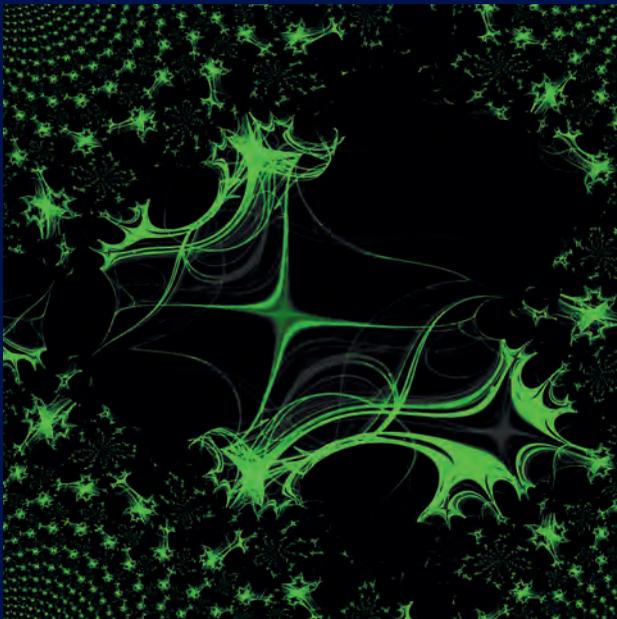


Mirosław Karwat

Theory of Provocation

In Light of Political Science



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The present volume discusses the subject of provocation and its various applications in the field of political science. Provocation itself combines the artificial induction of events, attitudes and human behavior, and the unilateral prejudging of issues, resulting in the interlocutor being surprised, trapped, manipulated or extorted. A political provocation manifests itself in various forms: productive or parasitic; pointed, collective or networked influence; initiative or reactive and reflexive; causal, deceptive or discrediting; constructive or destructive. The author brings forth real-world examples to illuminate the various intricacies of this concept, its applications, aims, and much more.

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Theory of Provocation

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Introduction

An already pretty girl fixes her makeup and chooses a sexy outfit even though she is not in an erotic mood. She trembles before job interview, so she tries to “enhance her image” to make a good impression and distract attention from her nervousness, and maybe also from her weaknesses, or gaps in the required knowledge and experience.

At an exam, a student flatters a lecturer who is the author of a newly published book. He tries to turn the exam to the “right” direction and force a reward for his extensive interests – in fact, for tickling the professor’s vanity.

A seducer is pushily polite and even gallant. He falls to a lady’s feet, tries to make her laugh, endear or stun her with boldness. The most important thing is to draw attention, surprise, intrigue, and surround. The next step is to get her.

A traveling huckster tells me that I will get five pots “for free” if I buy a pan at an extremely low price. Of course, only today and immediately. In case I decide that I do not need any of these gadgets, he calculates how much will I save thanks to this unplanned expense.

Advertising calls me to get up, combust my gasoline and spend several hundred dollars more than I planned because there is a 50 cent cheaper sugar at some supermarket on the other side of town. And besides, there is a big sale and discount on clothing, furniture, and equipment, which is a unique opportunity. I must hurry because already there are only some oddments. If I do not make it in time, there will be nothing left. Maybe I even know that today’s special offer and opportunity is common every day, and there is no more such thing as selling. There are only special occasions and incredible opportunities everywhere. However, I submit to this psychosis of opportunity.

Another advertisement arouses or revives a man’s hidden craving to buy a car. An attractive model on the mask seduces him, although she is unfortunately not a part of the car’s equipment. But the sublimation of the drive, reinforced by intrusive repetitions, is enough for the man to become obsessed like with erotic fantasies: he must have it.

In yet another advertisement, a stupid line or kitschy and intrusive song annoys me. It will be in my head when I wake up the next day. It seems that only by turning off the television I am free from bothering and delete unnecessary information. In fact, this information is already stuck in my memory.

In general, advertisements bend over backward to surprise me, stun me, urge me to shop faster or present something to outrage me. One way or another – to draw me in and tempt me.

A dealer puts an undecided, non-overly wealthy and a rather frugal customer under his thumb with a bundle, and thus ties agreement – “so many bonuses for such a low, and additionally reduced, price” – and a loan “without interest” with a deferred payment.

A colorful tabloid feeds me with ephemeral news from the “greater world.” It tries to make me an addicted rumor- and gossip-eater so I do not fall asleep until I am sure who divorced who, who got together with whom, who converted, how much money someone got for this or that role. Likewise, television sucks me into its moronic quiz games and series through the “idiotele” system of “Call and win. A Toyota already waits for you.” By stimulating and exploiting my greed, it forces me to know or immediately find out who plays the janitor, and who plays the broomstick in some movie. And then, counting the statistics, the television reports the numbers concerning the audience and informs me that it is my will that they will broadcast TV theater, concert, or reportage only around midnight because quiz games and sitcoms pushed them out.

A scandalous artist shocks, profanes, and blasphemies. He insists on changing our perspective when we look at his sculpture, painting, or installation. He wants us to start thinking and broaden our imagination. Another artist may have no creative ideas anymore but he always has an idea for a scandal and a crowd of journalists interested in it. A writer or filmmaker can do it too because one spicy scene drives the mass demand for a trivial work, which is sensational and forbidden. Stimulating protests among some activists, clergy, or parishioners works even better.

A journalist lurks with a hidden camera. Is he a peeper? Not only, because he also “fools” the people he filmed. Or, a journalist who pretends someone else to investigate something. Both he and some grave official imitate the ancient sultan, who sneaks out of his palace in disguise to learn how things really are, try the reliability and loyalty of his servants, and know the opinions and moods of the people.

A pickpocket charmingly addresses me or “accidentally” stumbles and leans on me. His people make a flash mob around me so that I can say goodbye to my wallet in a pleasant atmosphere of contact with polite people.

A broke poker player with unlucky cards outplays richer players with better cards by bluffing.

A police officer gives a bribe or buys drugs, and already has handcuffs in his other hand. A car or apartment is in fact a trap for a thief.

A guardian of an exceptionally resistant and obstinate child camouflages a command in such a way that it does not seem like an order but a question or begging. Or, the guardian orders subversively so that the child meets his expectations defiantly.

A head of hypermarket security, burdened with an invidious task of taking away too many people greedy for the already sold out goods, announces that he got a message about a bomb deployment.

The commander of “The Dirty Dozen” turns a bunch of outcasts and degenerates into a solidary and efficient team. He succeeds because he begins with marking himself as an object of common hatred, which motivates all the renegades to desire revenge that is possible if they survive an almost suicidal action. This, in turn, requires them to learn to cooperate. Here lies the trap of camaraderie and team ambition.

A psychologist or sociologist wants to make sure that the declared principles and views are as rigorously followed as they are required from others. Thus, in surveys, the researcher asks tricky questions, and in observations, he arranges incidents, that is situational tests. Another scientist is curious to what extent we can convince people, or to what extent they are susceptible to someone’s self-confidence, domineering character, and nerve. Hence, he experimentally checks the reactions of the examined to behavior or statements of a provided individual with a strictly defined task, for instance to persist in a clearly erroneous statement.

A teacher or lecturer invigorates a dreary audience with spicy anecdotes or shocking theses. He transforms the bored and indifferent into amused or outraged, thus, into the interested.

A colleague, who is my rival in a competition, gives me wrong information about the date and place of the final competition due to emotional arousal.

Mr. Smith eagerly informs, and perhaps also disinforms, Mr. Johnson what Mr. Williams told Mr. Brown about him. He sweetens the sad news with his own compliments.

A driver, irritated by urges from a rushing man behind him, stubbornly slows down to the speed limit but does not go down the right lane, where others go slower too.

A store owner marks the entrance door with a clear inscription “Christian customers are welcome.” Another one puts information in capital letters, with an exclamation mark: “I do not speak German!”

An enemy puts cardboard tanks or planes in front of me to bomb.

A foreign intelligence spies my country and, at the same time, stimulates the mood of spy mania with the information it spreads. It encourages people to

see spies everywhere and even indicates them. Just like a thief who constantly repeats “the thieves are all around!” or screams “catch the thief!” while getting ready to work.

Hitler provides Stalin with information about Marshal Tukhachevsky because of “losing papers” in Czechoslovakia.

An intelligence service or inventive confidants of a leader with a help of available or eager journalists arrange a strange “controlled leak” concerning some undesirable person.

At a rally, a demagogue like Harris or Kashpirovsky heals listeners’ beliefs, the economy, and the state with spells. With promises and encouragements like “you deserve it” and “I will help you with this,” the speaker evokes gratitude and spasms. Indeed, the demagogue’s wonderful prognoses and mirages seem like a dream, but they stir no less than movie special effects. The indication of the guilty ones wakes “the people’s wrath,” and mobilizes volunteers for lynching, so they can take care of their problems, which means settling accounts or repaying for a theft. This means the demagogue deals with own affairs with people’s hands.

Before an election, a few celebrities of the ruling party change their *emploi*. Overnight they transform into oppositionists, insightful critics, muckrakers, and accusers. They hastily change their social circle, identity cards, perfumes, and ties. They will not be disappointed. A sensation, new riddles, speculations, and calculations will follow. There will be a new distribution of positions. Other party members remain faithful but, on this occasion, they now appear “on a daily basis,” at a mass, in the Vatican itself, at a match, in philharmonic, and even in a library.

Is your competitor in elections too strong? Does he have too much support, authority, and competence? Does he not talk nonsense, and make embarrassing mistakes? It is fine, we will dig out some dirt, namely, we will discover something in the archives, ask his old friends for interesting stories, and, if necessary, prepare a spicy case file ourselves.

What do these so different and sometimes distant phenomena have in common? They belong to the category of deceitful activities, in which someone achieves his goal through having or gaining an advantage over others. The advantage is that the person using it becomes the director of the situation, the master of our feelings, desires, and imaginations, the inspirer of our illusions, hesitations, and decisions, or the pilot of our actions. This advantage makes us dependent on such a person, we lose control over the situation and ourselves. Briefly speaking, we talk about various forms of manipulation based either on a completely hidden influence or unclear smuggling of various suggestions. Forms of manipulation can also base on statements, gestures, and challenging actions,

which provoke predictive reactions. Most manipulations are provocative in nature, which means they rely on evoking certain images, impressions, illusions, emotions, involuntary reactions, and creating faits accomplis and situations that limit someone's ability to decide and think rationally and independently. They hinder freedom of action to force certain aspirations and behaviors.

Despite quite common prejudices, obtaining and using such manipulative, tactical advantage in provocative influences may serve not only particular and destructive purposes like harming, exploiting, and enslaving other people. This advantage may also serve the good of others as well as the common good. Not every provocation is a perfectly obvious "dirty job" because the goal of applying it can be sublime, and the methods can be sophisticated.

Moreover, we need to realize that provocation is not a sparse, marginal, or extraordinary and absolutely pathological phenomenon. Despite appearances, it is a common way of behaving for each of us. We use provocation every day in flirting, making advances, social games, caring and pedagogical behavior, marital and family arguments and accommodations, neighbor conflicts, drivers' fiery discussions and meaningful gestures, professional work, social initiatives, habitants' group protests. Every one of us uses provocation schemes and impact methods in our typical roles of citizen, voter, consumer, information and propaganda receiver, entertainment events participant, or in specialized roles of pedagogue, journalist, police officer, or criminal. Moreover, we all are subject to such influence.

Therefore, it is worth considering what is the essence of provocation, what is its accidental and changeable form, what is the use of this way of influencing people, how effective are the tactics and methods of provocation, and also how much does it cost the provocateurs and the provoked.

This is the purpose of the present book. This publication is supposed to be a compendium of knowledge on the possible repertoire of provocative interactions. Thus, first, we need to determine an adequate definition that would comprise various fields and forms of provocation. Second, we have to reevaluate stereotypes and prejudices against the word "provocation" itself. Third, we need to capture the typical structure of the phenomenon in its simplest, complex and sophisticated forms. Moreover, the analysis of various forms and manifestations of provocation provides the basis for systematizing its typical functions and repetitive forms.

Although the mechanism of provocation is a popular topic, it is so far studied in dispersion, that is only causally and peripherally when considering some fundamental issue regarded as sufficiently serious. Different cases of provocation are analyzed in mutual detachment, usually as examples themselves, and

not as a representation of certain rules and patterns. Reflections on the methods and means of provocation are usually one-dimensional and narrowed down to specific areas of life and activity. For example, the reflections most often concern: the art of seduction, advertising or war, the methods of operating of the intelligence service, tactics in military conflicts or terrorist actions, avant-garde forms of contestation and challenging the accepted conventions and traditions of art, scandalous forms of promotion and self-promotion of goods, works, and persons or institutions, methods of fighting organized crime, etc. Therefore, perhaps it is time for an attempt of synthesis? Maybe also in this matter, we should not see everything separately, like Tuwim's "terrible burghers?"

Let us try to systematize the knowledge about the mechanisms and schemes of provocative action. They should embrace universal, that is typical and repetitive in different historical situations, cultural circles, and political realities. We may assume that the repertoire of possible provocative methods understood "purely technically" is relatively independent of the ideological and political situation. However, of course, the climate of the epoch, political patterns, and the balance of political forces influence the preference of specific methods and lead to the recognition of admissibility or inadmissibility of specific measures.

We will base our typology and model interpretation of the provocative action schemes on historical and literary examples, taken from strictly academic literature, textbooks, and popular literature, for example fiction. We will also include feature films basing on sensational, investigative, and war themes in our considerations. Moreover, we can find rich empirical material like pieces of information, analyses, commentaries, official statements, and disclosed documents in documentary and para-documentary films, and press publications. However, in this reservoir, we will prioritize reports or reflections which can be clear and instructive only from a certain distance, apart from current references and emotions in which they are entangled. We can find inspiration for the theoretical synthesis not only in philosophical treatises but also in essays and columns.

The political scientist attempting to synthesize the provocation theory cannot speak fully authoritatively about issues requiring the competence of an art or literature historian, psychologist, criminologist, empirical research methodologist, or an expert in advertising and marketing because I am not certificated all-knowing genius. By necessity, I will restrict only to reviewing manifestations of provocation in various spheres of human life and activity, leaving the nuances to specialists. I hope that such an initial catalog of the omnipresent provocation will provoke professional researchers to produce precise, and sublime monographs. However, I can refer to the provocative methods in political actions with greater inquisitiveness and boldness. Therefore, I dedicate most of my work to this issue.

The task of the present guide is also to answer two questions. First, what every humanist who encounters the phenomenon of provocation should know, or learn, and think. Second, what can a political scientist studying the methods of political action learn from a comparative analysis of provocative methods of pedagogical, artistic, commercial, police, or criminal influence.

In the present work, we understand the eponymous “theory” not in the sense typical for science methodology but in accordance with the established didactic tradition. For science methodology, a theory is a relatively coherent and exhaustive system of strictly general claims, meaning the laws of science, which explain the basis, origin, mechanism of functioning, or determinants of certain phenomena evolution. The theory also explains claims based on certain assumptions, which usually focus on a particular type of factors. In this sense, many alternative or complementary theories of the same phenomenon are possible. On the other hand, in didactics, especially in the teaching of separate scientific disciplines, a systematic lecture addressing key concepts, the phenomenon’s range and limits, which are often contractual or conditional, determining the specificity of a given phenomenon in comparison with others, especially related ones, is called a theory of a given object. We study textbooks of the theory of law, upbringing, politics, or literature according to this principle. Such textbooks serve similar purposes as popular tutorials and guides held in the convention of “what every girl should know.” Therefore, respectively: what every lawyer, sociologist, pedagogue, political scientist, literary historian, or literary critic should know to competently study specific and detailed phenomena in their field. In a way, these are the “preliminaries of theory.”

However, the author may admit without exaggerated assurance that the book also contains elements of the theory understood rigorously since it addresses particular topics. These topics are, for instance: reasons for using provocative methods, conditions and limits of their effectiveness, factors causing the addressees’ susceptibility to provocations, attempts to assess the effectiveness of provocative methods, and the problem of whether and to what extent we can prevent or resist provocations. Nevertheless, of course, such problems require in-depth research, and more complete and systematized responses.

Besides typical cognitive functions, that is presenting the essence and manifestations of the phenomenon, and the symptoms enabling to notice and qualify it, the present work also serves a practical purpose. Readers will find here not an instruction of “how to do it” type but a warning of “how the ill-willed people do it” type. The work will show how to recognize provocation and how to defend ourselves against it if it threatens our dignity, our rights, or our interests. If we want to prevent or oppose the already existing brutalization and primitivization

of political struggle or style of governance, it is not enough to promote a culture of coexistence and models of reliable, substantive rivalry instead of the culture of aggression, war, and machination. Those who can use constructive forms of rhetorical, intellectual, pedagogical, artistic, literary, or detective provocation, which are thought-provoking, critical, exposing, and cease the arbitrariness of unreliable players, will oppose wicked provocations of criminals, terrorists, colonizers, spies, masters of negative campaigning, or dictators much more effectively.

Part One: What is Provocation?

The word “provocation” itself is a potential trap for those who use it. It is because this word became a common colloquial term, and thus its meaning seems illusory obvious. On the other hand, lovers of academic pedantry are usually embarrassed and disgusted by the alleged colloquiality of the term. However, this less often mobilizes them to a categorical effort than to avoiding the terminological problem.

A so-called decent scientist approaches common terms with distance, distrust, and sometimes with a sense of superiority. Perhaps there is a hint of jealousy, that is an attachment to something to which we have exclusive rights. A specialist has exclusive rights for specialist jargon and a theorist for sophisticated abstract categories. Meanwhile, almost everyone uses the word “provocation” or “manipulation” without asking the wiser ones for consent or advice. However, the common character of some term usually links with its currency and popularity but also with a lack of conceptual precision and consistency in using the given word, and occasional variability of its content and scope. In different situations or in the mouth of various, or even the same subjects, identical phrases sometimes represent two different notions.

To some extent, this is what happens with the term “provocation” and the related, more general term “manipulation.” This is probably because the term “provocation” appears more often in everyday communication and the language of media – for instance in reports, comments, analyses – than in scientific works and monographs. “Provocation” is also present in the language of politicians but rather as an epithet or accusation than as a unit of analysis, or a tool of description. As for scientific or popular science papers and textbooks, researchers and lecturers presenting the background and course of particular events, military, police, or spy operations, or insidious and shocking political actions, utilize the term “provocation” more often than theoreticians. Whereas the term appears either without “unnecessary comments” as implicitly commonly understood or understood in the context in question, or with an occasional author’s commentary which serves the purpose of regulatory definition – “for the purposes of this work, by provocation I mean...” This makes reading dozens and hundreds of publications on various provocations “confusing” because we can call many things a “provocation.” Is everything a provocation? What is actually a provocation?

In response to this terminological and conceptual confusion, a logical-linguistic alternative appears: the “ambiguous word.” It is a kind of excuse for

researchers who use such a slippery tool. The term “provocation” is ambiguous in the sense that it refers to many different contexts, for example care, entertainment, combat, teasing people, intimidating them, and talking behind their back. It is also ambiguous in the sense that the same way of evoking, stimulating, challenging, or forcing something can simultaneously serve several purposes, also independent of each other. Provocation is potentially a multifunctional activity.

Therefore, the solution is not to treat such a contextual relativization of provocation as the proof of the “liquidity of issue” or the elusiveness of the phenomenon’s essence. What remains then: Intuition? Improvisation? The solution is to seek a common feature, the core for the most diverse forms of the phenomenon. And this is what the most general, yet strict definition and using such multi-dimensional and multi-layered systematics, which makes it possible to see the specificity of various types of provocation without ignoring their kinship and mutual complementarity, should serve.

Therefore, the first trap set against us by the concept of provocation is the illusion of its obviousness, since it is a commonly accepted and used term. The second trap is the term’s overwhelming ambiguity understood mechanically as distinctiveness and alternativeness or even variability, arbitrariness, and randomness of different meanings. Wittgenstein’s concept of the *family of meanings* refers to the terms “provocation” and “manipulation.” The third trap is the illusory solution of the problem through an escape based on the principle “everyone will define it for personal use, as long as he is consistent in it and it is clearly different from other approaches.” Such decentralization means disorientation, and this is not the purpose of science. The fourth trap is the ballast of pejorative associations and negative prejudices, which makes us unable to see the provocative nature of actions aimed at protection, aid, prevention of dangers, stimulating thinking, and inducing to change unreasonable behavior.

Without discouraging ourselves from such negligence of our field of interest, let us restore order by answering the following questions:

How is the word “provocation” understood in everyday language and narrow contexts of specialized language? The analysis of dictionary definitions will help us to address this issue.

What is the difference between the situation when something provoked someone, or even when someone unknowingly and unintentionally provoked someone to do something from the situation when provocation is the result of some thoughtful or even cunning plan and clever behavior? On the other hand, what do such unintended and accidental effects of provocation and intentional acts of provocation have in common?

While remaining with acts of provocation, for which we reserve the term “provocation” as a mental shortcut, we have to determine the sense and extent to which deliberate attempts to provoke certain behavior or events and changes in the social situation, are manipulative.

The revision of manipulation and provocation stereotypes as allegedly always negative, destructive, and hidden activities, and the etymology of the word “provocation,” where “causing” meets “challenge,” obliges us, to focus more on the analysis of such provocation act, which consists in “challenging someone,” and which is the simplest form of provocation, unlike complex, “directed” forms of evoking the phenomena desired by the perpetrator.

I. Dictionary and Colloquial Definitions of Provocation

When reflecting on the essence of the phenomenon, or more precisely, on the type of phenomena called provocation, it is necessary to perform an etymological analysis of the notion and a critical-comparative analysis of the term's dictionary definitions. Not only because the accepted definitions are not random, and the tradition of understanding the term proves something, similar to the nature of the word's meaning evolution. A word may evolve toward continuation, enrichment of its content, extension of its range, or concretization and modification of the meaning attached to it. The words "provoke" and "provocation" have a relatively unambiguous linguistic pedigree but also an ambiguous interpretation, both literal and metaphorical. Learning these nuances is essential for a successful attempt to formulate a definition with the theoretical value which is adequate to the essence of the phenomenon, and devoid of common simplifications and prejudices.

1. Etymology of "Provoke" and "Provocation"

"To provoke" is a verb which is an English – and Polish – adaptation of the Latin "provocare" meaning to cause, to call, to challenge. "Provocation," from the Latin "provocatio" is a noun originating from a verb that means causing something or calling someone,¹ meaning it defines some kind of action.

"Provocare" has a narrowed meaning and scope of the multi-aspectual verb "vocare," which can mean the following, depending on the context:

- to call
- to summon; to invoke
- to summon officially; to sue
- to cry someone's name; to invoke someone; to call by a name
- to cry for help: deos vocare – to call gods; to invoke gods' help; to summon in prayer
- to invite
- to encourage to do something; to induce; to arouse; to create an opportunity
- to call obstreperously, in a provoking way
- to lead to a certain status or state

1 W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem* (Warszawa: 1994), p. 417.

- to institute
- to be called; to go by a certain name; bear a name.²

The author of the dictionary grouped the whole family of possible meanings of the term in one place. However, we must remember that, in the Polish language, the context, and therefore also the specific meaning in a particular context, is most often expressed with one or another prefix added in both verb and noun form. Although in Polish the following forms are analogous, they do not mean exactly the same: *zwać* (to call), *powoływać* (to institute, to impanel), *odwoływać* (to revoke), *przywoływać* (to summon), *przezywać* (to nickname), *nawoływać* (to exhort), *wywoływać* (to cause). Therefore:

- * invocation – a term known from the Polish epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* – means summoning – in this case in memory – but in the sense of supplication, cry for help, calling upon gods for intervention or muses for inspiration, the liturgical beginning of a prayer;
- * *equivocation* – understood as a logical term describing a particular type of error or manipulation in reasoning – is an ambiguity caused by interchangeable, seemingly equivalent use of the same name in a variable, non-identical sense;
- * *triggering* means evoking memories, visions, or realization of something;
- * *convocation* means convening, gathering, or assembling the parliament – in Poland, Convocation Sejm was in session before an Election Sejm and it was convoked by the primate-interrex during the interregnum.³

A popular Latin term in the Polish judicial jargon, *wokanda*, (docket) which is a plural noun derived from “vocandus” meaning “the one to be called as a defendant before the court,” comes from the same source. *Wokanda* is “a list of court cases in the order they shall be viewed on a given day.”⁴

Moreover, the already assimilated and obvious Polish word *adwokat* (counselor; cf. *advocatus diaboli*) comes from the same verb, that is “advocare” meaning “to summon.” *Adwokat* is an advisor, specialist, or a plenipotentiary summoned⁵ to assist in court cases, in the role of the plaintiff’s counsel or advisor in civil cases.

2 J. Mańkowski, *Praktyczny słownik łacińsko-polski* (Warszawa: 2000), p. 264.

3 Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, pp. 145, 160, 236, and 278.

4 Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, p. 548.

5 A. Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa: 2000), p. 5.

Among the mentioned associations, there are only three that refer to what today we commonly and agreeably call *provocation*, and which emphasize the narrowing of scope and content of the name with a “pro-” prefix: (1) to encourage to something; to persuade; to arouse; to create an opportunity; (2) to call someone obstreperously, that is in a provoking way; (3) to lead to a certain status, or state with own behavior or action, meaning to cause some event and its consequences, to create a certain situation or social atmosphere.

Realizing these three aspects, although maybe less reflected in colloquial language and thinking, which occasionally and intuitively modify the context of word use, is crucial to the theoretical notion of provocation. We see such a necessity when we observe that we can consider a direct and indirect influence on a subject, which relates to communicating with him, or indirect and long-term influence on the same subject or a community. When speaking about provocation, a theoretician can mean both explicit and unambiguous or implicit and ambiguous addressing of someone with specific signs which influence the subject’s emotions, imagination, will, behavior, control of a social situation, specific directing of circumstances of contact, and coexistence of people.

Provocare, translated mechanically into Polish as *provokować* (to provoke) means: (1) to cause or to call, (2) to challenge. It is easy to notice that the first reference system determines broader meaning and use of the term, while the second one is narrower and less general. For example, we can cause impressions, experiences, feelings, reactions, aspirations, intentions, decisions, and finally, actions. Noteworthy, with the mentioned examples, we might as well use the synonym “evoke,” or “stimulate.” Moreover, we can cause events and sequences of events, for example a rebellion, dispute, conflict, argument, catastrophe, or an avalanche in a literal or figurative sense. Also, we can call someone to volunteer, reveal, stand up to competition, or fight. However, the latter category is rather not what we call provocation. On the other hand, we can view “challenge” in three ways: (1) as challenging someone to a test of strength, competition, or duel, (2) as daring someone to ignore, disregard, or demonstrate disobedience to his calls, orders, or dictates, (3) as addressing someone in a form that questions his courage, patience, indulgence, determination, sense of dignity, especially when using an abusive tone and with offensive content.

2. Dictionary Interpretations of the Verb “Provoke”

A reader, who is unsure of the meaning of the word in question and seeks help in dictionaries, faces a strong suggestion of either ambiguity or pejorative character of the notion. Dictionaries characterize “provocation” usually not according to

some prior systematization of the term's content, for example ordering the meanings from the most general to a narrower and specific one, from neutral to evaluative one. Apparently, dictionaries focus only on the most common, widespread, and "empowered" ways of understanding the term. The order of equivalent terms, or *definiētia*, which appears in these rather reporting than regulatory dictionary definitions is apparently dictated by the assessment over frequency of occurrence rather than by the resolution of appropriateness and principles of terms' concretization, as is the case in, for example, textbooks and scientific monographs. Thus, the dictionary definitions are inevitably different from the definitions formulated by the phenomenon's researchers trying to grasp the essence, typology of forms, and possible gradation, hence using either regulatory or project definitions.

In Witold Cienkowski's dictionary, the verb "provoke" has a double explanation:

1. To bother, to tease, to dare, to stimulate to do something; 2. To start, to cause.⁶

The first meaning is the most distinct as it emphasizes the aggressiveness of the influence called provocation, to which the verbs "call" and "challenge" also refer. However, aspects that are free of the criterion of arousing, initiating, or causing something, appear as secondary.

On the other hand, Polish Scientific Publishers' (PWN) Dictionary of Foreign Words presents that characteristics in reverse order:

to try to trigger a particular reaction in someone, to stimulate for the expected activity, to incite something with hidden intentions; to challenge, to irritate.⁷

In this case, the most general and, at the same time, neutral meaning comes first without prejudging the intentions, effects, forms of stimulating others or evoking their reactions. The pejorative meaning related to deceitfulness, secrecy, and malice of influence appears only in the second section.

The emphasis on negative associations with the verb "provoke" even prevailed in dictionaries published later. Therefore, the word gains a mainly pejorative character. We find the following formula in the PWN Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language:

to incite something with hidden intentions; to try to trigger a specific reaction in someone; to stimulate a specific action in favor of the provocateur; to challenge.⁸

6 W. Cienkowski, *Praktyczny Słownik wyrazów bliskoznacznych* (Warszawa: 1993), p. 197.

7 J. Tokarski ed., *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* (Warszawa: 1980), p. 610.

8 *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*, Vol. 2: L-P [digital version], entry "prowokować."

Only the middle segment has a neutral, descriptive meaning: “to trigger a specific reaction.” However, then the reader must assume that a specific reaction can also occur as a result of overt and non-egoistic intentions. The examples provided with the definition by the entry’s author underline such a supposition: to provoke disturbances, riots. To provoke someone to openly oppose something. To provoke action, discussion, or speaking about something. Only the latter example lacks confrontational or destructive content, although previous examples may suggest that the one who provokes a discussion – and not simply invites, exhorts, or encourages – also acts inappropriately.

The author of the following entry formulated the definition criteria with an analytical attitude and more distance toward the stereotypes and prejudices accompanying the words “provoke” and “provocation:”

1. *When someone provokes or tries to provoke our unusual behavior by, for example, deliberately annoying us, or not agreeing with us.* She suspected that he was lying, and provoking something she could not predict... Stop provoking me... He was provoking whipping with his slow, clumsy behavior.
2. *When something or someone provokes or causes some behavior, especially one we normally do not display.* These texts provoke the reader to think... Because of his distraction, his friends considered him a semi-comical character, or in any case, someone provoking jokes... His way of being, intended to prove that he has an advantage over me, provoked me to dismiss this rude man... A statement provoking social unrest.⁹

The latter characterization is triply inspiring for theoretical reflection on the essence and scope of the phenomenon. First, it shows the wide range of the term’s use, simultaneously leading the reader to the idea that each mentioned context of the term, that is phenomenon’s manifestations, has something in common with the other. Second, the author of the entry noted a significant moment that provoking is already an attempt to trigger, stimulate, or force some kind of reaction, regardless of the outcome. Third, this characterization leads to a correct conclusion that it is not the nature of friendly or hostile intentions, nor the evaluation of the positive or negative effects or the overt and reliable character of the influence that determines the essence of the phenomenon defined by the verb “provoke.” It is the fact that the influence causes a particular transgression, produces previously unforeseen, unintentional, unpredictable, and, in a sense, enforced effects or reactions. In such a way, we approach the adequate theoretical, and not the purely colloquial, occasional, or contextually variable definition of the phenomenon.

9 M. Bańko ed., *Słownik języka polskiego* (Warszawa: 2007), Vol. 4, pp. 222–223.

3. Dictionary Explanations of the Term “Provocation”

The verb “provoke” can refer to any activity that causes forced effects. Moreover, it can even refer to the impersonal influence of one phenomenon on another on a principle that a cause-effect relationship occurs, and “under normal, typical conditions” it does not have to happen. On the other hand, the noun “provocation” is already a genre concept. In fact, this concept refers only to intentional actions of practical or ritualistic nature, which are potentially repetitive and could correspond to a specific pattern, scheme, or method of action. When we use the word “provocation,” we treat it as a qualification of an act, behavior, or event. Noteworthy, it is a qualification for which the criteria already exist, and are in some way codified and brought into consciousness, or intuitively treated as obvious. We rather not use the word “provocation” to describe a phenomenon that, although shocks or surprises us, does not bring any comparative associations. For example, we will not call an accidental social misunderstanding or collective consternation a provocation. However, we will call a provocation a parody deliberately balancing on the edge of good taste and respect for the object of “aping” and mockery, demonstrative rudeness, spiteful blasphemy in the presence of a clergyman or believers, stepping on a flag, tearing or burning an ID card, etc. Although such behavior or “incidents” shock us greatly because they happen in a particular place and time, with a particular intention, we already know such forms of acting from somewhere.

This one thing seems clear to all authors who give brief definitions of provocation. However, these definitions also fall into the mentioned dilemma of whether we should give this term a broad and neutral meaning, or limit it to particular intentions of the events’ perpetrators and the sings’ senders, and to the assessment of who benefits or loses from provocation.

Władysław Kopaliński narrows the scope of the term “provocation” to behaviors that have the following features:

a challenge, a deliberate attack; an insidious incitement, baiting someone to perform actions or make decisions that are harmful to him, her, or third parties.¹⁰

According to the PWN Dictionary of Foreign Words, provocation is:

causing, stimulating something > 1. A deceitful action to induce someone to do something, usually disastrous to that person and his related persons; a deceitful activity of

10 Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, p. 417.

secret agents in some organization, acting to its disadvantage. 2. *in law*, encouraging another person to commit a criminal offence to initiate criminal proceedings against him.¹¹

On the one hand, in this definition, the initial etymological formula narrows even more by omitting openly confrontational, aggressive, and provocative actions, and by indicating only the hidden actions, which are presumably harmful. On the other hand, adding a new contemporary context extends the perspective, for example inducing a crime to punish a criminal by catching him in the act.

The Mirosław Bańko's dictionary consistently uses the same criterion as in the definition of the verb "provoke:"

A provocation is the behavior of someone who wants to trigger anger, aggression, objection, or other attitudes that we normally do not show, and often harm us in such a way. Yesterday's attack was described as a political provocation aimed at breaking off the peace talks... Using the method of provocation, he led to a conflict between everyone... The police provocation and controlled purchase are risky, yet indispensable police actions... Fashion is art and provocation.¹²

Additionally, Andrzej Bańkowski, in his etymological dictionary, narrows the scope of provocation to crimes and offenses but also mentions other contexts of the term. According to Bańkowski, a provocation is

a deliberate inducement of a criminal act to arrest a person suspected of misconduct or committing a crime, or an appropriate act performed to discredit someone. ... also, *in medicine*, inducing symptoms of illness for preventive purposes.¹³

Let us focus on the last part. Bańkowski reminds us that we can use the term "provocation" not only to describe the characteristic way in which a human being influences another person, his social situation, imagination, knowledge, experiences, feelings, will, or practical behavior. We can apply the word "provocation" to describe specific methods of therapy. By analogy, we can relate it to the ways in which humans can artificially create the desired natural phenomena in technology, breeding plants, and animals. In any case, a specific artificiality of the caused effect is treated as a distinguishing feature of provocation. This refers not only to healing treatments but also to the trap set for criminals, a lure that induces someone to involuntary self-exposition, assault, or calumny which suddenly and radically changes someone's reputation. Bańkowski follows a similar

11 Tokarski, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, p. 610.

12 Bańko, *Słownik języka polskiego*, p. 222.

13 A. Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego* (Warszawa: 2000), Vol. 2, p. 796.

direction as Bańko, who emphasizes a specific “abnormality,” or the extraordinary nature of the caused mental state or behavior.

Admittedly, this creates a dilemma whether using the same term “provocation” to describe social and technological influences will not preserve the conceptual confusion. Whereas the multi-aspectuality of the word “provoke” is understood – because different phenomena can be provoked deliberately or not – the word “provocation” already implies a certain intention. Will the typology of provocation and using qualification terms like such-and-such provocation solve this problem? It seems that a better solution is to distinguish between the “provocation effect” and the “provocation act” (see further in Chapters Two, Three, and Four) and to reserve the term “provocation” for a human-human interaction as a mental shortcut.

4. Intentional Narrowing of Meaning in Words Concerning “Provoking”

Clearly, the direction of gradual terminology clarification is quite consistent. However, suggested by the alphabetical rather than logical order of the dictionary entries, we do not always notice this shift.

We can relate the verb “provoke” to different contexts equally properly:

- * to phenomena of an elemental and non-subjective origin – for example accidental events, natural disasters, or natural tendencies – which objectively cause and somehow force effects that are neither a subjective intention nor an expectation of anyone but which violate the “natural state” or “natural course” of something;
- * to the effects of human behavior or their traits that make a strong impression on the audience and cause “turbulent” reactions, trigger some emotions, thoughts, or reactions;
- * to actions performed with a specific intention, mostly deliberately.

Yet, only comparison of the grammatical and logical subject of a sentence with the philosophical qualification of “causative factors” – cause or reason, event, or subject – allows capturing a significant difference between different situations. For example, when something provoked something, when something provoked someone to something, or when someone provoked someone.

The noun “provocation” already bears an intentional resonance. We will not call a storm a “provocation,” although it “provokes” fear and intention to hide. Also, we will not call a road accident a “provocation,” although it “provokes” a gathering of people, who worry about the tragedy and are “unhealthily”

interested in the accident's details. On the other hand, we will call a provocation a challenging statement, a gesture of disregard, planting a bomb, hanging a forbidden flag, causing a fight viciously, a call for lynching, or a subtle intrigue.

This direction and method of intentional narrowing the sense within the family of words derived from the verb "provocare" continues even when we do not speak about human actions and their intentions, or goals, but only about their features. However, in such circumstances, we consider the features from the viewpoint of the addressees or witnesses. More precisely, we speak about the features' perceived effects or the meaning attributed to them by others, that is about their social reception.

In this context, we use two terms: (1) the present participle form "provoking," (2) the adjective "provocative." Those forms are treated as intentional and evaluative expressions of human behavior or superficiality.

5. Dictionary Characteristics of "Provocative" Behavior

Both "provoking" and "provocative" refer only to people, as confirmed by the comments and reliable examples from the dictionaries. The words in question either relate to people's traits, especially those that people can choose, reveal, demonstrate, conceal, or change, the imagined and, in a certain way, experienced qualities of their actions and works, or the nature of their mutual relations. However, "provoking" and "provocative" cannot relate to the characteristics of events, natural phenomena, or unplanned and unexpected effects of certain processes, or tendencies.

Therefore, we will not say that a flood is itself provocative, or is a provocative event, although the flood actually "provoked," for example an epidemic or mass looting of abandoned property. Admittedly, hunger "provokes" sleepiness or irritation but it is not a "provocative state." Although jealousy provokes "ugly thoughts" or even malicious intentions toward someone, we will not say that jealousy or envy is a provocative feeling. However, we will acknowledge that, as a specific style of coexistence with others, jealousy is provocative because it triggers annoyance, a sense of embarrassment or danger, and sometimes tempts to have a contrary attitude.

Let us look into dictionaries.

Something provocative should trigger anger, aggression, objection, or other behavior that we normally do not display, often to our detriment. It is difficult to remain indifferent toward her mockery, often provocative way of being... provocative actions of the extreme right-wing... ...provocative makeup. * pro-voc-a-tive-ly. Since this morning, the

militia of enthusiasts provocatively occupied the square ...provocatively dressed young women... provocatively drastic language used by the poet.¹⁴

“Should trigger” means “aims to cause,” “strives to induce, or incite.” However, the author gives the same differentiating factor to another expression:

Provoking words, appearance, or behavior should induce us to behave in a way we do not normally display, for example to be angry or desire. There is some provoking self-confidence, some terrible cynicism in Mr. L... He pretended he does not notice her provoking looks. > This also can be said about someone who tries to make us act in such a way. Then I became noisier and more provoking. * pro-vo-king-ly. They both laugh provokingly... ...provokingly short dress.¹⁵

Hence, what is the difference between provocative and provoking behavior? Perhaps the reason for choosing one of these terms is something else? For example, maybe “provocative” means something repetitive, what may constitute a principle, and “provoking” means an interim impact? Relatively, “provocative” could relate only to deliberate behavior, while “provoking” to the behaviors that are both deliberate and involuntary provoking, or not fully aware of their meaning? The latter category may include, for instance the “provoking glances.” They may be a sign, a clear signal of interest and encouragement but also an uncontrolled sign of interest, excitement, fascination, and thus an expression of someone’s experiences rather than an attempt to arouse experiences of others.

Adequate entries in the Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language clarify the difference regarding context and intention of using one of these two terms:

provocatively “obstreperously, challenging”

To behave provocatively.

To smile provocatively.

provocative “having the character of provocation, characteristic for provocation; obstreperous, challenging”

A provocative conduct, behavior.

A provocative performance, speech.

A provocative smile.¹⁶

14 Bańko, *Słownik języka polskiego*, p. 222.

15 Bańko, *Słownik języka polskiego*, p. 223.

16 Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language (KSJP), entries: *provokacyjnie, prowokacyjny, prowokująco*.

Therefore, without risking a great mistake, we can adopt the following arrangement because it enables greater accuracy in understanding human behavior, and considering the difference between the effect or social reaction and intentions:

- (1) “Provocative” and “provokingly” are terms for gestures, statements, and actions, which cause something materially or have some conventional-symbolic meaning, and whose perpetrator, author, initiator, or direct performer, intends to emphasize the intention of provoking others to, for instance become interested, think something through, protest, or make a mistake. The perpetrator somehow demonstrates the fact of challenging someone or something or wanting to cause some effect according to his intentions and needs, which is often contradictory to the audience’s attitude. For example, the perpetrator wants to activate the passive and indifferent or force someone to do something inconsistent with his will.
- (2) The term “provoking” describes mainly the psychological effects of someone’s behavior. For example, evoked impressions, associations, feelings, experiences, beliefs, more or less controlled reactions or intentions. On the other hand, the term also describes a person’s general features, which cause some kind of stir, anxiety, dissonance, shock, disapproval, or induce defiance, opposition, correction, yet regardless of whether it was the intention of the provoking person. Such features are, for instance beauty, style of gestures, or habits. Let us remember that we can provoke someone both deliberately and unintentionally. However, the perception of some behavior or someone’s trait in both cases can remain similar, at least at the first moment before we consider whether someone intended to stimulate us.

Yet, how should we describe situations when *something*, and not someone, causes a commotion, embarrassment, shock, or when someone is unaware of the fact that he raises something, shocks others, or is unable to prevent it even despite being aware of it? The term “provoking effect” relating to, for instance some event, trait, or unavoidable behavior, seems justified. After all, the effect of such situations is often regarded as some equivalent of provocative intentions, according to the scheme: if someone wanted to upset or astonish me, he would do, say, or wear this and that.

6. Dictionary Definitions of Provocateurs

A person who provokes – but rather the one who does so consciously and intentionally than the one who unknowingly, unintentionally, or even involuntarily

causes embarrassment, disgust, outrage, condemnation, or arouses dislike, defensive reflexes, etc. – is a provocateur. We should remember this nuance. There are many different situations, for instance violating certain rules, social conventions, and offending someone's dignity, or sensitivity for certain principles, especially when doing so accidentally and unintentionally. Another example is when someone deliberately, yet in relation to a particular event or transitive situation, shocks the audience with unconventional vocabulary, gestures, or behavior, or also challenges someone, the accepted correctness criteria, courtesy, or good taste. Moreover, a permanent attitude of an individual to confront the public opinion and expectations, or to secretly control a person, or team, is also something else.

The term “provocateur” is more relevant to a subject who deliberately and permanently provokes others into doing something, or indirectly influences them through deceitful methods. On the other hand, calling a “provocateur” a person who made a blunder, acted indiscreetly, or committed a deliberate, yet one-time affront toward a person distinguished by his abnegation in matters of dress, manners, or non-conformism, will be either exaggeration or, in any case, negotiable issue. In such a situation, it is different than when applying the term to a known scandalizer, subversive, impertinent, or even more so, denunciator, or police spy and infiltrator.

However, we find this narrowed meaning of the word “provocateur” rather in subtle historical and critical literary analyses, and rhetoric of moral and ideological polemics than in everyday life and language, and in dictionaries, which usually record the most common understanding of terms. Dictionaries usually contain a one-dimensional association. For example, a police denunciator, who gains information by provoking people into familiarity, confessions, exposure, or behavior that is too sincere and dangerous for them, brings to mind a picture of a spy and a saboteur sent from the outside.

And so, in the already quoted Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language we find the following definition:

A person committing a provocation, a secret agent who infiltrates an organization to act against it.¹⁷

The six-volume Dictionary of the Polish Language published by PWN in the “Library of *Gazeta Wyborcza*” (Biblioteka *Gazety Wyborczej*) series mentions a similarly obvious association:

17 Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language (KSJP), entry “*provokator*.”

A provocateur is someone who commits provocation, especially a political one. Spies, provocateurs, and snitches used to sit in pubs.¹⁸

Also Władysław Kopaliński provides the current and primary meaning of the word “provocateur:”

An instigator; a police agent who gets into a political organization to act against it.¹⁹

Andrzej Bańkowski emphasizes the same thing, and in a way, absolutizes it:

A secret police agent acting to deliberately induce crime for prevention purposes.²⁰

Admittedly, this definition remains less influenced by historical associations dating back to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries concerning political police like Okhrana in the fight against subversives or Gestapo in the fight against resistance movements. However, this definition includes more recent experiences like police fighting against gangsters, drug dealers, or terrorists. Nevertheless, we remain in the area of police action forms. Hence, we limit the term's scope to denunciators, agents, “leakers,” dummies, or spies. And this is but an exaggerated narrowing that only recognizes the connotations that first come to mind and colloquial language.

However, on this occasion, we learn how far the meaning of the word today deviates from the original, most literal meaning of the term in Latin. Similarly, we learn it when we see “provocateurs” in people acting voluntarily and on their behalf in areas that are not subject to police surveillance or prevention. Initially, the Latin “provocator” meant someone calling upon tournament participants to fight,²¹ a “stage manager” and announcer of performances in a knightly spectacle. Later, the notion also meant a person challenging someone to a duel or the attacking gladiator.²² However, today we call a “provocateur” a person who specializes in “mole” services for the police, as in the above dictionary entries. On the other hand, today's meaning of a provocateur may include a person who “challenges” others – out of own choice and need – that is: shocks, disgraces, violates taboos, attacks the sacred, or plots intrigues in any field, not only in exhibition fights, tournaments, battles, or police actions.

18 Bańko, *Słownik języka polskiego*, p. 222.

19 Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, p. 417.

20 Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik*, p. 796.

21 Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, p. 417.

22 Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik*, p. 796.

The adjective “provocative” – as something characteristic to the provocateur and serving to incite others²³ – refers to such people whose activity and functioning in a certain setting is permanently programmed for provocations.

Therefore, “provocative” means something that concerns a provocateur, which relates to his activity, results from his intentions or tasks. In this sense, we talk about a provocative activity, a provocative tone of conversation, in which someone’s intention to provoke someone is evident, and provocative methods of extracting testimony and gaining evidence, for instance blackmailing or setting a trap. Moreover, we also mean a provocative style of ruling that consists in antagonizing people, intimidating the rebellious, tempting the greedy, or confusing everyone: acting on the principle of “divide and rule.”

In Chapter Six, I will especially focus on people with provocative tendencies, tastes, and predispositions and study the full spectrum of a “provocative” personality or instrumentally applied characters and the role of a provocateur. The catalog of “provocateurs” includes much more than just the type of a police provocateur, that is a denunciator, agent, or “snitch” who performs surveillance and diversion in criminal or political environment, especially a subversive or revolutionary one.

7. Similar Expressions and Related Words

What better helps to understand the essence of the phenomenon in question is not only the analysis of the meaning of the word “provocation” but also that of similar expressions and related words.

Assuming that “provocation” is a genre-unrelated and many-sided concept – meaning the same word describes phenomena in different contexts but with common features – instead of considering it an ambiguous term, we will consider it rather as a term to which we refer by the notion of “family of meanings;” as is the case with manipulation.²⁴ Thus, it is difficult to treat the expressions with a meaning similar to “provocation” and words related to it as synonyms or equivalent substitutes. They are rather terms, which clearly reflect a particular context of a given concept. Each of such expressions refers to some kind of provocation defined by the goal or method of acting. However, none of them exhausts the content of provocation or covers everything related to it.

23 Digitalized Dictionary of the Polish Language (KSJP), entry “prowokatorski.”

24 Cf. J. Puzynina, *Język wartości*, ch. XII: “Słowo *manipulacja* w języku polskim” (Warszawa: 1992).

Sinister Expressions

The first group of equivalents to the verb “provoke” includes expressions that indicate an aggressive and destructive way of influencing coexistence among individuals, social groups, or specific subjects in terms of their well-being, motivation, or efficiency. The aggressiveness and destructiveness of such a method of influence is linked with inducing damage, attacks, or punishable acts, discouraging, daunting, and intimidating, causing conflicts and lynchings, arguing, and isolating people. There are many terms for such a psychological technique or social engineering. In Polish, the most popular of them are *podżegać* (to incite), *podszeptywać* (to prompt), *podjudzać* (to antagonize), *napuszczać* and *szczuć* (to bait). Most of those are metaphors that transfer literal expressions from the sphere of physically observable phenomena to the sphere of mental and cognitive-emotional-volitional interactions and effects.

The word *podżegać* (to incite) originates from an Old Slavonic verb that originally meant “to set on fire,” which with time became a metaphor. Instead of a house or pyre, we “set on fire” human emotions, thus causing “fiery” passions such as hotheadedness, anger, vindictiveness, hatred, or greed that can even lead someone to wicked and unlawful acts, that is to something that one should not do or is even forbidden as a punishable act. In modern legal terminology, incitement means precisely instigating someone to commit a crime. Moreover, the language of anti-war propaganda still stigmatizes warmongers, that is people, who try to induce war.

The word *podpuszczać* (to bait) has a similar meaning, except that the term itself does not apply only to situations in which someone induces others to wrongdoing. On the other hand, *podszepety* (prompts) are clearly negative and understood as hints whispered in one’s ear outside public control, usually happen in the absence of the other party and against that party, and refer to behind-the-scenes influence based on denunciatory activities and to misusing one’s trust toward an alleged friend, confidant, or protector. This is the influence typical of treachery because many intrigues are based on prompts.

Another word that evokes negative and aggressive associations is the Polish *podjudzać/judzić*. It means to hound, excite, rebel, antagonize, bait, and incite.²⁵ However, the word contains an additional connotation, which is the assumption of bad will and even perfidy. Bańkowski seeks the genesis of this expression in

25 Cienkowski, *Praktyczny Słownik wyrazów bliskoznacznych*, p. 176.

Ukrainian and Belarusian languages and their term *juda* inspired by the biblical apostle-traitor, Judas Iscariot.²⁶

In practice, *podjudzać* (to antagonize) means provoke artificially or, in any case, inciting someone's outrage, anger, hatred, and desire for revenge. This often happens for trivial reasons, or as a reaction to assumptions, guesses, conjectures, rumors, or speculations instead of facts. However, the conjectures are treated as obvious or "highly probable" due to wishful thinking and prejudices rather than sound reasoning.

The common equivalent of this otherwise sophisticated term appears in verbs *napuszczać* and *szczuć*, both meaning "to bait." These are quite illustrative metaphors, based on the similarity of certain methods for inciting and directing aggression of people toward other people to the use of hounds, fighting dogs, or watchdogs.

Someone baits us against another, which means that he evokes, simulates, or artificially "heats" and exaggerates a conflict or reason for reluctance or hostility. Thus, such a person provokes or revives faded or suppressed negative emotions, directly or indirectly induces people to take hostile actions against each other. A person who baits rouses anger, hatred, or contempt, usually along with a sense of impunity, so as to make some people harass and persecute others by evoking in them a sense of fear, intimidation, entrapment, and helplessness. However unfortunate it is that the phenomenon described by this metaphor is not a metaphor itself but a fact, it perfectly harmonizes with another one, namely the notion of a "smear campaign."

Someone who incites another to do something or who turns people against each other usually does so for own benefit and, at the same time, to the disadvantage of the antagonized. Moreover, such a person often also acts to the disadvantage of the incited person.

Expressions of Alluring

The second group of "provoke" equivalents includes expressions that define influencing based on encouragement, arousing of positive expectations and different kinds of desire, the sense of having an attractive contact with someone, some expected benefit, reward, or trophy. The common denominator for such situations and ways of persuading is the term *bałamucić* (to flirt and mislead). This word emphasizes that the addressee as the victim of influence, loses

26 Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik*, Vol. 1, p. 596.

prudence and criticism, own distance to a situation and impressions, and feels blissed, admired, or satisfied. The most popular verbs for this context are the colloquial *podpuszczać* (to bait) and the more sophisticated *podniecać* (to excite), *wabić* (to lure), *nęcić* (to tempt), and *kusić* (to entice).

A person who seduces stimulates desires just as much as illusions. By tempting and luring, such a person decoys and disappoints, he encourages pious desires and passions inversely proportional to the chances of fulfillment and satisfaction. Hence, in this sense, it means *podpuszczać* (to bait).

The colloquial word “bait” is a metaphorical expression of a specific provocation. For example, we can think of letting a dog off the leash so that it can get closer to a sausage, allowing or even inviting someone to a dangerous or forbidden zone and giving him the impression that the target or object of desire is closer than in reality. Adam Mickiewicz’s poem “The Fox and the Goat” describes such a situation: a fox is sure about catching a goose, yet suddenly he falls into a barrel.

Podpuszczać (to bait) means to induce someone to perform acts that he normally would hesitate to do – by directing a situation, creating an opportunity, openly encouraging, persuading, or challenging someone. Such acts can be disgraceful, wicked, vile, mischievous, reckless, thoughtless, or risky. They also can be a formal offense or a crime. *Podpuszczanie* (baiting) means encouraging someone to do something that he can do but should not do, and that he may regret. It is also encouraging something, which seems like a fulfillment of expectations, dreams, or some obsessions, but brings no satisfaction in reality.

In the case of encouraging to socially unaccepted acts, baiting is related to incitement and antagonizing. However, the difference is that baiting does not concern negative emotions such as anger, obstinacy, hatred, but “positive” ones, for instance vanity, pride, or greed. In such a situation, the emphasis is not so much on breaking social norms and rigors, or ordinary conventions but rather on breaking own rules, sacred resolutions, vows, pledges, and promises.

In practice, baiting may indicate one of the two directions of acting. First, “pushing” someone toward something. Second, “pulling” the person toward something with luring, tempting, or appealing to the ravenous needs or sense of attractiveness of something or someone.

We will omit the explanation of such words of similar meaning as *podniecać* (excite), *wabić* (lure), *nęcić* (tempt), or *kusić* (entice) not only because they are understood quite commonly and unanimously – though rather intuitively – but also because we will later characterize the mechanism of luring, temptation, and other similar mechanisms, with examples from various fields of human activity.

If we wanted to consider any of the abovementioned terms as capturing the essence of provocation or, in any case, as the most representative for this category of phenomena, it would be synonymous with a distraction of someone who “cannot see the forest behind the trees” or sees everything separately. Admittedly, models of temptation, “picking-up,” “baiting,” or inciting say much about the mechanism of provocation because there are certain situational and tactical models behind these mental shortcuts. However, it is a knowledge directly useful only for the typology of provocation. Meanwhile, capturing the essence of the phenomenon, which is overshadowed by its various forms, requires a comparative analysis and synthesis based on a search for a common denominator for this formal and structural diversity.

II. The Dualist Nature of Provocative Phenomena

So far, the etymological analysis exposed two different categories of “provoking:” (1) an impersonal, unintentional influence of phenomena like events or particular characteristics of things and persons about feelings, impressions, will, or more often, a reflexive or instinctive and subconscious behavior of individuals or groups; (2) a deliberate influence of specific individuals on the impressions, experiences, aspirations, intentions, decisions, and behaviors of others like encouraging them to do something which was not predetermined by their behavior or could not happen without such an encouragement, hint, or extortion.

What is the common denominator for both these categories? It is that what causes something initially unintended by the provoked people, which even seemed impossible or at least merely probable from the viewpoint of their inclinations, principles, or attitudes. A provoked person is artificially induced by something or someone to think, feel, and act in a certain way. We can consider precisely this feature as the essence of provocation. However, we need to remember the difference between the impersonal, “phenomenal,” that is event-related, or processual, and the personal, that is activity-related, and intentional, mechanisms of provocation.

1. Between Randomness and Premeditation

The stereotype of premeditation governs the common perception of provocation. Any provocation is mistakenly identified simply with action, meaning deliberate behavior. According to this assumption, a provoking person is the one who wants to provoke, knows how to do it, and does it consistently. Meanwhile, the verb “provoke” can refer to many different situations. Therefore, by provocation we may understand:

- (1) an unpredicted and uncontrolled effect of subjectively accidental natural and social events such as a volcanic eruption provokes (caused) panic; a famine provokes riots; a great flood provokes acts of looting;
- (2) an unplanned and uncontrolled effect of particular states of affairs and social relations such as poverty provokes envy, a double offense (he insults us and neglects to notice own insult) of a Mr. Big provokes hatred and a desire for revenge, an unfeeling procedural inability to solve the problem provokes rebellion;
- (3) an uncontrollable effect of some social situations such as hunger provokes one to theft, a common threat and fear provokes old enemies to get closer;

- (4) an unintended and uncontrolled effect of certain human properties that can be permanent or occasional and vary by case such as: a striking beauty provocative erotically as it evokes lust, involuntary coquetry, or sexual fantasies; a horrid face provokes reluctance; annoying habits; subservient politeness; pleasing character; personal charm; unbearable talkativeness;
- (5) an unintentional causing of specific phenomena by own recklessness, negligence, mistake, or miscalculation of relatively rational predictions such as: an awkward statement of a minister causes a scandal; an indecisive pedestrian provokes an accident. Why does the *pedestrian* provoke and not simply *cause* the accident? Because his behavior triggers or suggests impressions and decisions of drivers that disorients them, so the pedestrian evokes reflexes and uncoordinated decisions that lead to a collision;
- (6) a partially calculated effect of half-spontaneous, half-intentional, and simultaneously often ambiguous behavior such as: coquetry that may appear unambiguous, exaggerated, or misleading; abnegation that may be a demonstration, a challenge to convention and the surrounding environment, but equally well a scruffiness resulting from own convenience and carelessness in matters of dress, manners, and hygiene; “putting on a bold front” in the case of competitors; indecision in the case of contractors during negotiations (both a tactic and a sign of hesitation);
- (7) an effect of calculated behavior, meaning premeditated actions like a “bait,” a trap, or an intrigue.

In each of these cases, we refer to effects, to phenomena that did not have to occur yet that – under certain conditions – were determined precisely by the mentioned factor. However, in the case of categories (1)–(6), we refer to unintended and sometimes even unconscious effects, while category (7) refers to the effect of an intentional effort, undertaken with a specific goal in mind. Hence why we should distinguish the *effect* from the *provocation act*.

2. The Effect of Provocation

The term “effect” refers to a tradition present especially in psychological and sociological research, which uses it to describe particular repetitive patterns, mechanisms of individual or group behavior, and regularities found and verified in scientific observations and experiments.

Psychological and Sociological Concept of “Effect”

For example, the “halo effect” is “a tendency to automatically judge an individual, positively or negatively, based on a pre-formed general impression of the evaluator.”²⁷

This tendency influences the perception of particular behaviors, initiatives, achievements of an individual in such a way that the already prejudiced image of this person becomes a predominant evaluation factor rather than the analysis of this person’s actions.

We also know from everyday observations how important is the “first impression,” how strongly we follow our habits and prejudices, how we accustom ourselves to our ideas about someone, and how often we judge others in advance. Noteworthy, our beforehand evaluation may be that of appreciation, trust, or admiration but also that of underestimation, distrust, or aversion, which hinders a factual and adequate evaluation of specific efforts, works, and statements.

A similar principle emerges in sociometric mechanisms, which involve a particular measurement of the attractiveness of group members, determining their central or marginal position, the status of a leader, and a favorite or an isolated person:

The sociodynamic effect happens when the interpersonal choices made in a group tend to select people who are already popular, while little-known individuals are even more strongly rejected. It is so because preferred individuals gain the rank of a symbol and receive successive votes not as X or Y but as emblems of success.²⁸

And how does the presence of other people affect the adequacy and independence of our impressions and judgments? This issue was investigated experimentally through the example of perceiving optical phenomena:

The autokinetic effect happens when a person observing a small, stationary point of light in complete darkness has the impression that the point moves. Experiments show that individual assessment of the light’s apparent movements’ range in a group situation unifies and thus forms a group norm.²⁹

An individual may be prone to illusions, not only of optical character. Moreover, under the influence of other people’s presence, exchange of information and suggestions, pressure from others, and the created sense of bonding and

27 K. Olechnicki, Paweł Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny* (Toruń: 1998), p. 52.

28 Olechnicki, Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, p. 53.

29 Olechnicki, Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, p. 52.

community, such a person becomes even more susceptible to illusions, whether created spontaneously in the whole group or skillfully suggested by someone to the group. There is also another type of tendency confirmed by observations and experiments, which relates to the same category of phenomena concerning the change of behavior under the influence of the social environment:

The *audience effect* happens when an individual's behavior changes under observation performed by third parties. For example, when a non-working group observes a working person, the effectiveness of the performed work generally increases.³⁰

It is an arousal or stimulation effect. In compliance with this principle, an observed person tries to look and perform better in a given role, whether by exposing and increasing his real efficiency or by displaying eagerness and apparent efficiency, as in the case of social actions recorded by a camera. However, sometimes, such an individual also manages to demonstrate nonchalance, contrariness, or malice.

Moreover, the stimulating effect of the sense of community is distinctive:

The *effect of acting* together, that is social facilitation, in social psychology is a positive or negative influence of a group on certain behavior, for instance the quality of performed activities. According to the research of F. H. Allport, a group can influence the way of thinking of its members. Namely, the speed of creating associations and performing mathematical calculations increases, and the way of solving problems changes. In general, we can state that people with lower or average IQ, and those who work slowly, benefit from the presence of others. On the other hand, people with above-average IQ lose: they make more mistakes and work more slowly.³¹

Thus, the weaker ones receive support from someone else's example and help, but also from someone else's efforts, and this is precisely what we call facilitation. By contrast, the favorites and champions make it easier for the others to participate to their detriment.

We also know this mechanism from everyday observations. For example, it is clear that the pace and intensity of an entire hike in the mountains depend on the abilities of the weakest participants.

This process of "aligning the rank" also manifests itself as *facilitation of violence* in conflict situations, and in the aggressive behavior and destructive actions that accompany them:

30 Olechnicki, Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, p. 52.

31 Olechnicki, Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, p. 52.

Facilitation of violence is a type of effect of acting together which can occur in circumstances such as lynchings, revolts, or mass demonstrations. Due to a tension-raising process of mutual stimulation among the participants of an event, and to a process of reduced perception consisting in replacing common behavioral norms with temporary ones, which mostly base on prejudice and abolish most common moral prohibitions among the participants of such incidents, the sensitivity threshold for violent and cruel behavior decreases. In a group, people can perform acts they probably would not commit individually.³²

The latter phenomenon evidently shows the context of provocativeness: malice or aggression may even contradict individual attitudes of participants of an assembly, gathering, or tumult. Such people are usually good-natured, kind-hearted, or shy. However, the negative emotions in question arise due to the tension in a conflict situation, mutual stimulation of people in a crowd, accelerated unification of emotions, and other similar situations.

Distinguishing Features of the “Provocation Effect”

Therefore, what is the provocative result of some social phenomena, which would justify the notion of the “provocation effect?” In any case, the effect consists in a specific reception of the phenomena, that is in evoked reflexes, impressions, associations, imaginations, and suppositions, which would not occur by themselves but are a reaction to certain tendencies, events, and human behavior, and this reaction differs from people’s “self-set program.” A person provoked by something or someone is a person who did not previously think about a given phenomenon or issue, and who must somehow relate to the unexpected event, information, or contact. On the other hand, a provoked person is also someone who changed his previous attitude, ideas, feelings, or intentions due to surprise, astonishment, disorientation, confusion, shock, stress, fear, or temptation.

We can qualify a given phenomenon as the “provocation effect” in four types of situations:

- (1) When given phenomena influence the unconscious, yet determining and paradoxical way of thinking and behaving of people, that is when they think, experience, or act completely differently than they would on their own. For example, a person surprised and upset by some event reacts to it differently than someone who perceives and experiences this situation as routine. Another example is when a person experiencing strong sexual

32 Olechnicki, Załęcki, *Słownik socjologiczny*, p. 61.

excitement suddenly “changes his skin” and behaves contrary to previous habits, rules, resolutions, or inhibitions.

- (2) When people react to such phenomena faster than they understand them. Such a situation often prevents people from reflecting and keeping a distance from events or other people’s behavior, and limits or deprives them of self-control, namely decisions made reflexively in anger or fear.
- (3) When random events or temporal and spatial coincidence in certain circumstances induce people to interpret some event in teleological and conspiracy categories: “this event serves something, someone caused it on purpose.” Such explanations are often preferred over impersonal categories, meaning cause-effect, structural-functional, or statistical factors.
- (4) When we attribute specific, for instance malicious or seditious, intentions or at least a specific meaning to another person’s actions, gestures, words, and deeds that do not affect us either intentionally or in effect: for example, this offends me; even if he did not mean to disrespect me; his behavior reveals his real attitude toward me and his lack of respect.

Hence, we may also speak about the effect of provocation on such a principle that although it was not someone’s intention to provoke others, if he wanted to provoke someone to do something, this person would behave in precisely that way. Moreover, also the natural and difficult to overcome or conceal qualities of provocateur result as the equivalent of deliberate efforts to arouse, move, excite, agitate, and so no.

3. Involuntary Provocation: The Effect of Counterproductive Actions

On the borderline between the category of *acts* and *effects* of provocation, there is a phenomenon of results of a subject’s actions that are unintended, or even contrary to his will or intentions. Those results provoke the surrounding or certain addressees of the subject’s decisions to even opposite behavior than the subject expected or demanded.

On the one hand, such actions have features similar to acts of provocation, for instance intentionality, well-defined purpose, calculations of the subject, and well-considered preparatory and preventive action. Nevertheless, these are not acts of provocation because they do not aim to provoke anyone. In some terms, we could consider such actions as acts of provocation. However, their provocative result is inconsistent with the real provocative intention, or even completely contradicts it. In simple terms, the subject intended to provoke something different in the thinking and behavior of others than he actually provoked.

On the other hand, the results of actions in which the subject misreckoned or did not anticipate the turn of events are similar in nature to unintended and unplanned provocative effects of random phenomena, other people's qualities, or behavior that has no intention of provoking.

Praxeology calls actions with such properties, that is results that contradict goals, counterproductive actions.

A person who does something in such a way that his actions produce the desired result acts *effectively*. He wanted to signal his arrival, pressed the bell button, and the bell sounded. At the opposite pole of practical value lies the negative value called counterproductivity. An unskilled pianist wanted to strike the keys so that the C string sounded and the D string remained silent but he struck the keys so that the D string sounded and the C string did not sound at all. His action was *counterproductive*. Failure of this kind is gradable and reaches the limits of defiance when we cause something contrastingly opposite to what we wanted to achieve by our own deliberate movement. Chloroform anesthesia was given to help cure a patient undergoing surgery, but unfortunately, in some cases, it killed the patient.³³

In social communication, the most famous example of counterproductive action, which is also unintentionally provocative, is the so-called boomerang effect in advertising and propaganda. The metaphor of a boomerang illustrates the essence of the phenomenon, for it is easy to imagine what loss or harm someone can do to oneself if they mishandle this weapon that returns to its owner.

The first type of boomerang effect appears as a result of a mismatch between the form of advertising and the perceptions and experiences of the audience. Research shows that the customer cannot accept a suggested attitude if it does not relate in some way to his needs and established beliefs. A confusing interpretation, failing to explain the essence of the message understandably, or using a model distant from the customer's experience will cause a negative attitude instead of a positive one.³⁴

Hence, an advertisement promoting a product that is completely unnecessary or unreachable for the consumer, appealing to a foreign mentality, or incomprehensible and causing irritation similar to that of a joke we do not "get," will not encourage anyone to do anything.

The second type of boomerang effect ... is called the structural effect. It occurs when means of expression in an advertising message are ill-suited in terms of intended effects. For example, when we use the figure of some prominent actor to reinforce the message, and the customer focuses exclusively on this person.³⁵

33 T. Kotarbiński, *Dziela Wszystkie. Prakseologia, część I* (Wrocław: 1999), p. 357.

34 S. Kuśmierski, *Reklama jest sztuką* (Warszawa: 2000), p. 206.

35 Kuśmierski, *Reklama jest sztuką*, p. 206.

Instead of implying the authoritativeness of recommendation, the popularity of an actor or model can distract from the advertisement's topic. Celebrity's performance often becomes a sensation itself or, on the contrary: the contrast between his usual performance and the banality and triviality of the advertisement causes embarrassment or creates the impression of greed ("What a potboiler. This X moonlights again. Does he have to be everywhere?").

The third type of boomerang effect occurs due to "excessive intentionality." For example, when the advertiser uses a style of promotion that grossly deviates from the audience's acceptance spectrum. This causes suspicions that the product is not worth buying. In this case, the customer may even question the purely utilitarian information of the message.³⁶

Therefore, a pretentious advertisement, in which exaggeration, attack, impertinence, schematism, duplication, and imitation of patterns that are perfect only in the original only emphasize inefficiency and amateurism, is counterproductive.

Another example of a provocatively counterproductive action, well-known from Polish history, is *branka* (impressment), initiated by margrave Wielopolski. Wielopolski designed *branka* to decimate the number of young rebels and conspirators and to demobilize the radicals. The intention was to prevent an obviously upcoming January Uprising, or at least to delay it. However, the plan only accelerated the uprising's outbreak.³⁷

4. Impersonal (Phenomenal) Understanding of Provocation

In the broadest, somehow universal sense, we can apply the words "provoke" and "provocative" to any interactions or permanent mechanisms of interaction between anything and anyone, or anything and anyone. Such interactions have the feature of disturbing some "natural order of things," or "normal mode of functioning." Moreover, they cause, or even force, such a reaction to this disturbing interaction that is contrary to the original programming of a given object or system. Then occur such abnormal phenomena as:

- * self-aggression of an organism (allergy as a double-faced behavior of the immune system);³⁸

36 Kuśmierski, *Reklama jest sztuką*, p. 206.

37 Cf. Stefan Kieniewicz, "Powstanie styczniowe 1863-1864," in: *Trzy powstania narodowe. Kościuszkowskie, listopadowe, styczniowe*, eds. Stefan Kieniewicz, Andrzej Zahorski, Władysław Zajewski (Warszawa: 2006).

38 Cf. B. Romański, *Alergia i choroby alergiczne* (Warszawa:1984); Waclaw Droszcz, *Alergia* (Warszawa: 1986). The analysis of the background of allergic diseases and methods

- * behavior that does not match the personality, character, or temperament of an individual (for example, outbursts of rage and anger in an exceptionally self-controlled and amicable person);
- * perceptions and attitudes aberrant to the mentality and even principles of a given group (for example, unexpected manifestations of racist prejudice in the “progressive” circle or among liberals; hotheadedness, vindictiveness, and obsessive hatred in the attitude of advocates of mercy and tolerance);
- * decisions of some authority and the forms of their implementation which are not consistent with the authority’s competence and the procedures in force (for example, unlawful methods of the desperate police or prosecutors in the fight against unpunished gangsters).

At the same time, it is irrelevant whether the factor that disturbs and causes non-standard behavior of the object is an accident, element, natural tendency, or action of some subject who has will, ability to plan, and need and capacity to communicate with the addressees of their actions. Causes that are different in their nature produce a similar effect in the form of “deviation” in the functioning of various objects.

Most often the cause of such deviations are events, processes, or transformations, to which a given object or system emerges unfit:

- * A failure of the control or monitoring apparatus arouses the temptation of, for example, carelessness or materials’ theft in an employee who was always supervised. This is a difficult test of one’s self-control.
- * An arrogant behavior of some impertinent shuts down a gentleman’s aesthetic and moral inhibitions. As a result, he gets into a brutish squabble and a fight.
- * Increasing adverse medical condition transforms a person with an otherwise angelic character into a grumpy and malicious individual.
- * An accumulation of crisis tendencies that threatens the property of well-positioned groups and increases their sense of insecurity, arouses aggressive attitudes and inclinations that were unnatural in previously normal conditions

of their diagnosis clearly reveals the dual meaning of the term “provocation.” Allergens provoke an exaggerated, allergic reaction of the immune system – this is the *effect* of provocation. On the other hand, doctors use various “provocative” tests in diagnostics. In treatment they use specific desensitization based on an appropriate dosage of allergens, and vaccines forcing secondary immunity of an organism by controlled provocation with allergenic substances. This, in turn, is somehow a medical *provocation act*.

among them. People from the “posh world” show susceptibility to demagoguery and even the ability to engage in militant actions.

We could list many similar metamorphoses. They are always a testimony of balance disturbance or unhinging the system from its natural mode and rhythm of functioning. This is the sense we mean when we say that something provoked someone.

However, let us leave aside the “provocative” effects of the influence of one natural phenomenon on another or, for example the influence of environmental factors, or climatic and atmospheric conditions on human mood, health, and character. Instead, we will focus on the psychological effects of social influence, that is aroused impressions, experiences, feelings, imaginings, intentions, resolutions, and undertaken actions. With such a narrowing, the “provocation effect” would refer to the following social phenomena:

- (1) to describing the effect of someone’s behavior or action in isolation from – or even contrary to – the person’s intentions in such a way as if he intended to challenge or urge to do something. For example, his inappropriate festivity provoked outrage; the joke aroused consternation and disgust; an erotic poem read to the students is blasphemy and an offense against religious feelings; the noticeable absence of a professor was considered a demonstration and a signal to boycott by others;
- (2) to concise describing of a complex, mediated relationship of causation. For example, the conspirators caused the riots; the speculators provoked the panic and the stock market crash; both conspirators and speculators caused these events in the sense that they started a chain of causes and effects or multidirectional relationships with their actions;
- (3) to the impersonal and unintentional effect of one social phenomenon on another. For example, a shocking rumor provoked a riot; the delay of the announcement provoked conjecture and speculation;
- (4) to the unintended effect of some action having a different intention. For example, the announcement about prices’ increase provoked people to attack stores.

5. Subjective (Intentional) Understanding of the Term “Provocation”

The commonly used noun “provocation” refers to intentional behavior like actions, gestures, or statements that are conscious, purposeful, and undertaken with a specific pragmatic, and communicative intention. Pragmatic intention

means what phenomena we want to provoke. Communicative intention means what meaning do we want to attach to our action and how should the provocation be understood by its recipients, addressees, and witnesses.

No one would call a provocation an event caused, induced, or aroused by a “blind chance,” coincidence, or cause-effect relationships of natural, or technological nature, for example when a substance caused an allergy. Moreover, no one would call a provocation unintended human action, negligence, or nonfeasance, or its side-effects. Calling such situations “provocations” marks the boomerang effect of counterproductive action.

The intuitively accepted accurate linguistic custom somehow reserves the noun “provocation” for deliberate and intentional actions and behavior. In short, the colloquial mental shortcut contained in the noun “provocation” – also used in the rhetoric of journalists, politicians, and scholars – is tantamount to “an provocation act” in the convention adopted here. Noteworthy, journalists, politicians, and scholars prefer to use the word “provocation” as a descriptive term rather than a theoretical concept. On the other hand, the verb “to provoke” is used without such a rigor and less selectively. This verb defines both the acts and the effects of provocation. Hence the limited comparability of such expressions as “the arrogance of the management provoked a strike,” “the bankruptcy of the X company provoked panic in the stock market,” “the flood provoked acts of looting but also spontaneous reflexes of solidarity and help,” “the increased emission of industrial gases into the atmosphere provoked the greenhouse effect.”

Unconditional Effect vs. Conditional Effect (Entangled in Convention)

The intentional character of the term “provocation” relates not only to the assumed *pragmatic purposefulness* of influence – meaning provocation as a purposeful behavior aimed at practically causing a certain state of affairs – but also to *communicative intention*. Communicative intention consists in the fact that a subject gives a specific meaning to one’s actions, be it emotional, ideal, moral, symbolic, ritual, or procedural. Moreover, the subject expresses, gesticulates, or undertakes some actions in such a way that the reception of those expressions, gestures, or actions is consistent with the meaning he attaches to them. The communicative intention may concern both a desire to be understood by the recipients, and an attempt to deceive them, or falsely suggest something, which is possible thanks to abusing recipients’ knowledge of the rules of interpretation and their trust in those rules and the sender. In some provocations, the subject limits himself to achieving goals in such a way that the addressees’ consciousness, understanding of the subject’s intentions, or establishing a cognitive or emotional connection

with him, are irrelevant. In such a situation, the subject achieves his goal regardless of whether other people follow, notice, and understand his actions, accept, or try to oppose them. However, most provocations combine a “technological” approach, that is the use of cause-effect, structural, and functional relationships between various social and psychological phenomena, with a communicative approach. The communicative approach is specific inclusion of the addressees into the realization of the provocateur’s goals through evoked impressions, experiences, associations, conjectures, or beliefs.

We refer to the significant distinction between technical-utilitarian and conventional-symbolic activities. For the efficiency of the technical-utilitarian activities, it is enough to correctly recognize and apply cause-effect or functional dependencies of a natural, technological, or social nature. However, we should recognize and apply the social dependencies on the level of objective properties, that is regardless of how people understand what happens and what do they think about it. On the other hand, in conventional-symbolic activities, the condition for achieving a goal is the adequate, competent use of a cultural code or a system of rules and schemes for interpreting a behavior, just as badges and emblems are traditionally recognized testimonies of hierarchical rank.³⁹

Sign and Symptom

If we want to be sure whether we are witnesses or addressees of someone’s provocation, we must decide whether the noticed behavior is an indicator or symptom of something or the supposed provocateur. On the other hand, the noticed behavior may also signal an intention, a form of communicating one’s evaluation of phenomena and will (expectations, wishes, calls, demands, orders, or prohibitions). In semiotics, this is the distinction between *signs* and *symptoms*. Zygmunt Ziemiński explains this issue in an accessible and clear way in a popular textbook:

A *sign*, in the strict meaning of this word, therefore, is the name for a perceptible arrangement of things, or a phenomenon caused by someone, with which we ought to link thoughts of definite content according to some rules clearly laid down or formed by custom.⁴⁰

39 Cf. A. Pałubicka, “O dwóch pojęciach kultury,” in: *Wartość – dzieło – sens. Szkice z filozofii kultury artystycznej*, ed. Jerzy Kmita (Warszawa: 1975).

40 Zygmunt Ziemiński, *Practical Logic* (Springer, 1976), p. 5.

In this sense, a policeman who stops vehicles with a conventional gesture, a driver who uses turn signal to indicate his intention and direction to turn, a person who lets someone go first through the door, or someone who ignores our presence, reacts with a grimace or a smile to our words, or winks at us, “gives us a sign.”

The question then arises as to what is to be found in common in such cases as, for example, when a battalion commander fires a green rocket as a signal to begin an attack; or some person ties a knot in his handkerchief to remind him of something; or a post is erected bearing a road-sign; or the blue light of an ambulance has been switched on and the siren is sounding; or a student takes down in his notebook the most important points of a lecture by means of graphic signs; or some person by uttering the words “The bread is in the bread-box” informs us where the bread is to be found.⁴¹

Thus, a sign aims to communicate some intention and to make it understandable, or, quite contrary, non-understandable. By accurately interpreting or confusing the receiver, the sender achieves his intention.

In particular we should distinguish between what we call a sign in the strict sense of the word and a symptom of some state of affairs. A *symptom* of some state of affairs (or phenomenon) is the name given to anything that occurs together with that state of affairs or phenomenon and thus causes the directing upon itself of someone’s thought, even when there are no meaning rules that may order such a direction of thought. For instance, a cloud of smoke is a symptom of a burning fire ... the coming of swallows to our country is a symptom of Spring ... the broken glass is a symptom of an accident which happened at that particular place previously ... lines drawn in a proper manner by a policeman on the surface of the road are, according to the rules of meaning established within the Police Force, signs giving information on the determined situation of the car and other objects after the accident.⁴²

This is a significant difference in human interaction. Thus, for instance, aggressive behavior may be a symptom of nervousness, fear, or anger and hence unintentional, or even involuntary information about someone’s mental state, or a reflex defensive reaction. On the other hand, such behavior may be a signal of hostility, expression of dislike, an announcement of attacking, a form of threat or menace, or an attempt to frighten the recipient.

In some cases, even totally passive behavior by some subject may also become a sign, if, for instance, in the dealings between two firms it has been agreed that the lack of answer to an offer until some specified date should be regarded as the sign of its acceptance.⁴³

41 Ziemiński, *Practical Logic*, p. 4.

42 Ziemiński, *Practical Logic*, p. 7.

43 Ziemiński, *Practical Logic*, p. 7.

A “passive provocation” is similar to this “silent consent,” meaning the alleged lack of objection or consent. Noteworthy, this kind of provocation is only seemingly passive. It is passive only in the sense that someone harms us by abstaining from voting, makes us feel uncomfortable and confused by not answering a question, and maliciously embarrasses and shackles us with mere presence in a given place and time, which is only seemingly unintentional.

Passive and Active Expression

The distinction between sign and symptom correlates closely with the well-known aesthetic distinction between active and passive expression. Let us recall that passive expression occurs when the behavior, statement, or gesture of a subject expresses their impressions, experiences, emotional impulses, and in a certain way, reveals their secrets like hidden thoughts, repressed desires, or concealed prejudice. Passive expression is not always intentional or even conscious. More often, it is an uncontrolled, involuntary form of communication with the surroundings. On the other hand, active expression occurs when a subject not so much reveals their mental states but rather suggests and imposes certain feelings, images, and convictions on others, prompting them to specific decisions and actions.⁴⁴ Stanisław Ossowski vividly explains this issue:

The mimicry of the face is expressive because it *shows* feelings, and not because it evokes them; on the other hand, mood music is expressive because it *evokes* a mood and not because it expresses it. In the first case we ascribe expression to objects in view of their causes and in the latter in view of their effect. In the first case the expressive object is an object *on which* something has been impressed, in the latter an object *which* impresses.⁴⁵

This nuance also relates to the status of provocative behaviors.

Some behaviors are expressive in a passive way, although they evoke in the public perception impressions, movements, or vivid reactions like admiration, applause, opposition, or defensive reactions. Such behaviors provoke someone not because this is the intention of their “sender” but because this is the perception of addressees or witnesses. Thus, one’s nervousness spreads to participants of a shared situation even if involuntary and barely concealed. Another example is when one’s cheerfulness is perceived as appropriate or inappropriate, although

44 Cf. J. Dewey, “Akt ekspresji. Przedmiot ekspresji,” in: *Sztuka jako doświadczenie* (Wrocław: 1975); Stanisław Ossowski, “The problem of expression,” in: *The Foundations of Aesthetics* (Springer Netherlands, 1978).

45 Ossowski, *The Foundations*, p. 225.

it is a visible mood rather than a demonstration. However, the transmissibility of certain moods and behaviors or the controversy they raise in the surrounding reveals a certain paradox: the one provoked by a situation to certain feelings and moods in turn suggests and stimulates others, that is provokes them. The result of a pressure becomes pressure itself.

Other provocative behaviors have features of an active expression because they are a very deliberate and clear manifestation of a certain will, demands, requirements, or pressure. Moreover, they constitute an unambiguous or meaningfully ambiguous message about the evaluation of something or someone, or a positive or negative attitude.

Cause, Reason, Goal

We will also notice a certain duality if we refer to the cause-effect relationship between what someone did, wrote, said, or signaled by a conventional-symbolic gesture, and how did it change a situation or social atmosphere, how did it influence other people's thoughts, feelings, intentions, decisions, and behaviors.

There is difference between a situation when someone's qualities or behaviors *cause* certain events, mental states, and behaviors of other people, and a situation when those qualities and behavior are a *reason* or *motive*.

The practical or communicative intention of a subject who is the carrier of the cause has no role in the cause's impact. Moreover, the word "cause" applies just as well to an event as to a behavior. His shyness became the cause for a serious misunderstanding – and in this sense, it "provoked" the misunderstanding. A blunder at a banquet escalated into a diplomatic incident.

On the other hand, a reason is a cause for some behavior or constant conduct. However, it is a reason that is realized and transformed into a motive of action with a specific intention – meaning purpose – and the meaning attributed to this motive. In this context we say, for example, "I have reasons to dislike and fight him." We say this because pity and malice attributed to someone becomes a motive for revenge and outbidding the damage, an excuse for own malice, and also a source of inspiration for ideas of revengeful and possession reclaiming actions. "He stopped inviting him because of his unpunctuality." Unpunctuality is not the reason for not inviting one because it does not automatically cause such an effect. Rather, unpunctuality is the reason for not inviting the person because it is a conscious decision dictated by the negative evaluation of the phenomenon, which expresses impatience or maybe an intention to make the person think and change their habits.

How does this relate to provocation? We must remember that some provocations are the initiative of a subject and a primordial and “autotrophic” act because they do not need any other reasons than the desire to achieve a goal. On the other hand, other provocations are a response to someone’s actual or assumed actions, interpreted subjectively in a certain way. There is no shortage of, among other things, “provoked provocations” in everyday life and the world of big politics. We will examine such a phenomenon, that is a chain of multifaceted and multistage provocation more closely in Chapter Eight.

III. The Manipulative Character of Provocation

As the above examples indicate, provocation can have different origins, reasons, and intentions, if it is intentional at all.

We may provoke someone involuntarily and focus on own needs but in such a way that it makes a strong impression on someone. Therefore, the provoked person can exaggeratedly perceive such a behavior as an invitation for contact or game, a kind of a challenge, or even an extortion. Such a provocation is *involuntary* and *unconscious*: it is a behavior with which the subject unintentionally and unknowingly provokes the surrounding or specific other subjects. Although the subject does not want to shock, outrage, or excite anyone, they cannot avoid the *provocation effect*. For example, such a person cannot change his attractive or repulsive appearance, superficiality, biography, achievements, or relationship with stigmatized people.

We may also provoke consciously – or semi-consciously – but in a way that we somehow provoke ourselves with own thoughts, needs, and desires that we feel and realize more strongly in a given moment. Moreover, the side effect, or at least only an element of the game with ourselves, is that we include someone else in our psychodrama or spectacle. This is the case with, for example, erotic behavior, but also with statements of politicians who in a way provoke themselves to provoke others.

1. Provocation act as a Calculated (Premeditated) Action

Something entirely different is a situation when the reason – that is something more than a stimulus or a conscious motive that determines specific intentions – for a challenging, stimulating, or embarrassing influence on another person or group is the intention to communicate something to them, arouse certain aspirations, and force them to behave in a certain way. For example, emphasizing own separateness or independence, showing objection, defiance or disrespect, punishing them for something.

Premeditation

In the common linguistic intuition, only the type of situation when someone forces something from another individual or group refers to the word “provocation.” Moreover, in contrast to the abovementioned provocative behaviors – undertaken spontaneously and with limited self-control – we usually assume that we deal with a *premeditated action* by using the powerful word “provocation.”

The Latin word *praemeditatio* – from *meditatio*, meaning “to meditate, to reflect” – literally means a preliminary thought or an earlier reflection. However, both in colloquial speech and in precise legal terminology – in which “premeditation” concerns the legal qualification of a criminal act and the nature of guilt – the word in question refers to the practical purpose and effect of human conduct, and not to some self-existent contemplation. In this context, we understand it as: “planning thoroughly one’s action to bring loss or harm to others.”⁴⁶

Władysław Kopaliński puts the meaning of “premeditation” similarly: “deliberation, forethought, and preparation of some action or conduct of a negative or surprising nature.”⁴⁷

Noteworthy, these definitions, which indeed reflect the commonly accepted understanding of the term, emphasize not only the predetermination of a certain aim or result, and planning and preparation of some act in advance but also the destructive, somehow conspiratorial, character of this planned act. We will not say that someone deliberately helped or took care of someone unless it was supposed to be a prelude to addiction, exploitation, or harm. A person who plots something acts with premeditation. However, we do not act with premeditation when we develop a long-term plan of help or effective cooperation with someone or prepares a debate without assuming that they will surely win.

The second association, that is premeditation as an act that surprises others, which could surprise precisely because someone has accurately predicted expectations of witnesses and planned how to contradict them, softens this negative understanding of the term in question as an act that is harmful to others, or dangerous; for example, “he deliberately made these stiff laugh.” Such an action did not harm them. On the contrary, the provocateur overcame the mood of restraint, “broke the ice,” and facilitated negotiations. However, to achieve such a goal, the person had to act like a partisan by applying hit-and-run tactics.

Either way, we refer to a specific kind of superiority over others, which links with their helplessness toward a thoroughly planned action, and with one-sided dominance of someone prepared over someone unprepared.

“Premeditation” is a term popular even in everyday language. However, when used by a lawyer, defendant, prosecutor, or judge, it gains a more precise meaning and serious practical consequences. We know that assaults or “crimes of passion” are judged differently than the same crimes committed with premeditation.

46 L. Wiśniakowska, *Słownik wyrazów obcych* (Warszawa: 2007), p. 298.

47 W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych z almanachem* (Warszawa: 1994), p. 408.

Calculation

Premeditation is one of the attributes of *calculation*. Calculation consists of such features as:

- * “positive” or “negative” *self-interest*. The “positive” self-interest is the intention to achieve some good or benefit. The “negative” one is the intention to harm someone, deprive him of some material, moral, or symbolic goods;
- * *calculation*, that is considering the reasons for and against a given intention, anticipating possible consequences and costs of own action, estimating the balance of probable benefits and losses, comparing the alleged chances of succeeding or obtaining a reward, and the observed risk of failure or punishment;
- * *premeditation*, that is thorough planning and preparation of a self-interest act recognized as beneficial and well calculated.

All these features are present in the behavior commonly called provocation, which we will call an “provocation act” in the terminological convention proposed in the present work.

A clear illustration of such a calculation is visible in journalistic reconnaissance and muckraking provocations, that is “impersonations” that base on pretending someone or “lurking” in the place of someone’s possible embarrassment. Another example of calculation is political actions consisting in secretly recording and publishing skillfully controlled private or unofficial talks and negotiations.

2. Diverse Origins of Provocation Acts

An unambiguous demarcation and juxtaposition between behaviors that produce an unintended or even unconscious provocation *effect* and behaviors that have the status of *acts* of provocation can excessively guide us in our description of the nature of provocation acts. We may submit to the temptation of far-reaching simplification and take for granted that provocation understood as an act is always an action decided by the subject in advance. Our second assumption may be that the subject is apparently a free initiator of events and changes in the awareness of others, and thus he acts in such a way because of a previously formed intention and plan of action, which stems from anticipation and well-considered tactics. In reality, only a few acts of provocation match the depictions of a plan or conspiracy, especially a nearly perfect one.

Indeed, the line between the unintended provocative effect of human behavior and the intentional provocation of others remains clear and sharp. However, we must place the repertoire of provocative acts on a gradable scale of a behavior

that is more or less “controlled” and rational, in terms of choosing means to achieve its goal.

Nevertheless, it is not obvious that a consciously and intentionally provoking subject fully predicts the course of events, fully plans their actions, and thus is prepared for various possible variants of others’ behavior or alternative scenarios. It is not even obvious that such a subject is a one-sided influence initiator who implements their idea and intention, whose content is only the result of the subject’s consequent aspirations and situation analyses, dictated by the logic of their thinking and concrete reasoning in the matter. Indeed, it does not have to be this way.

Reactive, Initiative, and Feedback Provocations

Besides provocations that are free actions of a subject unrestricted in their choice and freedom of action by the behavior of participants of a situation and its features or actions that are set only due to a certain sequence of causes and effects, there also are... provoked provocations. These are provoked by the surprising course of events for the subject, unexpected shift, or someone’s pressure. The provocations in question are a half-spontaneous and half-considered reaction of the subject to situational stimuli and other people’s behaviors, statements, expectations, demands, or claims. Of course, not every reaction to a stimulus, reflex, or response to someone’s gesture, word, or deed is a provocation. Only such reactive behaviors are provocative, in which the subject simultaneously imbues their reaction in features of a sign – by submitting to such impressions, feelings, or reflexes like aversion, contrariness, the need to cut off from something or oppose it, or the desire for revenge. Noteworthy, this sign should have qualities that determine or force something or compensate for something, for example a revealed weakness or loss.

Therefore, we should distinguish between *reactive* provocations and *initiative* provocations. Let us remember that *reactive* provocations are often a forced, half-spontaneous, half-controlled, and deliberate reaction to what happened or may happen, including provocations of others. In contrast, *initiative* provocations stem from the unforced free initiative of a subject who freely and in advance plans a confrontation, game, or strong suggestion directed toward others.

Reactive Provocations

The concept of reactive provocation may at first seem paradoxical. After all, we usually assume that someone is either calculating, meaning they reason and decide like a cold calculating player who has several options for next moves,

depending on how the situation develops, or this person acts spontaneously. Noteworthy, when we think of a spontaneous person, we assume that they submit to various inclinations, drives, preferences, longings, and habits, yet have no control over their impressions, experiences, and emotional and subconscious decisions. Meanwhile, the psychology and everyday behavior of people often include a peculiar mixture of spontaneity and premeditation. For example, a spontaneous and thus to some extent, involuntary and not fully controlled reaction to something may be anger, outrage, or fear, but the response may already have features of deliberate influence, which may partly control someone. Hence, with fear we can repel someone, perform warning actions, or actions faking our greater determination, aggression, or strength. When guided by anger that we cannot avoid or control, we can choose a response that will be particularly severe for the perpetrator of the anger and tantamount to punishing or humiliating them. When submitting to the humorous or courteous convention imposed by the opponent and the audience, without suppressing the desire for revenge, we can respond to malicious and hurtful criticism with humor. The response may be irony that emerges in polite formulas or a venomous joke, which formally fits into the bidding convention of jokes and banter, but which means a knockout of the opponent in the audience's perception.

Feedback Provocations

In the political struggle between the government and the opposition, it very often happens that the opposition seeks to expose all of the government's mistakes, faults, and especially abuses, and focus public attention on them. Then, the opposition exaggerates the scale and significance of the government's deeds and comments and interprets them tendentiously. Such an action is a discrediting provocation. In response to this, those in power quickly find or create "substitute topics," especially when they do not have a clear conscience and do not have enough arguments for a principled polemic. In short, answer to adversaries' provocations are clever, sometimes improvised, and sometimes kept for the right moment, as *counter-provocations*, which are for example sensations, scandals, affairs, or even new conflicts caused by those in power, who are in a difficult situation due to the opposition's provocation. Counter-provocations effectively divert attention from troublesome issues, they change the object of interest of the media and public opinion and restore the freedom of action and initiative to the people, who were supposed to be the victims of the original provocation. The fact that some of the recipients realize that the counter-provocation is a form of prevarication and that raising some issue precisely when it helps to "save one's

hide” is a hypocrisy that contradicts pseudo-principledness, is not an obstacle to the effectiveness of counter-provocateurs. First, we know that the attack of opponents – against whom a given formation defends itself with a prevaricated counterattack – is also not selfless: it may be biased and tendentious. Second, the awareness of this fact does not prevent the necessity of dealing with a “new issue,” which overshadows the previous one. Such an “affair duel,” which is often multi-episodic, like a TV series, is a mechanism in which we deal with either reactive or *feedback* provocations.

Feedback provocations are acts of provocation that are a form of feedback communication like multiple exchanges of information, views, assessments, declarations or other signals of will, specific intentions, calls, or warnings. On the other hand, feedback provocations are also a practical counterpart of acts of provocation in a game. This means that we try to cause other, beneficial states of affairs, events, or changes in the situation or balance of power in response to the materialized effects of someone’s provocation act. Feedback provocations differ from reactive provocations by the fact that they are usually not an expression and effect of being surprised by someone’s actions. They are rather an expression and effect of being relatively surprised: the surprise is not the mere fact of someone’s criticism, attack, or plot but possibly the content and character of someone’s actions. This is because feedback provocations are the element of a multi-sided and multi-stage game between several subjects. A given subject expects actions from his game partners – allies, competitors, or opponents – although he cannot predict the direction, form, place, or time of all specific and possible moves. At the same time, the subject also “provokes in a planned way:” some provocations are the realization of his earlier intentions, predictions, and plans, while others are the result of modifying these intentions due to what happened, or what others did. Feedback provocations structurally correspond to a pattern of dynamic feedback.

I will separately address the mechanism of multi-provocation game in Chapter Seven.

Chart 1 below synthesizes the nuances related to the complex relationship between the motives, intentions, degrees of self-control, and rationality of the provocateur’s plans.

Diagram 1. Genetic-Structural Typology of Acts of Provocation

Reactive provocation (Provoked Provocation)	Initiative Provocation	Feedback Provocation
<p>It is a behavior provoked by a situation and especially by someone’s behavior. Such behavior is a spontaneous – for example reflexive or defensive – reaction to the very presence of someone. This type of provocation also occurs as a reaction to a feeling of threat or opportunity, someone’s challenge or blunder, or strong stimuli, for example the excitement caused by someone’s charm or beauty. Another thing we can call a reactive provocation is a behavior which is a premeditated, chosen, and planned response to someone’s anticipated or noticed, and in a certain way understood, actions or statements; for example, an attempt to oppose, outbid, or prevent something.</p>	<p>It is an action that is in advance settled and planned as a way of preempting, surprising, confronting someone, or forcing something. The idea of initiative provocation is that it should finish or prejudice an issue, or be a first move which starts some multi-sided competition, yet it should give a tactical advantage to the initiator thanks to priority, imposing the topic or form of contact, or forcing others to react to what already happened. Initiative provocation is an attempt to “transmit without receiving,” that is to prejudice further events and states of affairs.</p>	<p>It is a secondary impact of a given subject which is another part of a multi-sided and multi-phase competition, and not a beginning or cause of this competition. It is an attempt to transform or reverse things that already occurred, and which are the result of the course of competition so far. The beginning or cause of the competition may also attempt to prevent something that is anticipated. Feedback provocation is also a provocative form of exchanging information or “blows” in a confrontation of views and claims. In this kind of provocation, the object of influence becomes the subject, and the party taking up the confrontation (game) attempts to be the arbiter.</p>

Counterproductive Provocations

Reactive, initiative, and feedback provocations can become counterproductive acts. It happens when someone’s provocation returns like a boomerang to the sender or perpetrator and turns against them. The situation changes either through unintended and unfavorable objective effects or through the recipients’ behavior – and also counter-provocations – contrary to the provocateur’s expectations. A counterproductive provocation is an provocation act calculated to cause or force a specific behavior of the addressees, yet arousing an unexpected and undesired reaction, or even causing a specific *counter*-provocation. Such a counter-provocation can be, for example, a defiant and daring behavior, a demonstration of objection and obstinacy, a malicious action that baffles expectations, demands, or intentions of the provoking subject.

There are two paradoxes associated with this mechanism. We discuss the mechanism itself in Chapter Two. The first paradox is that a counterproductive provocation act is worth as much as the unintended effect of provocation: a subject becomes a victim of his own provocation directed against someone else or, in any case, aimed at influencing others.

The second paradox is that counterproductive provocations “change their master:” what was supposed to be a tool or a means of action for subject X, becomes a tool of his rival or opponent. Hence, the effect is that it is not X who provoked Y to do something, but it is Y who successfully provoked X.

For understandable reasons, such a situation occurs more often with reactive provocations than with initiative ones, especially with those planned not as an act but as an action or operation being a series of activities and their effects. The speed of making decisions is inversely proportional to the amount of time to think. It is this speed that determines the weakness of reactive acts of provocation. Relatively, it is also consideration limited in rationality through emotions.

In any case, an provocation act is a typical manifestation of manipulation.

To understand the issue in question, we should free ourselves from the stereotypes of manipulation and the negative prejudices about this phenomenon and the concept itself as we did earlier with the concept of provocation. They are widely present in colloquial notions, textbooks, didactic comments of scholars, and in the investigations of researchers.

3. Essence and Stereotypes of Manipulation

The deceitful way of acting popularly known as manipulation means that someone achieves his goal thanks to already having or gaining a certain advantage over others. This advantage stems from special dexterity, slyness, and the ability to surprise and outwit others. The subject's advantage also consists in the fact that he becomes the director of the situation, the master of our feelings, desires, and imaginations, or the inspirer of our illusions, hesitations, and decisions. Such an advantage makes us dependent on the manipulating person: we partially or completely lose control over the situation and ourselves.

Moral Context of Manipulation

Gaining and using such an advantage can serve various purposes, not only destructive ones like the exploitation and enslavement of people. A widespread and established negative prejudice against the very word “manipulation” distorts the essence of this phenomenon. We should not identify all manipulation with evil, bad will, and harm, and reduce it always to dishonesty, and even more to

fraud and lies. Admittedly, we should also remember that all manipulation is double-faceted and morally ambivalent, including the one done in good faith; for instance, with the intention of caring, helping, or protecting someone from error, damage, or danger. This is because manipulation, unlike persuasive methods, does not fully ensure partnership. In contrast, it usually involves an abuse of someone's trust or violation of the reciprocity rule. Thus, the moral cost of "good intentions" may be too high.

Incapacitation

All researchers of the manipulation phenomenon emphasize the moment of objectification. Andrzej Grzegorzczak rightly specifies this factor by pointing to a non-partner way of controlling others – after all, a person subjected to coercion or violence is also objectified – which however is not based on force but a game:

We usually speak of provocation or manipulation when the approach of the acting party toward the object of influence is not a partnership. The provocateur or manipulator does not tell the object clearly what reactions he wants to provoke. Hence, the acting person assumes the position of superiority. Besides, the acting person does not try to influence the object's free decisions but rather tries to create conditions that determine the object's decisions or behavior independently of the object's will.⁴⁸

While the criterion of non-partner relations is correct, the remaining statements narrow and simplify the matter. First, someone triggering involuntary reactions like confusion or anger in the recipient, someone aware of the provocateur's intentions – such as malicious goals – may also provoke and in this sense manipulate someone. Thus, the provocateur deprives the recipient of choice or prevents him from acting sovereignly, rationally, and under own sense of identity and principles due to the situation or mood of the recipient, such as agitation or distraction. Openly challenging, insulting, or upsetting someone is also a manipulation-provocation. Second, not every act or process of manipulation is an external (e.g. situational) suppression of someone's will, freedom of decision or action, or coercion through pressure or entrapment. An intrusive or subtle suggestion, disinformation, biased or strongly emotional information, expressing expectations that embarrass someone or reminding of certain commitments can also establish a manipulation-provocation.

48 Andrzej Grzegorzczak, *Życie jako wyzwanie. Wprowadzenie w filozofię racjonalistyczną* (Warszawa: 1995), p. 172.

There are two forms of manipulation-provocation. First, deceitful *direct control*, meaning influencing someone's consciousness, will, emotions, knowledge, or mental agility. Second, *indirect control*, that is influencing the conditions of a given subject's functioning that affect his imagination, perspicacity, consistency, and objectively available range of maneuvers. I will deal with this nuance in the next chapter.

Negative (Destructive) Manipulation

What has many facets is manipulation motivated with the intention to use other people as a tool to achieve particular goals and interests or to morally and socially destroy someone who gets in the way. Such a manipulation may serve an interim one-time *game* for the sake of possibly obtaining some concrete and temporary benefit. However, it may also serve *permanent dependence*, and thus constant subordination and exploitation, sometimes even enslavement. The latter type of manipulation is particularly dangerous to human subjectivity. Therefore, it is right to claim that negative manipulation is even more destructive than coercion or even violence. Confrontational and abusive methods can stimulate objectified people to self-awareness and the defense of their identity and dignity. On the other hand, deceitful and especially perfidious methods disarm people and make them co-perpetrators of their harm. At the same time, the illusion, euphoria, and even gratefulness for the persecutor takes away the pain of one's self-destruction process.

Neutral Approach to Manipulation and Provocation

Andrzej Grzegorzczuk aptly classifies manipulation as conditioning influence. This means that manipulation creates certain preconditions for the functioning of a subject, and thus enables to impose a certain way of thinking and behaving. "Conditioning" itself does not have to be dangerous and harmful for the subject who is also the object of influence. It is also possible to "condition" someone to his benefit, although an arbitrary (unsupervised by the subject) mechanism of care, protection, assistance, or facilitation means manipulation. Therefore, it is easy to provide an axiologically neutral, non-judgmental, and non-pejorative definition of manipulation and provocation.

However conditioning, these interactions can have a positive meaning. In the most general sense, provocation sometimes means any intentional causing of a partner's anticipated reaction, that is acting with the intention to create such conditions in which the

object of interaction will react in an anticipated way and, for example, reveal positive dispositions.⁴⁹

Thus, manipulation is such an influence that serves to gain, maintain, or confirm control over a situation and particular subject. It enables not only negative steering by creating various barriers discouraging or preventing certain intentions and efforts but also “positive” steering by proposing and imposing certain goals, arousing certain aspirations desired by the manipulator, and accustoming others to certain forms and means of action as “natural” or “obvious.” We may call such a “positive” manipulation “programming of a given subject.”

The concept of provocation described above actually includes every reasonable intentional interaction, for every interactor usually anticipates a reaction of the object.⁵⁰

The above statement is correct. However, the distinctive feature is not mere influence on someone by, for instance, persuading one to do something, imposing own will upon this person, or overcoming passive resistance or opposition. After all, one may achieve this by the power of persuasion, threats, punishments, or inflicted losses and suffering. In fact, the distinctive feature is the fact that we achieve obedience, consent, or support by disrupting someone’s subjectivity. We can do it by triggering confusion, surprising, embarrassing with faits accomplis, encouraging mistakes, undermining morale, or arousing obsessions like lust, greed, frustration, or ambition.

Negative Stereotype of Manipulation and Provocation

There is a widespread negative connotation and prejudice against phenomena called manipulation and provocation. People perceive these terms as “obviously” pejorative.

*In the narrower and negative sense, provocation is the creation of conditions in which the subject is likely to react in a way that he does not really want or over which he does not have control. In a narrower sense, we may speak about political provocation like provoking someone’s outburst of anger, or police action.*⁵¹

This definition corresponds to the negative stereotype of manipulation, which usually assumes that manipulation involves covert influence, which is more or less camouflaged by the perpetrator and unnoticed by the recipient. The influence

49 Grzegorzcyk, *Życie jako wyzwanie*, p. 172.

50 Grzegorzcyk, *Życie jako wyzwanie*, p. 172.

51 Grzegorzcyk, *Życie jako wyzwanie*, p. 172; own emphasis.

is consistent with the perpetrator's self-interest but divergent or contradictory to the interest of the object of influence. Often manipulation is even identified with deliberate action to the detriment of others.

The existence and spread of unambiguously negative forms of manipulation – those which are malicious in intention and destructive in effect – and the particular harmfulness of manipulative methods is not a sufficient reason to identify all manipulation with aggressive and exploitative actions. Such a hostile intention or the instrumental use of others for own purposes and negative effects of such an attitude toward others are not attributes of manipulation or deceitfulness as such. Instead, they are but an attribute of negative manipulation. Therefore, what is the essence of manipulation understood without bias or intentional narrowing?

Essence of Manipulation

There is a common denominator for good-natured, ambivalent, and destructive varieties of manipulation, just as there is one for temporary trickery and “spider-webbing.” *This denominator deprives the partner of self-control and control over a situation, linked with the abuse of the reciprocity principle – especially concerning partners’ trust toward the initiator of the action, each other, and the rules of the game– which results in situational and mental conditioning of those who we deceitfully influence in terms of their positions, minds, feelings, intentions, and actions.*

This is the essence of deception. However, such an approach assumes the revision of stereotypical depictions of manipulation. Common definitions of this phenomenon are either too narrow or too broad. Definitions that identify manipulation with camouflaged actions based on the unconsciousness of the steered subject are too narrow. However, ostentatious and challenging actions like intimidation, deterrence, intrusive flattery, seduction, teasing, evoking defiance, or vindictiveness are equally deceitful and have equally good effects. On the other hand, definitions that consider the objectification and instrumentalization of another person a peculiarity or even an attribute of manipulation inadequately expand the scope of the phenomenon and erroneously indicate its differentiating features. Notably, objectification and instrumentalization are not a strict characteristic of manipulation but they are a feature common to manipulation, coercion, and violence. Moreover, the specificity of manipulation lies in a particular method and mechanism of this objectification.

Deceitfulness as a Gradable Characteristic

We realize that the deceitful nature of behavior is a gradable characteristic when we overcome the narrowing and pejorative stereotype of manipulation, which reduces it to actions against others that are covert and use someone's unawareness or distorted awareness of a situation. Human behavior may be manipulative to some extent due to a *greater* or *lesser degree of self-control* of the subject that tries to steer others and such awareness and self-control of an individual or group who is the addressee or object of exerted influence. Manipulation means persuading someone to do something by profiting from his ignorance or confusion, misleading him, and persuading him to behave involuntarily, contrary to his will, initial intentions, resolutions, fixed principles, and commitments. The same may also be the case with acts of provocation.

If we refer to the stereotypical distinction and opposition of spontaneity (vividness) and deliberateness (calculation, premeditation), we will also note that we can talk about a manipulative character of a behavior – even if it is a carefully planned action – only if we realize it is a balance qualification. The phrase “this is manipulation” is a mental shortcut defining a behavior wholesale, in the balance of formally opposing factors. In other words, deliberate impact occurs not only from behavior in which the subject (the initiator, the perpetrator) acts with premeditation and full consequence as “the master of own feelings and thoughts” and “the master of someone's fate.” This category also includes behavior in which the subject specifies own goal and chooses means of pressure toward others under the influence of passions, accurate or deceptive impressions, or wishful thinking, and improvises own tactics. Moreover, an impact that is as much intentional influence on others as it is an expression of own mental state is also a deliberate impact. This is exactly what happens in the case of reactive provocations and, in a way, feedback provocations. These are intentional behaviors, but often undertaken in an atmosphere of tension, in a state of agitation, motivated by a desire to retaliate or prove something to oneself and others, a spontaneous need to demonstrate one's own individuality, malice, or simply the presence in a given place and time.

Tactical Advantage as the Attribute of Manipulation (and Provocation)

Having some advantage over others is the precondition for having any influence on them. Manipulation involves not a substantive or moral advantage as in persuasion and not a strength advantage like as in coercion or violence. Manipulation involves a tactical advantage. The peculiarity of such an advantage – which

bases on skillful and cunning maneuvering and outwitting of the other side – is that one can gain it even as the events unfold. Having tactical advantage in the first place is not a necessary condition for exerting deceitful influence.

Essence of Tactical Advantage

As a favorable starting point or a result of successful “debut in the game,” tactical advantage generally happens when – by a communicative influence and not by “force” as in the case of coercion or violence – the manipulator imposes features of the situation of coexistence and cooperation and how the situation is perceived. Thereby, the manipulator limits the freedom of the interlocutor’s maneuver and imposes the direction of his activity. The party in a dispute becomes the judge in one’s own case because he turns into a director, stage manager, and prompter at the same time.

Moreover, the manipulator partly programs his partner, namely by: suggesting to the partner what is convenient for him; diverting the partner’s attention from what would be an obstacle; guiding him indirectly to the “appropriate” way of thinking and acting; instilling beliefs and attitudes which are unfamiliar to the partner but which are considered own; forcing certain impressions, emotions, or illusions and reflexes or aspirations dictated by them. At the same time, the manipulator blocks the exit for the partner through faits accomplis and by things the controlled object already “obediently” did.

Sources and Manifestations of Tactical Advantage

There are multiple ways of gaining tactical advantage, unlike with the case of substantive and moral advantage found in persuasion, which usually takes the form of an authority figure and the case of strength advantage used in coercion or violence. The most typical ways to this advantage are:

- * creating situations and states of affairs by own actions – whether addressed directly toward a subject or directed at the subject’s environment – that limit the subject’s freedom or possibility of choice, impose certain necessities, confound and exclude certain intentions and undertakings or cancel their meaning, and even prejudice certain circumstances regardless of what the subject decides and does in response;
- * disrupting someone’s ability to think independently, critically, and reasonably; ensuring that the partner, rival, opponent, but also client-consumer, person, or group that is an object of adoration, knows less or understands as little as possible; preventing the subject from benefiting from one’s own knowledge, wisdom, and experience; making him “dumber than he really is,” and even

more so, ensuring that the subject does not learn from newly experienced failures and mistakes;

- * triggering feelings that make the subject susceptible to covert or overt suggestions or over which the subject has no control, but which are controllable from the outside in terms of their content, intensity, and direction;
- * as a consequence: making the addressee of manipulator's actions "less capable," meaning the subject can do less than he could in a different situation and is formally allowed to do; the subject is less capable of making decisions and acting efficiently, consistently, rationally, and sovereignly; the subject is less capable internally in comparison to the ability of the manipulator who directs the state of negative cooperation.

As we can see, the tactical advantage involves three facets: *cognitive*, *emotional*, and *pragmatic* advantages. This set clearly corresponds to the structure of human attitudes, which include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. The three mentioned facets also constitute a path of "attack" in a deceitful action, for instance in stimulus provocation like antagonizing, inciting, or erotic banter as foreplay or tempting. Other examples include a pushy, "aggressive" advertisement, propaganda-ideological diversion, special offers "sucking out" customers' money through an artificially generated demand, or hyping viewership through arousing the audience's greed.

Such is the common denominator for all causes of tricking or fooling others, that is applying deception successfully. Sources and scope of such an advantage differentiate correspondingly to the used tactics.

Ways of Achieving and Using Tactical Advantage

Generally, the tactical advantage of manipulator relies on *misleading and forerunning someone in something*, which is a common denominator for a few various situations. A manipulator acts according to the rule "first come, first served," meaning one's primacy allows this person to impose different necessities on others and to restrict their maneuvering field. Thus, primacy gives the manipulator more time to take further steps and, besides, allows the person to define the situation and impose a topic, game rules, or direction to the partner.

Forerunning someone in some aspect may have the following forms:

First, it may be an *outrunning* understood as an initiative in striving toward primacy overriding unknown or ignored intentions of a partner or rival. In this respect, forerunning may be also a prevention maneuver of outrunning someone in something and preventing the partner's intentions from implementing. Also, the maneuver may be diversionary toward the already commenced efforts.

Second, forerunning may take the form of a *surprising maneuver*.

Third, it may be a *behavior, act, or statement which arouses a sense of obligation*, for instance praise, encouragement, or help treated as an advance, which we will regain later with interest.

Fourth, forerunning may consist in *taking advantage of someone's confusion*, that is embarrassment, shame, or guilt, or in *causing this confusion with own provocation*.

Fifth, it may be *arousing and consolidating biases*. Noteworthy, forerunning may arouse positive biases, for example through promises, flattery, "showing off," impersonating authority figures, intrusive recommendations, or negative biases, for example through various forms of discredit.

Sixth, *deliberate misguiding someone*, for example about a certain state of affairs, our true self or intentions, may serve forerunning. Misguiding may take the form of bluffing, sophisticated deception, misleading suggestion, a stimulus drawing someone's attention, a lie, a fraud, or a paving over substantial information.

Seventh, *luring someone into a trap* may be a way to forerun someone's intentions and achievements.

Deceiving consists in causing certain expectations and the state and feeling of hesitation, which allows for arbitrary and one-sided decision-making in cases concerning others: "I choose the place and time and predestine something whenever it is convenient." Moreover, a wide range of tactical maneuvers expresses deceiving:

- * using ambiguous and even mysterious signs in communication;
- * *faking* various events, states of affairs, efforts, or *falsely suggesting* certain intentions to evoke illusions in the audience;
- * *powerful exaggerated declarations* that trigger strong impression and addict the receivers due to aroused expectations;
- * as a result: *disorienting* the partners of the situation;
- * *bluffing*, for example, "no one can be sure what card I actually have, how many bullets I have left, or if I have a financial reserve," and no one will risk checking what are my strengths and weaknesses;
- * *cornering* partners and *absorbing* their attention and energy; those actions base on bluff, strength demonstration, or "show off lessons." In other words, it is bargaining a better position with covert or overt blackmail through the very possibility of some actions.
- * *Artificial accelerating or delaying* some actions and decisions, which especially concerns difficult to anticipate and surprising accelerations after moments of

delay; this enables one-sided prejudging or, in any case, astonishment and the privileging of own position.

4. Provocation as a Form of Manipulation

Let us notice that every mentioned way of gaining the tactical advantage is provocative in nature. Those ways rely on “artificial” triggering, arousing, enforcing, inhibiting, or suppressing someone’s experiences, impressions, imaginations, aims, resolutions, and actions, and directing them arbitrarily. A manipulator prejudices something with his behavior in such a way that others must relate to the situation the manipulator created, fit within the frames he imposed, or deal with the problem he created. On the other hand, the manipulator also prejudices something by causing a specific situation and social atmosphere, such as a threat, conflict, mutual suspiciousness, collective enthusiasm, or euphoria; or by arousing certain attitudes that he can control in terms of intensity and their transformation into actions.

Does this mean that all manipulation is provocation? Not really.

Manipulation Irreducible to Provocation

The previous generalization is true: every provocation act is a manipulation. Indeed, most manipulative interactions are provocations. Such is the character of mercenary promises, flattering, “showing off,” allusions, intrusive or discreet suggestions, encouragements, obstructive and diversionary actions, substitutive or apparent actions, discouraging comments, mockery, jeer, raillery, covert or demonstrative threats, various methods of tempting, or pushes balancing between coercion and deception, similar to emotional blackmail. Provocations prevail in the repertoire of techniques and means of manipulation.

However, there are such forms and means of manipulation which are not an indirect or direct challenge and do not cause, arouse, accelerate, or inhibit something by themselves. Instead, they “serve” provocations in the sense that they help to deform the image of reality, distort information, or create a sustainable appearance of something, such as facades or ideological or institutional deceptions.

Common mental shortcuts blur the path leading from such preparatory or serving elements and means of manipulation to their use in actions that cause practical effects.

And so, plastic surgery like breast enlargement is not a provocation by itself, although it is a manipulation. On the other hand, demonstrating such “amended” breasts – especially with a specific intention – is a provocation. It is

“only” a manipulation when someone exercises in a gym or learns a language in secret, yet it becomes a provocation when the person surprises the surrounding with the new abilities. A regular compliment – a slightly exaggerated courteous praise – is not a provocation but flattery is, if it means mercenary, dishonest, exceptionally inadequate praise enforcing a feeling of commitment. A euphemism is also not a provocation, although it is a manipulation. On the other hand, an insult, insinuation, or tendentious and opportunistically convenient charge are provocative forms of manipulative discrediting.

Forging a document is not yet a provocation, although it is an obvious manipulation. However, what is a provocation is using the forgery, warranting its authenticity, invoking it as evidence in a prosecution, or shackling inconvenient people with the difficulty to distinguish between authentic information and made-up, unclear interferences. The latter is a mechanism known from Polish intricate lustration processes.

Moreover, improving someone’s chances in elections through “tampering with the electoral system,” for example correcting the election threshold for the party and coalition, changing the number of mandates or electoral districts, itself is not a provocation. However, we may call a provocation shackling and blackmailing potential allies and opponents with such changes, or applying them exactly when using this opportunity in the face of party’s falling ratings allows for deceitful prolongation of rule, guaranteeing a majority of votes, and restricting or eliminating opposition.

Manipulative Character of Initiative Provocations

The manipulative character of acts of provocation becomes most evident in the case of premeditated action. A predetermined and carefully planned provocation conducted consistently, methodically, and duly is somehow a sure manipulation. In any case, this is definitely true for a completely deliberate and planned provocation undertaken as a one-sided act, and not as an element of a multi-sided game, competition, bargaining, bidding, or as a response to the behavior, statements, or decisions of the partners in the situation. In the case of such a *one-sided initiative* provocation, the juxtaposition of the subject, that is the initiator of actions and the “dispatcher of movement” in his environment, and the object of influence, meaning the subject reduced to the role of the object of someone’s influence and instrument in someone’s action, becomes almost pure and literal. The provocateur is the subject and the provoked is the object of interference. Indeed, an individual or a group of individuals targeted by someone’s unilateral provocation does not lose its subjectivity as such. However, in this specific

situation, the individual or group did not manage to use its subjectivity. Therefore, it became objectified and is treated as a tool or as a passive object of someone's decisions and actions.

Deceitfulness of Feedback Provocations

In contrast, it is a different situation with provocations constituting some link in a two- or multi-sided and multi-stage game, for example accepting a challenge or being another link in a multi-sided and multi-stage auction. In this case, manipulation has a two-sided or even reciprocal nature. Each participant of the game is by definition both the subject and the object. "The subject" means a player guided by own intentions and calculations, making own subsequent decisions, and "the object" means the focus of someone's moves or tactical maneuvers. "The object" may also be an element in some plan that he may not even know or understand at first. The difference is that the participants of the game vary in the level of self-awareness, perspicacity, agility, and tactical dexterity, including deceitfulness. Consequently, we may also say that participants vary in the level of subjectification and objectification. A specific proportion between the level of subjectification and objectification imposes then a certain mental shortcut, that is identifying the balance of these opposing tendencies with a one-dimensionally defined status of an object or subject. However, the *co-manipulator* – who is not the only manipulating person but is also manipulated by others – does not cease to be a manipulator.

Deceit of Reactive Provocations

However, the above does not mean that typically *reactive* provocations have no manipulative character, although it may seem so as they are usually a spontaneous answer to one's actions or events and situations. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Reactive provocation is linked with manipulation in three ways.

First, reactive manipulation is a manipulative form of adjustment behavior, even if it is only an instinctual and subconscious action. We know that coquetry is a spontaneous reaction to a sexual stimulus or, even more so, to someone's erotic provocation. On the one hand, a coquetting person becomes somehow aroused and, at the same time, "caught" with the reaction he could not want to reveal. The first reaction of the coquetting person usually betrays at least partial loss of self-control. On the other hand, coquetry is the best example of challenging behavior because it contains elements of "showing-off," which test the addressee and encourage him to think: "You have captured the fact that I like

you. Now I am encouraging or forcing you to pay attention to me or get interested so you like me, too.”

Second, reactive provocations are usually an attempt to deceitfully change the situation of, for example, a surprise, threat, or defeat, through own actions, and thus to take over the initiative and shift roles in the “steering-steered” relationship. The mentioned coquetry aims to make the occurred dependency – such as “I cannot take my eyes off of you” – bilateral or mutual, although at first, it may be an uncontrollable reflex, for example, involuntary reveal of fascination or desire, an attempt to conceal embarrassment, or “putting a bold front.” Such an action resembles a counteroffensive in military actions. First, we defend. Then, we take the blow. Next, we gather forces, find the opponent’s weak spot and impose further maneuvers with own action.

Third, we should not overlook that someone who tries to regain control over himself and the situation only in the act of forced or rather reflexive or emotional than rational counteracting – “he reacted faster than he thought” – and thus to shift own adjustment into a basis for controlling others must also manipulate himself. Then, manipulating oneself consists in enforcing, subduing, suppressing, and hiding emotions, rationalizing own reasons and intentions, and applying poses inconsistent with own nature and predispositions because such a person either pretends or hides something, or even does both. For instance, a person that manipulates oneself maintains gravity when in fact is ready to burst into laugh mocking. Such a person knows that the funniest joke comes from someone with a poker face, and the most vicious irony comes with courtesy or appearance of restraint because a precocious satisfaction of a teaser becomes a false start. Remaining by the example of coquetry, we will notice that an intimidated or naturally shy person encourages himself, and even “charges.” A scrooge or swindler plays the role of an open-handed and extravagant man, even if his soul of a miser suffers and he is unsure whether the advance will pay back. In turn, an “adventurer” or “collector” thirsty for love conquests and treating successive partners instrumentally is more convincing and feels better if he considers this thrill of excitement or hunting bewilderment an affection, which, admittedly, quickly subsides, like a cold.

Of course, the deceitfulness of such reactive provocations is something different than deceitfulness of initiative or feedback provocations decided and planned in advance and conducted with complex premeditation. However, it is also a manipulative behavior.

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Steering or even manipulating human psychology, emotions, reasoning, and decision of a subject is different than steering a complex social situation, the

concurrency of events, directing occurrences, social tendencies, or positive or negative cooperation of many subjects. Perhaps we should now examine this difference, for each of these cases use different forms of provocation to steer directly and indirectly.

IV. Challenge: The Easiest Form of Provocation

The notion of provocation, or rather of the *provocation act*, exists either in the primary, entirely literal meaning, or more often, in the conventional and even metaphorical meaning.

The literal or, in any case, “unmediated” sense of the terms “challenge” and “calling,” from which the Latin mental shortcut “provocation” originates, refers to the simplest schemes of acts of provocation. In such a scheme, the subject-initiator indirectly relates to other subjects and addresses them. At the same time, he forces other subjects to react or adapt to what happened or, at least, to give some response to the event or sign. Noteworthy, the subject-initiator enforces the mentioned actions with own behavior, gesture, or statement.

This type of provocation differs from the one, where the initiator of events influences others’ interests, status, consciousness, and behavior through a combination of situational factors. The initiator achieves his goal by shaping and changing the character of a given social situation, the atmosphere of it, relationships between various subjects, their imaginations about the situation and themselves, and their consistent feelings along with temporary emotions.

We will compare these two forms of provocation in the next chapter. Here we will begin with the analysis of the simplest provocation, which boils down to a *challenge*.

1. Literal vs. Metaphorical Understanding of “Provocation”

We may refer to *the meaning* of the phrase “provocation” – as a definition of statement, gesture, or action performed with a specific intention – in the following contexts:

- (1) to *call someone to something*: to a fight, to step out of the rank, to perform, to come to the wicket;⁵²
- (2) to *call someone names*, that is insultingly describe someone;
- (3) to throw down the gauntlet (challenging) someone in the sense of encouraging, inviting, or even calling to reveal, trial, and assess someone’s traits, for

52 Bańkowski reminds of this first understanding of the word *prövocatio*, “calling to a fight” and “appeal” (initially calling people from their houses to the streets to defend the innocent convicted to death). Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik*, Vol. 2, p. 796.

example efficiency, beliefs, or arguments; it may also be a calling to settle a dispute over a right, claims to some material or symbolic possession, determining who is right, or deciding on the order or hierarchy through a competition, auction, race, or even fight; the most recognizable example of such influence is challenging someone to a duel;

- (4) to throw down the gauntlet (challenging) someone in the sense of forcing some reaction to social expectations or even requirements, insult, offense, or created and exposed dangers including own threats;
- (5) to throw down the gauntlet to a particular person or the surrounding in general with a *challenging behavior*, for example acts of defiance, actions performed “out of spite,” demonstration of disregard, nonchalance, or acts of protest against accepted morality;
- (6) *to arouse someone to do something* with some stimulus, suggestion, overt persuasion, or *call*: “I call you” = “I persuade or appeal;”
- (7) to arouse (“trigger”) impressions, imaginations, experiences, feelings, senses, moods, thoughts, reflexes, or resolutions in someone;
- (8) to cause events, states of affairs, changes.

Between Literality and Conventionality of the Phrase

Only the first and second definition have a literal sense. Moreover, we consider these cases tantamount to provocation only when they involve the pressure changing the addressee’s will. If we do not stipulate this feature, an ex-stage manager, court usher, or a master of ceremony announcing entering personas may as well be a provocateur. It is obvious that we do not refer to such people while speaking of provocateurs. We rather mean someone who “challenge someone to a duel,” especially someone, who does not want to accept the challenge.

In the literal view, expressions “call” and “challenge” may be treated as synonyms if we mean calling someone to step out of some group or crowd; we call such a person for a report, reveal, or to force him to stand up to fight. However, not every literal calling, for example “stand up to fight!” is a provocation. In fact, we may call a provocation a calling performed with extra pressure, for instance with stress on moral imperative: be a man, stop hiding. Thus, an ordinary appeal or order of a commander for volunteers to step forward is not a provocation, but the phrase “it is a task only for the best” – is.

Calling and challenging in this literal sense may sometimes have the same status as performative utterances, which are conventional expressions that have the power of changing the reality within the framework of some social rituals or

procedures.⁵³ For example, when someone says “I challenge you to a duel” with conventional gestures like throwing a glove to the ground or a symbolic slap, the word becomes reality in the sense that the dared person must take up the challenge. Thus, the duel is prejudged on a similar rule as the phrase “I declare the session open (or closed)” determines the start or the end of some discussion. A similar situation is with the phrase since today, “you do not exist for me” or “I don’t have a son (or daughter) anymore.” Such phrases do not really annihilate the addressee physically, but they nullify further possible communication and, in fact, start a period of intense ignoring. The same happens with the statements: “I do not acknowledge this – although someone informed me,” “I will act and speak as if I did not hear or read it,” or, even more, “as if it did not happen at all.”

Metaphorical Character of the Word “Provocation”

Using the word “provocation” in the third, fourth, and fifth meaning, that is *throwing down the gauntlet*, is a conventional expression based on a simple metaphor. “Throwing down the gauntlet” is a special case of giving a sign, in this case, a sign of objection. In this context, the meaning of the phrase does not lie in noting a simple cause-effect relationship. It lies in expressing a conventional connection between a reliable, adequate, and probable interpretation by the recipient of an act, gesture, or text which is a sign and probable behavior of that recipient in response to that sign. It is no coincidence that we do not say that someone called someone to a duel but that he threw down the gauntlet. This is a metaphor. We do not throw the gauntlet like we would throw a stone. On the other hand, there is a certain analogy here. Someone must respond to a ball or stone casting with a dodge, attempt to catch it, or an attempt to beat it. Respectively, it is not possible not to react to the “thrown gauntlet.” Thus, someone “picks up the gauntlet” on a similar rule as if he caught the ball. On the other hand, he avoids the challenge on a similar rule as if he dodged an impending bullet.

Meanwhile, “arousing,” “triggering,” or “causing” from the sixth, seventh, and eighth meaning are already strict metaphors or metonymies. Hence, “arousing” understood as inducing someone to do something is the psychological or psycho-moral equivalent of physical actions like pushing, poking, and stabbing. In a way, it is a secondary metaphor: when we stab, we “call” the pain. So, when a physician presses or punctures successive areas for diagnostic purposes to locate

53 Cf. E. Grodziński, *Wypowiedzi performatywne. Z aktualnych zagadnień filozofii języka* (Wrocław: 1980); S. Ehrlich, *Dynamika norm*, Ch. 4 (Warszawa: 1988).

the source of pain, he acts as if he calls suspects or a specific perpetrator of suffering to reveal – as if the physician literally called the pain to “step out.” The same happens when we turn to someone’s will or specific realized, subconscious, or suppressed and denied desires and aspirations: we “call out of hiding,” for example the desire for revenge or the need to affirm one’s self-worth. Arousing certain impressions, associations, imaginings, moods, feelings, aspirations, and resolutions in someone is “calling” in the sense that we act as if we call potential executors of our will from a rank. Figuratively, we could express it this way: an initiator of action addresses certain potential feelings by name as though they were persons to whom we entrust some task or give an order. This is an anthropomorphization, meaning treating human qualities as if they were subjects or conscious causal forces, for example: “Hate, step forward and get to work!” or “Delight! I entrust the mission of disarming Doubt to you.”

The understanding of the term “to provoke” in the contexts from the first to seventh applies mainly to the characteristics of the simplest one-sided behavior of certain people, and less frequently to slightly more complex interactions which involve two-way communication but still attempt to influence, persuade, or make someone listen. On the other hand, the metaphorical sense of the eighth entry associates with more sophisticated controlling of particular subjects’ situation or interpersonal bonds when it comes to causing events, situations, or social tendencies. This may associate quite intrusively with theatrical or film directing.

2. Challenge as a Conventional Act

Throwing down the gauntlet to someone is anyhow a conventional act. It means that both the sender and the addressee understand the act relatively consensually as an expression of certain intention. Noteworthy, they reason on the basis of meaning principles, patterns, and interpretative schemes attached to the words, gestures, attributes, and abstract symbols. This intention may be expressing own feelings, imaginations, and intentions and thus triggering psychological states or tendencies in the recipient, which are divergent or contrary to his original attitude.

However, this does not have to be contradictory to the interest of the addressee of the sign who is the object of pressure and be harmful to him. We can also provoke someone to behave in a way he would not be willing to or even oppose but which serves him well. Therefore, let us repeat: the essence of provocation does not include a negative or positive goal or effect of imposing, coercive, or determining influence. Its essence is the fact that the addressee was persuaded to do something against his will. On the other hand, benefit, harm,

kindness, malice, and hostility are already attributes of the constructive or destructive form of provocation.

Throwing down the gauntlet to someone may take various forms, from the simplest to the sophisticated ones. Therefore, it may be:

- * an *invective*, that is an offensive and demonstrably aversive – for example contemptuous or hateful – way of addressing or labeling people in their presence;
- * a *non-verbal equivalent of invective*: in such a situation we demonstrate disregard, aversion, or hostility, although we do not use insulting or offensive words, or taunts, but with the use of another, equally spiteful gesture, unpleasant behavior, or action to highlight the lack of good will or respect;
- * *challenging behavior* underlines disregard or even the intention to breach patterns, rules, morality, or convenance acknowledged in a group or an intention to deny common or particular person's expectations, requirements, demands, or claims;
- * calling to compare, compete, or even confront and fight;
- * *extortion of answer* for own reference to someone, that is for praise, help, critics, or attack.

Each form of this “communicative” provocation has its specificity. Notably, “communicative” provocation means that it bases on ostentatious communicating of own intentions, anticipations, expectations, requirements, or demands.

3. **Invective: A Vulgar Form of Challenge**

The simplest and even vulgar form of challenge is addressing someone, especially in witnesses' presence, with a specific verbal form that is offensive, diminishing, hard, or even impossible to bear or ignore. It may also be addressing others – but in the presence of the main addressee – with a stigmatic, contemptuous, and ridiculing definition that expresses and suggests repulsion, disgust, or hatred toward recipients.⁵⁴ Such an address is commonly called an invective and has similar results to “pointing people with fingers,” spitting, throwing rotten eggs, or dousing someone with a stinky liquid. In such acts of stigmatizing, one may use material means so that the physical effect gives adequate associations. For

54 Therefore, an invective is the simplest and direct form of stigmatizing. The analysis of the social mechanism of stigmatization or its use in purposeful behavior, especially malicious, discrediting, and discriminative, is available in the following works: E. Goffman, *Piętno. Rozważania o zranionej tożsamości* (Gdańsk: 2005); Elżbieta Czykwin, *Stygmat społeczny* (Warszawa: 2007).

example, “I douse you with paint so that people know your honor is “stained;” “I douse you with something stinky so that the smell reminds to everybody that your views and actions “stink,” and so that they arouse the same disgust as this stench.” One may also signalize and impose some intention to others in a purely communicative and symbolic form, just as in gestures, facial expressions, poses, and words that do not require physical contact. However, regardless of the communication form, all such behaviors contain the burden of visible and deliberately stressed aggression.

An invective is usually a spontaneously pronounced expression that reveals the emotions of the speaker toward the addressee. It can be used to let the addressee know that the speaker feels something negative about him and to make the addressee feel bad about it.⁵⁵

The author gives typical examples: “Pig! You moron! Cow! You lousy goat!”⁵⁶ We would amend this definition only in one respect. An invective is spontaneous because its sender must “relieve himself” and feels the irresistible need to strike the nerve of the addressee or express own reluctance, outrage, or anger so that the effect is an honest statement: “This is how I think about you;” “This is the way I want to see and depict you.” On the other hand, invective is a deliberate and calculated behavior in that the emotionally charged sender chooses own words carefully to make the statement as spiteful and demeaning as possible. Moreover, senders hope their statements are suggestive and contagious.

Exceptional Form of Challenge

Invective is a “challenge” in this sense that using offensive, insulting, and humiliating words is a confrontational behavior that makes an individual or a group face the dilemma of how to react. A person who “challenges us with invectives” like “villain,” “wretch,” “fool,” “minion” obviously dares us. Such a person emphasizes his advance: “I can allow myself to do this, and by humiliating you, I show I am someone better, or a judge in a given case.” Moreover, the insulting person tests our: resilience, courage, the strength of our feeling of dignity, or restraint, which he may use in further attacks.

The same applies to non-verbal equivalents of an insult. Those are for example despising faces, grimaces of aversion, gestures signaling disgust, affronts exposing a person to humiliation or lampoonery – which also can be

55 M. Grochowski, *Słownik polskich przekleństw i wulgaryzmów* (Warszawa: 1995), p. 18.

56 Grochowski, *Słownik polskich przekleństw*, p. 18.

discriminative – through an allegedly accidental gaffe or tactlessness or demonstrative expressions of disregard. Such insults contain a paradox, which makes it more difficult to oppose them than in other cases: everyone around knows what the insulting person wants to communicate in such a spiteful way. However, this person does not formally inform them about own intentions. Therefore, a signal seemingly unambiguous in its expression may be treated as polysemic, non-prejudged, and non-obvious in terms of intention. Hence why it is so difficult to contest, charge, or punish such an equivalent of insult. In this case, the effect of discredit is equally reliable and spectacular as the perpetrator's impunity. Hence, we may understand why such a way of oppressing people is so popular.⁵⁷ In this respect, we can only compare it to a “non-answerable” challenge, which we will address in subchapter 5.

Aggressive Character of an Invective

Of course, an insult is an aggressive behavior, meaning that is oriented toward destruction. Apart from expressing aversion, spite, or hostility, an insult allows one to “relieve oneself” – which is the *motivation* of this verbal attack – and serve two purposes: (1) it should worsen the attacked person's or group's self-esteem and (2) it should degrade the attacked subject(s) in the eyes of bystanders.

Notably, the latter result secondarily deepens the former one because a person or group who morally stricken and embarrassed in front of others experiences a degradation of self-confidence. If such an attacked subject does not start to doubt in own value and does not lose the feeling of righteousness of own views, principles, and efforts, such a subject has a lower esteem of own chances for success and the understanding of others. We usually call this the undermining of morale. Therefore, an act of spiteful and aggressive discredit is also the attempt of demobilization. A person affected with insult or humiliated with disregard or disgust will hesitate before protesting or will confront the attack with an undermined faith in the efficiency of such a protest.

Aleksander Bocheński accurately explains this psychological result of offense (a special form of an insult) in his deliberations on ambition and national pride:

In relationships between individuals, the matter of ambition is settled clearly and simply: one must always follow the orders of the honor. Just like between merchants being honest is the cleverest thing to do, so is having a sense of honor the most

57 More in: M. Karwat, *O złośliwej dyskredytacji. Manipulowanie wizerunkiem przeciwnika* (Warszawa: 2006), Part Five.

reasonable thing in personal relationships. People who let others mistreat them with impunity to avoid a quarrel, wound, or death quickly conclude that they become objects of insult from all people who refrain from harassing others only due to fear. Later, the persons who patiently endure offenses must lose their friends and position. Because social relationships and belonging to an environment is a significant issue in the life of an individual, so undermining them may bring total degradation and breakdown.⁵⁸

Therefore, those who let their rivals, opponents, or pursuers disrespect them or, in any case, are unable to enforce respect also gradually lose it in the eyes of others, even in the case of a neutral or so far friendly environment. Moreover, such a depreciation (undermining the person's value) and degradation (lowering of rank in social hierarchy) influences such an individual in a demobilizing, antimotivational, and self-destructive way:

Another group of repercussions of the offenses that went unpunished contains those that influence the psychology of the offended. The offended who did not respond to an offense devalues their self-esteem and decreases trust in own strength and, eventually, in own value. In the future, such people will avoid anything that could harm them. They will follow the line of radical opportunism. If social disregard does not kill such people, they will perish from self-contempt.⁵⁹

Moreover, invective is a provocation in the sense that the caused resentment or even humiliation forces the lowering of the safety system of the attacked person or group. In other words, it strikes self-esteem and the feeling of dignity. The addressees would not achieve such a self-degradation themselves, yet when attacked, they accept this degradation. Of course, the presence of witnesses increases the discomfort of such attacks. It doubles the feeling of humiliation and helplessness because it is not possible to prevent or invalidate the sensation or scandal. The addressee thus become socially stigmatized through the very fact of insulting someone.

Relative Crudeness of an Invective

Invective usually entails crude behavior, usually treated as the indicator of mental crudeness. Therefore, poverty or vulgar language is supposed to represent a closed or narrow mind; substituting argumentation with shouting or

58 A. Bocheński, *Dzieje głupoty w Polsce. Pamflety dziejopisarskie* (Warszawa: 1988), p. 261.

59 Bocheński, *Dzieje głupoty w Polsce*, p. 261.

strongly expressed emotions is supposed to represent intellectual helplessness. This is a hasty generalization.

The level of invectives' subtlety and their gesture or mimic equivalents differ not only depending on the level of intelligence and propriety of the subject who behaves offensively but also depending on the intensity of conflict and emotions aroused with it. Moreover, the subtlety of invectives also differs depending on the level of self-control and tactic sophistication of the aggressive subject.

Certainly, it is "natural" for truly crude individuals to spontaneously use unrefined and vulgar invectives. Nevertheless, we must remember a few nuances.

First, someone's personality may be a mixture of sophistication in some areas and crudeness in other. For example, a subtle poet, artist, or intellectual may have limited personal feelings and propriety, not to mention being vulgar in social life. In a situation like this, the repertoire of one's advances or behaviors in quarrels and conflicts clearly contrasts with the fineness of such a person's works, talent, or abstract knowledge.

Second, the primitive form of verbal or gesture aggression may be a deliberate and premeditated behavior, or an indicator of tactics pursued by a person sophisticated in terms of knowledge and intelligence. Such tactics consider the spur of the moment and include moods, expectations, and tastes of an event's witnesses, especially if it is a crowd or gathering divided into supporters and opponents of a conflict. The audience may cherish powerful words and outright attitudes just because they occur, not necessarily because they are substantial or right. Then, a premeditated invective becomes a tool for someone who maintains a certain distance toward the conflict, oneself, and the "information" contained in the offense or invective. Such a person knows the difference between real traits of the opponent and the image presented by ostentatious invective. Notably, such a tool is profitable in these circumstances because it gains approbation, appreciation, and admiration in some social circles (e.g. "he nailed him!"). On the other hand, such a behavior may also provoke the offended individual or group to make a mistake, disgrace themselves, or act to own detriment fueled by outrage and desire for revenge.

4. Irresistible Pressure

Unlike with invectives and their equivalents, other forms of challenge indeed have a confrontational character (e.g. "I oppose you") but their intention is different. The main thing is influence that forces the addressees to react. Noteworthy, the reaction is often contradictory to the addressee's interests and intentions. This influence is an irresistible pressure on someone who earlier had no intention to

speak on a given subject, demonstrate or test own potential, or join a debate, and who wanted to avoid polemics or fight. However, such a person could not ignore the tenacious pressure nor avoid reacting to an invitation, question, call, threat, or another way of disturbing his inner peace, balance, or safety.

Conventional Enforcement or Predetermination

A conventional act of challenge is every behavior that enforces reaction or answer consistent to the moral or custom principles ruling in a given milieu, and which does not leave a choice, restricts the options of reaction, or even almost predetermines the psychological outcome, character, and direction of the answer. Whether it is an answer to an invitation to compete, test one's strength or superiority, promise an attack, an obvious insult, or a statement triggering our objection, others impose on us the necessity to react. Furthermore, the character of the created situation, certain social rules, customs, and conventions constrict or even program us. Moreover, the pace of events and the factor of surprise, shock, or outrage make us react faster than our reason and premeditation would normally let us. Therefore, we answer emotionally, not rationally, undergoing a multi-level restriction of own subjectivity and acting according to someone else's scenario instead of our own.

Hence, a gentleman assisting a lady must react to the offense of her honor. A person challenged to a duel and thus blackmailed with the threat of being called coward must prove that it is not the case. A God-fearing witness of blasphemy or profanation must protest. A specialist or speaker in an institution must correct inaccurate information or stereotypes pronounced in their presence.

The act of challenge should by definition enforce the dared person to take an unwanted decision and join an unplanned and unpleasant game. Even more so, the act itself should encourage or mobilize someone who hesitates and struggles with own temptation to start some game like gambling or flirt.

There are at least three forms of such a conventional challenge.

Challenging Behavior

We should not mistake challenging behavior for actions, which cause the provocation effect unintentionally, for example embarrassment, consternation, disgust, shock, or outrage. In such situations, the provocation effect is not the intention of the perpetrator but only the result of discrepancy or principal contradiction between that person's way of thinking, lifestyle, tendencies, or tastes and the mentality of the surrounding or norms and standards applied in a given environment. For example, abnegation received by the surrounding with disapproval

is not a challenge, even if accompanied by a commentary “he is what he is, he will not change.” The extravagance of a misfit-egocentric, especially of an artist – “such a person must be a weirdo” – is also not a challenge. So is not an eccentric lifestyle of a millionaire, who rather demonstrates own caprice and the amount of money owned has or, relatively, manifests a upstart taste than an intention to offend, disregard, or blackmail anybody.

However, it is a challenge when a journalist comes to Khomeini in a chador – it is required to make an interview – but takes it off immediately as the conversation starts. It is a challenge when someone demonstratively tears a document, even more when that person scatters it around or throws the pieces in someone’s face. It is a challenge when someone burns a national flag, even more so if it is a flag of their own country. It is a challenge when from the initiative of disappointed and outraged right-wing politicians the Krakow city council decrees with a majority of votes an announcement that the winner of the presidential election shall be seen as *persona non grata* in the city. Moreover, the deliberate arrival of a future minister at the nomination and swearing-in ceremony in a sweater and sneakers has a similarly challenging overtone, especially since the appointment letter is to be handed by the head of state who, in a given term of office, belongs to the opposite political camp. An analogous message appears when ministers take the oath of office with their faces turned not toward a “foreign” president but their leader – the winner of the election. It is a challenge when during the sitting of an officially secular parliament – at least according to the constitution – a member of parliament begins praying or singing a religious hymn. A situation when one or more people among the crowd of prominent figures remain sitting, spread a newspaper, or leave during a standing ovation is perceived analogically. Not to mention a situation when a minority tries to outbid, or at least disrupt the “burnye polozhite’nye aplodismenty” (Russian: vivid positive ovation) with laughter, booing, or whistling. Of course, an equal challenge is the Equality Parade in support of the fight against the discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community. A counterdemonstration in the form of a Normality Parade is a challenge, too.

What is the common denominator of such acts? Their perpetrators usually obey the following rules:

- * they demonstrate their sense of separateness and insubordination, namely they do not obey some rules or do not accept the outcome of some game played according to the rules;
- * sometimes, they ostentatiously manifest their disagreement to the imaginations about normality, naturalness, decency, lawfulness, patriotism, or

religiousness accepted in a given milieu or to officially generally accepted rules, patterns, forms, schemes of actions, or standards of law and morality.

- * at times, the above involves demonstrative positive or negative highlighting of a subject, for example by showing aversion, hostility, or disgust or acting in a discriminative way toward something by stigmatizing or excluding it.

What do the perpetrators want to achieve? There are a few goals:

- * marking own sovereignty;
- * denying the assumption about obviousness, naturalness, or commonness of something;
- * boosting own and others' courage;
- * shackling the confidence and beliefs about the righteousness of views among the followers of the questioned rules;
- * making a precedent that opens the way for alternative attitudes because the presumption of tolerance follows the fait accompli.

However, causing confusion, shock, or outrage may have serious reasons like the defense and promotion of pronounced views, but may also stem from but a regular, occasional defiance as is often the case with a temporary rebellion on an intergenerational or personal background.

In the first case, challenge is a symptom of contestation. People who use contestation deliberately are contesters. They act as critics of predominant norms or at least as disobedient and defiant proponents of chaos, autonomy, or distinctiveness or propagators of alternatives and freedom of choice. Noteworthy, this status includes more or less precise or simplified labels and images of rebels, blasphemers, scandalmongers, corrupters, troublemakers, and nihilists.

In the common intuition, a contester is someone, who demonstratively or even deliberately and provocatively violates the ruling norms, lives inconsistently with customs and laws, acts bizarrely and different from other individuals, ignores orders and prohibitions, and lives according to own eccentric principles. Contester is associated with a rebel, nonconformist, dissident, or an outsider. This is someone who does not find place in a normal society and who has a negative attitude toward values accepted by society.⁶⁰

Acts of challenge are conventional-symbolic actions characterized by naturally high efficiency. It is difficult to ignore them if they destroy the settled order, disturb habits, and deny expectations of a milieu. At least one effect of such

60 T. Paleczny, *Kontestacja. Formy buntu we współczesnym społeczeństwie* (Kraków: 1997), p. 8.

actions is certain in advance. It is the effect of surprise, shock, and as a consequence, that of embarrassment, consternation, distaste, outrage, and condemnation, which can cause active resistance or attempts to counteract. Noteworthy, against all appearances, the negative reaction of the provoked may superbly suit the expectations and goals of the provocateur. For example, it can be a confirmation of accusations of philistinism and hypocrisy or proof for the thesis “every why has a wherefore.”

Breaking a barrier – at least in terms of imagination – or distance or taboo is another almost infallible effect of such “incidents.” Another effect is proving that the “impossible” –because forbidden, unwanted, or punishable – suddenly seems possible. For some people it is outrageous, but others consider it intriguing and thought-provoking.

Different effects like change in the attitude of environment and objective alternation of some state of affairs are problematic and depend on many factors, for example, the level of unity and authenticity or conformism and guise, attitudes of a given environment, the level of convergence or discrepancy in the interests of situation participants, and finally, the balance of forces. Moreover, it is the balance of forces that determines who can afford what and what kind of and whose behaviors can be rewarded, punished, or unpunished.

Encouragement or Call to Competition

What is also a challenge is a behavior that openly induces to assail, foray, mutual checking and comparing of efficiency, and thus to determine who is better, stronger, faster, or more agile (throwing down the gauntlet).

What does “to induce” mean? It is possible to induce such a bidding in many ways: with an open call (“Race with me! Let’s cross swords”), encouragement (“Do not be scared, this will not hurt. What have you got to lose? A hundred dollars? Your win can be bigger!”), blackmailing (“Do you doubt your abilities? Maybe you are scared? And maybe your diploma is a forgery?”), or creating a temptation (“Aren’t you curious? Won’t you regret that you’ll never find out if it’s possible? Let’s do it quickly, no one will know, no one is looking”). It is also possible to apply a specific form of suggestion consisting in intrusive pressure with “giving an example,” for example by accelerating, repetitively passing, or beating the yellow light and screeching away we give another driver the signal “let’s race.”

The motivation for acts of challenge is various. It is possible to induce someone to compare some traits “just out of curiosity” and not prejudice the outcome, assume own upper hand, or the certainty of winning. However, calling to a competition is often pronounced with an assumption that the competition will end

to the disadvantage of the other side and the attitude of proving or confirming own superiority. The provocative character of such an act is evident when both sides know that the outcome is not an undecided matter but seems obvious in advance. We provoke someone to play a game in which their chances are lesser or scant, of which the subject knows and tries to avoid confrontation.

However, is every calling for competition automatically already a provocation? Not really. We may talk about a provocation only when we refer to a dare that has an *artificial cause*, for instance forced readiness for a race, auction, competition, plebiscite, tournament, or election campaign. A person who reciprocated the intention, willingness, and readiness to compete in the starting point was not provoked because he could evince the initiative as well. We may call a provocation a challenge that imposes a behavior dissonant or contradictory to the addressee's primary attitude or resolution, or such which forces the person to participate in a situation or game against own will. It is not a provocation to initiate a drinking race among "only drunkards" but it is a provocation to get an abstainer drunk, whether by saying "don't be a wimp" or "people who don't drink denunciate." It is not a provocation to exchange coquetry signals between people who spontaneously feel and show mutual fascination and attraction. On the other hand, it is a provocation to engage in a mutually initiated and reciprocally intriguing love contests so as to decide "who will break first, who will chase whom" like the protagonists of *Dangerous Liaisons* who play such a sophisticated game. Of course, this is but a provocation to seduce someone and induce them to betrayal.

Forcing a Reaction (Answer)

While *calling for competition or foray* relies on the sense of relative attractiveness of the competition or game in which the provoked is supposed to partake, *forcing a reaction* relies on twofold premises: either (1) on a positive (non-aggressive) "calling to answer" through relating to someone's duty, moral obligation, or commitment ("You were the witness, tell us what happened;" "Why are the authorities silent?" "Professor, we ask for your opinion") or (2) on a created sense of threat and, consequently, on a sense of necessity to oppose negative actions, statements, or gestures, which are unacceptable for an individual or group.

Mobilization Through Danger

What does it mean that something is "unacceptable" for us? We cannot agree to such a thing or allow it because of some literal – physical or psychological – threat, for example to our safety, dignity, honor, or proprietorship. We also reject

it because of a symbolic attack on our beliefs, principles, identity, or its trappings, such the profanation of emblems, objects of cult, or important figures.

Respectively, the need to oppose is either literal (“I must defend because otherwise they will wound or kill me;” “I must foil the theft;” “I can’t let them insult me;” “I must withdraw or run away because the adversaries will be stronger and ruthless”) or moral and psychological, which evinces a “moral imperative” or a sense of obligation in phrases such as “I must protest,” “I must explain,” “I must make a rectification” are different kinds of necessity than phrases like “I must cover myself,” “I must anticipate this blow with a fist,” “I must shoot first.”

In any way, this simple type of provocation (challenge) consists in forcing someone indirectly or directly with own behavior that has premises of an attack, assault, or threat to react, answer, and especially to defense, dodge, or quite contrarily, to oppose.

Forms of such an enforcement are various. It can be a verbal or gestural call. However, the call can also evince in “driving someone to the wall” – this is the meaning of swinging at someone with a knife: it suggests that the next attack will be serious. In the conventional-symbolic sphere, crossing the boundaries of tolerance is an analoguous way of acting, for example “pushing to the limit” in diplomatic or strike talks in terms of demands or claims. “Pushing to the limit” means that the demands and claims are non-acceptable and non-achievable financially – because the resources and measures are insufficient and because it would be a measurable and irreparable loss – and in the moral sense because the rules of the game, our own principles, the sense of dignity, prestige, or authority disallow it. We also may call such situations “driving someone to the wall” but only metaphorically.

Challenging to a Duel

The act known in the past as “calling someone to a duel” situates on the borderline of a comparative challenge, competitive challenge, and an assault-challenge. It is something more than a call for a test of strength since the life of each participant may be at stake and the justification is graver than a ludic (“let’s have fun,” “let’s fight boredom”), training (“let’s practice,” “let’s hone our skills”), and competitive (“let’s see who will be better this time”) motivation. The sense of such a fight should be defending someone’s honor or punishing the offender.

Admittedly, such a serious character of confrontation may undergo two kinds of trivialization.

First, a means to achieve the goal may become the goal itself or an entertainment. Alexandre Dumas humorously notes such a situation in his novel *Three*

Musketeers: musketeers duel when they are bored or when they want to “thumb their nose” or remind of their existence to the privileged guards of the Cardinal. Let us also recall in this context Joseph Conrad’s short story “The Duel.” It is a history of a pathological “duel fetishist,” later successfully transferred to the screen by Ridley Scott.

Second, the formal reason for challenging someone to a duel – like an incurred insult or an offense of a knight’s or nobleman’s honor – may only be an excuse and not a real reason for such a drastic act. Therefore, we provoke an insult ourselves – a real or an alleged one – which we later overinterpret, so we may use it to justify a duel. However, the real purpose of such a duel is not to defend own or someone’s honor but rather to eliminate the inconvenient person. Two poets inconvenient to the tsar and court milieu died in such circumstances. The first one was Pushkin and the second was Lermontov who, paradoxically, in his drama *Masquerade* managed to present the same mechanism that killed Pushkin.

5. A “Non-Repayable” Challenge

A special type of challenge is such a behavior that is openly aggressive and evinces demonstrative arbitrariness in matters concerning a given subject or even the interest of others. It is a behavior that makes lawlessness an act of pride and aims to humiliate opponents or victims.

Demonstrating aversion and malevolence is often linked with underlining own satisfaction over someone’s trouble, embarrassment, or the sense of impunity (“And what are you going to do?”) and irreversibility of caused damages or insults, which the addressee must receive as audacity. A downed person may get up and brush oneself down yet will always remain the one who was downed. An insulted person will remain insulted even after forced apologies. An aggrieved person will remain aggrieved even after compensation or reparation.

A challenge of this kind seems to be a “one-way ticket,” a one-sided correspondence (“I notify you and *that is* it, the answer is redundant and unnecessary), or an “over and out” message. The sender intends to demonstrate or underline that it is an arbitrary decision, absolutely independent of any opinions, expectations, appeals, demands, warnings, or negotiation attempts by others. The essence of such a decision is often close to acting simply spitefully or defiantly. The source of the sender’s satisfaction lies in the fact that it shows “who is in charge here,” makes a point, proves that the sender does not have to reckon with others, or, in any case, can afford to disregard others. Moreover, the sender may mock others’ helplessness. Such an attitude combines instrumental aggression (hostile actions against someone as a means to a practical goal with) with

“autotrophic” aggression (malice as satisfaction in itself and as a manifestation of own superiority).

Allow me to offer a drastic example of such a behavior from the sphere of political decisions. Let us recall the challenge issued to the entire world by the Taliban. It was a challenge that indeed remained unanswered. Noteworthy, it remained unanswered in the practical sense. However, the symbolic answer involving appeals, persuasions, and warnings only reassured the provocateurs in the feeling of righteousness and impunity)“we will do exactly what we decided thus denying your protests”):

“We do not care about requests and threats. All monuments will be destroyed because they are sinful,” the Taliban Muslim fanatics ruling in Kabul announced yesterday. Their leader, the one-eyed mullah Mohammed Omar, ordered to demolish two two-thousand-year-old statues of Buddha yesterday.⁶¹

The statues in question are in fact older than the Islamic tradition in Afghanistan. They are a part (remains) of a Buddhist temple complex built between the first and seventh centuries, while Islam became the dominant religion in Afghanistan only in the eleventh century. Using the analogy of an apartment, we could say that a temporary principal tenant – thus not the first and not the last one – acts as if he were an independent owner only because he built the apartment and changes within it are his private matter, even if it is destruction. Such a sense of sovereignty is unacceptable for the surrounding, not to mention the dubious mandate from own society. In the common opinion of the international community, the statues are a cultural legacy representing the heritage and property of all humanity and not of a specific religious community, even less of some transitional government. However, the leaders of such governments, as if wanting to deny their awareness that their era is just an episode in the long history of humanity and their own country, emphasize “who is in charge” and their conviction that the one who is in charge is writing history “from the beginning” by their actions:

“This is tragic, scandalous, and impossible,” foreign politicians, diplomats, scholars, writers, and historians commented on the Taliban’s decision. The governments of Buddhist countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka reacted with outrage. The UNESCO, which recognized Buddha’s statues as a part of the most precious monuments of humanity, sent a plea to the Taliban asking not to destroy the “cultural heritage of humanity.” The UNESCO also asked the Taliban to refrain from destroying the remains of the statues end exhibits from the plundered National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. “This is a

61 W. Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 21, 2001, p. 8.

cultural catastrophe on a global scale,” said on Tuesday former Kabul Museum director Zemar Tarzi, a resident of Europe for two decades.⁶²

It is easy to guess what attitude autocrats have toward such protests. They may bark and squeal from their distant Europe. Buddhist states will not tell us what we, a Muslim state, should do on our land. Buddhists have nothing to do with our Muslim issues. And we remind them and their defenders by tearing down these statues that this is not and will never be a Buddhist or a secular state.

Part of the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan was the center of cultural intercourse for ages. Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Hellenistic, and Persian civilizations and cultures met here. In the 1970s, Kabul was considered the greatest Central Asian city: open to the world, rich in museums, universities, and libraries.⁶³

Thus, it would seem that the multicultural heritage is equally an achievement and a good for the entire humanity and this country’s people and authorities, and deserves preservation even only because of pragmatic reasons like promoting the country and touristic attractiveness. But do the Taliban care for tourists, especially Buddhist ones?

The statues of Buddha, considered the biggest in the world, survived undamaged a thousand years. Pilgrimages of Buddhists from the entire world visited them. They survived the invasions of Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century and the attacks of Timur in the fourteenth century. It seems that they will not survive the ruling of the Taliban, that is Muslim fanatics descended from the Pashtuns tribes of southern Afghanistan, who seized power in 1996.⁶⁴

This is paradoxical that the previous historical troubles – when conquering also involved acts of barbarism and vandalism – did not destroy such monuments, but it happened in the universalist twentieth-first century, cultivating testimonies of the past and striving for the protection of historical heritage even under international supervision. An anachronistic trend ignores and erases all these standards with childish ease, as it is imbued with a fetish for religious purity, orthodoxy, and a philistine hostility to everything that is “foreign.”

Their mullahs strictly forbid anything that they believe is sinful. They also forbid everything that the Koran, the holy book of Islam, does not mention at all. Thus, mullahs banned gambling, popular music, television, photography of living creatures, some sports, including soccer and chess. On Monday, the Taliban leader, the one-eyed mullah

62 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

63 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

64 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

Omar, ordered the demolition of all statues in the country. “There is one Allah, and these statues were built to worship what is sinful. They must be destroyed so that they do not lead to temptation now or in the future,” the mullah wrote in a special decree.⁶⁵

The intention and calculation of such an action are evidently practical and preventative. If there will be no bait, there will be no temptation. Irreversible destruction of a religiously foreign object is a warranty of the irreversible rule of Islam; the rightful one and not any “open” or modern.

On Tuesday, Omar countered foreign protests. “All relics associated with religions other than Islam will be destroyed because they are images of infidels’ idols. For me, nothing is important except for Islam.”⁶⁶

Actions of this kind are reasoned with a familiar thinking way: “My house is my castle” and “I do not care about your opinions and protests.”

The hopes of observers that this is just a verbal and ritual provocation of delusional and overzealous leader disappeared quickly. These were not idle threats and boasts but a bold announcement of irrevocable resolution.

The minister of Taliban diplomacy, mullah Wakil Abdul Muttawakil, and the Taliban ambassador in Pakistan, mullah Abdul Salam Sayyaf, confirmed the situation. “The order of emir Omar will surely be executed,” said Abdul Salam Sayyaf in Islamabad. “Criticism means interfering in our domestic affairs and our religious life,” he added.⁶⁷

This is the favorite argument of all governments that assault human values and goods: the defense of these values and goods in the form of outside intervention is an attack on national and state sovereignty and the sacred right to property. In this case, there is also a subversive addition of defending religious freedom. Whoever criticizes ideas of destroying the statues, almost discriminates against Islam itself.

The ambassador also disregarded laments that destroying the statues will be tantamount to destroying the cultural heritage of humanity and Afghanistan. “Even if, it is only a small part of the heritage,” he said. / To the remark that Genghis Khan and Timur saved Buddha’s depictions, he replied: “This is no argument. Just because nobody destroyed them so far, it does not mean that we should not tear them down, too. Maybe they did not trouble anyone in the past. But now there is a truly God-fearing government in Afghanistan.”⁶⁸

65 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

66 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

67 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

68 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

This is a disarming argumentation that underlines the contempt for symbolic goods being destroyed and the disregard for their defenders. “You, infidels will still have plenty of this garbage. And our Muslim heritage will not regret such a “loss.” On the other hand, what do we care about the ancestors, those superstitious gjaours, and their greatness? In contrast to them, we fulfill the will of the only true God.”

Minister Muttawakil added that he does not expect the world’s anger to impair Afghanistan which already is condemned and sanctioned by the UN for breaking human rights and supporting world terrorism. “We keep diplomatic relationships only with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These are Muslim countries and I do not expect that this case with statues causes any crisis between us,” he explained.⁶⁹

This is a response to allusions or overt warnings about the graduate isolation of the state. First, you already isolate us, and we somehow survive, so with what else can you scare us? Second, we do not care about your boycott. Quite contrary: it pleases us. We do not wish to contact with such a spoiled and sinful surrounding. We choose fellowship which is appropriate and fit for us. Whatever we do, we do it with this intention to even more clearly and permanently isolate and wall off from you. Third, your protests only confirm how just are our actions. If it hurts you, it means that the blow is accurate, and this is the purpose. Last but not least, we are not alone: other rightful people are on our side, and we care about them.

Such a way of thinking and behaving, which, despite appearances, is quite common in political actions, is a fairly intriguing mixture of emotions like obstinacy or blindness associated with “unconsciousness” and calculation or predicting and planning further actions incredibly soberly. It is a synthesis of fanaticism and... pragmatism or even cynicism. We may call such a phenomenon “calculated exaltation” because ideological obstinacy harmonically combines with cunningness and brutality in effective action. Politicians considered “lunatics” or “cranks” owe their success – at least temporary – to their determination, comparable with the persistence and consistency of a rhinoceros in pursuit and cunning tactics of shackling, blackmailing, and terrorizing the surroundings. Hence, such politicians use the repertoire of ostentatious challenging and acting against everybody else.⁷⁰

69 Jagielski, “Burzyć Buddę,” p. 8.

70 Cf. Mirosław Karwat, “Oszołomstwo, czyli szaleństwo metodyczne,” *Forum Klubowe. Lewicowy dwumiesięcznik idei*, No. 3–4 (27–28)/2006.

6. Offense, Show, and Bidding

We know the formula “two-in-one shampoo and conditioner” from commercials. We may also refer it to challenge.

Challenge as offense, demonstration of self-confidence, threat, imposing a foray, or forcing a reaction is deliberate behavior, and its symptoms may occur simultaneously. Moreover, a literal “calling someone out” may be specifically associated with challenge.

We may evince this with a scene from Henryk Sienkiewicz’s historical novel *The Knights of the Cross*, paraphrased by the author after Jan Długosz’s chronicles. In the scene, the Teutonic Knights’ messengers urge the Polish king to start the battle of Grunwald:

The Polish ranks opened to receive them, and, alighting from their horses, they speedily appeared before the King. Slightly bowing their heads by way of reverence, they proceeded to the accomplishment of their mission. / “Sire,” said the first herald, “the Grand Master Ulrich challenges your Majesty and the Prince Witold to battle, and in order to excite the courage which you appear to lack he sends you these two naked swords.” / With these words he laid the swords at the King’s feet. / Jasko Mezyk of Dabrowa translated his words, and as soon as he had finished, the herald who bore the griffin on his shield stepped forward. / “The Grand Master Ulrich,” he said, “bade me also declare to you, sire, that if you have not enough ground for battle he will withdraw a little, so that you may not remain idle in the brushwood.” / Jasko Mezyk again interpreted the speech, which was followed by a long silence. Many of the knights ground their teeth at the arrogance and insult of the message.⁷¹

Another good illustration of such a combination of the functions of a challenge is the following anecdote; although not sophisticated, it adequately presents the easiest or even crude scheme of challenge:

Two strangers are traveling in silence in a compartment of a passenger train, sitting opposite each other. They are clearly bored but do not make contact. In any case, they do not engage in polite chit-chat but only observe each other. Suddenly, one of them spits at the other as if shooting. The saliva flies past the other’s left ear. Then, without waiting for the surprised co-passenger to react, he repeats the same “shot” to the right side. Then he lifts his hat, in which he has been sitting all the time, and introduces himself with a smile as cheeky as full of satisfaction from the successful display of his skills: “Johnny, the professional,” to which the latter replies by spitting in Johnny’s eye and an equally concise self-presentation: “Vanya, the amateur.”

71 H. Sienkiewicz, *The Knights of the Cross* (London: Sands & Company, 1902), p. 629.

However, let us not take too much from this particular circumstance that, in this case, crude and brutish behavior was reciprocated. A challenge that has more polite forms and serves serious purposes is, despite appearances, structurally similar.

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Let us now compare the “straightforward” and sophisticated acts of provocation, which base on a direct and indirect influence, and find their common denominator.

Part Two: The Subtlety and Complexity of Provocation Acts

Any insidious activity requires ingenuity by its very nature, and its elementary condition is the subject's ability to recognize the situations, strengths, and weaknesses of those whom the subject intends to influence, so as to predict the possible results of that influence. The subjects must be certain whether they intend to achieve constructive or destructive goals solely by own action (here, the subject must decide whether his action will be overt, ostentatious, or hidden, veiled or, in any case, sheltered by a smoke and mirror show) or together with other subjects, who become allies or shareholders in this venture. The subjects must be certain whether they intend to achieve their goals by technological impact (where the act implies a materialized effect regardless of the participants' awareness of the situation, level of understanding, specific intentions) or by communicational impact (where the condition of provoking someone to do something is to evoke certain associations, conclusions, even more so emotions, and reflexes in that individual).

However, it may be that we achieve our goals by someone else's action, which we only control. The condition for achieving the goal may consist in exposing one's role, focusing the environment's attention on one's "stage character" or discreetly pulling the strings, playing the screenwriter, set designer, director, stage manager, and prompter at the same time.

Therefore, in the analysis of provocation, we must consider the difference between simple actions and those concentrated in time and space, which aim for uncomplicated goals, along with the difference between actions of which it is enough to operate a single factor of pressure or conditionality of phenomena, and actions aimed at complex goals or multiple correlated goals, which require the use and coordination of multiple factors, spreading the implementation process into several stages, and spreading the efforts into multiple component activities.

It is equally important to grasp the difference between the initiator, the performers, the coordinator, the beneficiaries, the division of labor involved in an action that is not so much an act as an operation, a campaign; to see when the relationship between the initiator and the provocation's coordinator and provocation's performers or casual participants is based on a community of interests and goals, and when it is based on the instrumental use of someone else's ignorance

or addiction, on the outsmarting of those who also want to “kill their own bird” using our action.

Moreover, it may be that different subjects – for instance participants of a discussion, rivals in an auction, opponents in conflict – provoke each other, so that their impacts (which to a bigger or lesser extent provide for the expected direction and manner of operation of the other positive or negative cooperation’s parties) create an inseparable weave. We usually call this whole – created from opposing or complementary initiatives and reactions to other people’s actions – a game, and its specific stages (what the different parties of cooperation intend to do and achieve): rounds. Someone may play such a game both on the principle of progression, sequence (when the action of one subject involves successive reactions, counterpoints, and new initiatives of many other subjects, which resembles a “free-for-all” race or competition), and on the principle of simultaneity (simultaneous, coordinated, or alternative and opposing actions of many subjects).

Especially political provocations or very similar activities in the sphere of economic competition and personnel struggles in large, structurally complex institutions are closer to the category of operations, rounds, and games than the category of a single act. In this case, however, we should consider provocations as multistage, multifaceted, repetitive, or somehow cumulative actions rather than simple and one-time actions with immediate effects that terminated at the particular moment.

It is also worth breaking the seemingly obvious assumption that someone who actively provokes conducts the provocation, that is someone who, by his own action, effort, creates certain situations, arouses certain mental states of other people, forces certain other people’s behaviors by events and the atmosphere created by them. Is it really that obvious? Is it the only way of provoking? Not at all. Provocation may also be the skillful use of completely accidental, as well as long anticipated and expected opportunities provided by other people’s statements, deeds, fates, works. Therefore, a “hyena” may be a provocateur, that is a subject capable and willing to use someone else’s mistake, failure, misfortune, or someone else’s gain and benefit, from which the subject may take advantage. We probably underestimate the extent to which this parasite form of provocation is widespread: both in great politics and everyday life, in family and labor relations.

Therefore, different provocations are unequal. Different acts of provocation differ between each other in their structure, level of complexity, and level of finesse, the sophistication of goals, diagnosis of the situation, tactical assumptions, and utilized methods and means of provocation. When it comes to subtlety, it is hard not to get acquainted with the mechanism and repertoire of perfidy, with

the art of intrigue, which has so much to do with even a very intelligent and sophisticated provocation as a habilitation with a master's degree.

V. The Morphology of Provocation Acts

Our use of the “provocation act” term – as opposed to the unintended effects of provocation – may excessively imply that an “provocation act” is literally a one-time act, such as statements made at a certain point in time that refer to some closed time frame, such as actions that have a beginning and an end, to which we may attribute a particular effect, let alone a one and only perpetrator, as these actions are “causal causes.” Meanwhile, the “provocation act” term expresses a generic concept, not an individual one.

1. Interim Acts, Continuous Actions, and the Provocative Rule of Conduct

A “provocation act” means a repetitive type, a mode of action used to artificially cause or determine something. Thus, it may as well be a *repetitive* act as it were a *sequential* act (based on a programmed sequence of many partial behaviors and treatments used to pursue an appropriate goal) or a *coincidental* act, that is based on the separate activities’ synchronization and coordination.

It is obvious from the praxeological viewpoint. When we use the concept of action intrinsically, we do not decide whether the action is simple or complex. It is a derivative qualification.

Sequences and Concurrence of Provocation

Moreover, apart from those simple or complex provocations, we may observe a whole *sequence* or *concurrence* of provocation acts, in which numerous independent subjects initiated and performed. The subjects cooperated and, at the same time, maintained their distinctiveness and autonomy or counteracted each other. Moreover, there is no shortage of complex subjects, which have a team or group character, meaning provocations conducted on order or by order of a team of contractors subordinated to someone else’s will, to the management that involves either formal subordinates or subjects somehow dependent on the initiator or holder of funds.

In praxeology, in such cases, we speak of a multi-subject network of activities¹ or – if the subjects realize and to some extent intend the positive or negative interdependence of the activities – of cooperation, which may be either positive

1 See J. Zieleniewski, *Organizacja zespołów ludzkich. Wstęp do teorii organizacji i kierowania* (Warszawa: 1976).

when it comes to mutual support, in the hope of synergy, or negative when the intention is to obstruct, hinder, harm, or even destroy.²

This fully applies to the concept of provocation. A provocation may mean either an ad-hoc action or a calculated “long-term,” multistage action; both an action with an uncomplicated structure – for instance consisting of a single action with a rather unambiguous meaning or unilateral consequences – and a structurally complex action.

In the latter case, it may also be that a provocation is an action as a whole, although the action’s components or preparatory activities are not provocations per se; so that we deal with the creation of a *mega*-provocation founded on coincidence and a sequence of constituent provocations. Such a *mega*-provocation may be a conspiracy, a carefully programmed and coordinated smear campaign, but also a police force, intelligence, or counter-intelligence operation. We call such actions simply “provocations” if we are sure that what happened is not a coincidence of events, actions, statements, and decisions concerning the belief that “someone is behind the event and pulls the strings.” However, this abbreviated colloquial term refers to the total function of what makes up the whole, and not to the structure of this “organizational whole of human activities,” as a praxeologist would say.³

For these reasons, when we analyze specific actions that we consider to be provocations, we should make conscious and thoughtful qualifications: whether we mean an *incidental* or *cyclic* provocation, an *individual* or *collaborative* provocation, an *interim* provocation (designed to have an immediate effect that is available in a specific, unique and volatile situation), or a *prospective* provocation when the action itself is a process rather than a short-term action, and its consequences are also processual, for instance based on an “avalanche of consequences.”

Long-term provocation resembles a drama in many acts (scenes). It is also not infrequent that we face a *serial* provocation (which resembles the action of an action or drama series in its structure and nature) or indeed even a *permanent* one.

2 See T. Kotarbiński, *Traktat o dobrej robocie* (Warszawa: 1975).

3 The following monograph contains the analysis of the structure of complex forms of cooperation and team activities in terms of “organizational whole:” J. Kurnal, *Zarys teorii organizacji i zarządzania* (Warszawa: 1970).

Serial Provocation

A serial provocation consists in that the same object – which may be an individual, a celebrity, a government team, an audience, an electorate – is subject to regularly recurring interactions (for example attacks, “temptation” attempts, disorientation measures, or disinformation measures) the purpose of which is essentially constant, but the circumstances change, followed by opportunities and pretexts for influence and, respectively, “subjects” (reasons to address the same addressee or object again), ways to address the audience and influence the situation of this object. The task of such “repetitions” involves maintenance or recreation of an outmoded previous effect, or the achievement of effects not yet achieved but likely to be achieved in a new deal.

The constant repetition of requests to bring the same “favorite” politician to justice before the State Tribunal, but due to ever newer reasons (pretexts), exemplifies a typical serial provocation. The constant resumption (on political orders) of investigations in cases previously discontinued or closed, when one hopes to regularly harass and stigmatize political opponents, is similar in nature. Moreover, the “political litigiousness” that involves initiating and forcing a return to lost political trials in subsequent judicial instances, in all possible emergency modes, is also similar. The latter phenomenon only seemingly appears as an irrational manifestation of vindictiveness and bitterness; in fact, it provides political benefits in the form of securing the status of accused and suspect in the eyes of the public for even a dozen or so years.

However, the serial scheme of provocation applies not only to hostile, destructive actions but also to attempts to win people as consumers, customers, voters, readers. The visible manifestations of this scheme involve advertising and promotional campaigns (peculiar commercial campaigns) which serve first to arouse and then to constantly maintain interest in a commercial and cultural undertaking. Let us note here, for example, the intrusive, cyclical forms of “breeding of fans” of *Harry Potter* or *Star Wars* (constantly repeating “attacks” and “bombings” in the media that involve advertisements, trailers, reviews, gadgets, competitions, lotteries; heating the atmosphere before each subsequent volume’s release or the subsequent screenings’ premiere).

And in what sense is permanent (infinite, continuous) provocation possible?

Let us recall that “permanent” means continuous.

In a way, it is a denial of provocation which, from a perspective, turns out to be an episode, even though the provocation may appear to be long-lasting during its existence.

One-Time Provocation

We undertake a *one-time* provocation at a specific place and time, with a specific case and a specific goal in mind, at least in the sense that when we plan it we may consider and “control” a limited number of conditions and factors. Here are examples of such a one-time provocation that someone programmed to work in a specified extent: a promotional action, a sale; a happening used during a protest demonstration against a particular political decision or project; a gangster execution that ends a certain rumble, a gang power struggle or closes the prosecutor’s case (the sole witness is no more); a covert or spectacular terrorist attack on a particular individual which somewhat “solves the problem” (the front-runner in elections is no more).

A one-time operation’s features usually resemble material objects and technical tools designed for one-time use or ones that operate until the result’s achievement and the moment when the tools get worn out. A one-time operation not only has a strictly defined beginning, but also a predetermined performance, lifetime, and thus it is obvious that the operation must have an end (in the form of success or failure in the goal’s achievement, a formal expiration of the case, or the cessation of public interest in the case). However, it is not always the case that a closed or unfinished case simply disappears from sight, goes to the archives, to the scrap heap of history. A provocation that some believe to be completed and that is satisfying or not may prove to be fodder for others; moreover, it may prove to be a prelude to something more than the initiators themselves anticipated and intended. It seems that we may interpret the “Rywin affair” that way, which was loud in its time, and is still alive in its echoes and political consequences. The affair’s repercussions were far-reaching and led to the collapse of the government and, in time, the significant “refitting of the political scene;” the latter does not necessarily fully fall in line with the initiators’ intentions.⁴

4 The following publications include a critical analysis of the multifaceted, still mysterious, and debatable game, which culminated in Lew Rywin’s corrupt and blackmailing offer to Adam Michnik, and in which less is known about what happened before than what happened afterwards: M. Przygodzki, *Na tropach kłamstwa* (Szczecin: 2005); M. Bil, A. Błoński, A. Małkiewicz, *Komisja Rywina. Próba spojrzenia politologicznego* (Wrocław: 2005).

Permanent Provocation

Let us return to permanent provocation. A permanent provocation means such a way of acting (artificial induction of phenomena and depictions, exposition of matters, acceleration, or inhibition of certain social changes), which consists in a relative continuity of behavior, ritual gestures, declarations that subjects constantly make in the same form on the same issue concerning almost the same subjects. The calculations for this formally intrusive and monotonous game of perpetual motion vary. Obviously, the goal may consist in the demonstration of one's tenacity, consistency, and steadfastness in cases when the subject's expectations have not been met yet. At the same time, however, permanent provocation may serve to mobilize, maintain the public's belief in the actuality of a problem and certain aspirations or claims, and to overturn the perception of the case as settled, or the sense of permanence of opponents' victories.

We may exemplify permanent provocation by a famous refrain in Cato the Elder's speeches: "Furthermore, I consider Carthage must be destroyed." We may find a similar example in the period of partitions of Poland when the representatives of the Sultan's court regularly called up the ambassador of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (by which they demonstrated their non-recognition of partitions and loyalty to a by no means allied state). The rallies and conventions of German *landsmanshaft* also exemplify permanent provocation (especially with immigrants of the second and third wave), as well as the maps, which get renewed for this occasion, with German city names in western and northern Poland, and with Pomerania, Silesia, Lubusz Land, and Masuria designated as "areas under temporary Polish administration." Numerous permanent provocations have accompanied political conflicts in Poland for decades. For example, in the People's Republic of Poland, some anniversary services and unofficial wreath-laying ceremonies may exemplify permanent provocation, as their participants treated them as a demonstration of remembrance, participation, continuity of traditions that the authorities perceived badly, and as a symbolic form of resistance. The "First, deal with the past!" demand to "post-communist" politicians also exemplifies permanent provocation. Their opponents constantly repeat the demand, but they do not count so much on self-dealing as on non-dealing, since it prolongs the historical argumentation's validity, actuality in future political battles, just as if they prolonged a subscription or a document.

Provocative Rule (Style of Operation)

Provocation (in its simple or complex forms, as well as in its primitive or sophisticated forms) may not only constitute a tool or a measure to pursue a goal

which someone uses when it is required, selectively and occasionally, appropriately to the circumstances that give rise to the need to use the provocation and make its use favorable; a measure that serves different purposes at different times. Provocation may also become a value that satisfies the relevant needs of a subject, such as, for example the need to “strut one’s stuff,” to constantly make others focus their attention on the subject, to compensate the accrued failures and frustrations with a sense of self-esteem, confirmation of either someone’s unchanging distinctiveness and independence, or someone’s domination and a sense of superiority.

In such cases, when there are a permanent tendency and predilection for provocation as such or a clear talent in this field, we deal with a *provocative style of functioning and operation* of individuals or teams of people. Then we deal with a provocation that is the principle, that is the subject’s fixed rule and scheme of conduct toward its environment or particular partners in a situation of coexistence, symbiosis, cooperation, or counteraction. However, let us not forget that this does not mean some kind of monotony, schematics of action because the repertoire of forms and mutations of provocative actions is extensive. I address the above issue in further argumentation.

We may observe such a predisposition and consistency in the provocative manner of conduct and public behavior not only among those who contest, the iconoclasts, lampooners, and scandalizers (among writers, publicists, reporters, artists, showmen) but also among politicians who represent a clearly Machiavellian orientation.

Obviously, in the case of politicians, one should not succumb to the temptation of a colloquial, trivial personalization that involves the reduction of politicians’ provocative style of struggle or governance to characteristically motivated causes, to their temperament, to the traumas that have grown out of their way of life, to unhealthy ambitions and personal complexes, and to their scores. Such an interpretation explains little by itself. At most, it may complement the analysis of the deeper ground, related to the composition of social forces, group mentality patterns, cultural traditions, and quite rational calculations of politicians who, indeed, like to fight, flex their muscles, abuse strong words, “divide and rule,” “set people against each other,” spark conflicts, ensure an arbitrary position with scheming inventiveness.

We most often associate the provocative (in general, manipulative, Machiavellian) style of action with a thoughtful strategy or tactic adopted for specific issues at specific stages of social events and processes’ development. The strategy or tactic assumes the provocative efforts’ continuity, the growth in provocative

actions, and the constant reproduction or accumulation of their effects.⁵ For centuries, monarchs and dictators were the virtuosos of the manipulative, provocative style of government. In the twentieth century, competitors such as Stalin and Mao Zedong achieved absolute mastery in this competition (as specialists in continuous mobilization and exposition campaigns, palace intrigues, successive surprising and breakneck turns in politics, cyclical personal rotations and mass purges, rituals, and practical mechanisms of collective baiting).

Let us summarize, in the study of the circumstances and the mechanism of various concrete provocations, it is necessary to adopt the difference between the following notions as a starting point:

- * simple acts of provocation,
- * provocative actions, operations, and campaigns,
- * provocative style of action,
- * provocative strategy or tactics.

2. Hyperefficient Forms of Provocation

Even a structurally simple provocation may be an unusually efficient or, so to speak, “nutritious” action for the perpetrator, which means that one simple or complex action allows the perpetrator to obtain a whole series of simultaneous or gradually multiplied effects that grow in time as if they reproduced by budding.

Simultaneous Provocation

A sender may address the same act (gesture, statement, decision, action) to multiple different addressees at the same time, and each addressee may bestow a different meaning on it, which, in fact, often follows the sender’s intention and suggestion. Provocation may be a simultaneous action, which makes it similar to a question, promise, threat, tip, or accusation. This means that individuals address the same behavior (statement, announcement, decision, gesture, ritual, or procedural action) in many ways; they broadcast the behavior to everybody, but addressees receive and interpret the behavior separately so that each recipient of the statement or gesture understands it in his own way, and each influenced

5 I present the model of the Machiavellian version of authoritarian style of government that is based precisely on the arbitrary arousal and constant preservation of conflicts, crises and social upheavals, and the atmosphere of constant threat, in M. Karwat, “Socjotechnika konwulsyjna,” *Forum Klubowe. Lewicowy dwumiesięcznik idei*, No. 1–2/2007.

subject behaves in accordance with the provocateur's goal and prediction, though unlike the others. At the same time, there is a possibility of a paradox that individual addressees of the same influence feel that they are either the only distinguished addressees or particularly distinguished – either positively, for example helped, or negatively, for example oppressed – by someone who addresses them or acts on their behalf.

The simultaneous communication with the environment allows us to achieve an effect comparable with that of shooting a machine gun at multiple beings at once: we may hit each one of them and, what is more, we do not have to aim at only one being. The same is true of protest actions; they mobilize a group of people to participate in the resolution of their own affairs, make another group of people want to show support, and make yet another group of people express outrage or threaten their interests, and thus force them to... take a stance on the case, which may be inconvenient for them; protest actions provoke others (addressees of the demands) to refuse, react sharply, make defiant responses, be aggressive, which exposes them to unclinking in the eyes of at least part of the public opinion, puts their credibility in the eyes of their own supporters to the test. On this exact basis, one strike, even a local one, may become the onset of a crisis. Protest organizers may intend to use at least some of these effects in their tactics; they consider other effects by modifying the tactics according to the circumstances. It seems that such a mechanism confirms the course of the protest actions of doctors and nurses conducted in Warsaw in the summer of 2007.

Autotrophic Provocation

The essence of an *autotrophic* provocation involves turning the effect of someone's previous provocation to own favor. We find the simplest example in Kinga Dunin's column: "Irritate and then humiliate your partner, finally show that you care and ask: what is the purpose of those emotions? Are you hysterical? Look, a lunatic! Then the lunatic goes more and more crazy and becomes an even bigger loony or hysteric."⁶

People not only use this eristic trick in marital or neighborhood quarrels, in the backyard or marketplace verbal duels but also public debates, in polemics of politicians. The tactic of discreditation through confrontation, impertinence, insults or insinuations, and blatant slander consists in the assumption that an

6 K. Dunin, "Prostactwo i władza," *Wysokie Obcasy – dodatek do Gazety Wyborczej*, No. 39 (389), Saturday, November 30, 2006, p. 8.

individual provoked by his reaction to a provocation will strengthen the provocation's effect and, paradoxically, by his behavior, will "confirm the rightness" of even the most obvious malice and manifestations of rudeness or the most absurd accusations. Such deceptions intensify especially during negative election campaigns when politicians adopt the rule "it is enough to just bite them: let them get nervous and they will provide us with new arguments against themselves." Politicians that practice legal or rather pseudo-legal demagoguery show similar cleverness: they know very well that a part of public opinion, who are not very competent and completely uninterested in the substance of the cases, the legitimacy, and legality of the various "investigative activities," perceives the protests of the "framed" in the majesty of the law and their defenders as a clear confirmation that the "framed" apparently have something on their conscience when they raise such a cry and allegedly do not want to allow the matter to be clarified.

Avalanche (Cascade) Provocation

An avalanche or cascade plan of provocation involves a situation, in which one decision, statement, or pressure on a particular individual or institution entails not one effect but many effects at once – and in a sequence. For example, one leak from the intelligence services, the prosecutor's office, a secret archive, or private documentation causes a sensation and thus leads to widespread attention, then consternation or outrage turns into a scandal or affair. The scandal encourages different individuals or groups to make statements, declarations, demands (for example they demand a clarification of a case, someone's suspension from duty, or their resignation), so that the seriousness of the case (the compromised individual or those who disclosed the secret suspect that someone committed a crime) becomes a reason for the prosecutor's office to inevitably deal with the case. The result is, for example, a dignitary's voluntary or forced resignation, the consequence of which involves tenders and reshuffling within a government coalition, and even a cabinet crisis. In the long run, however, we face a completely different result of the upcoming elections than expected. This is how an avalanche of effects of one simple provocation act manifests itself, for example the avalanche of effects of a spicy publication in a newspaper or television (obviously, provided at the right time). It is possible to plan such a development and to trigger it with our or someone else's controlled action. For a long time, some also used the avalanche scheme of provocation in investigative tactics (prosecutorial and police tactics, as well as in parliamentary extraordinary investigation committees' operations). We may illustrate it with the following sequence: tricky questions => further inquiry => new threads in the investigation

=> new interrogated => new suspects => and, at the same time, new grounds for “pushing” the first witness or suspect. During the inquiry or investigation, we not only refresh the memory of witnesses or suspects in a particular case – for instance through new evidence, testimonies of other witnesses, conducted confrontations, or local visions – but also use conflicts of interest and between individuals or even institutions involved in the case that surfaced. Arthur Miller depicts such provocative inquisitorial tactics in *The Crucible*.

This pattern mirrors a surefire hit and self-drive of inquiries, questions, and accusations in the committees of inquiry appointed by the parliament and in media campaigns conducted under the banner of “investigative journalism,” in which while the reporter acts as a detective or an intelligence officer, the newspaper acts as a prosecutor who interrogates, “presses,” verifies, and evaluates the credibility of documents and statements. One thread of the investigation is the key to the next, the incidental and incidentally captured details from the witnesses’ testimony open a new direction of inquisitiveness, which in turn is an opportunity or pretext to provide the audience with new stimuli and to justify new levels of harassment of the targeted prey, as well as to expand the list of objects of attack and stigmatization.

Cumulative Provocation

Cumulative provocation means such a way of action that consists in that some formally single, one-time provocation act triggers not only an avalanche or cascade of effects but also causes the occurrence of multiplied cumulation of effects. First, the achieved effects “pay off” in a similar way as the value of a deposit in a bank or a historic work of art increases over time. It may be that social resonance or media coverage will give a marginal event, a social incident, or a gossip the appearance of a historically significant factor. Second, only the effects of these effects may prove electrifying. The initially understated provocation’s effects often resemble those of a time bomb. The effects may be planned beforehand, but they often surprise and defeat the initiators. The Watergate scandal’s development perfectly illustrates such a phenomenon: who could have expected that the exposure of banal malpractice committed due to overzealousness would end with a political earthquake?

In cumulative provocations, the costs of action repeatedly pay off, and the benefits progress geometrically rather than arithmetically.

The cumulation of effects primarily characterizes discreditable provocations, that is deceitful attempts to discredit and isolate opponents, which often prove to be a trap. Indeed, when the accused protest against slander and refuses to

answer, others suspect them to hide something, while a principled response condemns the accused to the impression that if they explain, the accused apparently has something to hide. Anyone who protests against malicious and biased ridicule becomes ridiculous twice over (because such an individual “does not know jokes” as the individual’s reaction also deprives this person of seriousness). The most widespread manifestation of cumulative provocation – especially in the political sphere, but not only there – is the turning to one’s favor and inflating (also on a parasite basis; see Chapter Six) of various real or supposed sensations and “apparently important” scandals; the unleashing (especially in the form of strikes; see Chapter Thirteen) of collective psychoses of being in danger, crisis and catastrophic moods, feelings of collective disappointment or indignation, bloodthirsty lust for revenge (even on random scapegoats), states of collective hysteria that paralyze the possibility of critical, independent, and unwelcome statements. A mega-provocation – called a “smear campaign” – is an avalanche-cumulative provocation by its very nature.

Where lies the difference between a provocation, which is “only” an avalanche or cascade, and a cumulative provocation? Well, the former triggers an avalanche (cascade) of desirable effects in the form of events or behavior that correspond to the initiator’s predictions, expectations, requirements, pressures, demands. These are the multifold and increasing effects of this one provocation, but they are not always provocative alone. On the other hand, cumulative provocation not only triggers the spontaneous dynamics of events, a series of given action’s consequences, but also simultaneously stimulates various participants of events to engage in their own provocations, which at least partly (as a rule, contrary to the intentions of their authors) belong to the initiator or conspirators’ plans.

From this viewpoint, Goebbels’ parasitic game that involved the exposure of Katyń discovery, which he saw as a “gift from the gods” (see Chapter Six), was precisely a fruitful cumulative provocation: not only did the provocation create turmoil among the Allies but also simultaneously enforced the provocative behavior of this troublesome piece of information’s recipients: the severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR by the Polish government-in-exile, undermining of trust and corruption of relations between Polish politicians-in-exile and Western governments already during the war, the Soviet’s later deceptions.

3. Indirect and Direct Steering

The steering of the social situation and, in a way, the social atmosphere may be twofold: direct or indirect. We may observe the difference even in simple interpersonal relations. For example, someone who directly arranges for us to marry

someone else is the one who persuades us to make friends with that individual and check whether the person is a suitable candidate for marriage, praises his qualities, suggests or reminds us about reasons to try to go for it, puts pressure on us to stop hesitating or being afraid, to overcome our laziness or shyness. On the other hand, someone who does it indirectly is the one who, by being aware of our expectations and inhibitions, may check whether people who should get to know each other find themselves in the same place and at the same time, for example at a joint social meeting, in the same task force, on a trip, and find an excuse for them to make contact.

A *direct* influence attempt consists in verbal or gesticulatory contact with the addressee, on the announcement of our own will (expectations, requirements, orders, prohibitions, cautions, requests) to the addressee, on giving the addressee our own adequate or false suggestions concerning the interpretation of phenomena and decisions made, presenting the possibility that we may help the addressee, highlighting temptations or threats. This constitutes a direct provocation when a direct address (which means an act of communication) to someone or behavior that directly influences the addressee's situation trigger an effect, which we would fail to achieve either with clear persuasion (convincing, awareness-raising) or with coercion (threat of using force) but which ensures the use of trickery, for example temptation, disorientation, excitation of illusions, strong emotions. This category also includes a subversive triggering of subversive behavior... consistent with expectations. Even more so, situations such as when we close the door in front of someone's nose, block someone's way, threaten someone with a fist, all exemplify direct influence.

In turn, *indirect* forms of influence consist in situations when we influence someone by means of other people as well as the arrangement and directing particular social situations, or through the creation of a particular atmosphere around an individual (group) in his community, creation of reasons and pretexts for the environment to put pressure on the individual (group). This constitutes a provocation when it is our action that creates a situation of some opportunity or some necessity, conviction, and aspirations of the environment, the environment's pressure on a given individual (team) which may serve us.

Diagram 2. Direct and indirect forms of provocation

TYPE OF INFLUENCE	<i>Direct steering:</i> interim arousing of particular attitudes of particular addressees of action; an action that signals a particular challenge (for example intention to make a foray, threaten, offend, or make a commitment).	<i>Indirect steering:</i> the provocation of attitudes and behavior through the provocation of events and situations that provoke certain moods, perceptions, and emotions that influence human decisions; usually a long-term impact.
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Steering Social Influence

The scope of acts of provocation (simple, interim, as well as complex, far-reaching) may be twofold. The act's object and its addressee may be both a certain subject itself (an individual, a group), in a certain detachment from his surroundings, and, on the contrary, the subject's very environment. Obviously, we should not exclude the simultaneous influence on the given subject's consciousness, emotions, will, and on what happens in the subject's environment, on the nature of relations and the established atmosphere. Then the pressure becomes stronger. For example, a threat to the subject coupled with the creation of a state of isolation or the subject's environment disapproval of his position, views, intentions, or actions is more impressive and has a demobilizing effect. When the individual's surroundings encourage, urge, or even force him to succumb to someone else's strong requests, appeals, or temptations, that individual succumbs to them easier. The same happens with individuals who define their actions in a conformist way, highly rely on the opinion of others, count on others (friends, authorities), follow the dominant tendencies.

Provocative "Conditioning"

Indirect influence on a subject, intended to induce him to do something, but without any ostentatious external pressure organization, is aimed at the "effects' effects," that is the phenomena gradually provoked as these interim results' future consequence. Even in the "short run," we may observe the results of influencing people not through our statements and actions directed directly at them, but through the influence exerted on the circumstances of coexistence. The formation and modification of the socioeconomic and political situation create stimuli for certain moods, opinions, and beliefs, which, in turn, lead people to particular behavior (reactions) which, under the right conditions (which we may create with later initiatives and actions), seemingly "come by themselves."

I take an example of indirect provocative influence (not necessarily in a pejorative sense, namely machinating to someone's detriment) from the book by Andrzej Grzegorzczuk:

A government that authorizes or stifles inflation through new tax regulations releases a large amount of money into the market or, on the contrary, takes away people's individual financial capabilities, manipulates the economic behavior of citizens, to some extent provokes their economic activity, or provokes economic stagnation. Usually, the government wants to create conditions in which citizens will produce more goods or consume fewer goods.⁷

Therefore, it is the formulation (appropriate guidance and strengthening or weakening) of a particular motivation for the activity. But why does such an influence have the features of manipulation-provocation (let us repeat the objection once again: not necessarily in a pejorative, conspiratorial sense?) Well, it is because, in this case, the influenced individuals' decisions and actions do not result from persuasion, negotiation, social tender, but the arbitrary, selective erection of barriers and the creation of certain opportunities.

As no one generally wants to work harder or limit their consumption, the government in its actions of this kind puts itself above society, creates pressure or (more often) conditions. This is not a partnership influence, although journalism uses a style derived from partnership influences. For example, the government speaks of the need to make sacrifices, but does not appeal to people to make sacrifices (that is to voluntarily forgo some kind of consumption), but creates conditions that make a given consumption no longer possible for the people. Sometimes (less often) the government tries to corrupt citizens by giving them new opportunities. However, these opportunities are often apparent or realistically available only to a few. Then it is real corruption against a minority, but one that deludes the majority.⁸

In this case, the government has a similar status to that of a traffic controller: they allow, suspend, delay, accelerate, determine the direction and intensity of traffic.

4. Retail, Wholesale, and Complex Influence

Both direct and indirect forms of provocation may refer to threefold objects: first, to specific individuals or integrated groups that act as one; second, to groups of people, masses, assemblies that are devoid of ties or that form a mere fleeting and selective bond between the participants; finally, to social groups, communities,

7 Grzegorzczuk, *Życie jako wyzwanie*, pp. 172–173.

8 Grzegorzczuk, *Życie jako wyzwanie*, p. 173.

communes, institutions that share a complex objective and subjective bond, and are organized wholes in nature.

In the first case, we deal with a strictly individualized influence, which is adjusted to the unique situation and personality of the individuals and to what depends on them in their behavior. In the second case, the influence consists in either a standardized and, in a way, wholesale way of influencing the consciousness, situation, and behavior of a mass of people who are alike and typical in some way (this is how advertising and promotion affect millions of consumers, how propaganda and marketing affect millions of voters reduced to a common denominator), or in the simultaneous triggering of different impressions and attitudes in people who are not united by a permanent bond and identification or even strangers, reluctant and hostile to each other. In the third variant, the foothold for provocation means the network of mutual connections between the social position, social situation, and behavior of different individuals and groups, their mutual interdependence, and especially the dependence of individuals or groups on the state, rules of functioning, will and pressure of the wider community.

We may describe these types of provocations as pointed, simultaneous, and networked.

Diagram 3. The possible range of provocation

Scope of Impact	Pointed Provocation	Collective Provocation, Including Simultaneous Provocation	Networked Provocation
Principle of Influence	<p>Directly addressed to a particular individual or group, focused on their awareness, motivation, inclinations, predicted decisions. Consists in the creation of situations, triggering of events, creation of problems, tasks, and challenges, the transmission of information, calls, encouragement, warnings, threats, and so on, which directly affect only the individual or group, and someone may receive and respond to them independently of the object's relationship with other individuals or groups.</p> <p>An object of influence placed in a situation "on its own" in the face of danger, confrontation, rivalry, offer, temptation.</p>	<p>Addressed to multiple individuals or groups at the same time, it provides parallel and synchronic effects, as if the culprit addressed each person individually or undertook numerous separate manipulations. Standardized: the same action or sign triggers the same reactions on a mass scale. Simultaneous: consists in the ambiguity of words, symbols, rituals, the use of illusions, the facade of social bonds and institutions, the egocentricity of individuals and group particularism. Involves harnessing of multiple subjects to achieve the goal of the component tasks.</p> <p>The provocateur, as the sole subject, binds what is separate and seemingly independent in events and human reactions together. Particularly effective in crisis and conflict situations (joined together by a common enemy and a common protector, which conceals internal differences and antagonisms).</p>	<p>Control of the situation and behavior of selected individuals or groups through the control of the bond in the community of which the object is a member, a cell. Selective regulation (stimulation, direction, disturbance) of contacts, communication processes; influence on the interdependence of interests and the nature of mutual interactions in the community.</p> <p>Use of situational threats or opportunities and temptations and environmental pressure to arouse desired emotions and aspirations, to force certain decisions, concessions, reorientation.</p>

5. Materialized vs. Mental and Symbolic Impact

The use of two terms – “object” and “addressee” – is not a coincidence, as they do not mean the same.

An individual or a social group may be the object of manipulative and provocative influences. The individual or social group may either be unaware of them, or not fully understand and appreciate the influences’ purpose and effects, or be aware of the fact and importance of such influences, but, at the same time, be unable to prevent them, react, or oppose them. In such a situation, “what was to happen will happen” regardless of the attitude of those whom we influence. But such pure objectification is only possible for actions the outcome of which does not depend on the interpretation and acceptance of those on whom they are directed. For example, such a *provocative objectification* may be a terrorist attack, but also an effective battery despite the victim’s protests and attempts to defend oneself, as well as a simple disregard for a contractual obligation (for example the obligation of timely delivery, payment, assistance), a decision that someone took without consultation and implemented it without notice, and which is a visible demonstration of bad will and intent to oppress someone, for instance an individual unexpectedly deprived of his position, a group suddenly deprived of certain powers.

The situation is different when the provocation act is a sign, a conventional-symbolic action, that is when it achieves its goal, provided that the act makes someone produce certain impressions, associations, presumptions, experiences that he will interpret and motivate him to create some kind of response to a challenge, threat, or encouragement. In this case, the provocation act is a communication act and the relationship between the provocation’s perpetrator and its victim, or a relatively passive beneficiary takes the form of a relationship between the sender and the recipient of a certain message, a sign (for instance a sign of encouragement, disapproval, reluctance, warning, threat, assault in a conventional form, that is verbal, gestural one). This relationship is not simply an objective dependence – what I do or only could do affects your situation and your ability to act – but an intentional bond based on both parties’ assessments and intentions.

6. Communicative and Regulatory Provocation

In contrast, the difference between influence through the announcement of something and thus triggering certain reactions and attitudes, and influence through the creation of certain states of affairs, triggering events and sequences of events is important for those who are concerned about their interests, convenience, and

benefits or intent to harm someone on a provocative basis. I summarize this difference in the below graph.

Diagram 4. Communicative vs. regulatory form of provocation

CRITERIA FOR	COMMUNICATIVE PROVOCATION	REGULATORY PROVOCATION
TYPE OF EFFECT	<i>Psychological effect:</i> the triggering of impressions, stimuli, experiences, feelings, prejudices, aspirations, intentions, and resolutions; someone's own clear influence that induces (or even compels) others to specific spontaneous reactions or decisions and actions taken as a sign of approval, support, respect or objection to the subject's conduct, will and expectations	<i>Objectivized effect:</i> the triggering of events, states of affairs, changes in relations between individuals, and, among other things, disturbances, misunderstandings, conflicts, or situations that facilitate agreement, cooperation. The circumstances (not always perceived as the result of someone's intentional influence) impose dominant topics and priorities as well as the horizon of choice and limits of imagination of the participants of the situation
NATURE OF ACTION	<i>Intentional act of communication:</i> the imposition of our will through our own signs: statements or meaningful deeds, with a specific meaning, forcing a specific reaction of the recipients. Signs with triple meaning: (1) the expression of a certain attitude toward the addressee (for instance kindness or dislike; respect, esteem, respect, or disregard), (2) the expression of certain intentions (for instance help, disturbance, or subordination), (3) the expression of certain expectations, requirements, claims, demands	<i>Act or process of artificial regulation</i> of human bonds or the course of events: a provocateur in the role of initiator, information selector, traffic dispatcher, intervening, conclusive and decisive instance, a factor capable of preventing, inhibiting, accelerating, directing the course of events, channeling human aspirations

CRITERIA FOR	COMMUNICATIVE PROVOCATION	REGULATORY PROVOCATION
TYPE OF EXTORTION	<i>Extortion</i> of particular behavior of particular subjects (addressees of a statement or an act that is a sign) <i>through our own mental burden</i> . The recipient's reaction is the result of several factors: (1) comprehension of the sender's intentions, (2) prediction of the effects of one's own choice, (3) balance of mental forces (will, consequences, determination) of both parties	<i>Situational extortion</i> : the creation of certain necessities (risks, challenges, demands) which each participant of the situation must consider in his calculations and decisions and which highlight the difference between what is intended, what is desirable, what is necessary, what is possible, what is beneficial and profitable, and what is disadvantageous

The division into direct and indirect provocations does not match the division into typically communicative and regulatory provocations. Both a communicative and regulatory provocation may as well constitute a form of direct or indirect control.

The influence on a particular, somewhat isolated subject in the provocateur's tactics may be similar in nature to the influence on the environment, of which the subject is an element as a controlled object. When we use a challenge in the form of, for example, ostentatious anticipation of someone's action (because we managed to outrun that individual), presenting someone with a *fait accompli* (which speaks for itself, and there is no necessity for words, such as demands, proposals), we control that individual in a similar way as when we manipulate the conditions of his functioning in the environment by triggering changes in this environment because that individual does not influence neither of them. Therefore, the regulatory provocation does not only mean the arbitrary regulation (for instance selective limitation and disruption) of the bonds between our opponent or potential client and his environment, partners, but also the direct regulation (and modification) of that individual's situation to the extent that so far depended on his will, efforts, achievements. On the other hand, the act of communication may provoke both directly, that is as a call, a challenge, an insult, flattery addressed directly to the subject, whom we want to persuade to do something contrary to his intentions, and indirectly, for instance as publishing the information, which leaves the individual with no choice, addressing the surroundings, partners, or superiors of the individual whom we provoke with words such as "help us convince, appease him, explain to him that he must apologize."

7. Perfidy: A Sophisticated Form of Provocation

Perfidy is a special form of provocative style of action, assuming that we mean the provocation's destructive orientation to others.⁹ A perfidy is a *subversive* form of influence, which is particularly sophisticated in terms of methods and tactics – extremely dangerous and harmful to others – and some use it as a tool to antagonize individuals, social groups, nations, and states, as an instrument of conquest, subordination, subjugation, exploitation, retaliation, and finally, extermination. The tragic experiences of humanity, such as the Inquisition, the Crusades, religious wars, colonialism, Nazism, or Stalinism, confirm that the most effective methods for the perpetrators and the most dangerous and fatal for the victims are precisely the ones included in perfidy's repertoire.

The essence of this way of influencing others reflects itself already in the name, which is a transformed phrase *per fidem*, which literary means: “by faith,” or to put it in a more accurate, full, and correct way means: *by the use and abuse of faith, trust, reliance*. The Latin word *fides* means faith in many contexts.¹⁰ *Fides* may mean: belief in something (confession of faith, worldview, including religion), belief in someone (in someone's assets, qualities, attributes), believing someone (belief in someone's sincerity and good intentions, the assumption that someone acts “in good faith” and that someone will “remain faithful,” that is, someone will keep the bond and keep his word, fulfill his duty, promises, commitments), meaning trust, reliance, and finally, belief in the validity and effectiveness of certain rules of the game or validity of certain forms of social control, as a guarantee of our own and common safety. Faith does not have to be naive in itself, for instance the principle of cautious approach in business or road traffic consists in the prediction that someone may fail, but there are certain rules or their enforcers that stand guard over us. All these phenomena may be subject to manipulation, that is instrumental treatment and abuse.

To make the concept more precise, I will add that – obviously – the abuse of other individual's faith, trust, or even reliance, especially the abuse of naive faith and trust, mere credulity, does not mean perfidy. We deal with perfidy when abuse consists in deliberate arousing of such faith in someone (faith in some specific assurances, in someone's qualities and good intentions) or deliberate arousing of a permanent trust precisely to use it as someone's weakness, to

9 I separately and extensively explain this phenomenon's essence and manifestations in the following book, through references to numerous historical and literary examples, and press releases: Mirosław Karwat, *O perfidii* (Warszawa: 2001).

10 Cf. J. Mańkowski, *Praktyczny Słownik Łacińsko-Polski* (Warszawa: 2000), p. 120.

make someone defenseless against an attack or betrayal of the individual that he trusted earlier.

It is necessary to distinguish between someone's credulity, or even "natural" or "primitive" naivety that results from character predispositions, or a certain disability, such as infantilism, or from a certain type of upbringing or stage of human development, for instance the childhood, youth, or senile, and secondary and "artificial" naivety because it is contrary to the daily, natural attitude of an individual or group, marked by rationality, criticism, prudence, or caution. The latter kind of naivety is not simply "given." Moreover, it is incomparable to the opportunity that someone's natural naivety offers to a fraud, scammer, or common liar, as the latter kind of naivety is a result of special cunning influences.

Therefore, to put it simply, the art of perfidy involves the intentional and, at the same time, artificial arousing of such secondary naive reliance or trust in particular matters (because it consists in insincere intentions and a deceptive game of appearances). Subjects achieve it through not crude, but sophisticated ways, mainly based on subversiveness.

Subversiveness means the ability to turn the sense of signs, symbols, statements, actions, the transformation of phenomena – for instance the action's effects – into their opposites in a surprising way, a situation in which someone checkmates the surroundings with masks and poses that precisely contradict his own face and intentions. In this respect, Hitler's Munich masterpiece is instructive: an aggressor, a conflict provocateur, who checkmates others with the threat of war, bargained (or rather dictated, calling it a "compromise") everything he wanted, and at the same time, acted as a "dove of peace," a politician who wanted agreement and compromise, plus he achieved all of this with the help of Czechoslovakian allies turned into traitors.

A *perfidant*, which means the subject who acts perfidiously, gains the trust of the future victim, for instance based on disastrous rescue (deliverance, which turns out to be a trap, a cause of bane), harmful help, addictive or subjugating liberation, requests for help or mediation, or impartial judgment of the dispute, which, of course, is not visible immediately, but only after a while. Such behavior almost always proves effective. It is difficult, for example, not to feel obliged or grateful to someone who helped or defended us from something or someone. This, in turn, becomes the basis for the trust shown in further contacts: after all, distrust would be a kind of ingratitude.

The basic tactical principle of perfidy involves the assumption that to reliably and effectively harm or destroy someone, an individual must get close to him. This corresponds to the etymology of the word "trickery" (=> to finagle someone means to get closer to someone, whereas metaphorically it means to deprive

someone of the ability to take criticism and not treat oneself and the situation seriously as a result of approaching that individual). Therefore, a *perfidant* acts the most effective as a trustee, advisor, protector, the only one who understands and supports, or as one who puts the others' vigilance to sleep: as one who needs help, care, rescue himself, as one who is persecuted, defenseless.

The tools of such a confidential subversiveness involve an enigmatic and bigoted form of communication, hypocrisy, excuse, faithlessness, intrigue.

The obscurity and ambiguity of communication – words, gestures, ritual and procedural actions, declarations – which serves to conceal or pretend certain intentions and goes as far as bigotry, that is the ability to satisfy even contradictory social expectations or requirements with the same gestures or words, to gain trust and support of individuals and groups whose interests and aspirations are contradictory. Usually, this enigmatic nature and bigotry guarantee impunity, since they allow someone to talk his way out of responsibility for the consequences of his suggestions, persuasions, calls with a simple “I did not say that” buffer.

Hypocrisy, duplicity combines instrumental hypocrisy (someone deceives and lies to others, selectively exacts from others, and equally selectively respects certain social norms, depending on his convenience, but, at the same time, keeps up appearances of being principled) and self-deception (which serves well to suppress one's moral restraints, mental inconsistencies, prevents “leaks in the lie”). At the same time, the above uses the *perfidant's* hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of the victim's surroundings, as well as the victim's hypocrisy itself, who wanted to outsmart the *perfidant* this way but the *perfidant* eventually outsmarted the victim.

When defending, some use *evasion* (when one does not want to fulfill inconvenient obligations, duties, responsibilities, and we deal with the possibility of refusal that is not formally a refusal). In its verbal form, such evasion means an excuse (a pretext, false justification), whereas in its practical form – a ploy, that is an activity, an occupation that provides an alibi based on such statements as “I didn't make it on time” or “first, I must finish the earlier matter.”

Faithlessness means a parasite form of perfidious provocation. Faithlessness means the failure to keep commitments, the surprising violation of the rules of the game, or the common betrayal of a partner, ally, or protégé: the abandonment of such individual in trouble, the unexpected turning against such individual using his well-recognized weaknesses or joining that individual's enemies. Not all kinds of faithlessness are perfidious. Accidental and spontaneous faithlessness are not perfidious, for instance when we deal with a trivial act of marital infidelity, desertion from the battlefield under the influence of fear or defeatist

news. Certainly, however, perfidious faithlessness means deliberate faithlessness, which is an implementation of a plan, or faithlessness that – although not planned (especially in detail: in what matter, at what time) – involves a subject that was ready to implement it at any time, deliberately espoused someone without concern for his dignity and safety, and assumed “the acceptance of obligations without obligations” in advance.

Finally, the “crown jewel” here is *intrigue*: an aggressive, conspiratorial form of destructive action aimed at actively harming someone with one’s own clever efforts, entangling him in trouble and danger, and even in dead-end situations. Intrigue is either a direct or indirect form of destructive control over the victim’s consciousness and situation. I deal with the mechanism and repertoire of intrigue separately in Chapter Eight.

The special, almost subversive sophistication of perfidious methods and tactics of conduct – rivalry, struggle, revenge, exclusion of someone from the game, discreditation of opponents, and so on – relates not only to the exceptional ingenuity of the pest (schemer) and, at the same time, the sadistic flavor of the schemer’s invention but also to the impressive psychotechnical or sociotechnical effect which is the inclusion of an individual in the act to the detriment of someone, including his closest relatives, friends, allies, followers, as well as such addiction of mentally, emotionally, and situationally entangled individual in a way that he zealously acts to his own detriment and destruction, with an initial sense of success, euphoria, fulfilled duty, and even gratitude toward her persecutor. This is the most serious dimension of such subversiveness.

The qualification which I adopted at the beginning of this chapter fully applies to perfidy. We may deal with perfidy both at the level of the individual, single acts of provocation (perfidious provocations), and at the level of complex operations or intrigues which are a web and sequence of many provocations that together serve a particular goal and a closed result crowns them, for instance intelligence operations, some media campaigns, especially the smear campaigns or intrigues that occurred in the backstage of different parliamentary bodies or offices. It may also be that perfidy is a constant and almost exceptionless rule in some subject’s conduct that determines the subject’s lasting style of operation that matches his predispositions and preferences.

VI. Productive vs. Parasitic Form of Provocation

Most usually associate the “provocation” term, as if it were obvious, with a situation when someone triggered some social or mental effect by his planned action or by control of someone else’s behavior or actions. Anyway, one could succumb to such suggestion if he read the definition adopted so far literally: “artificial triggering of phenomena that include events, states of affairs, mental states, human behavior.” Artificial means induced (enabled, forced, or settled) with exactly such action.

1. Artificial Triggering... On a Favorable Ground

But what does it mean in practice? (1) The subject somewhat brings phenomena (events, actions, thoughts, intentions) to life: those phenomena would not be able to come into being, or it would be highly unlikely, without provided stimuli – particular example, incentive, help, or warning – or the subject’s intervention. (2) The subject enhances or weakens and channelizes outlined but neither dominant nor settled social tendencies and human aspirations. The subject that uses provocation regulates the intensity of such tendencies and aspirations, creates, or destroys barriers, makes it so that something is more or less likely to occur. The subject cannot, for example, bring envy to life or destroy it once and for all, but he may fuel it, bring it to the forefront, and use people that are already consumed by envy, or embarrass and prevent them from more violent behavior; (3) With initiative, effort, and reference to what happens, the subject may cause a situation in which one of the opposing tendencies (which balance each other in the addressees’ consciousness and will, such as the desire for revenge and the desire for forgiveness and reconciliation) outweighs the other tendency. The subject’s behavior may also tip the balance in the case of alternative, divergent, and opposing objective tendencies, for instance in a society, where proclivities to economic and cultural backwardness clash with proclivities to modernization and being open to the world, a political upheaval, conducted by decisive reformers or traditionalists, may determine which of the proclivities emerges victorious.

Nevertheless, we should not absolutize “artificial triggering” for two reasons.

First, “artificial” triggering does not mean “discretionary.” It is not that one may evoke any social or mental effect with ingenious cunning action anytime, in any situation, anywhere, and in any object. By no means. We cannot persuade or tempt every customer to buy anything anytime with commercials and special offers, regardless of price and the customer’s needs. We cannot successfully encourage every spouse to participate in a “one-night stand” or get him embroiled in romance, love triangle. We cannot seduce everybody in an erotic

or ideological sense. We cannot persuade everybody to descend into drunkenness at the moment of our choice. Not every financial manipulation guarantees a stock market crash. Not every revolt begins a revolution. Not every pacification scares the rebels and quells the riots: sometimes it may “add fuel to the fire.”

To put it briefly, the regularity present in the methodology of sciences fully applies to provocation: the conditional nature of cause-and-effect relationships, which is a single-factor dependence, does not mean a simple and automatic consequence of certain types of phenomena, but a dependence, which materializes in a certain combination of circumstances and factors.¹¹

A considerable part of acts of provocation owes not only its effectiveness but also the possibility of occurrence in general to the fact that such acts come upon a favorable ground, in the form of objectively mature social demand, people's expectations, illusions, biases. Therefore, provocation is not “the creation of something from nothing.” On the contrary, we deal with provocation when one overcomes barriers, unlocks inhibitions, discloses secrets, transforms understatements or riddles to become clear. In this sense, *virtually every provocation act grows on a certain fodder and “breeds” on something*, for instance human greed, snobbism, naivety, biases, fascination with innovations and sensation, desire for a change, revenge, real (and even discreet) racial, ethnic, or religious conflicts, crisis tendencies in the economy, technical standards and legislation, which someone may turn into a trap or camouflage for his actions, and so on.

Second, it may be that arbitrary settlement and imposition of something are precisely the more important differentiator, the attribute of provocation. Sometimes we may be able to cause, impose something which neither relies on some concealed, starving, or suppressed demand, nor on the expectations of the action's addressees, nor on some objective premises, but on the disruption of something that functions, on spoiling something that would not fall by itself, or other similar mechanism. For example, we may artificially set against each other people, who do not argue themselves and so far had no reason for disputes or quarrels; we may scare and intimidate people who do not get frightened easily and so far did not have reasons to be concerned with an innovation; with a single bill, we may paralyze the economy that did pretty well before.

11 You may find more detailed information in the following monograph: Wł. Krajewski, *Związek przyczynowy* (Warszawa: 1967).

2. With Own Effort, By Using Someone, and By a Twist of Fate

The artificial triggering of phenomena or the arbitrary regulation of their course and orientation, or the unilateral settlement of affairs may be a result of a three-fold influence, which may involve:

- * the process of certain situations' creation or triggering of particular mental states and tendencies in other people solely by certain subject's own actions, statements;
- * the instrumental use of other people's aspirations, ideas, illusions, and behavior, which one foresaw or deliberately evoked to pursue a particular goal; the people, to whom the above phenomena belong, become the performers of one's plan;
- * the transformation of prepared facts (which came into being without the subject's participation) by him into an opportunity for particular comments, declarations of intent, decisions, for an occasional justification of resolutions and actions that one undertook with motivation and intention quite different from that declared in the convenient situation; the selective focusing of the surroundings' attention on the facts that are convenient for the subject, biased publicizing, suppressing, belittling or leaving events and affairs unsaid, giving events or other people's actions and words a convenient interpretation for oneself, for instance attributing them a sensational or scandalous character, calling controversial acts a crime, or calling inconvenient facts treason or heresy.

Let us try to grasp this nuance. Who, for example, provokes a scandal? Is it always someone who deliberately behaves scandalously, because he wants to challenge someone, draw others' attention to something, force others to see to something? Or is it someone who draws and focuses others' attention to an event or action, which they would not notice or appreciate otherwise, and who, at the same time, suggests them the assessment of this discovery, imposes feelings or calculated argumentation on the environment? Different incidents in art galleries, concerts, or lectures often show that it was not an artist who utters scandal, composer, or performer who challenges the audience or the law, the authorities, the church, that it was not a speaker or debater, but it was a critic, coincidentally present politician or (party, parochial) activist, watchful journalist: a scandal-monger and sender of exalted reports, who turns it into an outrageous event, into a conflict, confrontation, manifests himself or provokes an objection in those, whom the event itself would not provoke normally. It is precisely them that inform the message recipients or event's witnesses that, for example, the event is

outrageous, blameworthy (instigated-outraged). It is them that inform an artist or writer that he is a corrupter, iconoclast, the profaner of most sacred values, the promoter of pornography, although his intentions may have been most certainly consistent with some canon of correctness, right-minded and right-believing. For centuries we know, for example, how much one may achieve in a theatre with claque: mockery, whistles, protests, turn a premiere into a flop with induced tumult, and on the other hand, make an insipid performance look like a great success with intrusive applause, as if on order, and demand for an encore! Therefore, a claque differs as a provocation from the demonstration of nonconformism, controversial behavior of an artist, or an avant-garde experiment which is a hard exam for all of the participants of exhibition, concert, play.

Similarly, who provokes war? Is it simply someone, who pursues war and launches an assault? Or maybe those who tolerated his increasing aggressiveness and impunity in breaking more laws before also participate in the process? We may exemplify the above with the experience of French and British appeasement foreign policy, which hastened the coming of war and strengthened its initiator, instead of postponing it. How to qualify a situation when the attacked country becomes the culprit for the outbreak of the war, when it just wanted to prevent or avoid it, but other countries set it up in an appropriate interpretation of an event, incident (completely accidental or specially fabricated and posed), which was convenient for the attacker?

Who provoked, for example, cabinet collapse and an unexpectedly quick change at the helm of government? Was it those who left the coalition because they intended to bargain something as a prerequisite of their return, or rather those, who did not miss a convenient moment, created another majority ad hoc and effectively pushed through a constructive vote of no confidence?

Those examples already warn us not to reduce provocation to a simple situation, when someone who provokes with an idea or effort has a purpose in this action. It is not always that the one who worked hard to gain a benefit gains it in the end, which is similar to ordinary life situations. It is enough to consciously anticipate, cause, and capitalize on someone else's actions, accomplishments, or troubles.

Moreover, an intentional act does not always have to consist of a situation in which someone planned what will happen in advance (what one will do, with careful preparations, or what others will do, and which one may predict or inspire in advance, and integrate it into one's plan). Contrary to common intuition, we may also improvise a game regarding something, which is neither our merit, nor something predicted by us, but something that was a godsend to us, and we will not waste that godsend.

To put it briefly, we will call a provocation not only someone's own deliberate action which artificially evokes or arbitrarily regulates and settles something and not only skillful control of someone else's action, so that they become an instrument of realization of certain subject's idea, but also the exploitation of someone else's action and their results, giving them a meaning and significance that is inconsistent with their intentions and objective character, exploitation of emerging opportunities to cause a sudden change in the social situation, the system of forces, making the previously impossible or improbable real, overnight spoiling something that seemed permanent, unquestionable, and irreversible.

3. Creating Situations Vs. Turning Opportunities to One's Favor

This differentiation of "work input" into the acts of provocation manifests itself in situations of rivalry and conflict between individuals and human teams, especially in political play and struggle.

To settle rivalry or struggle with a political opponent, for example, with the center of power or opposition faction, it is often enough to (instead of committing our own costly and, at the same time, risky and unreliable insidious procedures) grasp a convenient opportunity, which came into being either based on sheer or favorable coincidence or due to someone else's actions, especially as a result of errors, failures, two-edged nature of efforts, someone being late or some venture being started too early.

Social spontaneousness in various forms constantly creates such opportunities. Many so-called uncontrollable collective behaviors, avalanche, and surprising turns of events allow the vigilant participant of the game to intervene, protest, criticize; not to mention individual unforeseen events, in which reflexes and ingenuity determine the turning to one's favor and in which the simple lack of inhibition and scruples extends the limits of imagination and tactical flexibility; not to mention single unforeseen events, when reflex and ingenuity simply decide in whose favor will they turn, when the simple lack of restraints or scruples expands boundaries of imagination and tactical flexibility.

Politicians are particularly eager to use such opportunity as a pretext or safe cover for their own shoddy and wicked behavior, for example, to cause unrest, destabilization or to break peace agreements, compromises, and inter-party alliances, to pose ideological, principled reasons to revise views and stances taken on certain issues, when an ad hoc interest, opportunistic calculation, or, for example, succumbing to other people's blackmail is a real reason for reorientation.

Other people's actions are also a fantastic opportunity: first, those that they undertook deliberately, which were well calculated and perfectly executed;

second, those which were wrong, because someone overestimated the effects, costs, neglected side and accidental results, although they acted efficiently and effectively; finally, those that were completely misguided. Assassinations of leaders committed by others, acts of blind mass terror, brutal suppression of demonstrations, demonstrations of force that provoke spontaneous reactions, carefully prepared and “blown up” affairs, scandals: all of the above shows the limitless talent of “political sharks.”

Because of those reasons, we must always see the difference between productive and parasitic provocation.

4. Attributes of Productive Provocation

The former term may be a bit misleading if we do not clarify its context. Productive does not necessarily mean, for example, constructive, positive, or socially useful.

Obviously, there are provocations, which properly serve the common interests, the common good of a community or the whole society.

In addition, not only acts of provocation motivated by a sense of servitude and principledness – undertaken with a pro-social intention – may benefit the society but also those whose moral overtone arouses mixed feelings. For example, many successes of the so-called investigative journalism – disclosure of abuses, institutional pathologies, exposure of celebrities who enjoy popularity or authority as criminals, posers, careerists – are a service to society, although the involved achieved it not because of social involvement but in pursuit of a sensation, for circulation, ratings, to discredit a political opponent just because he is an opponent, but not because it is required by the social good. In such cases, we may doubt whether the whistleblower gets outraged by what they expose or whether the whistleblower enjoys the fact that they may get outraged and cause widespread outrage. “Looking for dirt on someone,” especially when dictated by political bias and readiness to evaluate information prejudicially, is by no means morally laudable in itself. However, the triviality of motives and the false, self-interested nature of demonstrated “principledness” and criticism do not negate the social benefit of the exposure of grifters, opportunists, or real agents.

Productive provocation may well be constructive in the sense that it creates something, especially something socially useful and necessary, and destructive in the sense that it destroys something, for example, it undermines trust, authority, nullifies someone’s achievements, replaces compromise with struggle and revenge.

The “productive” term refers to a situation when a particular subject (the provocation’s perpetrator) had to do some work, make some effort, also or solely at his own expense to cause something. From this viewpoint, gossip that someone deliberately put into circulation, slander, libel, fabrication of false testimony, or intrigue are also “productive;” moreover, an act of sabotage is also “productive.”

Therefore, productive provocation means an artificial triggering of certain effects, arbitrary regulation, or the settlement of the course of events through moves based on someone’s own efforts, endeavor, or attempts to direct the interests and manage the activities and energy of others that also require his own effort. Here, the subject is an initiator, framer, direct perpetrator, or as a lawyer would say, the executive perpetrator of the action, which creates particular states of affairs or states of human consciousness with a certain purpose in mind, and the subject undertakes the action at a time and place of their choosing, in a form that suits their resources and qualifications. This is why productive provocation differs from parasitic provocation, which bases on the exploitation of events that were “a godsend to us” as opportunities and are convenient for the subject of other people’s actions and their effect, favorable moments, and advantageous situations which are not this subject’s merit.

Productive influence in provocations usually bases on a particular combination of elements of *suggestion* (through someone’s actions-signs or interpretative activities) and *extortion* (not necessarily by force, but also, for example, on the principle of importunity, harassment, or situational extortion through the creation of certain situations and atmosphere, the triggering of emotions in others, through which they lose control over their own thinking and experiencing and become susceptible to control).

5. Parasitic Form of Provocation

For a change, the parasitic variety of provocation involves battenning on someone else’s actions and their results (achievements or errors, failures, and troubles) and situationally conditioned possibilities of taking advantage of what happened, of what is still happening, and of how the situation’s participants experience and perceive it. In particular, it may involve consuming and turning others’ hostile and deceitful actions to one’s advantage. Thus, it is a popular provocation to accuse others of an actual or perceived provocation to justify our actions, which often allows us to “shift our ground” (for instance, the relationship between an attacker and a victim). A statement that someone’s action is a provocation may be a provocation itself. So is a principled protest against a provocation and

provocations in general, if such a protest provides an opportunity to attract attention, gain interest, and launch our own attack.

Thus, it happens that the proper provocation is not the first link of an action or sequence of events that an action set in motion – for instance a rogue act, a terrorist act, someone's overeagerness – but only what comes after it: the behavior of those who make use of the socially shocking action (calculating or hasty and spontaneous – it is all the same) according to the intention or against the intention of the first actors.

Parasitic provocation often involves conscious use (allegedly, “in good faith”) of a clue, someone else's lie or insinuation, fabricated documentation in the interpretation of different events or information, while someone who provokes is aware of falsification or suspicious nature of sources or suppliers of information. It may also be based on the triggering of further phenomena and behavior by deliberate maintenance and deepening of the environment's confusion. This is especially the case in the numerous negative campaigns and smear campaigns that some unleash and carry out demagogically “because of” (in fact, *under the pretext of*) various sensations, scandals, tragic events, collective disasters. We do not so much parasitize on an evident scandal or affair as we decide that a yet unrecognized and problematic matter is an affair, a scandal, which obviously entitles and even obliges us to “principled” reactions. Then, the manipulators suggest the public opinion that a complex problem is simple and obvious, that presumptions and speculations convenient for them and accounts that emotionally guide the audience are “facts that speak for themselves.” They demonstratively pretend that they even believe in something that evidently does not warrant belief and that most people regard as unreliable. They may sow a “seed of doubt” with such persistence. They present something as indisputable, which would otherwise be questionable both objectively and in public perception. As evidence of their theses, especially arbitrary assessments, biased accusations, and exaggerated accusations, they offer rumor, hearsay, clue, suspicion, denunciation, even when it is forced with the following transaction: “you say what you must say, and we will try to do something for you.” They refer to openly biased judgments and expert opinions as “impartial.” They cite legal regulations that are convenient for them and unambiguous on matters that are not themselves unambiguous or yet unexplained.

This is flagrantly provocative, but that does not mean it is a desperado behavior. Audacity will often disrupt the confidence of unstable, undecided individuals and communities, especially those who have something to gain or lose. They accept not so much reliable as beneficial or valid information. The self-confidence of someone who appears to be a prudent and responsible individual

means that it is not his stubbornness that raises doubts, but rather it is this person who raises doubts and credit of trust in their surprised audiences: “there must be something in it,” “he must have some serious reasons since he is not a fool or a fraud, but such an inquisitive intellectual.” A thoughtfully chosen moment and an accurately chosen foothold for the provocateur-parasite enhances his power of suggestion.

6. The Turbulent Tale of a Handbag

The most often observed fodder and the most popular pretext for parasitic provocations (especially those designed to discredit) involve curiosities, rumors, but also facts from the sphere of morality, as spicy as they are real, related to the carelessness of famous individuals and public figures, their inconsistency in behavior, the inconsistency of words and deeds, especially of official public declarations and personal, private practice of conduct, which involves not only abuses but ordinary mistakes, even accidental or of marginal importance. It is a well-known fact that opponents act mercilessly in their criticism of all lapses, slips of the tongue, and gaffes. Once, some eagerly interpreted the linguistic awkwardness of an ambassador candidate in a neighboring country as her ignorance of the Oder and Bug Rivers’ location and the country’s borders. Another time, an influential politician who confused *philippics* with *Philippines* was satirically executed by the media. Of course, others educated him for a whole week how to amend his mistake.

And now a more complex example of ordinary human weakness’ political turning to one’s favor: the case of a handbag.

Scene One. During a parliamentary visit to Vietnam, a female MP of the ruling party (which specializes in stigmatization and prosecution of all kinds of crime) whom the tabloids match with a man, who is the chairman of the party and prime minister at the same time, occasionally buys a handbag for the equivalent of 50 zlotys: a fake of an exclusive and snobbish handbag that is prestigious in the elegant world from the Coco Chanel catalog. The handbag not only copies a copyrighted design but also bears the copyrighted emblem of the company, although it does not meet the conditions of identification with the original neither by its origin nor quality, nor any license. That is, it is a “pirated” product.

Scene Two. The female MP not only enjoys the purchase but also shares her joy with those around her, in any case with her colleagues in the parliamentary club. She expresses her pride in her own foresight and familiarity with the world of fashion. She bought a trendy and expensive item so cheaply (balance: 50 zlotys instead of 2000 zlotys).

Scene Three. Her colleague from the club, a male MP known from many controversial initiatives and statements, frequently present at court hearings in defamation cases, a widely read author of numerous rectifications and apologies, and thus a media personality, who is always in the center of journalists' attention (What will he say this time? What will he get up to?), casually (on the occasion of some interview) "rats his colleague out" when he reveals this fact as a curiosity. Later, some disputed the circumstances of this "denunciation," whether he presented the information about this find in a sneering tone and referred to taste, style, and cheeseparag maliciously or whether he merely committed a careless indiscretion and proved long-tongued (a prater).

Scene Four. On her internet blog, a female MP from the opposition – known for her eccentric lifestyle and sharp tongue – comments on this curiosity and says that such precautions do not suit a parliamentarian, since MPs are supposed not only to pass the law but also to set an example of respecting it.

Scene Five. The media (especially, but not only, the opposition media) pick up the story. The curiosity becomes news of the day and then causes quite a stir. Comments repeat the thesis that a conscious purchase of a pirated product means at least accessory to crime if not a crime in itself; that such nonchalance toward the violation of law contradicts the image of moral and legal purists' party; that such savings are distasteful in the case of the female MP who is supposed to personify the majesty of the state (also by her outfit) and who can afford this "chic" since her allowance amounts to almost 10,000 zlotys; and also that it is a sign of parochial pretentiousness (when one aspires to the standards of Paris in a piece of substitute equipment). There is also no shortage of strictly political commentary, namely generalizations about the hypocrisy of a party dedicated to moral revolution and legal rigorism.

Scene Six. In media statements, several MPs wonder whether such a case does not qualify for the MPs' Ethics Committee, if not for the Attorney General's Office. In any case, such a case calls for explanations.

Scene Seven. Disgusted with this unhealthy publicity of the affair, worried about its impact on the image of the entire political environment, but even more irritated by the fact that the party owes all this "stench" to the talkativeness of its enfant terrible (called "bullterrier"), the party leadership takes disciplinary action against this MP and accuses him of acting to the detriment of the entire party. This causes repeated hilarity for some and consternation for others.

Scene Eight. Both the media and the opposition consider the punishment for this self-diversion, which coincides with the punishment of another party politician, this time for a serious matter: the politician asked embarrassing questions and publicly shared doubts about the actions of a minister. The media and the

opposition unambiguously interpret it as evidence of authoritarianism, courtly relations, and negative personnel selection (elimination of personages in favor of disciplined, expressionless mediocrities). On the other hand, in comments of the kinder or sympathizing part of the media, there is a tone of concern: such a defense of ranks' unity and the team's good image is an own goal.

The qualification of this sequence of events is obvious: it is a multistage discrediting parasitic provocation that contains elements of involuntary self-discredit of the MP, along with her overly talkative colleague, overeager superiors, and party colleagues.

This example is instructive in that it shows how someone may make serious political capital out of trivial behavior in trivial matters, which then become a reason or pretext for quite serious accusations. It shows how great is the efficiency of the parasitic form of provocation: how much one can "squeeze" out of someone else's blooper and even more unfortunate attempts of "saving face" that worsen the situation.

7. The "Zippergate" Scandal

On the other hand, let us see how the personal recklessness of a politicians of world stature may be used in political struggle, when the politician forgets that as a public figure and head of state – or even superpower – he cannot count on such protection of privacy and intimacy as an average citizen of his country. The infamous sex scandal of serious political consequences that compromised not only the authority and personal dignity of the President of the United States but also the dignity of the office and the prestige of the USA itself already went down in history. The case was entangled in a considerable opportunity for a political game, in which even impeachment was at stake:

It is Wednesday, January 21, 1998. Just four days earlier, Bill Clinton testified under oath that he did not have an intimate relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. In an affidavit filed in federal court in Washington, Monica Lewinsky testifies that she did not have a sexual relationship with the president. But tapes of Lewinsky's phone conversations, as she tells a friend with poignancy about oral sex with the president, come into the hands of special prosecution counsel Kenneth Starr. / These tapes appear to be the smoking gun of the president's perjury and inducing another individual to lie under oath and could contribute to Clinton's removal from office. These types of crimes carry penalties of up to 5 and up to 10 years in prison. And this is what the most serious American dailies are writing about this January Wednesday. / Could

it be that Clinton's presidency (and who knows if not his marriage too) is coming to an ultimate end?¹²

Kenneth Starr formally had the status of an independent prosecutor, but strongly motivated by his passions, political prejudice (he had "hunted" the Clintons earlier), and personal ambition (such a hit, on a historical scale!), he did not overlook such an opportunity. He knew that this case does not look like a trivial moral scandal, such as those that occurred in the history of countries and leaders before; and only some of such scandals have "shaken the throne." On the other hand, it is an opportunity for judgment and removal from power on charges of crimes against the interests of the state.

However, the media were a natural ally of the zealous accuser in this ambitious endeavor, which always to react to spicy information in the standard way, as to any tabloid stunt:

This most important announcement in the capital of the United States becomes (through the medium of CNN) a worldwide sensation. Already before noon, the first-ever visit of the Pope to Cuba, the crisis around Iraq, and the confession of the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, to the bombings of American universities and airlines cease to matter for American news services.... No one seems to be paying attention to Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who officially visit the US capital right this moment.¹³

Here, the essence of the phenomenon called the mediatization of politics revealed itself in a caricatural form. What is the "news," the topic of the day: perhaps events, human decisions, and actions that affect the fate of humanity, cause or solve some social problems? Or perhaps it is a great tragedy, at least a cataclysm or a public threat? Not really, the criterion is different: what is the biggest gossip, sensation, record, or surprise. Once it may be murder, another time – the secrets of the alcove, the secrets of the kitchen, or the medicine cabinet or hospital chart of a famous person.

The same prosecution counsel now wants to prove that the president lied under oath and that he and his close friend, attorney Vernon Jordan, persuaded a young White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, to commit perjury. Thus, this time it is no longer about the conduct of the governor of a small state in the south of the USA but about the most powerful man in the country: the President. The consequence of proving him guilty may result in his removal from office by the Senate.¹⁴

12 A. Kaniewski, *Eros w Białym Domu* (Warszawa: 2000), pp. 12–13.

13 Kaniewski, *Eros*, p. 13.

14 Kaniewski, *Eros*, p. 14.

The president who first abuses his power and authority to sexually exploit a female employee and then both obstructs justice and once again abuses authority, this time by inducing his subordinates to engage in obstruction and perjury – this surely must end his career as it did to Richard Nixon. Or maybe it does matter that Richard Nixon lied about a political crime of constitutional importance while Bill Clinton lied concerning a personal matter?

During the quickly passing first hours of Wednesday, when everyone wants to “pot” the President as quickly as possible and become the king of the hunt, a torrent of both true and false information floods all doubts. All that matters is the scandal at the White House! Journalists are as excited as if they were covering the second Gulf War and the capture of Saddam Hussein. They may put any information to print, even if it is not 100 percent confirmed; all they have to do is cite “sources close to the investigation.”¹⁵

The consequence of this atmosphere was the violation of a previously strict barrier, namely, the public discussion of intimate details of physiology, sexual technique, or personal underwear.

In the end, as we know, President Clinton emerged unscathed from the embarrassing situation in which he embroiled himself, although with a damaged reputation. Both procedural calculations (for the resignation of the perjurer) and calculations to provoke widespread outrage, condemnation, and isolation in society and international opinion failed. It turned out that the American society underwent a visible evolution in matters of manners and moral standards, tolerance for politicians’ personal weaknesses, that ambiguous fame for the consumers of tabloid information does not have to be equivalent to infamy if it is “fame that results from one being reckless” and, above all, that a sufficient guarantee is the acceptance of the outcome of the leader’s rule who may be confused about his temperament and personal life but shows professionalism and consistency in his political activity. Or, perhaps, there was also the effect of spite toward an action too intrusive compared to the political triviality of the offense? Let us leave these mysteries to sociologists.

The parasitic scheme of provocation reveals its dangerous nature in historical situations, in which some prey on great conflicts and collective tragedies. Two examples are very meaningful in this regard.

15 Kaniewski, *Eros*, p. 15.

8. Sarajevo: An Assassination Both Outrageous and Convenient

Most rightly regard the Sarajevo assassination as the spark that started the First World War. However, this does not mean that we may seriously consider it the conflict's cause, and certainly neither its main nor original cause. Not at all. According to many historians, the outbreak of the First World War itself was in any case settled by the unanimous desire of the European empires for a "new deal," a new division of Europe and its colonies; although none of them knew the timing, the official reason (*casus belli*), or even the final composition of the opposing coalitions in advance. Only with this amendment and also with the knowledge that it is problematic to tell to what extent it was a cause in a complex causal connection, and to what extent a pretext, we may call this action a "cause."

The Sarajevo assassination attempt on June 28, 1914 on the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was the immediate cause of the war. Conspirators directed from Belgrade were responsible for the assassination, as a group of staff officers in the capital of Serbia decided to provoke the war, probably in agreement with the same, equally irresponsible, Russian staff officers. / The Austrian government decided to exploit the widespread indignation in Europe, which at that time abhorred terror. Vienna's ruling circles finally decided to bring about an end to the entire Yugoslav question. However, it was not very clear how this end was to look like. It was decided only to start a war with Serbia and humiliate it so that it could not continue to stand at the head of the Yugoslav movement. The outstanding statesman, Hungarian Prime Minister I. Tisza, was at first against such a war because he did not want to enlarge the territory with lands inhabited by Slavs. Thus, Serbia was to be defeated but not incorporated into the Habsburg monarchy: instead, Serbia was to be relegated to the rank of Austria-Hungary's vassal. / This concept was not viable because even after a complete defeat, Serbs would not give up the idea of the unification of all southern Slavs. However, it clearly illustrates the hopeless situation of the dualist monarchy in 1914.¹⁶

In short, Vienna needed a confrontation and downright war with Serbia, which does not mean that Austrians sent the heir to the throne to Sarajevo to be shot in order to get the desired war. However, though painful, evoking spontaneous reactions, and a desire for retaliation, this blow paradoxically was to some extent to the advantage of Viennese politicians: since such a misfortune and such an injustice already occurred, it was at least politically useful.

When the German government assured Vienna of its support, on July 23, Austro-Hungarians sent an ultimatum to Belgrade, worded in such a way that Serbs could not accept it. Serbian diplomacy gave an extremely compliant reply, but even this did not

16 H. Wereszycki, *Historia Austrii* (Wrocław: 1986), p. 262.

help; the countries broke off diplomatic relations and, on July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. The fact that the General Staff issued a mobilization order intended for a war limited to the Balkans only shows how little foresight there was in Austro-Hungarian leadership. Although diplomats expected Russia to intervene militarily in defense of Serbia, the General Staff did not give the order for mobilization planned in case of a simultaneous war with Russia and Serbia. On July 30, Russia announced a general mobilization; the next day Austria-Hungary announced it too. On August 2, Germany declared war on Russia, and on August 3 – France. On August 4, England declared war on Germany, and only on August 5, did Austria declare war on Russia. It was military reasons that caused this delay, as both Russia and Austria wanted to mobilize peacefully for a few more days.¹⁷

The “negotiation” tactics strictly confirm premeditation: when one sets unacceptable conditions, it is not in order to resolve the conflict or to define the field of compromise.

In turn, the escalation of the conflict, which meant that more and more countries joined the chain of war challenges, did not result from spontaneous solidarity or allied loyalty, but from the fact that this course of events seemed convenient to the participants themselves. Germany had no obligation to help Austria-Hungary against Serbia alone (nor was there any military need to do so), but it was convenient for Germany that Russia, as Serbia’s ally, stepped in against Austria-Hungary, as this allowed Germany to kill its own bird with the same stone. The calculations and false justifications for the bellicose attitude of each party were analogous (each country zealously and chivalrously honored its alliance commitments and defended their homeland... simultaneously hoping for territorial gains).

Austria-Hungary was beginning a war that would decide the existence of the monarchy. The period of armed peace, when all the superpowers were preparing for a great pan-European conflagration, was coming to an end. As a matter of fact, the people in positions of responsibility who directed the destinies of the superpowers were afraid of war, because they realized that it would be a struggle the outcome of which no one could predict. But the technical preparations were in the hands of the staffs, guided by purely military considerations. The generals assumed that the war is inevitable anyway and the party which surprises the enemy will have the best chances. This also explains why the last days of July and the first days of August had such a violent and dramatic course. The staffs imposed immediate moves on the diplomats, which in this way prevented any action to preserve peace.¹⁸

17 Wereszycki, *Historia*, p. 263.

18 Wereszycki, *Historia*, pp. 263–264.

Therefore, paradoxically, if one accepts the author's view, the politicians of the states involved in this war presented the opposing party with a *fait accompli* as their supporters presented those politicians with a *fait accompli* as well.

Let us omit historians' disputes regarding the extent to which the political leadership of the countries – the main participants in the confrontation – pushed for war and to what extent their leadership succumbed to the pressure of military circles, the effects of their own chauvinistic propaganda, and the avalanche of events, which eventually overwhelmed these politicians. In any case, there is no doubt that the multilateral game started by the superpowers after the assassination attempt in Sarajevo – as if at a set signal, even if one considers the elements of spontaneity and randomness – had the features of a multilevel and mutual parasitism on previous events and opponents' moves; mainly in the sense that “intentions sought justifications.”

9. Goebbels's “Promotion of Katyn”

It is said that a crocodile sheds tears when it devours its prey. If true, these are rather the tears of joyful emotion than the tears of pity and remorse. In any case, the metaphor “crocodile tears” refers to a situation when someone expresses bitter regret or outrage over something that he is the perpetrator or co-perpetrator of, or something that he would be just as happy to do. If we consistently stick with this metaphor, we will not be surprised when one crocodile sheds tears, because another crocodile got ahead of him.

Doctor Goebbels's masterly propaganda gambit, when he did not waste the discovery in the Katyn forest, is a political example of such crocodile tears. In Goebbels's diaries, we find a detailed record of the calculations, impressions, and satisfaction that he experienced because of such a pleasant occasion and good work of the entire subordinate apparatus in this matter.

April 17, 1943: The Katyn incident is developing into a gigantic political affair which may have wide repercussions. We are exploiting it in every manner possible. So long as ten to twelve thousand Polish victims have sacrificed their lives anyway—probably not entirely without their fault, for they were the real instigators of this war—they might as well now serve to open the eyes of the peoples of Europe to what is Bolshevism.¹⁹

Josef Goebbels did not have to pretend to himself to be shocked by the killing as such, nor by the fact that the Soviets murdered defenseless prisoners of war.

19 L. Lochner, *The Goebbels Diaries 1942–1943* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1948), p. 332.

The comment on the guilt of “warmongers” is not only psychological (the aggressor’s self-justification) but also practical: since the victims were “not entirely blameless” (against the Third Reich), the Nazis would have done exactly the same thing with them. But someone else’s wetwork (in addition, carelessly executed) came to light just in time when the relatively concerted action of the anti-Hitler coalition put victory in the war in question. Here emerged an opportunity for effective diversion to drive a wedge between the Allies. The development of the matter turned out to be even more promising than the initiators expected.

April 27, 1943: The Katyń incident has taken a really sensational turn through the fact that the Soviets have broken off diplomatic relations with the Poles, giving the attitude of the Polish Government-in-exile as the reason. Reuter issued a lugubrious and tragicomic report about it I am withholding this sensational news item ... for the present; I want to watch developments for another day, to see what I can do with it.²⁰

Thus, the Germans scored many points in a short period. First of all, the event spoiled a chance to break the tradition of hostility and fresh resentment in Polish-Soviet relations. Second, the event put the Polish government-in-exile in a situation in which a non-emotional reaction was impossible. Third, the news about the gross crime and indirect reminder of the repressive and criminal face of the Stalinist regime tarnished the – conducive to the sympathy of Western societies – heroic image of the Soviet army and the Soviet state. Fourth, the event maneuvered the Stalinist leadership of the USSR into a situation without a good way out: to admit would mean to put one’s hand to the unmasking of the image of the state as a victim of the aggression, whereas to deny would mean to lose the chance for an agreement with sovereign Polish authorities, namely to have a weaker enemy in a potential ally, and this at the moment of Russian army’s gradual approach to Polish territory.

April 29, 1943: The Polish conflict still holds the center of the stage. Seldom since the beginning of the war has any affair stirred up so much public discussion as this. The Poles are given a brush-off by the English and the Americans as though they were enemies. It is admitted that I succeeded in driving a deep wedge into the enemy, thereby provoking a much greater crisis than that between Darlan and de Gaulle some time ago.²¹

On the whole, it was a successful diversion. The affair itself, the fact, that the Allies would have to relate to an awkward situation when the Nazi liars announce the truth this time, and of course, the emotional reaction of Polish politicians

20 Lochner, *The Goebbels Diaries*, pp. 345–346.

21 Lochner, *The Goebbels Diaries*, p. 347.

and soldiers in the West were inconvenient for the Western Allies. The Great played Poland, because, as a smaller ally, Poland became an obstacle for them to reach an agreement. At first, one ignores such an obstacle, and over time, even removes it (and so happened in the division of spheres of influence). The event maneuvered allies-protectors into a situation, in which they once again became the betrayers and co-participants of their charges' (the Poles) political pacification.

April 30, 1943: Our propaganda is suspected everywhere of having blown up the Katyń incident to enable us to make a separate peace either with the English or the Soviets. That, of course, is not our intention, although such a possibility would naturally be very pleasing.²²

This reasoning is disingenuous and misleading; there is little doubt that the exposure of the Katyń massacre was also a trial balloon, a test of whether the divergence of interests between the Western Allies and the USSR was mature enough to cause a rift. Certainly, the exposure's goal was to help widen the rift.

May 5, 1943: The Katyń protocol of international scientists has become an unheard-of sensation worldwide. Also, the neutral press remains deeply impressed. As a result, the British foreign minister, Eden, feels compelled to make a statement in the House of Commons. He laments Katyń, but not because the Russians murdered 12,000 Polish officers, but because we managed to drag it out before the public. Eden makes an almost grotesque attempt to blame us for Katyń. It is understandable that Eden expresses the hope that there will soon be a reconciliation between Sikorski and Stalin. Such a prospect is a long way off. If Eden is recommending to the members of the House of Commons maximum discretion in the Katyń affair, it means that the divergence between Moscow and Sikorski is greater than is visible on the surface now.²³

The propaganda diversion related to the Katyń massacre's exposure by the Nazis did not prevent their defeat in the war and could not cause the coalition's collapse, which the Third Reich desired at that very moment, but the diversion certainly proved to be a successful "revenge from beyond the grave" because it permanently poisoned Polish-Soviet and Polish-Russian relations. It does not mean that the countries' relations would have been healthier if the exposure had not happened, but the fact that the memory of Katyń and September 17, 1939, remains more vivid in certain circles than that of Auschwitz and September 1, 1939, sixty years after the crimes of Stalinism and Nazism probably proves something. Doctor Goebbels would be proud.

22 Lochner, *The Goebbels Diaries*, p. 348.

23 E. Guz, *Goebbels o Polsce i sojusznicy ZSRR*, Warszawa 1999, p. 69.

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Now we should examine the difference between provocations initiated and conducted unilaterally, and provocations that are part of a multilateral and multiphase game in which individual parties provoke each other to make certain moves and eagerly use the effects of someone else's actions or refer to them in justifications for their actions.

VII. Provocation as a Game and Round

Let us more precisely consider how simple, clearly unilateral, and somewhat individual acts of provocation differ from the complex, multi-provocative operations of the same subject or several subjects who achieve their goals through the attempt of control over someone else's attitudes and behavior, especially the control over the situation of mutual dependency and cooperation or counteraction.

1. Provocation as a Game

There is a good reason why most associate acts of provocation, and all the more multiple provocations' networks and provocations' sequences (of the same subjects and different ones), with a *game*. When we interpret different and numerous provocations in terms of a game, we must remember the applied "game" term's twofold meaning and metaphorical nature.

Two Meanings of "Game"

We may understand game both as a conventional way of communicational behavior, which one uses to transmit certain signs to the recipients, suggest or even impose particular impressions, perceptions, expectations on them; but also as a certain way of practical conduct related to decision-making under conditions in which both opportunity to act and effectiveness of a subject's action depends on other subjects' previous or possible subsequent actions; on the ability to recognize and consider the goals, resources, and prowess of partners, rivals, and adversaries in our own tactics; especially the ability to anticipate or preempt someone else's moves, to compensate for losses sustained so far, to prevent threats, or to surprise others. In the former case, by "game" I mean a "play," pulling the wool over someone's eyes, pretending. In the latter case, when I speak of a game, I mean a contest. In this sense, some speak not only about a political play (even more so about war games, stock market games) but also about, for example, the love game or the marriage game, the analysis of which also involves concepts of strategy and tactics.

Let us note here that this duality of the term "game" corresponds to the duality of another term, equally popular in the social events and human actions' description and interpretation, namely the term "role." On the one hand, in sociological theories of social roles, by "role" we usually understand positions assigned to a certain social position in the social division of labor to some extent determined without the participation of variable performers of the task, function, desirable and acceptable methods of action, codified formally or conventionally. On the

other hand, some understand the role as the meaning assigned to a subject and the subject's impact (the impact of one's efforts or long-term presence and status) on what happens around oneself. This also relates to "provocation" as the analysis of the provocation act relates both to what purpose they serve, what kind of demand they satisfy, what tasks they fulfill, and whether they had an impact on the course of events, on the state of a given social whole, and whether it was intended or unintended impact.

Figurativeness of the "Game" Schema

Both in the former and the latter case, the term "game" is a metaphor. It is a metaphor that consists in the recognition of a certain parallel between a situation and demeanor of individuals bound together with a certain mutual dependence of their situation, interests, aspirations, goals, intentions, decisions, actions, and the bond that binds theatrical performance or other play's participants or some competition's participants.

In the former case, I use the theatrical metaphor of a play. In such case, the word "play" refers to masks and poses that a subject wears and assumes for the use of the environment, gestures, rituals, etiquette, and words that make a strong and often false impression on recipients (addressees) and witnesses, while the message itself or the situation where the communication takes place, become a kind of a spectacle characterized by a dramatic effect comparable to a theatrical performance or even an action movie.

In the second meaning of the word "game," the metaphor involves the use of the term to describe positive and more often negative cooperation processes in the sphere of relations between political parties, governments, allied or hostile armies' headquarters, intelligence headquarters. Such a term also refers to bilateral efforts (although not necessarily mutual, when we mean intentions, regulation of obligations, as well as acts of aid or retaliation, and not necessarily symmetrical when we mean the strength of influence, degree of freedom of action, level of possible benefits or threats) of companies, sports teams, and other similar groups. It is a metaphor because specialists transferred to the sphere that I discuss here a literal term from the field of sports competitions, different auctions, contests, games, entertainment. Obviously, there is a certain yet only relative similarity between a round of bridge, chess, checkers, poker, a cycling race, a soccer match and, for example, a parliamentary debate, a political campaign, or an intelligence operation. It is a structural similarity. Still, we must remember about a significant difference in terms of the scale of operation, range of "impact," social costs and consequences.

2. Round as a Form of Cooperation

For the record, let us recall the terms taken from praxeology.

Positive cooperation, colloquially called cooperation, collaboration, joint venture involves a situation in which subjects mutually support each other because of a common, consistent, or concurrent goal, interest, harmoniously understood and respected principles, and, in any case, such cooperation is based on the fact that what one subject does, enables, facilitates the actions of another subject, makes them more effective. In the case of a common goal's pursuit through coordination of efforts and division of labor, subjects achieve a synergy effect, the essence of which is that the effect of work performed jointly – or at least of negotiated actions – is disproportionately higher and the costs are disproportionately lower than in the case of separate action and even more so in the case of unrequited favor and mutual action against each other.

Negative cooperation involves a situation in which (1) one subject's actions are an impediment, obstacle to another subject's actions, and in extreme cases, even prevent his actions in advance (“what I have done prevents you from acting and maneuvering as you planned”), or (2) nullify the effects of another subject's actions throughout their existence or spoil them. Either way, the subject achieves his own goal, benefit, at the expense of the partner (either on the principle “if I gain more, you gain less” or on the principle “if I get, take something, then nothing will be left for you, so we either take all or nothing”). Negative cooperation may take the form of competition (in which one's own higher efficiency determines the outcome and access to goods, as in a race or auction), combat (in which one wants to weaken the efficiency and potential of the opponent), or outright war, that is when one intends to (or, in any case, is prepared) to threaten, disarm, mutilate, destroy the opponent: be it in a literal sense, in a physical sense, or an economic, moral, civil sense.

To be more precise, from this viewpoint, a “game” is more of a *round*. One subject, who tries to somehow control the situation and the actions of other subjects, may perform it, which is a unilateral round, although it may be, for instance simultaneous or network in terms of scope; a round may also be a multilateral interdependence, a network of more or less unanimous moves in terms of purpose and direction, either divergent or contradictory, performed by multiple actors. The round's goal may involve direct or indirect extortion of certain moves on the partners in a situation in order to trick those who show no interest, readiness, or even resist and refuse, and make them participate in some events or undertakings. The round's goal may also be the opposite: it may serve to discourage someone from participation and activity, or to exclude him from involvement

and deprive him of influence on the common and his own situation. The round may also serve to exploit someone else's weaknesses, mistakes, or someone else's strengths, merits, and achievements for our own purposes. The round may also serve to gain and demonstrate someone's own superiority, advantage, to weaken someone and deprive him of certain assets, and finally to destroy him.

The Unity of Play and Round

The differentiation between these metaphors is relative. Theatre and practical round (be it a love game or political action's tactics) by no means must exclude each other: it is quite the contrary. The paratheatrical scheme of a game does not have to constitute a goal in itself. The scheme may be a setting and support for practical moves concerning how to share some wealth with someone or deprive him of some wealth (in various tenders, negotiations, possessive actions). After all, provocation of misconceptions and expectations, of a state of uncertainty and confusion, or diversion of attention from something (when elements of "theater," appearances, and deception allow one to do so) perfectly simplify practical, yet surprising or embarrassing moves for the other party. It even makes it possible to artificially adjust the outcome of the game, different from the past course of the game, the demonstrated efficiency, and achievements, the parties' gains. Here, for example, a soccer match, in which winning a cup or league championship, and as a result, serious financial, prestige gains, and some sort of privilege in the following games may be an insightful lesson. We will notice that the players of such soccer match not only actually foul their opponents tactically and technically, by tripping, kicking ankles, hitting the ball with a hand, or any other similar behavior. We will also notice how often the players suggest that their opponents commit foul, how often the players simulate injuries (to gain more time and recover thanks to a break in the game, to force an unwarranted free or penalty kick). "Acting" skills, effective even against very experienced arbiters, are part of the top players' professional equipment.

The "agonist" (competitive) and antagonistic (conflict, confrontative) rounds may be clearly pragmatical (sometimes even cynical) in form, as well as spectacular, usually ostentatious. In the first case, the rules of a spectacle are secondary, and some may disregard them, as we may disregard impressions and mood of the coparticipants and witnesses of the game (for instance, their admiration, acceptance, consternation, disgust, or outrage) if they will not impact the final result or even the costs of the action, losses sustained. Just as in the case of sharpers, in the latter case, individuals achieve pragmatic goals not through purely technical or tactical prowess, but through the ability to arouse certain impressions,

perceptions, attitudes, and reactions of the recipients of the action. This subtle difference clearly illustrates the difference between a gain of power through an exemplarily efficient and timely military coup and a gain of power through a better marketing setting.

Admittedly, the growing tendency to mediatize and theatricalize politics means that most political rounds come wrapped in banners, symbols, and clichés even more than before, so that superior skill in the art of deception determines purely pragmatic success to an increasingly bigger extent.

The repertoire of provocations serves both the game in the paratheatrical sense (including the game focused mainly on symbolic and ritual goals, for instance demonstration of prejudice, stubbornness, contrariness, challenging only to confirm one's own superiority), as well as rounds with practical goals.

Provocation as an Instrument of Cooperation

Both simple, single, one-time provocations, as well as complex provocative tactics or strategies, may constitute a tool of positive cooperation. One may convince partners, who are indecisive, unstable, reluctant due to incomprehension of their interests and chances or due to exaggerated matters, with provocative ways. It happens also in politics: we may find there multiple provocative operations and campaigns undertaken with the intent to mobilize partners, allies, supporters, believers; undertaken to consolidate a community, strengthen motivation and participant's identification, highlight the given community's identity criteria.

More than one provocation is positive-negative as the situation is similar with, for example, dedeception actions. Then the action itself serves the goal of, for example, "bait" and nailing someone on unreliability, treason, or malpractice, and, at the same, to gain the trust of the addressees of this "planned discovery" through peculiar extortion of moral debt. It is based on the following principle: "Look what kind of man he actually is. Look who warned, sheltered you, who is your real friend."

However, it is understandable that most associate provocations mainly with destructive influence against rivals, opponents, or enemies, especially in the political actions sphere: with inclining them to act to their own detriment, with publicizing, making tendentious comments, and exaggerating their mistakes or vices, with attempts to stop them in their tracks, demobilize them or entirely deter and intimidate them, with attempts to "drive a wedge" between an opponent and those, who could support him, with "shifting one's ground," namely an

aggressor in the victim's role, protégé who fights nepotism and party particularism, a scandal-causing individual in the corruption tracker's role, and so on.

3. An Actor's and a Director's Provocation

At first, when we remain in the sphere of the game's theatrical metaphor, let us pay attention to another duality of the applied analogy. Namely, a subject may either play and behave like an actor in a performance, who performs a specified role (plays means that an actor personates a specified character of a drama as a fiction piece through which he somewhat pursues the assumed program of his role), or a subject may perform his own smoke and mirror show regarding his identity as well as purposes, intentions, and, at the same time, improvises, freely initiates his gestures, statements (declarations, comments on situations and events), decisions, act, which may also be totally surprising, unforeseen by anyone, contrary to established rules.

As we know, individuals write scenic roles "once and for all" (if one overlooks adaptive measures, shortcuts, or compilations done as part of authorial staging): it concerns the monologs, the dialogs, and the behavior, deeds, fates of characters that the story (scenario) envisioned. Admittedly, it is never so that totally different, variable performers similarly play the formally identical role: it is quite the opposite, because their personality, temper gives inimitable features to each performance, prepared according to the same scenario.

To a certain extent, many political staging also correspond to this principle of programming; but political staging involve allowances for individuality, lesser or bigger executive efficiency, but also particular actors' own invention. In a political debate, one verbal assault shocks the audience, another evokes only distaste or pity, yet another passes unnoticed. One resignation triggers an avalanche of comments and speculations "with a bang," sometimes acts of solidarity, and may even be the trigger of a cabinet crisis; another resignation merely exposes the politician who is also a poser to ridicule.

At the same time, a game in the paratheatrical sense and a game understood as a round (an attempt to control the development of situations, the course of events through control of someone else's attitudes and behavior) do not have to be mutually exclusive. The round that one subject initiated and unilaterally controls also reminds us of something from the theatre, namely, direction. If we look somewhere else, but close, the function of the conductor of a choir or orchestra would be an equivalent of this mechanism, although with an allowance concerning that the drama's author himself is the performance's director, and the composer himself is the conductor.

Therefore, someone “wrote a scenario,” and, at the same time, assumed (and accordingly stimulated, selectively inhibited, or enhanced) one group’s expectations, illusions, aspirations, behavior, and reactions, and gave tasks to others (who were formally subordinate to each other or somewhat mutually dependent), so that such pre-planned spectacle’s participants would behave predictably, according to the assigned roles. Simultaneous provocation (addressed to many individuals or groups at the same time) often involves a situation in which one directs such a social spectacle (for instance scandal, affair, “brawl,” conflict), in which the final goal is assigned to multiple participant’s roles which are coordinated and controlled in terms of time and the performances’ sequence.

Both in the former and the latter case we deal with an artificial and arbitrary *creation* of events.

In the “actor’s” provocation, an initiator creates social situations through his own creations that resemble either actors’ creations or leading fashion designers’ creations. Even the language of marketing refers to this principle. “Image building” means the creation of desired impressions, appearances, and illusions concerning someone’s identity, competencies, achievements, program offer embodied in some way. The communicative type of provocation (that consists in sending suggestions or information, which may also be deceptive) refers to the “actor’s creation,” as the message and pressure exerted on others is effective because the sender made a strong impression on the recipients, evoked certain emotions, imaginations, illusions in them. Most measures that constitute manipulative, false accreditation – overly favorable and selective self-presentation when one makes himself credible by insincere tributes or artificially adds to his own importance, seriousness, “puts on airs,” etc. – are exactly the typical communicational-actor’s provocations. Moreover, many forms of malicious discreditation base on such creations (for instance when one infects others with his own well-faked astonishment, outrage, disgust, fear when one poses principledness of judgments and criticisms through hypocrisy).

In a “director’s” provocation, which is regulatory (controlling) in nature and bases on the provocateur’s activity as a kind of traffic controller in a given environment, place, and time, one creates social moods, the image of the situation, the “scenography” (through the triggering of suitable associations, symbols), but also tangles individual actors’ behavior into particular rituals or procedures, which give them meaning on the same principle as a whole usually defines a part. This is also a paratheatrical influence, related to a so-called theatricalization of politics, to a transformation of triggered or appropriately publicized and used events into a spectacle, the suggestiveness of which relates to the dosage and intensification of riddles, tension, surprises, to the atmosphere of sensation

or suspense (“what will it be, what will it be, how will it end?!”). Nevertheless, a causal, objectified effect also accompanies the paratheatrical influence, because what shapes the real balance of power is the selective regulation of the strength of motivation, determination, the horizon of imagination and aspirations of individual participants, focusing on something or diverting their attention.

Diagram 5 below shows this duality of the theater of provocation.

For the sake of simplicity, I used expressions associated mainly or exclusively with an individual. However, the actor’s creation in question here may just as well be a group performance, a smoke and mirror show performed in a well-coordinated and suggestive manner by an entire human team, or even a large group, for instance a given party’s parliamentary club, a faction of dissenters, who pretend that a long-made decision, which they postponed until a convenient moment and pretext, is spontaneous. Moreover, an individual (for instance a political soloist: an independent, autocratic leader who prefers a one-man mode of leadership) is not the only one who may program and carry out the directorial type of provocation, but it may also be a compact team – for instance the so-called top leadership of a party, a narrow leadership team within the government, or an editorial team that arranges and exploits a scandal in a coordinated manner. Here, the term “subject” – of provocation – refers both to a human individual, a particular individual who acts independently, as well as to an “organizational unit” that acts collectively as part of a specific division of labor in a larger social whole.

Diagram 5. Provocation as a gamew

DIFFERENTIATING ACTOR'S PROVOCATION CRITERIA	DIRECTOR'S PROVOCATION
TYPE OF CREATION	<p>Creation (a particular pose, gesticulation, facial expression, rhetoric), the suggestive imposition of impressions, emotions, beliefs, and decisions by unilateral use of particular symbols, rituals, props, by abusing or breaking certain conventions; during display of challenge's intentions, demonstration of one's own sense of superiority, self-confidence, impunity, or tenacity that is either principled or smacks of particularistic stubbornness. The recipients' reaction results from either positive or negative prejudice against the "actor," his intentions' perception, the confrontation of participants' own will with the provocateur's intentions and expectations.</p> <p>Creating a particular situation (the nature of bonds, the balance of power) and atmosphere in relations between individuals through interference in the interdependence between individual and group interests, in the rules and criteria of physical and symbolic goods distribution; by selective control over communication between individuals or social groups; by triggering events, which force the environment to react in an adaptive, defensive, or aggressive manner because of the events' particular time of occurrence or consequences and their particular sequence; by the selective display of attractions, occasions, threats, dangers; by triggering either confusion, disorientation, and uncertainty, or euphoric moods in a given community</p>

DIFFERENTIATING ACTOR'S PROVOCATION CRITERIA		DIRECTOR'S PROVOCATION
NATURE OF THE GAME	<p>Unilateral "performance," calculated to achieve a proper psychological effect (triggered strong impression, stir, shock, fright, fascination, temptation); perpetrator's effort focused on its own role, perceived as a sufficient causal factor. The goal of the subject's statement or act is to intrigue, excite, tempt, cause outrage, encourage, discourage, scare away. The addressees of an act or statement, that is a challenge which they face, must refer to the statement whereby their field of maneuver is limited, that is they are "positioned," so to speak programmed by the provocation.</p>	<p>Round based on arbitrary objectification of partners in a situation, control over their footing, or conducted with the deliberate and active participation of other subjects, however, with the intent that their actions would contribute to the fulfillment of a scenario settled in advance, for instance based on the inclusion in the game and its predetermined outcome of resistance, opposition, or manifestations of independence.</p>

4. Unilateral and Multilateral Provocations

Let us now consider the structure of provocation understood as a game in a praxeological sense, and therefore as a round.

Especially in politics, provocation not necessarily, or rather not often, means an act, which binds together only one action, one subject, and one goal. Typically, however, provocation means a network of partially intended, partially incidental, and not always mutually coordinated actions. Moreover, provocation is often a multistage and multi-subject action, or even a game of many subjects, a network of many actions, which different subjects did, and which have different directions.

In such a case, provocation is a chain composed of many rings. It may be that the manipulator is the object and victim of manipulation himself. It may also be that several different powers, which may as well fight each other, try to fulfill their goals and interests through the same action, since one may wage a mutual struggle through cooperation. However, one should not assume that every provocation in which many individuals or teams, institutions participate is a single unanimous conspiracy of solid partners.

First and foremost, one must distinguish between:

- * A game (round) that one sole subject initiates, conducts, and controls to the very end: in such a case, we deal with a unilateral provocation.
- * A game (round) that one particular subject initiates and continues, but other subjects, who are more or less aware of the ensuing situation and more or less accurately read the initiator's intentions and calculations, somewhat reciprocate the game (round) and, at the same time, want to fulfill their own goals: such a game may transform into a network of provocations triggered by different subjects.
- * A game (round) that several subjects initiate and conduct during more or less unanimous cooperation, because of more or less unanimous interests and goals: therefore, such a provocation is multilateral.

A unilateral provocation only requires the perpetrator to be consequent and persistent in his own action, to make an accurate diagnosis of the earlier measures' results, and to accurately predict consequences, which is simplified by the fact that others do not notice his "direction" at all or early enough, and passively submit to it. However, the subject must be prepared for a situation in which people who are an object of his round "come to their senses" and his action will meet reaction.

In turn, provocative round reciprocated with counter-provocations requires accurate reading of partners' (rivals, opponents') knowledge and intentions, projection of their intentions, decisions, moves, modification of one's own tactic during an interaction that involves changes of situation, triggered by those whom one failed to exclude from the game or program them according to his own desire or interest. Provocative round requires contingent, alternative thinking (preparation for different courses of events) and interactive action, which involves taking advantage of someone else's reactions and initiatives instead of control over someone unaware and passive, or in any case surprised and in a way disarmed. Such round does not consist in a mere empowerment of some and objectification of others, but a situation when a foray occurs in the circle of subjects that compete or engage in confrontation: an auction or a test of who will show relatively better inventiveness, efficiency, cunning. The initiator's only advantage (which, however, he may lose, or others' efforts may forfeit it) involves the asset of being first, the fact that the initiator anticipated others, imposed the moment and the plane of the game on them, limited their choice by what he determined by his move.

In any case, *multilateral* provocation, which, at the same time, is non-simultaneous, multiphase and involves multiple subjects, consists in that one subject's given provocation act is an opportunity or pretext to use the

provocation for other subject's own ends or inspiration for their own provocations or counter-provocations. Therefore, other subjects take up the challenge and co-create the commenced game. However, in addition to this, it may not only be that those subsequent provocations are an answer to the earlier someone else's or mutual auctions, but it may also be that the provocations create a "cause-effect/cause-effect" avalanche. There occurs dynamic feedback and multi-level determination: the result of one provocation is a fodder, pretext, foothold for a subsequent provocation. The cumulative effect is similar to that of unilateral cascade provocation.

If all participants of a joint game are aware that each one of them plays his own game at the same time, then potentially the odds are even. In the case of a multilateral provocative round that occurred as a result of several subjects' concurrent initiatives that happened at the same time, the postponement of settlement ensues. Then an auction of pretense, illusion, cunctation, uncertainty precedes the actual round. Since no one started the race or confrontation first and thus did not warn, surprise, or embarrass the others, those, who will be the first to do something for which the others will not be prepared, to which they will not find a convenient answer, will determine the outcome of the game.

Nonetheless, the raciest situation occurs in the case of peculiar "cooperative provocation," which reminds a postponed duel of sharpers who, at first, cheated together and harmoniously. The cooperative provocation consists in that two or three parties fruitfully cooperate, coordinate, and mutually support their moves until a certain moment, although each one of them does so with different turning to one's favor of the fruits of their common labor in mind or they just want to trick their partners, who may not be trustful but are surely alert. A well-known example of such a multiphase bilateral provocation is the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent sequence of events (the alliance that surprised its surroundings, the mutual recognition of weaknesses made possible by cooperation, and the race against time of the allies as "lurking enemies," and finally the Stalinist leadership's sleepiness and them being surprised by the Nazis). The other known and often repeated example of such multistage cooperative provocation are the games of various countries' intelligence and counterintelligence, based on the scheme "we know that they know that we know that they know" – it is the same for the predictions that result from this knowledge. One may observe this pattern, for example, when it comes to the use of false information and documents that one knows must be false, but one does know neither to what extent nor in which place, nor when will it pay to stop pretending to believe that the documents are true.

Others may achieve their own goals and benefits as they enter the game initiated by a given subject through both thwarting someone else's efforts or nullifying their results (it happens that the above is precisely the reactive or feedback counter-provocation's goal), and of the constructive action, that is creation of new situations, states of affairs, achievements. One may conduct the destruction and construction both through his own effort and energy input (this is a productive provocation) and on the parasite principle (someone else's creation, achievement, or error becomes my opportunity and my tool).

VIII. Examples of Multi-Provocations

Therefore, we deal with a “multi-provocation” model: either a unilateral round, in which a given subject controls the game of many participants, and, at the same time, preys on and selectively channels their emotions, calculations, moves, or a multilateral round that is mutually provocative and it is a peculiar auction of provocations, in which “a provocation raises provocation through provocation.”

Let us see how it looks in practice. I will analyze three examples: each one of them illustrates a different kind of negative cooperation. The first example deals with a multilateral web of provocations. The second example deals with unilateral “takeover” by a witness of someone else’s provocations, freeloading on someone else’s simple initiative provocations by the entanglement of all other participants of a situation into one web of dependence. The third example illustrates the mechanism of bilateral conflict escalation, in which both the spontaneous provocative behavior and both parties’ calculated acts of provocation – but also forced or voluntary participation of different surrounding forces – arranges itself into a cascade pattern in a multistage manner.

1. Multistage Round in Sarajevo

First, let us return to the already discussed example: namely, the assassination in Sarajevo and its consequences for international politics. To me, it is an example of a classical parasitic provocation (the skilled turning to one’s favor of opportunity). Now, in this event and its repercussions, one may notice not a single initiative provocation (namely, the assassination in its perpetrators’ intentions) and parasite reactive provocation (namely, the Austro-Hungarian government’s answer), but a web of several parties’ interests, calculations, and intentions that manifested itself in the sequence of provocations and counter-provocations.

In the twentieth century, conflicts between Serbia and Austria-Hungary were not uncommon and there were often sharp disputes, but they did not lead to war until 1914. An insurmountable gulf developed between the two countries in the 20th century, mainly over the Yugoslav question. Serbia, by proclamation and active support of the South Slavs unification, threatened the stability and integrity of the multinational Habsburg Monarchy. In turn, Austria-Hungary constantly sought to weaken and annihilate the Serbian state, as they saw it as a way to resolve the Slavic question within its own state and as an opportunity for further expansion into the Balkans. / The movement for the unification of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes intensified on the eve of the First World War. Numerous secret organizations emerged in Serbia, Montenegro, and the South Slavic countries of the Habsburg monarchy, chief among them being Black Hand, led by the head of Serbian counterintelligence, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević (aka Apis). The goal of this organization was to liberate the South Slavic peoples from Austro-Hungarian rule

and to unite them as part of Greater Serbia. The same goal was also pursued by the secret organization Young Bosnia, which carried out the famous assassination attempt on the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand.²⁴

Obviously, the cooperation of an organization formed among Serbian politicians, but not representative of Serbian state policy, with a subversive irredentist Bosnian organization had to entangle the Serbian government in actions it could not predict, control, or prevent.

Why exactly did Ferdinand become the target of the attack? Simply because he was heir to the throne? Not really, his death had symbolic and ritualistic overtones: like a kind of exemplary execution, a well-deserved punishment for his activities, a deterrent example for potential imitators, and a mobilizing example for opponents (our resistance is effective, our actions are reliable).

The supporters of the South Slavs unification regarded him as an enemy of Serbia and the unification movement. He directed the Austro-Hungarian politics directly before the war since the old Emperor Franz Joseph was already infirm. When Serbian intelligence received information that the Austrian army maneuvers aimed to attack Serbia would take place in Bosnia in June 1914 under the command of Franz Ferdinand, the organization Young Bosnia together with Black Hand passed a death sentence on him. They decided to execute him during maneuvers and appointed Gavrilo Princip and Nedeljko Čabrinović as executors. Supplied with weapons by the Black Hand, they carried out an assassination attempt in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, which resulted in the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife.²⁵

What did the initiators and perpetrators of the attack hope for? Did they predict all the consequences of their action or were they surprised by some of the more far-reaching ones? Let us leave this dispute to historians.

In any case, the status and nature of this action (villainous assassination) are explicit: it was a typical desperate provocation (meaning it was based on a shocking use of brutal violence, act of brutality) that combined several functions. The action was an act of *ritual violence*, that is aggression symbolically and practically focused on an individual who symbolizes more than just himself. Moreover, the action was an act of *mobilization*, meaning an attempt to revive, to evoke a sense of victory, of triumph because of a successful “act of justice.” The action was an obvious act of *challenge*, as the above organizations challenged their enemies (House of Habsburg) who were badly wounded, powerless against

24 J. Skowronek, M. Tanty, T. Wasilewski, *Historia Słowian południowych i zachodnich* (Warszawa: 1988), p. 575.

25 Skowronek, *Historia*, pp. 575–576.

such a blow, though stronger in general. Finally, the action was a multifold act of *extortion*. It nullified the possibility of compromise or at least postponement of confrontation on the Balkan issue. The strong negative stimulus also provoked an emotional but at the same time calculated aggressive reaction, which foiled the search for solutions other than the use of force. Both parties of the conflict faced the irreversible fact and the inevitability of “settlements:” both the Austro-Hungarian government (the obvious enemy) and the Serbian government (too conciliatory). The Viennese government had no choice because prestige considerations would not allow it to settle the matter amicably, even if Austro-Hungarians did not plan further expansion at the expense of Serbia, as they waited for a convenient moment and pretext.

For centuries, radicals use provocation in great conflicts to make “their own” assume a warring attitude toward enemies, the radicals do it simply by provoking enemies, thus giving “their own” no other choice.

The Serbian government tried to prevent the planned assassination of the Austrian princely couple by notifying Vienna of the planned attack. Serbia feared the repercussions; it did not seek war at the time, as it was weakened by the Balkan wars, and the Entente powers that stood in its defense did not intend to initiate war in the name of Balkan affairs.²⁶

Serbs ostentatiously emphasized goodwill, as they showed a kind of loyalty to the enemy. Why did Austro-Hungarians not appreciate and reciprocate it? Obviously, because it was not the Austro-Hungarian government’s intention to mitigate but rather to aggravate and exploit the escalating conflict, which was probably encouraged by a sense of superiority. In addition, an opportunity arose to play a game with Russia in which Serbia was to be merely a pawn, a pretext. The Serbian gesture of goodwill was inconvenient from the viewpoint of the demand for a confrontation, a test of strength.

The Serbian government’s fears that the assassination of Franz Ferdinand would become a reason for war proved to be completely true. Austria-Hungary saw the assassination attempt in Sarajevo as a convenient reason to deal with Serbia.²⁷

Let us rather say that this assassination was not so much a reason (indeed official) as a pretext. The intention to provoke a war was settled and Austro-Hungarians sought the pretext. The pretext turned out to be excellent since it involved an action that was so shocking (murder) and so unacceptable for great

26 Skowronek, *Historia*, p. 576.

27 Skowronek, *Historia*, p. 576.

power in terms of prestige. One could count on a successful and suggestive, subjectively credible propaganda deception in the form of “natural outrage and desire for retaliation.” Indeed, it may have appeared to the part of the public that the reaction to this attack is natural and spontaneous, like the anger of a wronged man or a reflex of dignity. In reality, what we deal with here is a typical *pretexual parasitic provocation*: one’s own loss becomes a convenient opportunity and pretext to unleash a war that someone has long decided. A war planned with a dual purpose: if one succeeds in attacking, perhaps even conquering, isolated Serbia, that is good; on the other hand, if Serbia’s allies come to its defense, that is also good, because they will be drawn into the planned test of the strength of the two great alliances, the blocs.

Germany fully supported this intention, as it believed that the Triple Alliance was militarily superior and that they could easily defeat England, France, and Russia.

This is also a parasitic provocation: under the guise of demonstrating far-reaching loyalty and solidarity to an ally, you kill your own bird. Austria-Hungary’s Balkan interests only indirectly related to Germany’s interests and goals, through the involvement of Russia, the borders and influence of which Germany was eager to shift further east, and even more through the collision with the interests of France, Russia’s ally, which in turn was thirsty for a rematch of 1870 and a “recovery” (the case of Alsace and Lorraine). German soldiers were to die not for the late Ferdinand, but new provinces in Europe and recaptured colonies in Africa.

With the support of its ally, Austria-Hungary decided to take a hard line on Serbia, and on July 23, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian government issued an ultimatum to the Serbian government and gave Serbs only forty-eight hours to respond. The ultimatum firmly demanded an end to anti-Austrian organizations and their propaganda and demanded that the Austrian authorities participate in the investigation of those responsible for the Sarajevo attack. Austro-Hungarians deliberately provocatively worded the ultimatum so that the Serbian government could not accept it.²⁸

This is a typical *stimulus provocation* that resembles a challenge for a duel, but a rather subversive one, such as to make it appear that the aggrieved party merely demanded due satisfaction, and in response suffered an even greater insult, a confirmation of ill will. In response to an insult or injury, the aggrieved party places the conditions for compensation in such a way that the dignity of the individual (respectively, the sovereignty of the state) does not permit to

28 Skowronek, *Historia*, p. 576.

accept them. Austro-Hungarians did not intend to end the conflict thanks to the Serbian government's concessions; in contrast, Austro-Hungarians intended to force a continuation of the auction and confrontation. If the Serbian answer were unsatisfactory, it would be an excellent pretext to create the impression that the Serbian government gives proof of its own guilt, obduracy, and that it acts in bad faith; the impression that, in this case, instead of genuine regret and readiness to right a wrong, the Serbian government insults Austro-Hungarians even more than before or the impression that it is impossible not to respond firmly to such a defiant attitude.

Nevertheless, Serbia, persuaded by Russia, was disposed to make concessions and, in this spirit, replied to the Viennese government on July 25, with the only objection being the participation of Austrian representatives in the investigations carried out on the territory of Serbia.²⁹

Serbian opposition on this exact issue was rational and understandable: after all, it was a matter of confirmation or denial of state sovereignty. Since the Serbian authorities were not the ones who inspired the assassination, but the co-victim, it was unacceptable to conduct the investigation under the auspices of a foreign state, as if it were an investigation on the case of Serbia and against Serbia. But this was precisely what the Austro-Hungarian government wanted: to insist on an integral ultimatum and find at least one reason for refusal on the opposing side and a reason for retaliation on its own side.

The Serbian response did not satisfy Austria-Hungary, which declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, and began the shelling of Belgrade on the same day. The Austro-Hungarian action marked the beginning of the First World War; within the first four days of August, other powers of both European blocs joined the conflict, except for Italy, which initially did not participate in it despite its alliance commitments to the Central Powers. In addition to England, France, and Russia, Montenegro also came to the defense of Serbia and joined the war against Austria-Hungary on August 5, 1914.³⁰

From the historical perspective, what is striking is the disproportion between what the people of that time officially considered a *casus belli* and the real reasons for the bloody clash between great powers, along with the disproportion between the scale of the injustice and crime (hypocritically attributed to the state that wanted to avoid it) to the scale of the retaliation and the momentum of the great slaughter of nations.

29 Skowronek, *Historia*, p. 576.

30 Skowronek, *Historia*, p. 576.

2. Intrigue as a Multistage Web Provocation

Let us now consider an example of a successful unilateral initiative web provocation that, as a result, means a round of one subject, which, admittedly, allows some participants to play their own game as well, but does not allow them to embrace the whole and makes them play only within the limits that the provocateur-initiator set. I will take the example from Friedrich Schiller's tragedy *Intrigue and Love*, which revolves around an intricate court intrigue. The work's atmosphere and type of drama are undoubtedly characteristic of the Romantic literature climate, with the literature's focus on passions to the point of exaltation. However, the emotional tone and melodramatic nature of this play do not prevent a cool analysis of intrigue's mechanisms; perhaps they even simplify the analysis by sharpening the image. For the sake of convenience and brevity, I will use a precise summary of the plot from a theatrical guide:

A German prince, the lord of life and death to his subjects, who lives in a debauched and frenzied manner, meets a beautiful exile in Hamburg, the English princess Elizabeth of Norfolk, who is on the verge of destitution and had suicidal intentions. The prince throws his love at her feet and offers her to become his favorite. The inexperienced, lonely princess cannot hesitate long with her choice. However, she decides to turn all her influence on the ruler to make the oppressed country happy. She does quite a bit, yet not enough to truly prevent the exploitation and plunder that maintain the court and the courtiers. / There comes a day when Elizabeth's heart, which hitherto coldly calculated all the good and bad points of her position, loses count. Lady Milford, as she calls herself today, for the first time falls in love for real, with the son of the President of the Duchy, a young Major Ferdinand von Walter, aged twenty. / Nothing easier for a woman who knows all kinds of court intrigue and tactics than to convince the prince that he should marry and that he should marry her, his favorite, off to someone trusted and close to the throne.³¹

It is an intelligent initiative, in line with the accepted customs, conventions, and rules of social hierarchy. After all, the ruler does not marry his courtesan (even if she is formally equal in status since different selection rules govern dynastic marriages); in turn, her marital status allows the ruler to take better care of appearances, which are necessary even when everyone knows exactly what is going on. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for her to free herself, as her husband takes marriage seriously and not as a "cover."

31 St. Marczak-Oborski, ed., *ISKIER Przewodnik Teatralny* (Warszawa: 1964), p. 152. Entry compiled by: Natalia Bojarska.

The case is even easier with Ferdinand's father. This man has deceitfully removed his predecessor and fears for his position. Therefore, he will do anything to keep his influence. Ferdinand will not think twice, since he has an opportunity of such close connection with the prince, almost of kinship, because who among the courtiers cares about matters of honor and dignity when career is at stake?³²

Thus, the outcome of the attempt against the young man's liberty seems guaranteed, since his father has a personal interest in such a marriage.

The lady's beautifully arranged plot gets thwarted by the young man's completely unanticipated opposition. / Ferdinand graduated from an officer school, where teachers shape not only the mind but also the heart. He is incapable of trading his feelings and his honor: "Oh! better, father, far, far better, than to crawl about a throne!" At the same time, Ferdinand feels obliged. He falls in love with beautiful, innocent Louisa, the daughter of Miller, a violinist in the court band. The girl returns his feelings. Their happiness and mutual trust have no limits. / The first, pure and great love of these two arouses terror in the old violinist. Miller does not believe in its fair ending. He knows life and explains to his wife, who does not see the danger: "That's the right strain! We beat the sack but mean the ass's back. He who wishes to pay his respects to the flesh needs only a kind heart for a go-between. ... When we've once so far cleared the ground that the affections cry ready! slap! the bodies follow their example." / Meanwhile, the son's stubbornness nearly drives the proud President insane, for whom the worldly position is the only meaning of life, for which he used to break and crush all obstacles.³³

Lady Milford's initiative provocation, which she planned to be a unilateral and one-time provocation that would end the affair unexpectedly for her encounters a fundamental obstacle, and just as unexpectedly the provocation, becomes an opportunity for someone else and the beginning of a unilateral but multistage web provocation. For now, however, this initiative, innocent in intent, finds support in the potential father-in-law's reactive provocation, that is in his reaction to his son's resistance, which is a demonstration of who is in charge.

First of all, the President uses violence. He bursts into the Miller house with his guards, orders them to drag the old man to the prison and to drag the daughter and her mother to the pillory as harlots. However, Ferdinand is there. When pleas and requests do not work, the Major reaches for threats to defend his beloved. He threatens the President to announce the degenerate way by which his father came to power to the world. Only this has an effect. The President backs down.³⁴

32 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, pp. 152–153.

33 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, p. 153.

34 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, p. 153.

An exceptionally brutal, drastic provocation: an attempt to literally remove the obstacle, or, in any case, an attempt of double extortion as the President intimidated the family that threatened misalliance and degradation of status, and at the same time, he presented his son with a *fait accompli*. Evidently, this provocation provoked the son's counter-provocation in the form of his rebellion and reassertion of his original intention to marry someone of the inferior social class.

There is yet another individual who wishes to remain in the shadows, yet who plays an indispensable role in these games of ambition and passion. It is the Private Secretary to the mighty President, Wurm, a probable future husband of Louise. As he realizes that the straight path will not lead to his goal, he decides to join the great game to make others pull his chestnuts out of the fire. It was he who turned von Walter against his son and the Millers. Now he has a different plan: it is necessary to quietly imprison the Millers and then, as a condition for their rescue, force Louisa to write a false short love letter to Court Marshal. This piece of writing should appear as evidence of her complete bond with the courtier and contain a mockery of the young officer's feelings. / The plan is perfect. For when Ferdinand, as he senses the pressing violence, offers Louisa a joint escape abroad, he is met with refusal. He is all the more convinced by the alleged revelation contained in the girl's note to the Court Marshal, which was skillfully slipped to the young officer. He is convinced that he has fallen prey to a perverse tease.³⁵

The actual and main playmaker appeared. He starts from a parasitic provocation, meaning he subordinates all of the parties' calculations to his own plan. The most important foothold is the transformation of imprisoned parents into hostages, the use of blackmail. In turn, the perfidy of the forced solution consists in the following provocations: first, deceitful provocation, which involves the show of treason creation; second, diversionary provocation, which involves disuniting of lovers; finally, the resultant obstructive provocation, as this false letter, the truthfulness of which the victim must confirm to save her parents, closes the victim's path to rescue, nullifies the trust of her beloved and the possibility of help from him.

Then, according to a prearranged move, the father agrees to his relationship with the musician's daughter because Lady Milford has left the country. / Systematically lied to about the satisfaction and prosperity of her subjects, she accidentally learned the truth: when the tormented people moan and cry tears of blood on parades which accompany the acts of oppression... "the drums are beating loudly, that the prayers and lamentations might not reach the Almighty ear." The unhappy Englishwoman saw the ruin of what seemed to be the justification of her disgraced life. She also realized that she would not gain the heart of the man she loved. Ultimately, she was humiliated by Louisa's

35 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, pp. 153–154.

generosity who voluntarily relinquished Ferdinand for her. Lady Milford decides to be no less generous and removes herself from the country. / Thus, the path for young love is seemingly free. Wurm's plotting irreversibly closes it.³⁶

The deception, forced by blackmail, closes the path not only for Louisa. Appearances that plausibly appear as the actual state of affairs inevitably provoke Ferdinand, eliminated from the game: first to hatred and contempt mixed with suffering and love, and then to an act of revenge and desperation at the same time.

The oath and fear for her parents, who are in the hands of the terrible President, close the mouth of terrorized Louisa. Even her lover's insults cannot prevent her from telling the truth. Ferdinand must despise her, but he cannot stop loving her. He is left with one sole solution: poison, one half of which he makes the girl drink, leaving the other for himself. / When the lethal drink begins to take effect, the unfortunate Major confesses to the crime. The approaching death removes the seal of silence from the lips of the inhuman conspiracy's victim. / Her last words are a pardon for the murderers of her youth and happiness. / The dying Ferdinand, imitating this little townswoman with a big heart, forgives his father, who rushed to save him, when he received his only son's farewell letter.³⁷

Thus, the development of the intrigue was out of Wurm's control. He only predicted the provoked lovers' breakup and the complete impossibility of a joint, normal solution of the trap by the mutual explanation of its circumstances. What he did not predict was the degree of the spontaneity and lovers' determination or its consequences.

The President wants to find someone to blame for the tragedy while, at the same time, he forgets about his own involvement in the events. Not without reason, he points to Wurm. / However, Wurm does not yield. Already tied up, he threatens: "Bind me, officers! Lead me hence! I will discover secrets which shall make the hearer's blood run cold. ... Arm in arm with thee will I to the scaffold! Arm in arm with thee to hell! Oh! how it tickles my fancy, villain, to be damned with thee!" / Not the threats of an accomplice to the crime, but his dying son's gesture of forgiveness breaks von Walter. Von Walter himself orders the guards to take him to prison.³⁸

Therefore, we deal with the President's provocation, which is a preventive action, an attempt to end the case, as the President points on the allegedly sole perpetrator, and Wurm's feedback provocation, who transforms his own lethal dangers into a danger for the prosecutor.

36 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, p. 154.

37 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, p. 154.

38 Marczak-Oborski, *ISKIER*, p. 154.

Do not mind the moralistic finale. In any case, Schiller's drama perfectly illustrates both the mechanism of a multilateral game based on provocations and the mechanism of unilateral simultaneous provocation (as it is aimed at multiple subjects at once), web provocation (as it is based on joint entanglement of several individuals in the same trap), directorial and at the same time multistage and cumulative provocation, as the effect of the whole escalates with every move.

In the next chapter, I systematically analyze the character and mechanism of intrigue as an especially sophisticated, treacherous form of provocation.

3. Russian-Estonian Monument War

A telling example of a cascade multilateral provocation (which originally was bilateral but proved to be extremely "nutritious" for other subjects) is the stormy diplomatic and propaganda conflict that erupted in relations between Estonia and Russia in the spring of 2007. The conflict stemmed from an emotional and prestigious dispute between the two parties over the possibility of relocation or inviolableness of a monument to Soviet soldiers killed in the fights to retake Tallinn from Wehrmacht. As usual in such cases, the particular cause (or, rather, the flashpoint, the catalyst) of the conflict is only an indicator of its deeper underlying cause, a synthetic reflection of broader and more lasting resentments.

The Underlying Cause of the Conflict and Its Premises

Let us recall the background and course of events in maximally abbreviated form.

The Estonian authorities decided to relocate the Soviet soldiers' monument from the center of Tallinn to the Soviet soldiers' cemetery. Such postulates of the indigenous population of the republic and the authorities' intentions appeared much earlier, but the Estonians informed about the decision not long before the Victory Day that is sacred for the Russians which added fuel to the fire.

Everything checks both in the physical and legal sense: this is a monument's relocation and the Estonians described and motivated the decision they made precisely in such a manner. The element of relocation's operation is the *removal* of the monument from the previous location, which is precisely how both parties of the conflict frankly perceived the whole operation, that is both Estonians and Russians who either lived in Estonia or Russia. The official, reserved, and politically correct announcement did not even slightly change the decision's reception. On the one hand, the announcement put special emphasis on the formal, policing issues (the monument of the fallen, especially of the foreign armies' soldiers, belongs to a special cemetery; not the city center, where residents expose their remembrance either of the nation's achievements, reasons to be proud,

or of the nation's failures and suffering). On the other hand, the announcement put special emphasis on the preservation of respect for the fallen commemorated with this monument, as Estonians believed that the operation meant only the change of the monument's location for even more suitable, even for the Russian residents of Estonia, who commemorate their relatives and their heroes on the cemetery anyway.

The first discussions among both countries' citizens, commentaries in Estonian and Russian media, and the fierce exchange of views and stances in diplomatic contacts (frozen not long after anyway) revealed the especially confrontational nature of both the decision itself and its subject, as well as the subject's entanglement in both the historical reckoning and the contemporary perplexity concerning the numerous Russian minority in Estonia, especially in Tallinn itself.

What was the dispute about? The dispute was about the interpretation of the history of bilateral relations and, in this context, the substance of the monument itself.

Russians see it as (and will not stop seeing it as such) one of the monuments to the liberators who defeated the Nazi occupiers, as a tribute paid to antifascists, war heroes. Therefore, they see it as a monument to victory and liberation. The monument is one of numerous other relics of what the Russians perceive as sacred: the remembrance of the Great Patriotic War, the price which they paid in blood not only on their own soil but also in countries which the Third Reich conquered and occupied. Nowadays, the cult of their soldiers' exploits, heroism, and victory in that war, related to the self-belief that Russians were the saviors and liberators of Europe, remains the sole patriotic element that binds Russians themselves together, as they, to a great extent, remain divided both in terms of their evaluation of the USSR and contemporary political orientations. They automatically treat each "attempt" against this sacred object as sacrilegious and defilement (which may manifest itself not only as profanations or lies but also as a review of myths). Usually, the politicians of former communist states do not understand this attitude when they demonstrate their sovereignty, toughness, or plain compensatory defiance of Russia.

Even for Estonians, the monument itself and even more so its liberatory name is provocative, as they perceive it as a symbol of conquest, Soviet annexation, occupation, and repression. Therefore, they believe that the monument's status as an object of tribute is historical negationism. Moreover, Estonians see it as an anachronism, a relic of times that fortunately passed. The argumentation of Russians that live either in Russia or in Estonia – that the monument does not commemorate conquerors but liberators – is met with a tough answer: "Who

did you liberate? Probably yourselves? Who invited you? Who asked you for that liberation?"

Obviously, there were numerous Estonians who took a moderate, temperate stance on the issue, dictated by a desire for objectivity and pragmatism. From their viewpoint, the removal or relocation of the monument is an absurd correction of history, which was what it was, and the monument testifies it. It is easier to explain the tragedy of Estonian fate to foreigners and tourists by the exposition of such monuments. Moreover, one should not extend the aversion to the Stalinist and post-Stalinist USSR to regular soldiers and, to a certain extent, Russian civilians who settled in Estonia, not necessarily voluntarily, and who were often repressed too. The deprivation of Russians who remain in Estonia of such a sacrum means the unnecessary escalation of the conflict and even an act of discrimination against the minority. It also means the simplification of a complex issue, such as the nature and outcome of the Second World War.

However, similarly to the situation in Russia, it is not the voice of intellectuals that is the most hearable, when they call if not for an examination of conscience than at least for the understanding of the rationale of the nations that were forcefully and perfidiously incorporated into the USSR, and even more for the resignation from imperial pride and arrogance attitudes, demonstrations of power.

Therefore, a confrontation based on emotions was inevitable. For many, probably for most Estonians, the removal of such relics of the Soviet period is an element of national honor, symbolic and ritual act of overcoming the past, conventional confirmation of full independence. For many Russians, especially for the veterans or their families, the removal means unacceptable small-mindedness and a testimony to a failure in understanding what a great evil and threat fascism was. As usual in the case of emotional, affective polarization, instead of an exchange of arguments, tendencies for mutual emotional blackmail appear. Thus, a Russian who opposes decommunization in one sense or another – but also for example, the requirement that Estonian be the state language – is simply a Stalinist, a new occupant. An Estonian who refuses to recognize the Red Army's liberation merits is a successor to the fascists and their collaborators.

The polarization that is typical of conflicts makes the picture banal, reduces the diversity of views on both sides, and blurs the difference between the beliefs and emotions that are common in a given camp and those that are characteristic only of certain circles and extreme attitudes. Thus, on the Estonian side, in addition to balanced statements and speeches, some were ambiguous, almost nationalistic, or even unambiguously retaliatory and characterized by exceptional malice. For example, some publications cited historical research and verified the list of Soviet soldiers killed in the battles for Tallinn and commemorated by the

monument, but at the same time, these texts revealed their authors' satisfaction when they depicted one of the soldiers as a drunken looter who was shot by his own men: it would be hard to find a more defiant act of mockery. In turn, on the Russian side, as a result of typical patriotic emotions, there were also superpower and chauvinist resentments among politicians and in many social circles, as well as calls to show the small country who it messes with and who is in charge, whose zone of domination the small country is.

As a result of these opposing passions and that both parties treated the issue as a matter of prestige (in terms of dignity and national pride, and even superpower pride, imperial arrogance in the case of some Russians and Russian politicians), the emotional propaganda and diplomatic confrontation escalated into a conflict that the media eagerly referred to as a Russian-Estonian monument war.

Indeed, we may describe this conflict (a "war" of gestures, words, but also legal and economic moves with practical consequences) in terms of a multistage bilateral – and partly multilateral – provocation model based on the reciprocity of acts of provocation by direct participants (parties to the conflict) and on the inclusion in the game of other actors from neighboring countries, also with the intention to provoke.

Mutual and Multilateral Bidding with Provocations

The following is a reconstruction of this political psychodrama.

The Prelude. The monument and its name themselves are a challenge posed to Estonians, a symbol of the 1939–1940 conquest, the occupation, and the return of the occupiers. In turn, Estonians treat the Russian demand to leave the monument in the central place of the capital as a refusal to revise historical assessments and fully recognize the national and state sovereignty of Estonia. Therefore, we deal with a *double provocation effect*, if we assume that there were no particular intentions: what provokes here is the monument itself, along with the defense of its location and name, as if Estonia were the same kind of liberated territory as Soviet Belarus or Ukraine. This symbolic change doubly provokes Russians, too, regardless of whether these are the initiators' intentions because they treat the change as a refusal to acknowledge that the fights in Estonia were an integral part of the military operations that liberated half of Europe from German occupation, but also because of the resultant interpretation of the Russian population's presence in Estonia.

Act One. The local Russians and those who live in Russia perceive the monument's relocation announcement as a *challenge*, a demonstration of hostility and lack of respect for the fallen and the Russian contribution to the rescue of

Europe, a profanation of a grave. Moreover, they also perceive the moment of the action itself, which will occur not long before the next anniversary of the conflict resolution, Victory Day, as a meaningful act of malice, evidence of ill will, and a slap in the face to Russian veterans (also those who live in Estonia), all Russians, and the Russian state. Others treated the Russian government's reaction as a double test of dignity, that is whether Russians will allow to disrespect them; whether the others must reckon with Russians or may disregard Russians). For Putin's government, the Duma, and the pro-government Russian media, this is a test of whether they know how to defend their compatriots abroad.

Act Two. In response to this announcement, Russians organize *first protests* and *warn* Estonians: both by diplomatic channels and by statements and comments in the media, resolutions of veterans' associations, and so on.

Act Three. In answer to this pressure, the Estonian party develops a substantive and ideological justification for its decision, which goes beyond the previous correct and formal justification. Its sense is *ostentatious*: for us, it is neither Victory nor Liberation Day but a day to remember enslavement; and the liquidation of this symbol of appearances and deception is an act of sovereignty confirmation for us. It is a sovereign decision of a sovereign state and attempts to force a change in it mean interference in internal affairs and a sign of disrespect for this sovereignty.

Act Four. The Russian answer to this decision's announcement (even before the decision's execution, as an intention and a resolution, but as a settled matter) has many threads. In Estonia, protests of local Russians erupt, including violent riots in Tallinn with the participation of young Russians, which the police pacified as acts of anarchy and vandalism and the Estonian authorities considered them to be at least ambiguous, meaning they wondered to what extent the protests were spontaneous, and to what extent they were externally inspired as a pressure factor, an attempt of intimidation. There was also a widespread *public opinion outrage* in Russia itself, as much spontaneous as stimulated by the dramatic and hysterical tone of media reports and politicians' comments.

Act Five. The media and politicians from other Baltic states and Poland enter the confrontation and demonstratively emphasize solidarity with the Estonian government and dislike of the Soviet army and Soviet influence memorabilia. Their statements also implicitly involved dislike of Putin's Russia. In Poland, among others, there is an increasing number of enunciations, official information, and leaks about planned laws and administrative decisions on the removal of brotherhood-in-arms monuments, monuments of gratitude, along with other projects and initiatives under the banner of decommunization. In the Polish media and Polish politicians' commentaries, the events such as the

Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, September 17 of 1939, and Katyń reappear. The Russian-Polish dispute over meat exports appears in the same context as evidence that Russia takes revenge for Poland's independence. Several Polish newspapers and websites excitedly reprint an article from the Russian press which states that as the Russian authorities and parties call for the defense of the tomb monument in Tallinn as sacred Russian soil, at the same time, in the heart of Russia, bulldozers drive over soldiers' graves as if they were construction sites.

Act Six. Official Russian decision-makers' statement says: these statements and announcements in the neighboring countries are also an anti-Russian provocation; an artificial inciting of anti-Russian sentiments, instrumental use of the conflict, and social emotions to achieve goals related to the internal political struggle in Poland and Lithuania. Russians also allege that Estonian and Latvian politicians deliberately fuel the conflict to justify their discriminatory policy toward local Russians through provoked reactions of Russians, and thus to force the EU's consent to pursue this policy.

Act Seven. The answer to the Estonian party's tenacity involves *warnings* and more or less indirect Russian authorities' threats, which they formally present either as an announcement of natural reprisals or as an appeal to the "civil society" (to entrepreneurs, people from the sphere of culture and science) to penalize Estonia (to abstain from contacts, to sever contacts, to boycott Estonian goods). This is a provocative move in the sense that it is an attempt to discourage, deter, or even force the abandonment of the original intent. Moreover, in this sense the solidarity in opposition is supposed to be a test of patriotism for ordinary Russian: the Russian authorities use the conflict with Estonia as a way to "invigorate patriotic feelings and national pride."

Act Eight. The Estonian authorities uphold the decision and announce that they will execute it, which is a *second-degree challenge* (the first degree was the announcement itself), as it means that the Estonians ignore both the Russian party's arguments and their warnings. The challenge is a demonstration of "we shall not fear you" and "we shall have our way" attitudes, which indirectly look like an act of revenge as if Estonians said: "Now you will see how it feels to be helpless and powerless."

Act Nine. Apart from state sanctions (diplomatic, economic) announced by the Russian authorities, numerous *unofficial retaliatory actions* happen, which if they are not inspired by the Russian authorities, then they are a result of Russian encouragement, the created atmosphere, and the Russian authorities demonstratively tolerate them, even when they have the appearances of illegal acts or even crimes.

A particular manifestation of this is an all-out *cyberattack* on information systems in Estonia, which is an attempt to paralyze the administration, economy, education, and science, along with being a substitute punishment and a form of pressure. Russians heated the emotions both in Russia, to the point of hysteria and anti-Estonian campaign, and in Estonia itself among the Russian minority.

Officially, Moscow denies any involvement in the campaign, even the cutoff of oil and coal supplies to Estonia on Wednesday was justified by the urgent need to repair the railroad line that connects Estonia with Russia. The pro-Kremlin Nashi youth group has admitted liability for the anti-Estonian hysteria. The group's activists have already announced the blockade of border crossings with the Baltic republic. They want to prevent the import of Estonian goods to Russia. Tallinn itself is like a powder keg: an enraged mob of young Russians may start plundering the city again at any moment. Officially, the Kremlin explains this behavior as a justified reaction of "civil society."

Act Ten. This campaign and the atmosphere created result in a characteristic *protest* in Moscow, which is militant in form.

On Tuesday, the whole world saw how this "civil society" works when Nashi stormed the Estonian embassy in Moscow and removed the Estonian flag. But that was not enough for them, and on Wednesday they decided to hunt down Ambassador Maria Kaliurand. They attacked the Swedish ambassador's car that was driving along Bolshaya Nikitskaya Street because they thought that the Estonian diplomat was hiding there. They finally cornered the ambassador at a press conference at the editorial office of *Argumenty i Fakty* magazine. They dispersed pepper gas in the building. The militia did not react. After the attacks, the families of employees of the Estonian mission were evacuated from Moscow. And last night, the Estonian ambassador returned to the country, officially for a planned vacation. Nashi considered her departure an "escape" and their own small victory. In the evening, they lifted the blockade of the embassy.

Act Eleven. Estonian protests on this issue, interventions, and expressions of concern from outside about the lack of respect for the rules of immunity and protection of diplomatic services, were excused with the argument that the Russian authorities cannot control the spontaneous outrage of their citizens.

Act Twelve. Irritated with the ineffectiveness of previous pressures, the Russian side makes a sharp and extremely unconventional statement: the Estonian authorities compromised themselves by this act, violated both elementary moral principles, rules of international law, and good manners. Therefore, the Estonian government should resign. The resulting consternation is accompanied by interpretive dilemmas. How to read this call: Is it an evaluation? Is it a demand to the other party? Is it a call to revolt? But for whom? For the Russian minority? The Estonian party perceives and presents this statement as an act of arrogance,

superpower pride, as a confirmation of inertia in the thinking of Russian politicians, who mentally remain in a bygone era.

Act Thirteen. What follows is the Estonian president's balanced statement, which nonetheless contains *counter-provocation elements*, meaning it has a slightly veiled tone of moral and cultural superiority.

The president interprets the riots and unrest in Estonia itself as the result of a coordinated action:

I am disappointed that there are people in Estonia who have no respect for their fellow citizens and the state. They are the ones responsible for provocations and havoc. The goal of the instigators who caused the riots in Tallinn is repulsive: they want Estonians and Russians to live in hatred. / However, we will not let them drag us into this dispute. This is the best way to show that we are above those who manipulate us. There are many wise Estonians and Russians in our country. I believe that they will resist the influence of the instigators.³⁹

Next, the president emphasizes the declaration of openness, tolerance, goodwill, willingness to reach an understanding with their own citizens of Russian nationality:

These past few days served as a lesson for everyone who loves Estonia. As Estonians, we must understand that the people who came here during Soviet times, just like their children and grandchildren, are our compatriots. I would like everyone to regard Estonia as their own country. However, the minorities that live with us must understand and accept that Estonians have their own, very painful, historical experiences. In the last century, we lived under the rule of three occupiers.⁴⁰

The president's intention is also to reject the accusation that it is the Estonian authorities that have an interest in the conflict between the indigenous and immigrant populations. He almost points at the instigators of the conflict:

We must be sturdy, noble, and friendly to each other. We do not need intermediaries whose hidden aim is to stir up disputes between us. / I assure you that Estonia can talk with anyone except those who incite riots and sow confusion. Let us give new meaning to the word "ours," which Kremlin propaganda today uses to spread hostility. All those who consider Estonia to be their country are "ours." / I appeal to the Russian-speaking population to learn Estonian, be successful and happy! Then the state will help you. We have obligations to the Russian minority, just as the Russian minority has its obligations to the state. / The story of the Soviet soldiers' monument is coming to an end. The

39 T. H. Ilves, president of Estonia, "Rosjo, bądź cywilizowana," *Dziennik*, No. 103(316), Friday, May 4, 2007, p. 2.

40 Ilves, "Rosjo, bądź cywilizowana," p. 2.

monument and the remains of the fallen soldiers will find their respectful burial place in the cemetery. It is time to stop using the remembrance of war victims for political purposes.⁴¹

While the address to Russian residents and citizens of Estonia is dialogical, the response to the aggressive, confrontational tone of Russian politicians' statements and the forms of pressure they applied balances between principledness and a provocative tone of superiority:

I turn to Russia, Estonia's neighbor, with a message: try to remain civilized! In Europe, it is not acceptable for one country to demand the resignation of the democratically elected government of another sovereign country. In Europe, it is not acceptable to launch hacker attacks on the state institutions of another country from computers owned by state institutions. Nor is it acceptable to violate the Geneva Convention that guarantees the immunity of diplomats. In Europe, politicians, and diplomats resolve all disputes between states. One does not do so on the street.⁴²

In this paragraph, a subdued and rational commentary on bad manners, inconsistent with the culture of negotiation, the rules of diplomacy, and generally accepted procedures for the resolution of interstate conflicts, accompanies an emotional subtext ("barbarians") and a *reciprocation of bidding* for superiority over the opposing party. Such a phrase ("try to remain civilized") does not belong to the language of diplomacy. One may interpret the phrase as purely rhetorical, though by no means courteous. But its meaning is different: it is rather a statement addressed to Estonians – "Ah, I told them good! On behalf of all of us" – and to international opinion – "Look who we have to deal with." It also contains double derision: the phrase does not mean "be civilized," but "try to be civilized," as well as an implicit meaning in the subtext: "try, because you have not tried yet," "try, although it will not be easy for you."

Act Fourteen. The ultimatum-like tone of the Russian statement provokes other neighbors to counter-provocation:

This dispute is not just about the monument and history. The whole conflict has a much broader context. I recall the year 1940. At that time, the Soviets issued ultimatums to the three Baltic states in which they demanded changes of governments. Today such claims

41 Ilves, "Rosjo, bądź cywilizowana," p. 2.

42 Ilves, "Rosjo, bądź cywilizowana," p. 2.

are made “only” against Estonia. In other words, Moscow wants to use the crisis to cause a change of government in Tallinn and help to form a pro-Russian cabinet.⁴³

The association is emotionally understandable and largely spontaneous. However, the historical analogy is greatly exaggerated. It ignores other realities, the balance of power, and the difference between the Stalinist regime and Putin's Russia. The interpretation of the Russian party's calculations is also exaggerated. It is doubtful that Russian strategists and advisors hoped to provoke a change of government with a crisis (where are the alternates?). It is rather rational to assume that such a rhetoric is a *face-saving measure* in front of one's own public opinion (if one cannot win in some dispute, one must create an impression that he had the last word, even if it is an empty phrase to which there is no point to reply). Such a propaganda exaggeration intends to mobilize, consolidate, and motivate people to assume a *maximalist* rather than a *negotiating stance*:

What is happening now is nothing less than a new incarnation of Russian imperialism. Vladimir Putin already refers to us as *pribaltika*, even though there are three sovereign states in the region. His advisors have prepared a document in which they refer to our countries as “dwarfs.” I am just waiting when they will say that Poland is a “Versailles bastard,” following the “good” tradition of Molotov, the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Stalin's time.⁴⁴

There are two provocative elements here. The first element is a propaganda exaggeration technique: it seems that the interested parties perceive the Russian politicians' insulting patronization (known also to the Poles in the Russian proverb “a hen is not a bird; Poland is not abroad”), which has the savor of “winking at one's own,” with the ironic undertone “this independence of theirs: just like banana republics,” as a non-recognition of the new status quo and an expression of the aspirations for a second annexation. The element involves the creation of a mood as if the “Soviets” or “Russkies” already prepare to attack, to reconquer. The second element is the rather intrusive provocation of Poles to solidarize when one reminds them of things that agitate them and induce them to another symbolic revenge.

This aggressive insolence must be opposed at all costs! Before Europe understands what is happening, we, as neighbors, must support Estonia. Let us not be fooled into thinking

43 Statement by Vytautas Landsbergis, the first president of independent Lithuania: Landsbergis, “Rosja traktuje Bałtów jak za Stalina,” *Dziennik*, No. 103 (316), Friday, May 4, 2007, p. 1.

44 Landsbergis, “Rosja,” p. 1.

that this is only about a monument to a Soviet army soldier, for it is the prelude to an integrated attack on our region! That is why today we must defend Estonia together. Just as in January 1991, when the independence of Lithuania was defended by parliamentarians from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and many Russians, which should not be underestimated. I would like to appeal to the Polish and Lithuanian MPs to go to Tallinn and support our neighbor.⁴⁵

This appeal is an obvious attempt to launch a political festival in Tallinn comparable to the one that happened during the Orange Revolution in Kyiv, that is to counter Russian attempts to implement a “tough” hegemonic policy with a symbolic demonstration that has a simple meaning of a subversive “let us thumb our nose at the bear” challenge. If the interested parties took such an initiative up, it would be a spectacular *avalanche provocation*, with a similar effect as during the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity.

In summary, the Russian-Estonian confrontation eloquently and precisely demonstrates the great role of acts of provocation and counter-provocation in political conflicts.

45 Landsbergis, “Rosja,” p. 1.

Part Three: Provocation as a Tool in Politics

Assuming we already know the essence of provocation as such and the characteristics typical of all provocations, regardless of their application field, we may now consider what use political actors make of the potential repertoire of provocation.

Who belongs to this circle of actors? The contenders for power, those in power or in direct control of the situation, as well as those who do not intend to deprive anyone of power or replace anyone in exercising it, but who only want to effectively take care of their own interests, express and impose their views, defend their belongings against various assaults, protect the principles that guarantee the supremacy of the common good and the transparency of the rules of social coexistence, maintain control over those in power, or force social projects and changes beneficial to the public. This is the preliminary answer to the question of who can make use of provocation in political life.

However, the answer to the question of what (which purposes) a provocative mode of action can serve first requires a reflection on the possible types of cooperation: social situations in which various actors' actions intertwine in a way that allows those actors to support, strengthen, help, or replace each other, but also can limit, hinder, or obstruct each other, or even thwart not only their intentions, but the very possibility of action.

Therefore, providing the analysis and typology of the functions of provocations used in politics must be accompanied by the awareness of the difference in how they function in the cases of cooperation, alliance, or integration, and in the cases of competition, struggle, or outright war. For multiple reasons, the conviction that the purpose of provocation in politics is always to outwit and outmaneuver others, to fight (harass, oppress, and harm) them, or even to destroy them, has been established as a stereotype. It is as inaccurate as the identification of politics with aggression and violence, while there exist plenty of instances of pursuing policies through diplomacy and negotiation, and even more so through persuasion, compromise, and a settlement called consensus. To understand politics in a neutral and non-reductive way would be to consider it in terms of a game. Then, in the typology of the functions performed by provocations, we will not be overly influenced only by either constructive or deconstructive character of these functions

In the context of these functions, the consideration of the matter of positive and negative, or – on a different plane – of constructive or deconstructive character of action will foster objectivity. Thus, when provocation is supposed to support, confirm, or justify something, and when it is supposed to contradict something, or to be a form of discord or opposition; when it serves to create, and when it serves to undermine or destroy.

The functional and genre-based typology of political provocations is entangled in a certain methodological problem, namely: Are there provocations that are politically specific, characteristic of only political activity as a certain scheme and a manner of action, unheard of in or atypical and inadequate for other fields of human activity? Or is it so that the specificity of the provocations used in politics is determined not by an unrepeatable scheme of action unique for politics and a reservoir of means (as in the same way, using the same tools may act, for example, policeman and gangsters; artists, pseudo-artists, critics; coaches and athletes; journalists in relation to their readers, listeners, viewers; journalists in relation to politicians – although they should not be guided by political or ideological reasons, but purely commercial ones – and to civil servants; sellers and buyers in relation to each other), but only by the “matter,” intentions, scope, effects and social cost of the influence? I will favor the latter stand, assuming that politics does not have monopoly on the exploratory, mobilizing, diversionary, deceitful, pretextual, or discrediting provocations.

Another methodological nuance is connected to the fact that, in terms of its matter, provocation is a potentially multifunctional, and not monofunctional, form of insidious action. Therefore, the divisions adopted in the typology presented below refer to the abstractly distinguished functions (as they can be analyzed in detachment from others), and not to concrete actions. In short, it is not so that a given provocation which serves, for instance, as a tool to diagnose a situation and intentions of an opponent, cannot simultaneously stimulate, encourage him to do something, or discourage him from doing it, or constitute an attempt at creating obstacles through his own actions, which he cannot prevent and over which he does not have control, even if he is aware of this intention.

First, we will distinguish and separately characterize causative provocations (which consist in creating specific states of affairs, situations, events, and a specific social atmosphere), deceitful provocations (which aim to create appearances and illusions which serve to disorient and mislead), and discrediting provocations (which aim to discredit someone or to coax someone into self-discrediting). The last type can be based on either causative actions (creation of real phenomena) or deceptions (creation of appearances and illusions). Furthermore, we will look at different varieties of causative provocations, using as our

starting point the difference between the provocations which require contact and communication with the object of influence, and those which enable influencing someone without his participation. An analysis of the “pure” provocations in terms of their functionality and genre (as they are based on a different scheme of influence) reveals that in real political life we will sooner encounter not a unidimensional provocation (which fulfils only one function via only one of the possible forms of influence) but a concatenation of multiple functions and schemata of action. This implies a notion of a syndromatic provocation, which is – presumably and by nature – multifaceted.

IX. Characteristics and Typical Repertoire of Political Provocations

In terms of structure, form, mechanism of action, and even the goal achieved through a specified way of influence, acts of provocation used in various areas of life are similar. For instance, if we compare not the object but the form of the rhetorical, erotic, artistic, journalistic, and political provocations, it becomes visible that they have a similar schema; the only problem is to determine whether a given provocation act is supposed to undermine or destroy, to replace something with something else, to cover something up, to ensure the reconnaissance of a situation, to coax someone into something (for example, to tempt, to incite, to force to do something through the created situation), or to prevent something. Such goals have a universal character and occur in any relationship of coexistence, cooperation, competition, struggle, or war (either in the case of a quarrel about a cat between two neighbors or a price war between car companies). We set similar goals in the game of love, in economic competition, in teaching, as well as in a satire tournament.

Therefore, the fact that political provocations serve to win someone over (commercial solicitation of clients has the same goal), to prevent something (the same could be said about allergy shots, which are a “medical provocation”), or to defeat someone (like in sport competitions, where we can find various ways of deceiving, confusing, misleading, and discouraging an opponent, as well as maneuvers to divert or absorb attention), prove that these are not their unique characteristics.

A specific character of political provocations is connected to the fact that (1) they are at least entangled in the conflicts of interests and in the conflicts of large social groups, which pose a threat to the social balance and unity of the nation and the state, in the struggle for the articulation of these interests, and therefore, in the fight to gain influence and power in the country. Moreover, that (2) they are a tool for influencing and simultaneously correcting, limiting, and canceling someone else’s influence on political relations and decisions, an instrument for the struggle for power, and one of the means of exercising state authority. Similarly, political provocations are involved in conflicts of interests between states, large supranational communities, and blocs of states, in the conflicts between them, conditions of states, and collective security; they are a tool for triggering changes in international relations, hegemony, or domination, compensating weaknesses of the international relations participants’ own potential, tactical dexterity or determination in action.

1. Pejorative Tradition of “Political Provocation”

The stereotype of a political provocation associates and identifies it with destruction, malicious and deceitful actions to the detriment of others. This is a simplification, as there exist constructive forms of political provocation as well, which serve social consolidation, activation, and mobilization, forcing decisions and legal regulations which aim not to harm or destroy anyone but to settle certain issues, to solve social problems, and therefore, to achieve or restore social balance and relative harmony of coexistence between different social groups.

A widespread negative connotation with the word “provocation” undoubtedly hinders a substantive analysis of the meaning and repertoire of provocative methods of political action. While in many other areas of human activity the word “provocation” takes on not exclusively a pejorative meaning (a synonym of destruction), but also a positive one (cf. artistic, intellectual, rhetorical, or journalistic provocation), in the sphere of politics a negative bias attached to provocation prevails. There is a tradition behind it but let us emphasize that it does not involve an objective evaluation, a statistical distribution of benefits and harms, or manifestations of principledness and dishonesty, but the focus of social memory mainly on what shocks and hurts. An unprecedented historical inventory would probably clarify these disproportions in the phenomenon’s image. We would then realize how much society owes to provocation methods (also in the political sphere) used as tools for social activation and mobilization, social resistance against oppression and persecution, fight against colonizers and occupiers, impulse to constructive ideological and program debates. However, for the time being, the odium dominates:

Today this word has an ominous overtone. Due to the experience of public life, especially political struggles, it carries both an alarming warning and a heavy accusation. It will probably be considered obsolete to remind that, generally speaking, provocation is a morally indifferent procedure intended to induce someone’s action, to persuade someone to do something, it aims to create situations that determine someone’s performance, decision, or choice. However, with time it became increasingly clear that this term is used to refer to hostile doings undertaken in the conviction that the actions provoked by them will be unfavorable, harmful for the provoked person and often for a wider scope of people. A provocateur deliberately pursues an expected effect, realizing the possible negative consequences of his intentions. Colloquially, we speak of such situations in terms of “baiting someone into doing something,” cunningly inducing him to cause harm to themselves or to others by giving them false motives or by putting them in a forced situation.¹

1 M. Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” in: *Czas w słowach odbity* (Warszawa: 1986), p. 154.

A negative understanding of manipulation as such is somehow automatically projected onto the notion of provocation. A (political) provocation is to be a synonym for either the commonly understood deceitfulness (secretiveness, plotting, setting a trap, deceiving, lying, or forging), or a brutal aggressiveness (in this sense, “to provoke” means to unceremoniously assault, attack, profane, blaspheme, humiliate, and degrade others, to draw from the methods used by the paramilitaries).

Today, the odium surrounding this notion has its source in the political struggles (mainly from the nineteenth and twentieth century) waged by various groups and parties. In this fight, provocation was often used, most often in the form of sending an agent to the “enemy camp.” Pretending to be a zealous supporter of the cause for which a given group was fighting, the agent pushed his companions to violent actions, informed his authorities, and, at an indicated time, collaborated in discrediting, and breaking up the group. Then, the agent was often a crown witness for the prosecution in court trials. This was an exceptionally despicable role, hence a justified accusation that someone is a provocateur must be considered a serious charge in public life.²

In common language and thinking (although this should be also applied to many publicists and even scholars), political provocation is practically identified with infiltration, just as a provocateur is identified with an agent, a mole, someone who was set up to pretend to play a certain role in order to deceive and surprise, or simply with an instigator (a war instigator, goading into lynch, pogrom, or purge). This is an excessive narrowing of the term’s scope.

And yet, the somewhat typical actions of a single agent, intended to cause harm to a social group are neither the only one, nor the most dangerous form of provocation. In the complex processes of collective life and political contradictions, there occur situations far more complicated and threatening, when a finely organized provocation concerns the problems generally perceived as vital and socially significant, and when it is difficult to unmask at the same time. Acts of provocation are supposed to compromise political activists, they intend to invert or at least impede some kind of actions, undermine one’s trust, and prevent a peaceful consideration and settling of some difficult issues.³

Therefore, in political life, apart from a provocateur in the role of a pest and diversionist, we will also notice a provocateur-muckraker, who challenges renowned (especially the fake and artificially created) authorities with his polemic, but also a muckraker using provocative methods borrowed from the repertoire of prosecutors, detectives, and policemen, in order to catch his opponent

2 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” pp. 154–155.

3 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” p. 155.

red-handed. Sometimes, in such exposing measures, the line between arranging situations in which the opponent's malpractices, delinquencies, and crimes can be revealed, and inducing someone to commit a crime in order to establish and punish him can become problematic.

Just as often, provocative techniques are used – either ostentatiously (by issuing a challenge) or in a “staged” way (by manipulating the turn of events, the development of a situation) – in order to force someone to fight (to undertake a challenge), to create or maintain and strengthen social divisions, or to absorb social attention and energy with a conflict, which paralyzes the functioning of the system, pushes all other issues into the background, diverts attention from inconvenient phenomena and one's own controversial and objectionable actions.

Provocation is supposed to cause conflict or to intensify or escalate an already existing one. In most cases, it intends to arouse collective attitudes or to induce the state of excitement. The situation created in this way is often blamed on the person who loses on it. In this way, he loses twice.⁴

In what sense does one lose twice? First, the person loses because of the damage inflicted by the provocation act itself (for instance, by undermining one's good name or prestige with an accusation or a sophisticated insult, one loses influence by being forced to resign as a consequence of a scandal or controversy). Second, the person loses because one is condemned as the perpetrator of a disorder or social harm; for instance, the defense of one's honor is considered insolence, and one's refusal to resign is presented as both litigiousness and deceit (the person wants to hold position in order to gloss over the case).

2. Distinguishing Factors of Political Provocations

The specificity of political provocation is related to the following factors:

- * matter,
- * context,
- * perpetrators,
- * object and addressee of influence,
- * social reach and importance.

4 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” p. 155.

Matter

The stereotypical understanding of politics (as a sphere of struggle for power and authority) imposes a certain association (and narrowness) regarding the notion of political provocation. In this view, it seems clear that political provocation enables to undermine or overthrow one's power in the state, or on the contrary, to gain, seize, maintain, or confirm that power. Therefore, its object must be (artificially defined or modified) scope of influence of the attacker or the attacked, the status (the position held, the role played, the prestige or authority, duties and powers assigned to a given position), and the group or personal credibility, (un)popularity of a given political actor, the consequent trust and support, or the refusal to give such support. Therefore, the obvious examples of a political provocation include, for instance, to deceitfully discredit a candidate in an election by means of some document or recording, to persuade a deputy to change his parliamentary club in order to downgrade his previous club to the status of a circle, or to deprive the deputy's party of its parliamentary majority; to convince or force a minister to resign, which results in the collapse of an entire cabinet; to subject a public figure or formation to threats (soon, we will delegitimize you); to break off the promising coalition-forming negotiations in order to drive up the tender's price; to organize a strike or picketing during the visit of a foreign delegation; to set a corruption ambush on the deputy prime minister.

However, when we move beyond this stereotype, we notice that a provocation is political in character not because the object of an attack or, for instance, of a treacherous murder, was a politician, but because the consequences of the caused event are significant for the coexistence of large social groups, for the criteria of distribution of goods, for the economic and legal privilege, or for the disadvantage of a particular social category. The proper matter of any political action, including acts of provocation, is not so much the relations between various figures, or even political parties and state bodies, as the conditions of social balance, the settlement of relationship between the interests of particular groups and those of the entire society, nation, or country; it is the relationship between the ideological partiality and the *raison d'état*, between the aspirations for political innovation or restauration and legal and cultural continuity of the state.

The "media mangle" reduces politics to backstage sensations, personal reshuffles, alleged or real cliquey plots, courtly hierarchies, or the rankings of (un)popularity. But this is not the essence of politics – only its form, sometimes deceitful and barren (as in the case of the staff reshuffles that do not result in any social changes and fail to provide solutions to social problems and issues).

In short, the deciding factor in considering the political character of provocation is a certain context. What kind of context is that?

Context

A political character is attributed to a given action (an act of good or bad will) if it is entangled in a relationship between particular interests of some large or small social groups (teams, coteries, cliques) and individuals, and the common interest, common good, and the conditions of general social balance, integration, the requirements of the continuity of existence and preservation of the identity of a given community; and, respectively, in the relationship between particular aspirations and the collective will, between the biased perceptions of certain groups and relatively popular opinion. Political provocation always serves to force through a particular interest or view at the expense of another particular interest or view, to impose a particular partial interpretation of the common interest (common good), to foil one's intentions that are considered harmful for the public interest, or to disarm or exclude from the game a party deemed harmful by nature. A separate issue is the validity of those assumption, the impartiality of those who adopt them.

It is necessary to notice the difference and connection between the direct interest of a direct object of action (an initiator, an executor, a beneficiary) and the interest of a larger group: A social class, its faction, layer, professional group, ideological community (for instance religious one), ethnic group. On the surface of phenomena, there may be exposed personal animosities and reckonings of certain public figures, tactical "scuffles" of various intraparty factions, games within the circle of parties forming a coalition; but the essential, deeper content of these phenomena is something else, namely, social functionality or dysfunctionality of this political or somehow politicking game (how it affects collective security, the efficiency of the functioning of the state, the resolution or alleviation of ideological conflicts and disputes over the distribution of wealth). Both in the common and media optics, we cannot see the wood for the trees. The sensations and speculations are persistently stuck in a closed circle of considerations about the accelerations or postponement of elections, about the change of the leaders; it may seem that the essence of politics consists in various declarations, polemics in debates, press conferences, complains with the prosecutor's office, resignations and their consequences for personal reshuffles, while, in fact, its essence consists in the undertaken, realized, blocked, contested, and cancelled decisions on the key socioeconomic issues, on the security issues, on the issues of cultural identity. Provocations constitute a tool of politics (or politicking, if

the fetishization of the game, manipulative efficiency, and power itself replaces attempts to solve social problems), but they are not the expression of its essence.

Perpetrators

When speaking of perpetrators, we often mean the subjects that directly initiate and perform given activities. The structure of perpetration is often more complicated, which prove not only subtle sociological theories but also a very practical document, namely the Criminal Code, which includes the distinction between directing the commission of a prohibited act and committing it or being an accomplice in committing it. By analogy, without yet going into which provocations are considered crimes and which are legal, legalistic, or even parlor, we notice a significant difference between the status and distribution of labor between such subjects as: the initiators, steersmen-dispatchers, executors, beneficiaries stimulating others or parasitically turning arising opportunities to one's favor.

Who uses political provocations specifically? Contenders who struggle for power but unable to gain support or win the fight according to the rules; those in power who want to maintain it despite losing their social mandate and ability to govern; those who, through not having their own claims or interest in power, demonstrate their refusal to participate, lack of consent for the violation of certain rules (contestatory provocations). I will discuss the diverse uses of provocations in the next chapter.

Object and Addressee of Influence

As we have indicated before, someone can be an object of this influence, while another person can be its addressee. An object is the person we influence, someone who we place in a certain situation, or "set up" for us – both when he is aware of the influence, evaluates and reacts to it (either by submitting to it or opposing it), and when he unconsciously and involuntarily submits to the influence, like a material object subject to processing or rearrangement. An addressee is someone whom we inform (sincerely or not) about our influence on someone and its results, someone whose impressions, convictions, feelings, judgements, and decisions we want to change. Thus, if the object of provocation is, for instance, a politician in the course of being investigated by secret services and subjected to a test of incorruptibility or resistance to blackmail by an alleged agent of foreign intelligence, then the addressee of such a provocation are: the media, the public opinion, the politician's party and coalition partners, whose attitude toward him are shaped by this provocation.

However, it is not the object alone, nor even the addressee, but only the addressee and the intentions together that define the political character of provocation. And so, an insulting of the head of state by a drunk homeless man annoyed by the police intervention at a railway station is not a political provocation; but an insulting of the same head of state by a radio program owner is a political provocation.

Social Reach and Importance

Acts of provocation are “public” influences, although not necessarily in the colloquial sense. In the colloquial sense, the word “public” is associated with what is exposed and widely visible, available for the public to observe; and simultaneously, it is addressed to the widest possible audience. In this view, a concert held in a large open space of a park and attracting the attention of crowds that turn up, similarly to a football match, are both considered public events. Sociologists, lawyers, and political scientists attribute a different meaning to this word. A public matter is what concerns the public, what refers to the conditions of existence of a community, coexistence of its members, and what exceeds their individual needs and interests, the sphere of intimacy and privacy.

Acts of provocation have a political character when they gain public significance and range, serve to manipulate collective behaviors and even collective imaginations. The range on its own can be a misleading criterion – the matters that concern everyone can be decided by some, be under their control or beyond it; they may be considered “in the public forum,” with an open curtain, but also by confidential, behind-the-scenes, and secretly intimate (within a small circle) polls or agreements.

The functions of political provocations, which I will discuss in Chapter Ten, correspond with the mentioned criteria of specificity.

3. Fertile Ground for Political Provocations

The previously conducted structural and functional analysis of multilateral and multistage provocations, together with an amendment to the definition of provocation (artificially caused phenomena... on a fertile ground) makes us aware of a certain regularity. That is, political provocation becomes both intentional and particularly effective when it constitutes an answer to a certain demand or at least an expectation.

Whose demand?

First, obviously, that of the initiator and perpetrator of provocation, who in this way wants to achieve something that he could not achieve using persuasion

(by convincing others to his arguments and claims), by asserting his rights (since it involves reaching for undue or forbidden goods), or by reliable forms of participation in the political game (which do not guarantee success but create an obligation to acknowledge one's own failure and accept it).

However, second, provocation can only be successful or even effective under the condition that – apart from its perpetrator – there is another person interested in it, if not objectively (in the sense that it is also of his interest, that he can “profit” from it), then at least subjectively, in the sense that the person is fascinated by such a form of action, suggested by its necessity or inevitability. Although it sounds absurd or at least paradoxical, for many provocations there is... someone waiting; the person waiting can be precisely the one who is painfully touched, hit, or outraged by it. Despite what might seem, one does not exclude the other. It is not necessarily about a successful sadomasochistic relationship (like the “you sweet brute” type), but rather about the fact that an aggressive mode of action of an opponent or enemy confirms the victim's prejudice and at the same time justifies the victim's aggressive attitudes and intentions. Therefore, this is all the more true in a multilateral game, in which a third party may rely on own gains from the conflict, exchanges of punches, or chicanery in relations between two other parties.

Furthermore, let us notice that very often the “audience” is almost thirsty for provocation. The theatricalization and mediatization of politics have intensified such a type of demand. Moreover, these changes have caused a shift in the perception of provocation. Since the spectacle has become an independent value, so provocation itself (be it an accusation, a leak, a cunning recording made public, or an exceptionally rude form of insult) has invoked in some people not so much reflections, reactions of indignation and protest, or “wild satisfactions” but rather an interest similar to that of a crowd gathered after a car accident (“I wonder if they are still alive?”).

For instance, why are provocations involving the creation and appropriate turning of scandals to one's favor so effective? Is it because they meet the expectations of sensation or confirm obsessive patterns of conspiracy theories? Why instigating demanding attitudes can be effective? Because there is someone who feels unsatisfied, lost, deceived, who will not neglect any opportunity or promise, and who is ready to accept or take back what so far has been denied him. Why is it so easy to arouse demanding attitudes, even those bordering on bloodthirstiness, a desire for revenge and vindictiveness? Because in a certain community, there is a sense of disappointment, injustice, and humiliation, accompanied by a strong desire to find and punish the guilty ones (it does not matter that those people may be typical scapegoats).

A circumstance particularly conducive to provocations is the existence of a conflict, especially antagonisms between social groups, ideological communities, or political formations.

Psychologists distinguished the phenomenon of affective polarization whereby a strong contradicting emotional engagement creates the conditions for a distorted perception of the world. Then, there appears an ever-intensifying tendency to exaggerate that what is consistent with one's aspirations, and to minimize everything that is contrary to them. This way of perceiving reality multiplies not only one's mistakes and faults but also injustices and merits. Simultaneously, the ability to understand the opponent's arguments, or even the willingness to hear them, clearly decreases.⁵

Such a state and the corresponding atmosphere of threat, suspicion, hostility, and viciousness arouse not only the temptation to manipulate and provoke but also the tendency to believe that, under such consequences, challenges, threats, demonstrations of force and malice, even twisted maneuvers, game of appearances, attempts to surprise, or mislead are considered natural behavior, the obvious language of communication between antagonists.

4. The Provocation Scare

However, a destructive tool of political fight (extortion, incitement, obstruction, confusion) can be not only real provocation as such but also the charge of provocation (whether justified or not), suspicion of provocation, and even more so the act of arousing an obsession or even psychosis of provocation in a given situation in a particular environment.

In such situations, provocation is relatively more common, although it is generally a rare occurrence in the public life. An important background brought by the atmosphere of active polarization is the increase in the frequency of suspicions of provocations, and the increasing number of accusations of similar mechanisms. Unfortunately, this type of insinuation against a differently thinking person who soberly opposes one-sided excitement can be generally effective enough to silence or discourage him from defending a just cause, and hinders actions aimed at diminishing oppositions and extinguishing conflicts.⁶

Provocation (assuming the "obvious," namely that it must be a hostile and despicable act) is considered to be not only the behavior of the opponent or enemy (including his acts of goodwill, conciliatory gestures, declarations of his

5 Szulczewski, "Prowokacja," p. 156.

6 Szulczewski, "Prowokacja," p. 156.

readiness to reach an agreement, appeals for talks) but also interventions or completely random comments of potentially impartial neutral actors not engaged in a given conflict but interested in, for instance, solving a problem, restoring social balance, or peace.

We may notice that unfounded accusations of provocations are frequently made not against a clear and specified opponent but against someone who expresses readiness to mediate the conflict without being directly involved in it. The intensification of negative emotions in a very heated situation often forces to reject any attempt at mediation. The person provided with the right conditions to mediate must be, so to speak, neutral and therefore have a certain level of understanding for the positions of the two parties. This forbearance toward the pursuits or attitudes of the opposing party induces its suspicions toward the mediator, encourages him to accuse that the proposed mediation is in fact a covert action for the benefit of the opposite side, that it constitutes a provocation aimed at causing a one-sided defeat of those who will take it seriously.⁷

In this case, the sectarian principle “whoever is not with us is against us” prevails. Thus, whoever urges us to compromise, to come to an agreement with the enemy, is an agent or servant of that enemy. The agent’s offer of intermediation or even more concrete ideas concerning the conditions of ceasefire or ending a confrontation are perceived as plotting or a trap, and not as help or a chance for coming out of a stalemate in an honorable manner.

Thus, the intensification of suspicions of provocation may constitute an effective deterrent, block actions aimed at eliminating the conflict, and maybe discourage those who are capable of at least mitigating it. The intensified emotional states enable elements of fanaticism to appear in people’s behavior. The increasing tension, uncertainty, and anxiety, fear of being forced, and losing one’s previous positions, or the necessity to give up one’s goals – all of this generates states of frustration and may induce desperate actions, such as provocations. Such an atmosphere seriously increases risks, it seems to make the fear of such acts more real, the more so that in a state of stress, there usually occurs an impoverishment of intellectual capacities and the ability to critically evaluate phenomena and situations may be limited.⁸

A vicious circle ensues; it may also be called a spiral of suspicion or obstinacy. The more we are overwhelmed by the situation to which we have contributed our own participation in a bidding of provocations (via challenges, deceptions, or appearances), the more ardently we respond with reactive provocations and

7 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” pp. 156–157.

8 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” p. 157.

counterprovocations to all attempts that seek to defuse the tension and resolve the conflict.

Nevertheless, the escalation of conflict is neither the only nor the primary cause of the obsessive sensitivity to and demand for provocation.

In some circumstances and environments, the stereotype of provocation functions as a convenient superstition which stems from a prejudice against someone else, which is used to replace the lack or insufficiency of one's arguments in an ongoing dispute. It is supposed to constitute some kind of excuse for one's helplessness or inaction.⁹

This resembles the game of hot potato. When I cannot handle a problem and my self (own limitations, weaknesses, doubts, dilemmas, fears of a risk, mistake, failure), I cover my confusion and embarrassment with aggression, provoking the environment or specific subjects.

In interpersonal relations, provocation is a dangerous and repulsive phenomenon, although fortunately, it is not a very frequently occurring one. Who knows whether a more negative role of provocation should not be sought in the function of the deterrent? Here, provocation is only an elusive shadow which is intended to increase tension, fuel conflict, and deepen distrust. To effectively avoid provocation also means to critically analyze all accusations of this kind.¹⁰

The provocation consisting in accusing others of using provocation – in particular permanent provocation in which everything is presented as provocation from the onset – seems to be the most dangerous way to check the environment and paralyze other activities, but also the cheapest way to assign a privileged position and arbitrary role to oneself. It is then when politicians known for abusing provocative methods terrorize society with their “hypersensitivity.”

5. Fixed Repertoire of Provocative Means of Political Action

What behaviors or sophisticated insidious actions are commonly associated with provocation? Here we present an incomplete catalog of such symptoms:

- * *a challenge, taunt* are behaviors (actions) intended to deprive the opponent/victim of self-control, induce him to behave in an unwanted or socially unacceptable way, for instance, to use force, to make mistakes, to act inconsistently;
- * the use of *situational coercion* means, for instance, forcing the opponent to defend and react to an attack, preferably through a disproportionate response

9 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” p. 157

10 Szulczewski, “Prowokacja,” pp. 157–158.

which will burden not the stimulating party, but the responding one, forcing someone to give up the original intention in unexpectedly changed circumstances;

- * *instigation, incitement* induce individuals or entire groups to undertake actions to the detriment of our rival (opponent), benefiting us directly or indirectly, and exempting us from direct participation and responsibility;
- * *intrigues* aim to place someone in an unfavorable situation or discredit him, make him cause damage to himself by this person's own actions in our interest (cf. for instance the meticulous revenge of the envier Iago, the actual instigator of Othello's madness and crime);
- * *smear campaign* means either turning some against the others (by the use of scheming methods) or turning an entire community against one group or an individual (initiated on any convenient pretext, also that created by the initiator of the smear campaign);
- * the creation of *fait accompli*, that is a surprise action consisting in breaking the generally applicable and respected norms or one's own (forced or voluntary) obligations; to forestall the opponent, consolidate the effects of unlawful actions, and impede the return to the previous state;
- * *documents fabrication and publishing* (completely false ones or blurring the distinction between the actual state and fiction or slander), distorting the image of current and past events, serving to discredit certain individuals or institutions;
- * *causing social unrest*; triggering an "avalanche of uncontrolled events" be it by goading, incitement, instigation, distribution of outrageous rumors, or by the specially undertaken desperate measures;
- * *criminal actions and acts of terror* designed to provoke collective emotions, change the balance of power, and prevent certain actions;
- * *creating a pretext* means actions (legal, military, propaganda) intended to misinterpret other people's intentions and behaviors and to interpret others' actions to our detriment, which serves to justify one's intended destructive actions: aggressive or diversionary, presenting them as something forced, undertaken against one's best will.

The above catalog is related – perhaps too vividly – to the scope of temporary measures. Meanwhile, provocation can also be a method of long-term and multi-stage action, programmed for gradual and culminative effects, calculated in variants and alternatives. Commonly known and even exploited in action literature (in war, spy, and detective movies and novels) and popular non-fiction literature are, for instance, the forms of continuous provocative influences, especially those

related with diversion, such as infiltration (for instance agent and conspiracy activity, police, and intelligence provocations), stirring up and fueling racial, ethnic, and religious conflicts (warmongering).

Already the brief catalog above indicates that “provocation has many faces” indeed.

6. A Concise Repertoire of Immediate Provocations

The repertoire of provocative techniques calculated for an almost immediate result includes:

- * *spreading euphoric or catastrophic visions* (with the suggestion – salvage lays only in us);
- * *spreading resonant slogans, postulate, demands* which evoke social agitation, enliven some disputes, conflicts, and settlement attitudes;
- * *making vague announcements* (“we will solve this problem,” “we will stop this practice,” “we will not allow for this to continue”) or *even promises and obligations* which meet the expectations of unprivileged, aggravated groups, but also responding to the reflexes of revenge or scapegoating;
- * *servng allusions, “thinly disguised,” mysterious, and intriguing understatements* (like “I know but I won’t tell”) which cause confusion, consternation, a sense of uncertainty, and at the same time typical curiosity of gossip (bait for the media and prey for crowd psychology);
- * *spreading rumors and gossip* – focusing public attention on the raised in such a way issues discrediting rivals and, by contrast, putting those unaffected by the news in a better light (“I seem higher because I have diminished him”);
- * *disseminating random pieces of information, information without context, or incomplete information* (for instance manipulated statistics, leaks, snippets from secret documents), which trigger an irreversible avalanche of targeted emotions;
- * *overt, frontal attacks in the form of aggressive caricatures, impertinences, affronts, insults, chicanes, strong, and at the same time malicious and tendentious accusations, including insinuations, slanders, and evident libels*, whose collective effect is the impression of stigmatization and “stench” around inconvenient people and institutions that are hostile to us;
- * *causing scandals* be it by one’s own shocking actions with the flavor of a brawl or iconoclasm, profanity, blasphemy, or by exaggerated, incommensurate publicizing of random events, marginal incidents, or someone else’s awkwardness, appropriately controlled “fiery indignation” due to an opportunity falling from the sky in the form of someone else’s mistakes, abuses, transgressions or

just statements, gestures, controversial behavior; turning into a scandal even such phenomena which by themselves would not draw anyone's attention or appall anyone;

- * *blowing up and publicizing scandals and... pseudo-scandals*; with the intention of the programmatic criminalization of actions of a political rival or – better – the criminalization of his image (schemers, mafia, agents);
- * *inspiring certain individuals or environments bashing*, normally under the pretext of a self-caused scandal, affair, or pseudo-affair.

We could continue to expand this incomplete list and make it even more specific.

Contact with such phenomena as those listed in the above two catalogs provides the basis to presume that we are dealing precisely with political provocation. The tricks in this repertoire are a probable indicator of some kind of a political game – but they are nothing more than an often-deceptive indicator. Above all, it is not that on the basis of the means and tricks used by someone and observed by us we can unequivocally and without any risk of error judge who stands behind it and what are his intentions. The same instruments (for instance an unmasking campaign, stirring statements, insults, calls for boycott, demonstrations of force or intransigence, defiant gestures) may serve different purposes in different situations. At most, we may assume that some ways of provocative actions are clearly hostile and destructive toward specific objects and addressees, while other may testify (but without guaranteeing that it is an appearance or a trap) to constructive efforts of good will.

X. Functions and Purposes of Political Provocations

What needs do political provocations satisfy? What purposes do they serve? What benefits or losses do they bring and to whom?

1. Positive and Negative Programming of a Provocation

In order to capture both the peculiarity and the full spectrum of provocations' functions used in political life, we must first deal with the stereotypical qualifications reduced to a dichotomy: positive or negative evaluation.

The Criterion of Positivity and Negativity

As we noticed in reference to the popular prejudices concerning the term itself, the very nature of provocation as such does not determine its "positive" or "negative" orientation and effects of its functioning. On the one hand, there are the intentions of the perpetrators (the initiators, directors, direct executors), and on the other hand, the costs and social effects of their actions that attribute the positive or negative character to specific provocations.

Provocation can have a positive character in the sense that someone wants to express acceptance for certain values, confirm something, defend it from a threat or an attack, perpetuate, popularize, also – force the environment to notice an ignored issue, force the recognition of someone's unacceptable or unwelcome presence. An instance of such positive provocation was, for instance, the demonstrative use of mother tongue by the Kurds in Turkey at a time when the authorities took an undecided stand: either that such a language (and nationality) does not exist or that using this language is a crime. What has an analogical character is the famous Polish poster of a gay couple captioned "LET THEM SEE US" and below "PARADA RÓWNOŚCI" (Christopher Street Day Parade; lit. Equality Parade), namely street parades organized by the LGBTQ+ community with the participation of heterosexual people who join the protest against the discrimination of this community.

Provocation has a negative sense if someone wants to deny something, actively oppose something or overcome it, remove it, change its status, character, or functions. For instance, a typical negative provocation is: a group of members of parliament ostentatiously leaving the room during a speech given by the leader of the opposition who is involved in a scandal but protected by immunity that cannot be waived; the burning or flogging of a puppet representing an unpopular politician; the telltale omission in inviting or welcoming of a boycotted or condemned figure representing an unacceptable political formation; the

profanity of a flag of a state during a demonstration near the embassy or consulate of that state.

The positive and negative functions of provocation can complement each other, like two sides of the same coin. We may consider the following examples as instances of the positive-negative provocation: a demonstration-challenge consisting in ostentatious manner of wearing emblems, badges constituting the sign of identification with a certain movement, religion (especially in the perspective of prohibition or discrimination), which is a challenge and a demonstration of one's attachment to symbols, identity, a manifestation of steadfastness. It is precisely this category that we would include Oriana Fallaci's gesture, when during an interview with Khomeini, she tore off her face the chador that he had conditioned her to wear in order to agree to a meeting.

The terms "positive" and "negative" classify provocation exclusively based on the abovementioned intention of affirmation, confirmation, and preservation of something, or of denial, overcoming, elimination, or cancelling of something, respectively. It is not about the subjective impressions or the judgements made on behalf of the whole, classifying as just or unjust, morally good, or bad, useful and beneficial or socially harmful. On this plane, we would become entangled in contextual relativization (moral and ideological). What is positive from the viewpoint of a subject's expectations and intentions could be negative from the viewpoint of the addressees of provocation. These are rather common situations: one's gain at the expense of another's loss, one's pride in a victory, which for the defeated is a failure and humiliation; unmasking a false authority perceived by its followers as an attack on the last sanctity.

The Ambivalence of Provocation

Let us pay more attention to the potential ambivalence of provocation interpreted in a one-dimensional way, as "simply" and only positive or negative: ambivalence even from the viewpoint of the interests and intentions of the perpetrator. For instance, the same action that is the demonstration of one's confession of faith, attachment to certain views, or solidarity with someone, constitutes at the same time a challenge for the individuals or alien and ideologically opposed groups, an expression of disapproval of their views or lifestyle, or even a clear form of refusal, opposition, or confrontation. It is not uncommon that a formally non-aggressive and non-confrontational behavior is a demonstration of one's superiority, a way of stigmatizing fellow participants of a situation.

Thus, for instance, ending the oath of office by some ministers during the swearing-in ceremony of a newly appointed cabinet with the optional formula

“So help me God” is not a clearly spontaneous or neutral act but can have the implied meaning of “I have something that you lack.” While refraining from using this formula is a demonstration on the part of atheists or agnostics, and on the part of believers considering faith to be a private matter and affirm secularism and neutrality of the state’s worldview, uttering it may well be a personal and spontaneous declaration of the politicians who do not pursue a religious state, but also a devotional and clerical manifestation, or a conjunctural and marketing trick.

An ardent polemic with an article or speech, abounding in malice, a tendentious deformation of the criticized view, offensive formulations, and thus being a manifestation of negation and dislike (it is less important whether it is more substantive, or rather emotional and ritualistic), is usually at the same time a demonstration of identification with something, a way of drawing attention to the presence of opponents of what is being contested, a means of forcing interest, an incentive for others to break their restraint or temptation of conformity and join in the criticism. And if witnesses of the polemic are resistant to the argumentation, then the provocative mocking and, unfortunately, witty form of the polemic becomes a successful trap, because it encourages involuntary behavior (“You see, you yourselves laugh at what you have just presented with the utmost seriousness”); it has all the hallmarks of a “positive” provocation as well.

2. Constructive and Destructive Forms of Political Provocations

The positive or negative programming of political provocation should not be identified and confused with its constructive or destructive character.

Provocation has constructive character if it creates something that did not exist before, reveals new or previously unnoticed features of existing phenomena, becomes an inspiration for others, and an example for others to follow, or sets new standards. In this sense, a stylistic or genre innovation, a creative experiment that surprises the audience or critics – if it challenges the recognized conventions and common practices but at the same time is perceived as a discovery – can be considered a constructive artistic or literary provocation. The political counterpart for such activities constitutes innovations in the language of public communication, in symbolic conventions. The history of religions and churches provides many examples of such practices. Thus, Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible into German was a decisive provocation (as an act of disobedience and challenge), although constructive and positive both in its intentions and outcomes. The traces of constructive provocation (as a challenge for sectarian tradition) are attributed to such innovations as, among others, ecumenical

initiatives, concelebrations by clergy of various religions and denominations, joint services in the intention of peace or in memory of the murdered, or pope's visits to synagogues. Similar overtones (constructively provocative) are visible in the conventional-symbolic gestures in the political life, such as, among other things: inviting to the presidium of the ceremonial assembly of a hitherto ignored figure or one regarded as public enemy number one, awarding and presentation of the highest state decorations to former dissidents or repressed by the president originated from the ancien régime.

Provocation has a destructive character if it causes, determines, or moderates (accelerates, delays, withholds) certain losses or damage with what it artificially creates. It is an action that insidiously destroys or prevents something in the bud. The examples of destructive provocation are as follows: parliamentary obstruction as an effective form of blocking a contested decision under a given procedural pretext, also a successful search for, finding, and publicizing "dirt" on the opponents in the form of compromising papers or sensational testimonies; even more so a covert or spectacular assassination attempt, the goal of which is both the physical elimination of one of the opponents and the intimidation of the others. An evident destructive provocation is the destruction of the infrastructure of a given area before the agreed upon truce or peace terms of leaving the conquered territory.

The positive program of provocations (affirmation of certain values, defense of possessions or violated principles, promotion of one's patterns) can be realized both in the constructive and destructive form. Similarly, in the case of the negative program (negating, fighting), it is realized not only directly by harming or destroying, but also indirectly by constructive achievements. For instance, whoever writes a better book, disavows another, worse one written on the same subject, even if (or especially if) he does not mention it. It is then a two-stage provocation. First, it is provocative (because it means undertaking and issuing a challenge) to bring that subject up, for instance, after mentioning an established authoritative predecessor, who is considered a monopolist specialist, and then ignoring the previous work (this has multiple meanings: "It is a waste of time, let us draw a veil over this ambitious failure, the meritorious deserve an amnesty"). This is an example from literary or scientific domain, although it applies to the political life, where, similarly, a statement is a polemic, a polemic against something praises something else, and so on.

In this case, again, unambiguous and single-dimensional qualifications often fail. In provocation both intentions and results can be constructive and destructive at the same time (constructive in one respect, destructive in another). For instance, starting to discuss again a historical figure surrounded by widespread

veneration or even exposing him as a false authority restores the true image of the phenomenon and forces us to think, but the side cost of such a demythologization can be confusion or even demoralization of the hitherto uncritical worshippers, undermining faith in any authorities and glorious traditions. A demolition of a monument interpreted as a remnant of foreign rule, a tribute to evil, a testimony of dishonor, on the one hand, has a destructive-constructive overtone (symbolic reevaluation – the new hierarchy of values and exclusivity of the new, righteous symbols require to openly cross out the past, break up with its burden), and on the other hand, gains a purely destructive character (the price for breaking up with the bad past is breaking the historical continuity and “correcting history” by... erasing some of its pages from our memory).

In turn, we should not confuse this distinction (constructive–destructive) with the opposition between productive and parasitic provocations. Both productive and parasitic provocations can be either constructive or destructive. After all, it is possible to create something and hinder or destroy something by the use of one’s effort, interpretation, or by using others’ efforts and merits for one’s own purposes.

3. Pragmatic, Ideological, and Ritual Functions of Political Provocations

Provocation is a multifunctional mode of action, in the sense that the same action allows to achieve multiple goals at the same time, while usually its motives, intentions, and aims are varied. The same scheme of provoking may fulfil either specified “single-dimensional” functions one by one, or several ones simultaneously, in a certain correlation and coordination.

In particular, we should distinguish *pragmatic* (practical) needs and calculations of the perpetrators, *ideological* order and programming, and typically *ritualistic* functions related to the manifestation of ideological identification and zeal.

Positive and Negative Pragmatic Functions

On the positive level, provocation usually serves several pragmatic purposes: to draw attention to the presence of its perpetrator or the social force that he represents, impose priorities (enforcing the addressing of an issue, turning it into the foreground or exclusive “subject of the day”), increase one’s importance and influence disproportionately to the real potential of perpetrators, their representativeness, owned “social mandate” (if they have one at all, unless their action is an effective act of usurpation), generally speaking to achieve one’s personal

goals against the will of the opponents and beyond the control of other participants in the political situation.

On the negative level, provocation allows for such pragmatic effects as:

- * destroying the state of affairs, established traditions and customs, balance of power, or recognized hierarchies unfavorable for the subject, limiting the possibility to achieve his aims, which expose him to marginalization;
- * diverting attention from one's own weaknesses, mistakes, failures, and especially from what could be a compromise if the opponents, media, and public opinion were allowed to focus on the troublesome situation and reflect deeper on its significance, consequences;
- * avoiding responsibility for breaking moral, ethical, and legal rules, for reprehensible mistakes, and any losses or social damage caused by these mistakes or a desperate attitude (a politician "caught" on some type of abuse or compromise, and thus, potentially at risk of formal punishment or loss of credibility, "trumps" his stumble with another, even more shocking issue, and even transforms the troublesome situation into a challenge, a show of self-confidence, arrogance, or perversity, by imposing – against evident facts and conclusions – his own twisted or even insolent interpretation of the events or issue);
- * fighting rivals, opponents, and enemies on an alternate plane, more convenient for the provocateur, in the place and time chosen by him, compromising, isolating, confusing, surprising, and disarming, practical elimination (exclusion from the game, with the formal denial of the right to participate, or social condoning of discriminatory practices).

Immediate and Long-Term Pragmatic Goals

Provocations can serve both interim goals related to the current needs of self-promotion and social consolidation, or the fight against opponents, the temporary conjuncture, and tactics chosen for specific issues, and far-reaching goals resulting from a certain ideological and political vision, long-term program, or an acting strategy. The goals of provocations used as tools in fights are the most pronounced:

An immediate goal usually consists in "getting one's way," directly causing or imposing on others something that would have been impossible with the current balance of power, distribution of public support, or in a fair-play situation, with one's own actions or pressure. At the same time, it is an effort to limit the opponent's freedom to maneuver, and even to force him to take actions which may be unfavorable for the opponent, which he tried to avoid, or he was renouncing.

A *long-term goal* consists in shifting the balance of power: it is possible as a result of unexpected moral or material losses of the opponent, under surprise, confusion, or in the view of regrouping in the distribution of public support for the various parties of the rivalry or conflict.

Ideological Functions of Political Provocations

In political practice, there is no shortage of not only purely pragmatic provocations but even cynical ones, thus constituting – in the process of achieving specific and measurable goals – a demonstration of disregard for all axiological norms or even a display of ideological futility, naked politicking, a fetishization of power as a good in itself, and destruction dictated solely by vindictiveness devoid of positive motivation.

However, most acts of provocation or complex provocative operations, including “multiprovocations,” contain an ideological component. What does it mean? They serve to justify and rationalize certain policy (pursued so far or at the beginning of being pushed through), and simultaneously to negate (prevent, erase) an alternative policy. What is supposed to be an alternative must turn out to be either impossible or too costly, or harmful and disastrous. These are the practical expression of what a given subject considers right, believes in, and what he excludes, condemns, or combats.

Political provocation usually manifests specific beliefs of the perpetrators, an intentional form of confirming and manifesting these beliefs, and at the same time (in the perpetrators’ intention) a form of proving their rightfulness, an example for co-religionists (to follow, or at least to reflect on), an attempt to persuade outside witnesses in favor of these beliefs.

In this view, the anti-Semitic pogrom was not only a “practical solution of a problem,” a form of intimidation of the persecuted, and a material proof of “who is in charge” but also an expression of broader ideological hatred (the internalization of the ideology of hatred and contempt) and propaganda of this hatred (“See and learn how a true defender of the race, a man of action, should act”). Moreover, arguments that commonsensically would require some justification (“Why do we beat and murder them? What for? What do we gain by that?”) turn into... proofs of rightness. The action justifies itself. After all, the logic of active, aggressive anti-Semitism is simple: the superiority of the strong over the weak, which such a doctrine asserts, is proven precisely by the weakness of the latter, by how easily it was for the former to beat the latter, how easily the latter surrendered; their vulnerability was to best confirm that they deserved contempt.

These ideological functions of political provocations occur in several aspects: as indoctrination, legitimization, propaganda, and agitation functions.

Indoctrination through Provocations

Provocations often are a means of indoctrination. Sometimes they are even more effective than persuasive or secretly manipulative forms of “informing” or “brainwashing.” This is because they inculcate a system of beliefs as efficiently as a demonstration lesson in didactics, an example that concretizes and embodies the abstract notions, schematic patterns, or remote historical references. An action, a live example has always been a better way of instilling patriotic, religious, and revolutionary feelings and motivations than catechism, pamphlets, volumes of works of the prophet. Even more when the road to conviction is shortened by the speed of influence of aroused emotions. Therefore, numerous verbal provocations (for instance verbal assaults with such mental shortcuts as “Paid traitors, Russia’s puppets”), religious services for and against what is to be widely known, profanations of monuments, happenings in the convention of historical reenactments in front of the building of the condemned party, columnist and cabaret parodies of other people’s speeches and programs and other similar acts carry a powerful indoctrination load. A nationalist slaughter can be an excellent patriotic version of “sentimental education,” an effective burning and demolition of a heretical temple – a confirmation of which side receives the support of God.

Provocative Legitimization

Indoctrination is coupled with the legitimization of actions and activity in general, but also the existence and political aspirations, and claims of a particular formation. Provocations often serve to express one’s representativeness, legitimacy, social mandate, or to deny these qualities. When group X protests against something and someone, it often acts on behalf of, among others, its predecessors, forgotten and deceived combatants and veterans, future generations, faithful sons and daughters of the church, or workers opposed to freeloaders or bloodsuckers. In turn, when the Minister of Internal Affairs efficiently but somewhat brutally pacifies a demonstration or strike (aiming for the show of force to make a proper impression), it makes it simultaneously proof that the authorities are watching, protecting, and that they will not allow hooligans to commit acts of vandalism, will not allow irresponsible elements to destroy the achievements of so many generations and the ruling team, that this strike or march is just a pretext and political diversion, that the opposition is balancing on the edge of

high treason, that the citizens have a choice between law and order and anarchy, patriotism or acting in the interests of foreign countries fueling these unrests.

Provocation as Propaganda and Agitation

There is no doubt that provocations promote political goals and programs, contribute to the dissemination of knowledge about the existence and intentions of groups or powers standing behind the direct perpetrators, and to reinforce and perpetuate positive and especially negative stereotypes in the images of certain political powers. Therefore, for instance, terrorist attacks are the propaganda of terrorism in the sense that they spread the belief that terrorists are omnipresent and omnipotent. In many circles, smear campaigns, boycott campaigns, or calls for civil disobedience – even very far-fetched and clearly tendentious – result in a strong suggestion that there is someone who opposes the suspicious figures, foreign agents, or the emerging dictatorship. Provocations also have agitational functions, because of their interim goals and effects. Provocation can be either a form of agitation or the equivalent of agitation as evidenced by the experiences of negative election campaigns. One inappropriate “bill” is more effective in driving voters away from one’s rival than dozens of posters, debates, or critical articles.

Ritual Functions of Provocation Acts

The essence of all ritual behaviors is the routine or overeager assertion of one’s belonging to a community, identification with its symbols, rules, traditions, goals, one’s readiness to participate, and any duties, services, and related sacrifices.

The ritual dimension of acts of provocation is twofold. On the one side, it may be a spontaneous expression of authentic feeling, views, and ambitions, an outlet for the need to express one’s attitudes and needs of self-affirmation. On this basis, we demonstrate identification and attachment to our beliefs even if such a demonstration cannot bring us any practical effect, or a change in our situation, in the attitudes of the environment. On the other hand, ritual behavior may have a bigoted character, that is to be a manifestation of either a popular conformism, or a cynical tactics, thus non-authenticity, a facade adaptation to the expectations, requirements, and patterns of a given community. In such situation, we demonstrate some attitudes – like piety, revolutionary fervor, or holy indignation – not so much because this is what we need, but because that is “the right thing to do.” But then provocation (ostentatious demonstration of desired attitudes) is also a self-provocation, since it is necessary to arouse the feelings that are more heated than the actual temperature of these feelings (mild), an argumentation in one’s speech more sophisticated than the motivation to give one.

In the case of acts of provocation, conformist motivation is rare: the conformist is looking for peace, reassurance, melting into a crowd, and not for challenges that require unambiguity, precise self-definition, and taking the personal risk of failure, social disapproval, and responsibility. Ritual provocations (as opposed to ritual gestures and ceremonies that cost nothing but are well perceived) usually do not come from colorless, indistinct, faceless people, but rather from the people driven by an idea, a sense of duty, mission, and servitude. The people who want to protest against something (even if their actions turn out ineffective, they still act in accordance with their conscience and beliefs), cut themselves off from something or someone (even against their interests and reason, but upon what they believe and want to believe), resist something or someone (out of a sense of duty well done), or finally impose their will and their criteria on their surroundings; this is what attributing the symbolic and ideological signs to actions is for. However, sometimes it is possible to find such acts of provocation of the conformists as if, in this way, they wanted to cover or shout down their inexpressiveness, the seeming or incomplete nature of their commitment, the conventionality or opportunism of their demonstrated convictions and principles, their embarrassment at their own insincerity of belonging and commitment (although more so to cover their fear of self-exposure through insufficient eagerness). Thus, these are the later “renegades,” revisionists, and dissenters, who show themselves off in the devotional behavior or in soaring acts of revolutionary rigorism and steadfastness.

The Correlation of Pragmatic and Symbolic Functions

The same provocation act can fulfill simultaneously pragmatic, ritual, and propaganda functions, but also the indoctrinating and legitimizing ones.

As an example of such a synthesis of functions, let us consider the brutal act of Islamic terrorists consisting in beheading a hostage, filming this execution, and sending the recording, usually accompanied by the terrorists’ commentary or statement, to the media.

The pragmatic function of this act of cruelty is rather clear. It is, at the same time, a demonstration of power and impunity, as well as the means to make the threats more credible and to force concessions: “We really are not joking. You have to reckon with us. We have you in our grasp, not just these hostages but everyone who care about their survival and release.”

The ritual function does not raise doubts either. First, it constitutes an exemplary expression of one’s loyalty to the cause, idea, and extreme determination of hatred against an embodied enemy, thus a typical act of ritual violence which,

through a direct reference to the scapegoat, concerns his entire group as a demonstration of hostility, hatred, and contempt. Second, the crime transformed into ritual and spectacle proceeds under the slogan: “We did it because our faith, our cause requires us to do so; we killed him as we should have annihilated all of them.” It is at the same time a signal to the co-religionists: “We take our faith and mission seriously and literally. This is our proof of piety. And how is it with your zeal? Which side are you on?”

The propaganda function is connected with the fact that the recorded and retransmitted ritual execution is an activity exceptionally interesting for the media. The bloodthirst interest of the media and a part of its audience, which is only capable of being interested in the sensational political information, is guaranteed (what news!). This results in an intensified impression and, therefore, free advertisement for the group that committed such an act. For at least a few days, a week, or even longer, media will repeat the information about the identity of the group, recall the previous exploits of the terrorists, comment on the problems that the group refers to in the act of kidnapping hostages, blackmail, and the shocking proof for the validity of their threats. In this way, the goal or program of struggle – or at least the slogans of the terrorists – are disseminated. And in the eyes of journalists and the public opinion, they become just as strong as – or even stronger than – the professional forces of powerful countries, intelligence, and diplomatic services. They even gain some kind of recognition, at least in those circles that may take malicious satisfaction in this tragedy: “To be honest, they asked for this misfortune. Why did they go there in the first place? We told you this could end up like this, but no one had listened to us.”

4. The Compensatory Character of Provocations

A universal function of all provocations (in particular political provocations) is compensation. This is confirmed by the experience of not only political games but also “marriage games,” prestige disputes between the contenders in various competitions or sports tournaments decided not so much through the evidence of one’s superiority, but rather through the ability to disrupt the rival’s game, provoke him into a mistake, or advertising campaigns (in the case of which sometimes the suggestive force of a poster, spot, or promotional action is inversely proportional to the quality of the promoted product).

Compensation of Deficiencies, Weaknesses, Failures

The provocative and generally manipulative way of influencing allows one to achieve what he “normally” (that is without the use of insidious tricks) would not

be able to afford, either in the sense that he would not be able to meet his own ambitions or that he could not afford the high cost of his effort.

Provocation allows the subject to cover his own deficiencies, to redirect attention from various mishaps and artificially created impressions, illusions, interest, fascinations. It allows one to appear in the role of the representative of particular interests and intentions of a given collectivity, the guardian of certain principles, or the defender of certain values, while referring to the imponderable, although at stake is some trivial, personal interest. The provocateur operates here on the subversive principle that the one who starts the fire himself can declare himself the First Fireman and, on that account, take command of the action, demand from others obedience necessary for the rescue operation to run smoothly. This is precisely how it is with numerous cases of smear campaigning, artificially created cabinet reshuffles, or constitutional crises rising out of disputes about the content, scope, and limits of competence of specified bodies.

Provocation enables the perpetrator to obtain from others or force them to do what his partners (protectors, allies, friends), and even supporters, followers, fans, and especially his rivals, opponents, and enemies would not allow him to do in a normal situation and under the existing balance of power, within the existing rules and social hierarchies.

In other words, provocative tactics allow one to compensate for one's own weaknesses, limitations, deficiencies, past failures. Acts of provocation (and even more so the planned and smoothly coordinated sequences and tangles of acts of provocation) allow us to make up for our deficiencies thanks to the created appearances and pretexts, manage other people's assets and resources, and redirect the collective interest, concern, and reasoning. Or at least, to cover up these deficiencies, gaps, and incapacities with something else. Thus, for instance, it is possible to efficiently trump and cover the nomination of an evidently incompetent person, although politically and nepotically favored, by providing any thematically different sensation, as long as it concerns someone else (especially the critics of this nominations) and is even more spicy. Therefore, in the jargon of politicians already offers the popular term of "cover-up," which refers to such compensatory maneuvers.

Provocative Compensation in Political Action

In the case of political action, there are two types of shortcomings and deficiencies of the subject. On the one hand, it concerns a complete lack of assets, qualities, and achievements that would allow to gain a high level of credibility and attractiveness in the eyes of public opinion, voters, potential allies (for instance

coalition partners), or an insufficient amount of such assets (in the form of successes, demonstrated competences, staff potential). The latter corresponds to the low level of interest, trust, and in consequence social support for the claims regarding representativeness, influence, and leadership. On the other hand, it concerns the advantage of those who oppose and hinder the actions of a given subject in the realization of his aspirations and intentions. The advantage revealed not only in assets or rights but also in substantive advantage of competences, program offers, and past achievements, not to mention moral advantage represented by social recognition.

Thus, the provocative scheme of action is, on the one hand, a lever for action in the complex mechanisms and procedures of social accreditation, and on the other hand, in the mechanisms and forms of political competition and struggle, especially that conducted in the antagonistic, conflict, and aggressive style. In the latter case, the minimum goal is to discredit the adversaries, while its more ambitious goals are to marginalize, isolate, or exclude them from the game, and even annihilate them by their own actions. Even in the democratic regime based on the guarantees of potential equality of the political forces respecting constitutional rules, some parties dream to delegalize another party “with their own hands.”

5. Provocative Ways of Accreditation

Provocations of various kinds are an effective tool in the process of attracting attention to ourselves, adding ourselves importance and seriousness, forcing, and pinning interest, preoccupying the surrounding with our sole presence, and especially with our intentions, aspirations, initiatives, and demonstrations of abilities. The provocative manner of self-presentation enables to turn one's own show, potentially even lacking in content, in an event and spectacle that arouses public fascination. The pretendent's show may consist not only in self-praise, demonstration of power, or efficiency of good connections and recommendations but also in a scandal, which may cause consternation and even fear or strong dislike, which also has a “promotional” effect, because someone whom we dislike or fear becomes someone important to us. This calculation works; many politicians owe their career not to their achievements, competences, expressive views, sensational ideas for social solutions, but only to the opinion of a scandalizer or *enfant terrible*. Meanwhile, the anti-advertisement on the part of their opponents and the media becomes free advertisement for them, a confirmation that they are someone if they evoke such strong emotions.

This property of provocations has been appreciated to the point of limitless exaggeration, especially in the recent decades, in relation to the growing tendency to theatricalize politics, transform it into a media spectacle, a spectacular competition or auction in which the final result (namely the gained respect, prestige, popularity, support) is not determined by the substantive personal assets of the candidates and the contents of their programs (reduced to a collection of slogans) but this greater efficiency (greater creativity and routine proficiency) in applying marketing tricks. This resembles a mechanism from other areas of social life. In commerce, it is not always the best product that wins but the one most effectively (for instance most intrusively) advertised and promoted. In the art of courtship, the winner may be not necessarily the most handsome or charming contender, the most subtle in feelings or intelligent, and not even the most affluent but the most insolent one, who demonstrates the greatest self-confidence or impresses others with his panache, fantasy, and gesture (even if uncovered), and even with sheer nerve or impertinence. The fetishization of marketing has taken this tendency to the extreme.

Therefore, provocative methods foster the falsification (obviously to the advantage) of one's image (deceptions in the service of self-advertising and self-promotion serve that purpose), the control of conscience (knowledge, attitudes) of those who could judge, choose, reward, or punish the contender, such manipulation of the social situation and the course of events which causes the judging and choosing to judge and choose while remaining under one's impression and pressure, in chosen (convenient) situations and in the atmosphere imposed by the manipulators-provocateurs.

Election coquetry is largely based on provocation. What else than provocation are exalted manifestations of piety, patriotism, and dissent from lawlessness and corruption; touching promises of meeting the needs and expectations proportionately to those expectations and not to resources; moving tributes to whomever is needed and in the time of need; flattery directed to an entire collective or its idols and authorities; protests, expressions of outrage flattering the mood of a potential clientele; allusions and suggestions of benefits in exchange for support or changing sides to the ours; forcing contact and a sense of privilege and obligation (a candidate cuts a ribbon, shakes hands with passersby, visits the sick in hospital); sudden bursts of charity, namely buying the support of debtors; "I accidentally got you a raise, a grant, acceleration of work on the construction site, and all of that before the election?"

6. Provocative Means of Political Competition and Struggle

Provocation can be an exceptionally effective and severe method of eliminating, harassing, and oppressing opponents. Acts of provocation enable perpetrators to gain significant personal profit based on another's harm.

In practice, destructive influence by acts of provocation (or sequences and tangles of provocations) means the following effects:

- blocking and obstructing initiatives, efforts, and undertakings of political opponent;
- discouraging opponents from undertaking or continuing certain actions by highlighting risks, threats, dilemmas, obstacles; arousing dilemmas, doubts, hesitations; undermining faith in the rightness, expediency, reality, or chances of success of these undertakings, weakening motivation to act and identification with the cause and the community; this manifests in various forms of disgracing and demobilizing of opponents;
- absorbing the attention and energy of public opinion, certain social groups, and particularly the competing or hostile political forces with substitute subjects, secondary issues, marginal sensations that are elevated to the rank of key issues, which enables to both "occupy" and "bind" (in the mental sense) potential critics and opponents deprive them of the time and energy they could devote to dealing with the actual problem and its solution, and even divert attention from what is inconvenient, troublesome, or even embarrassing for a given subject;
- disrupting or paralyzing the ability of the attacked object (system) to act;
- causing disintegration of teams and communities (cause people to argue, stirring up conflicts, fueling misunderstandings, the atmosphere of distrust and mutual prejudices; supporting and intensifying centrifugal and decomposition tendencies);
- undermining and destroying opponents' morale, that is the motivation to act, belief in the rightness and success of undertaken efforts, enterprises;
- discouraging decisions and actions inconvenient for the perpetrator (both by disrespect and ridicule, but also by undermining the sense of security, causing fears, a sense of threat, anxiety); deterrence and intimidation;
- harming one's honor and good name with the intention of permanently stigmatizing and negatively biasing the environment against the attack person;
- creating appearances and false suggestions fostering disorientation and illusions in attacked targets;
- finding pretexts and false excuses for one's own aggressive actions, even allowing – in the perception of the environment – to reverse the relation between

the attacker and the attacked, provide cover and impunity for conduct that violates generally accepted and applicable moral and legal standards;

- destroying the opponent's potential (his material resources, human resources, substantive advantages; credibility capital, social trust, reputation, authority).

In sum, the destructive forms of provocations are an instrument of weakening and isolating or even eliminating the rival, opponent, enemy. In extreme cases, they enable not only the degradation, marginalization, arbitrary exclusion from participation in the political game but also the destruction of a hostile party, fraction, or coterie.

The effectiveness of a particularistic and biased attack on someone's position is often guaranteed when handling the situation by someone else's as the main actor. Then, the arbitrary conventional-symbolic execution assumes the character of a collective will (suggested and determined by the very provocation act), judgement of public opinion, and even the "verdict of history." Such a manipulation succeeds particularly in the form of smear campaigning or as the basis for criminalization: the presentation of the opponents as criminals to be dealt with by the prosecutor's office and the court, acting under double or triple pressure of the denouncer and public opinion, and sometimes also under the pressure of politically programmed superior bodies.

Destructive provocations are double as productive, because the successful dealing with a specific opponent, or at least a significant weakening of his position, facilitates not only the "reckonings" and disposing of one opponent but also the action against other subjects and establishing achieved benefits. Thus, it is easy to "follow through," for instance, to widen the circle of accusations' subjects and under the same pretext combat the allies or protectors of the defeated opponent; by eliminating someone with a smear campaign pretending to be a fight against crime, by blackmailing or stigmatizing his defenders as coparticipants in a criminal arrangement as inspirers of an abuse of power. The elimination of a subject allows one to take his place, take over his social base, appropriate his symbols and achievements (in this view, we may take over someone's "estate" on the occasion of destroying him, by calling ourselves a true leftist or a true rightist, as opposed to "the renegades").

7. Provocation User Categories and Their Goals

Provocation as a manipulative method of correcting the balance of power and the course of the political game to one's own benefit can be used by all participants of the political game. However, their goals differ according to their status, and the diversity of goals corresponds to the diversity of provocative tactics,

hence the repertoire of techniques and means. This is because different goals correspond to different, peculiar patterns of provocations, as we will see in more detail in the following chapters.

We may distinguish the following categories of model political provocation users:

- (1) *contenders for power* in the struggle to gain support and influence, and to deprive their opponents of this influence at the same time: in the moments of determining the continuity or change at the helm of government, especially during election campaigns, political reshuffles, cabinet and constitutional crises, great social conflicts which destabilize the prevailing order and balance of power;
- (2) *rulers* act to confirm and consolidate their power, extend its duration or “immortalize” their rule, while at the same time extending the scope of this power and excluding it from under social control, especially from under the control of their rivals, opponents; at the same time, in their pursuit to subject or disarm and overpower their opponents (when the power they execute is used not for the purpose of implementing their program, commitments, or solving specified social problems, but rather for the purpose of fighting the opponents, thus, when it becomes a value itself)
- (3) *rulers in an internal struggle for power, prestige, popularity, hierarchy, and influence division*;
- (4) *the opposition, opponents of the rulers* pursue to replace and overthrow the latter, to shorten their rule or at least limit the scope of their power;
- (5) *outsiders* (as opposed to the opposition establishment, which is temporarily not in power but can potentially overtake power, having lost the parliamentary elections, it may win in the local elections, dominate the media, among other things) are marginalized contesters, often considered the “political folklore” and “political plankton;” this mainly refers to radical opposition groups outside parliament, especially those with an anti-systemic orientation, and intellectuals with the status of “prophets without followers.”

Categories (1) and (4) may seem identical, although they refer to subjects acting in different situations. In the case of the fourth category, we mean those forced to recognize and survive the temporary triumph of their opponents, but also to make appropriate use of their period of power (for instance, a parliamentary term).

Contenders' Provocations

Contenders for power use various forms of provocations, visible both during the stage of election campaigns and after losing elections.

During elections, the positive repertoire of provocations refers to the above-mentioned manipulative accreditation, which means attempts to artificially increase one's own attractiveness by evoking strong impressions, illusions, and positive expectations of voters with a feast of shows, principled declarations, touching tributes and promises, exploitation of sentiments, and various manifestations of historical nostalgia. Such calculations result in pretentious, sometimes even tacky behavior of candidates. The pathetic manner of their speeches and declarations aimed to move the feelings of, for instance, veterans, combatants, disadvantaged groups, discriminated minorities; the excessive amount of symbolism and rituals, empty words intended to escalate emotions and suppress thinking; the intrusive display of biographical advantages, the sudden surge of exhibitionism (flaunting family warmth, hobby achievements, dancing, or singing). These methods are provocative (which is rarely realized) because their purpose is to overcome an inert resistance (lack of interest, indifference alone and in the judgements, or indecisiveness about political preferences), to move, impress, and stand out from the crowd of candidates and counter-candidates.

The fact that voters are accustomed to such schemes and promotional-marketing props, together with marginal differences between candidates and parties in their configuration cause a certain numbness. This factor and the progressing homogenization of programs or replacing the programs and ideas for concrete solutions with slogans (which reflects mental laziness or insufficient competence of the majority of voters) result in the more frequent attempts of politicians to win the election by the use of negative campaigns, in which the result is to be forced or determined (when the differences in the number of supporters are insignificant, and the fight is for the undecided or politically orphaned, by a few percent of votes) by an exchange of blows – not just in the form of criticism or polemics but also by exposing materials, past scandals, affairs recalled or “reheated” for this particular occasion, shocking and surprising accusations, duels with insults (labels, epithets, mockery, derision, knockout parodies); instead of bidding with positive assets (programs, personalities, previous achievements, evidence of support). The greater part of the repertoire of means and ways of negative campaign is provocative and involves the artificial generation of doubt, consternation, disappointment, the reversal of sympathies and elections even by a hundred and eighty degrees.

In the post-election period, if claims for leadership and power had not gained sufficient approval, the defeated political group may assume the role of a contender who not so much lost as was harmed by the tricks and fiddles, instead of the role of a conventional opposition reconciled to its role and acting according to the standards of a systemic opposition. Such a contender does not wait for the end of his term, but for the moment when he can take the reins (he is prepared to do it at any moment). Thus, tactics of the overdue contender consist in an ostentatious non-acceptance (if not formally, then morally) of the election results and the legitimacy of someone else's rule, in attacks on the people in power, which are intended to suggest the illegitimacy, minimal mandate for their rule, or the temporary character of their rule, in putting such an emphasis on the difference between one's own influence and the influence of his opponent in power, which stresses the temporary character of the opponent's rule and the continuity of the contender's rule (based on the principle: "You rule only temporarily, we rule forever; you will not do anything without our consent or against us anyway"). Unlike the routine opposition, the permanent contender tries to provoke an atmosphere of continuous polarization and, if possible, a crisis that would shorten the period of enemy rule, thus the contender's waiting time.

Governmental and Regime Provocations

The people in power use the tools, functions, and prerogatives of their authority to control and weaken their opponents, seeking to discredit and eliminate them (a classic example of this is the use of special services, prosecutor's office, the police, and the available media – under the label of "investigative journalism" – to look for any "dirt" or to decipher opponents). The acts with challenge overtones also have a provocative character: demonstrations of arrogance, power, and arbitrariness in the face of protest and revanchist actions; attempts to intimidate or discipline (or "to buy off") the social groups contesting the prevailing order, a given party in charge, or the ruling group. Moreover, provocations are useful for the people in power (especially those who rule incompetently and in conflict) as a way to divert the attention of the public opinion and opponents from own deficiencies, mistakes, and abuses. Provocations that serve to discredit, harass, confuse, marginalize, or isolate opponents can at the same time promote the mobilization and consolidation of one's supporters and sympathizers by feigning or enforcing social legitimacy. Such a unity of destructive and legitimizing functions is most evident in the case of regime bashings.

Provocations among Members of the Same Group

Internal provocations. The internal struggle for power or its equivalents happens both in the independently ruling party (as a clash of factions, coteries, and cliques) and especially in the ruling coalition.

It is not only an internally conflicted party, divided by divergent interests, lineages, opinions, personal resentments, and conflicting ambitions of its leaders, that is deemed to the provocations “for internal use” (although played out publicly, in parliament, in the media, at gatherings, especially in the form of various ambushes, denunciations, duels for comments and polemics), but also – against all appearances – a party that is strongly consolidated, ideologically and genealogically homogeneous, uniform and disciplined in its actions; for example, a party relying on the command of a single leader. In such a party, such factors as the arbitrary status of the leader, the privileged status of his confidants and figures personally anointed or favored, the obstruction of the mechanisms of influence and promotion for a much wider circle of people eager to pursue a career and make a living – they all, in one way or another, provoke the need for provocation; since only provocations (intrigues) enable regroupings and staff reshuffles in the rigid courtly-bureaucratic system.

The demand for provocations occurs also in coalition relations. If an inter-party coalition is composed of unequal forces, the hegemon naturally seeks to consolidate its dominance, to make the weaker, sometimes adventitious, momentary, or inconvenient allies dependent, and even to absorb them, if possible. Various forms of provocation may serve this purpose: attempts to discredit leaders who are too tough and inconvenient, to divide the leadership of “smaller brothers,” to provoke break-ups, and to deliberately humiliate and emphasize the dominance, disregard, and helplessness of weaker partners in the face of the hegemon’s arbitrary and unilateral moves. From their part, smaller coalition partners not only defend themselves against a vassalization but also repeatedly demonstrate their dissenting opinion, fight, try to put the hegemon in check, and if the fragile and changeable political balance allows it and crisis situations foster it, they try to checkmate the hegemon, take revenge for the suffered humiliations, and gain the status of the most important player (when, paradoxically, the weakest partner is the most important, bears the key to resolve a disproportion in power).

Anti-Governmental Provocations by the Opposition Establishment

In the *opposition’s fight against the rulers*, provocations constitute the most rewarding and cheapest way to undermine their credibility and legitimacy of the

government. They serve to prove the incompetence, ineptitude, and irresponsibility of the people in power, to reveal and stigmatize their real or alleged abuses. The allegations of misappropriation of proclaimed principles and commitments are often based on information obtained by provocative techniques and tactics (for instance leaks, insidious recordings of provoked confessions or negotiations, wiretaps, provoked or intercepted denunciations), or in any case, they are themselves provocations – because of their sensational and shocking atmosphere of an affair or a scandal. Another important factor is situational context. At least some recipients notice the difference between the time of an event that is referred to and commented upon and the moment chosen to publicize the issue, express outrage, call others to react, and so on. Therefore, they understand that the moment of the announcement of a certain piece of information, statement of a declaration, or allowing a leak are not an accidental result of spontaneous behavior, but a manifestation of the game, especially if we consider the surrounding issues that precede and follow it, who raises it, and against whom.

In the repertoire of the opposition's adopting demagogic tactics, the parasitic forms of provocations are particularly favored. They consist in preying on the committed and uncommitted, questionable, and problematic failures, and even on natural disasters and catastrophes, considering them opportunities to attack (the example of this is the anti-government campaign during the floods in 1997). The favorite provocative ploys of the opposition's demagogues include incitement, instigation of conflicts, artificial creation of the atmosphere of tension, anxiety, fear, indignation, or vindictiveness (by rumors, gossip, hysterical predictions and calls to action).

However, provocations are not only a specialty of demagogues. Provocations are also used by the opposition that takes a principled stand and strives for reliable and factual argumentation in political disputes. It does so especially when it is aggressively attacked, limited in its ability to act and exercise its rights, when it is marginalized or ignored. If the balance of political forces disables the ruling power to be balanced by control mechanisms, representativeness, real pluralism, and the critical function of the media, then in that moment provocations and counter-provocations become useful. These particularly include rhetorical and intellectual provocations from the repertoire of rhetoric or eristic; happenings borrowed from the sphere of artistic activities (as forms of discredit, protest or expression of views and demands); provocative poetics of newspaper columns, but also press conferences; the provocative form of legal actions (such as publicized reports to the prosecutor's office about suspected crimes committed by decision-makers, motions to dismiss a minister, putting the prime minister before the State Tribunal). Provocations of this kind enable the opposition to break

through to the media and public opinion in the situation of being notoriously overlooked, passed over in silence, or ignored due to low ratings in election polls; it allows the opposition to break the conspiracy of silence on issues that require fundamental and open public debate and concrete decisions, to stimulate the latent criticism of supporters and sympathizers of the ruling party, who support it upfront and by force of habit, interest, and reflection of individuals, along with motivating groups that are passive or indifferent toward ideological controversies, systemic dilemmas, and political confrontations.

Political Outsiders' Provocations

The political groups that were marginalized from the start or as a result of their defeats, compromises, or bankruptcies need provocations in order to highlight their presence (to break through in media reports, in common commentaries), to force and absorb the attention of public opinion and the major political powers (which under normal circumstances is prevented by them being stigmatized or ignored), to increase their significance, respect, influence over others, and to impose certain decisions and actions, by the use of scandalous or drastic actions disproportionate to their own potential, social representativeness, and their scale of support. Provocative tactics allow outsiders to put in check those who are stronger than us, to keep them in a state of uncertainty, or even disorientation and fear of a possible threat. In this way, it allows outsiders to bind opponents' strengths and tip the balance of power. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of completely unconventional actions that challenge the moral values established in a society and state, legal and moral standards, conventions, and environmental labels (such as happenings, acts of blasphemy and profanation, forms of criticism and polemics considered uncultured, even primitive, and uncultured) shows that, against all appearances, they have less spontaneity than calculation. What is at first perceived as an excess, a manifestation of immaturity, infantilism, quarrelsomeness, insolence, or mental disorders, often turns out to be a cunning tactic that guarantees its perpetrators, on the one hand, advantage and impunity ("Who would argue in court with a madman; we will not let ourselves be provoked into a brawl"), and on the other hand, the feistiness that is ensured both by cautious reactions (attempts to avoid confrontation, waiting events out) and violent reactions (in forced quarrels, brawls, fights, unsavory incidents, the initiators have better results, their advantage lies in not being constrained by rules). In short, though this be madness, yet there is method in't. It concerns especially extremist groups, in which extreme views and fanatical, voluntaristic, and quarrelsome tendencies assume the form of violent and drastic actions, such

as lethal demonstrations of force, acts of cruelty and violence, displays of hatred and contempt, ritual sadism. Behind those forms of action, commonly identified with primitivism, usually lies a sophisticated tactic for effectively combating opponents, terrorizing the public (including their co-religionists), and forcing the implementation of demands that would normally be unacceptable (for more on the matter, see the last chapter of this book).

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The scale of functions potentially or realistically fulfilled by political provocations influences their functional-genre typology because a specific way of acting (provoking) corresponds to specific demands, permanent goals, and concrete tasks.

XI. Causative, Deceiving, and Discrediting Provocation

According to the definition adopted earlier, provocation is an action that either artificially causes or regulates – inhibits, accelerates, intensifies, marginalizes – certain phenomena convenient for a given subject or is an intervention in events, their interpretation or continuation, which determines something. It determines the occurrence of phenomena that did not have to occur, the direction of human interests and efforts or the further course of events, the resolution of dilemmas, doubts, and inhibitions of people who hesitate or withhold their decisions. In this sense, provocation “tips the scales.”

Provocation settles matters rather arbitrarily, providing the perpetrator with an advantage over those whom he anticipates and seeks, surprises, deceives, confuses, encourages, tempts, intimidates, frightens, or forces into something by actions or their results.

However, the arbitrariness of such a regulation or prejudgment is of a different nature from that of decisions and acts of power. The subject who possesses real power with all its attributes and means, especially backed by authority and not just naked coercion does not need to provoke. It is enough to give a command, an order, a request that no one dares refuse. On the other hand, the provocateur is the one who does not have decision-making authority in a given matter or exceeds it, freely interprets, abuses his prerogatives or pretends to have them.

1. Three Types of Provocation

Among the phenomena which are subject to such artificial creation, arbitrary regulation or prejudgment, we have distinguished – with reference to the difference between being and consciousness, between what is or becomes and what people think, imagine, experience, feel and intend – events, states of affairs, social situations, tendencies, dependencies between people stronger than their imaginations and wills, and subjective impressions, feelings, judgments, expectations, prejudices, aspirations, wishes, intentions, resolutions. These are different qualities. On the other hand, when we talk about human ideas, expectations, aspirations (individual or collective ones), one thing are ideas and attitudes that are realistic and adequate to reality – and the resulting decisions and actions that are potentially rational, even if suggested or forced by someone – and delusional beliefs and plans are another. Intentions, decisions, and efforts made under the influence of illusions or a suggestive game of appearances are inherently burdened with the risk of error, harmfulness. Such diverse results are the result of different means of influence.

Thus, taking into account the objectives (functions) and effects, linked to the characteristic mode of action, I distinguish three main types of political provocation: *causative*, *discrediting*, and *deceiving* provocation.

Each of them may be productive or parasitic, for real situations, negative impressions, prejudice, appearances, and façades may arise due to one's own efforts and by invoking the speech and results of others' actions or even random events.

2. Causative Provocation

Causative provocation consists in creating by one's own practical action the states of affairs or, respectively, the states of consciousness relating to real phenomena, which serves both to introduce and consolidate the change materialized in social relations, in the political situation, the balance of power, to limit and impose the choice of behavior of the opponent and the whole environment, and to cause disorientation of the opponent and public opinion. Such a "directing" activity may also aim to seize what "falls into one's hands," of course, in order not to let go of the opportunity or prey, to conduct a social debate.

We call it causative influence in the strict sense, because the result of statements, gestures, and practical efforts are social facts – secondarily objectified, and therefore, after their creation, they are already independent of people's wishes and imaginations, being the initial state, which must be taken into account in further intentions and projects. These facts are often irreversible or difficult to overcome. The power of their influence lies in the fact that it is impossible not to acknowledge them, to ignore them or even to underestimate them in plans of action.

Causative influence is exercised by making decisions, creating so-called *faits accomplis*, resisting someone else's actions, piling up practical and procedural obstacles, playing for time in matters that are urgent matters and inconvenient situations. It can take both ostentatious form – for instance clear commitments that force the mutual obligations of others, demonstrations of force, open warnings, or threats – and a camouflaged form.

In the latter case, the *manipulator-provocateur* is the author of the innovation, who however, acts in the humble role of an obstetrician. According to his own interests, the manipulator-provocateur wants to be perceived as the one who only facilitates or possibly accelerates the birth of that which supposedly matures naturally but is artificially suppressed. In reality, it is the other way round: with his actions, he manipulator-provocateur gives the appearance of naturalness to

his artificial creations, to what by itself, and without his “help,” would not have to or even could not happen, come into being.

Conspiracy operations are a special case of camouflaged provocations. We discussed their nature, structure, and mechanism earlier when analyzing the anatomy of intrigue.

Causative actions may serve a variety of specific purposes – alone or in combination – for instance to stimulate someone to do something, to encourage or discourage, to block a project in progress or cancel it, to derail a project already underway, to identify another’s intentions and resources, to prevent something, but also to divide opponents or allies whom we wish to weaken and make dependent. We will present a detailed functional typology of causative provocations in the next chapter.

3. Deceiving Provocation

What is *deceiving provocation*? It is the production or “handling” of illusions and appearances. The tool of such action is selectively and tendentiously prepared information – and unverifiable “para-information” and pseudo-information – and also personal or institutional facades masking the real features of something or suggesting the existence of something that does not exist, making it possible to distort the proportions of the image of phenomena, exaggerating or diminishing the importance of certain events, factors, conditions, introducing the state of ambiguity, ambivalence, uncertainty.

It may be a sophisticated and programmed game of appearances, which is maintained especially in the atmosphere of collective hypocrisy, when the participants of the situation are more comfortable to keep silent, ignore something, not to accept changes or events that upset the existing order and balance.

The provocative form of deception consists in an ostentatious, defiant action that performs several functions at once. It is to focus the attention of the adversary or the attention of society in general on the phenomenon which has been faked, to suggest and perpetuate a strong and false impression, a false perception of the situation, to divert attention from our proper intentions, preparations and actions, or from facts already existing. Thus, it assists in disorienting the adversary. It may also be used to cover up traces of one’s own participation in something, criminal actions, shifting the responsibility for one’s actions onto others.

This mode of action – especially the combination of *deception* and *diversion* – has been used in the art of war for centuries. Most often, the purpose of such fictional activities is to distract the enemy from preparatory maneuvers, regrouping, suggesting the place, time and manner of attack other than the correct one.

An example of it may be exposed dummies of military objects and weapons which are not so much to mask what is real and really threatened with attack but to effectively pretend what is real and attract an attack.

The suggested belief in the reality of the suggested appearances stimulates action no less real than the real facts. This is the alphabet of all propaganda deception.

Operation Bodyguard

One of the turning points in the Second World War was the opening of the second front in Europe through the invasion on the Atlantic coast of France. The military and technical preparations – armaments, regrouping of troops, supply – were accompanied by large-scale disorientation and disinformation activities based precisely on the art of deception. Their setting resembled work on a theatrical performance or a blockbuster film as the Allies used and gathered lots many props and employed lots many tricks and acts of simulation, including the use of actors and extras. The aim of this carefully programmed set of actions, called Operation Bodyguard, was to cause, if not complete surprise, then in any case to make the German army unprepared to repel the invasion and to disperse its forces. The means was deception, causing confusion as to the place and time of the planned attack.

The assumptions of this operation were precisely laid out by its coordinator, Colonel Bevan, head of the disinformation service:

The Germans must be told lies. The Germans must be told gigantic lies, crafted in such a way that they believe them. It is necessary to create the impression that their agents are gaining information with the greatest difficulty. We will pretend to prepare for an attack on Norway, the Balkans, Italy, southern and western France. We will use all means, we will use intelligence, resistance movements in occupied Europe, diplomatic missions. The goal is one – to force Hitler to disperse his forces and keep them away from the landing site.¹¹

One of the ventures was the fictional construction of a 350,000-strong army, supposedly being prepared for a landing from Scotland on Norwegian territory.

The Germans had an excellent radio network at their disposal, so the main part of the deception was to take place in the ether. Thirty telegraphists subordinate to the Colonel simulated day and night the radio traffic typical of large groups forming, summoned officers from nonexistent units for urgent briefings, protested against delays in supplying

11 K. Pytko, "Wielka zmyłka," *Focus Extra*, No. 4 (115), April 2005, p. 2.

provisions, and ordered equipment necessary for mountain climbing. / Other camouflage specialists made sure that the newspapers mentioned soccer matches played by soldiers of four armies and even congratulated its officers on getting married. At the airports, mock-ups of fighter planes and transport aircraft were set up. The only real weapon at MacLeod's disposal was anti-aircraft artillery to drive off German reconnaissance planes.¹²

Moreover, the Allies intensified the radio contact between Scotland and the Norwegian resistance. The USSR allies also joined in the deception with strongly suggestive fictional actions: their submarines were patrolling the northern coasts of Norway, a "strong strike group" had appeared on the Kola Peninsula. The suggestion was clear: it was possible that the strike would come from Scandinavia.

Of course, Germans guessed that much of the information given them was an attempt to falsely suggest or divert attention from the real courses of action, but they could not be sure what was fact and what was fiction and a form of deception. Nevertheless, they rationally anticipated that an attack from the north of France was most likely. However, their reconnaissance and preparations were paralyzed by the scattering of possible invasion sites and the abundance of contradictory information, which in addition, although it was a "toss-up," was to be regarded as stolen, as "spied out."

The Allies brought in stage designers from London's film studios and theaters, mobilized hundreds of carpenters and locksmiths, and even one of the most prominent architects Professor Basil Spence appeared. Soon, landing ships began appearing off the coast, clearly visible from the air, and by mid-April there were more than 400 of them. German analysts studying photographs taken by air reconnaissance had no doubts – a great armada was gathering in the vicinity of Dover. In reality, the ships were merely wooden and tarp structures floating on empty oil barrels. Experts in special effects made sure that from time-to-time smoke would gush out of their "chimneys." At night, hundreds of searchlights were lit to illuminate the supposed loading ramps. A few kilometers from the shore, Allies formed "ground troops." Soldiers crawling in the grass dragged balloons imitating tanks on ropes and trampled track marks in the dusk. Anti-aircraft artillery fired on German spy planes but did so in such a way that some broke through to the FUSAG grouping. Analysts easily recognized in the photos ammunition depots, columns of trucks, even field kitchens, which they estimated would be enough to support at least fifty divisions.¹³

This is an important factor in war deception: the enemy must be convinced that he has snatched a "secret" which is only a suggested guise, and he is attached

12 Pytko, "Wielka zmyłka," p. 3.

13 Pytko, "Wielka zmyłka," p. 5.

to his “discovery” the more with the greater difficulty and at the greater cost he has made it.

Professor Spence designed a huge fuel depot covering almost five square kilometers near the port of Dover. It contained everything from tankers, pumping stations and pipelines to a fire station. Special blowers kicked up huge clouds of dust to make it look like intensive construction work was taking place. In reality, the entire facility was just a wooden mock-up. It was tightly surrounded by entanglements, with gendarmerie patrols stopping anyone who tried to approach. / The Allies took care even of the smallest details. When the Germans tried to bomb the “base,” a few planes were let through and pyrotechnicians imitated fires, using sodium vapor lamps and smoke shells. If even a super-agent slipped through to the Islands, he could only confirm the reality of the aerial photographs. Clergymen warned during sermons against immoral behavior of American soldiers and sent protests to non-existent commanders. Newspapers carried letters from outraged parents whose children had found American condoms in the grasslands. / King George VI visited the “base” in Dover, General Eisenhower met with its “builders,” General Patton conducted regular inspections. The airwaves buzzed with conversations between the commanders. Meanwhile, two hundred kilometers west of Dover, in places where a real invasion army was being formed, there was absolute silence.¹⁴

As we see, the purpose of deception was twofold. On the one hand, the Allies absorbed Germans’ attention and guided it to desired course of action. On the other hand, this guise made it possible to conceal the actual place of preparation and the planned attack.

There were twelve days left before the invasion. These were the most difficult and risky days. The Germans still had enough time to move additional forces into Normandy. How long could they be deceived? How long would Operation Bodyguard be able to protect the invading forces?

Colonel Bevan assumed that it would succeed until the very end, until D-Day. Consistently, Bevan put in place successive, increasingly finer elements of the plan. Next, he wanted to convince the Germans that the landing will not take place earlier than the second half of June. If it was otherwise, the commander-in-chief would not leave his army.¹⁵

At this point, the Allies employed an almost theatrical staging involving a professional actor – Montgomery’s double. He was the ideal performer of the deception not only because of the close physical resemblance but also because of professional qualifications, that is the ability to imitate other people in their

14 Pytko, “Wielka zmyłka,” p. 5.

15 Pytko, “Wielka zmyłka,” p. 6.

manner of speaking, moving, gesticulating, accustomed to make-up. The actor was to be spotted by vigilant hostile intelligence at such a place and time that his presence would “postpone” what the real commander was about to do.

The next day he departs for Algiers. Technicians arrange for the plane to break down, Montgomery has to get off, he kills time sipping tea at the airport cafe. / He “accidentally” drops a handkerchief monogrammed “BLM” – Bernard Law Montgomery. It was a proof for the ones who may had still doubted the British commander’s stay in the south of the continent.¹⁶

Years later, filmmakers recreated this actor-spy combination in the British feature film *I Was Monty’s Double*, which older viewers probably remember. The results of these actions – which served to create either illusions, erroneous predictions and moves, or uncertainty inhibiting the necessary steps – exceeded all expectations. Even when Marshal von Rundstedt already understood that the attack would be directed neither at the Pas de Calais nor at Brittany, but at Normandy, and intended – still in time – to direct SS panzer divisions to greet the enemy, Hitler forbade him to do so. The Allies achieved the effect of complete surprise.

Real Effects of Appearances and Illusions

A mystification-provocation is distinguished by a certain paradox: what in normal deception is achieved through camouflage – the appearance, fiction, and especially its “installation” is supposed to be as inconspicuous as possible – here it is realized on an ostentatious basis, as in a pushy, flashy advertisement. It is a dialectical paradox: to focus attention is to distract and suggest.

Among others, the repertoire of deception provocation includes faking facts – events, actions – through fictional actions, similar to the deliberate erection of mock-ups and facades. This is how the so-called “media facts” are created. Other examples may be falsification of documents used later either to justify claims for awards, compensation, privileges or in accusations and insinuations, in demands for isolation, marginalization, elimination or “deserved punishment.” This always serves some immediate purpose, the current political game – for instance the fight for ratings in the polls and for election results – but often also has an important place in a strategy that takes a very long-term view, such as attempts to force a ban or at least a general boycott of the hostile party.

16 Pytko, “Wielka zmyłka,” pp. 6–8.

Although provocation artificially creates events that are neither necessary nor natural; it always creates the impression as if the opposite was true. An event caused by a hidden and camouflaged action or ostentatious action diverting attention from something is in any case a fact; it becomes an element of reality. Even the appearance – apparent and artificial existence and illusion of the audience perceived as a fact – exerts such an influence as if it was a real fact. In addition, since the *metafact* (a sociopsychological fact that consists in perceiving something as fact) must be reckoned with regardless of one's own perception of reality, appearances materialize. In his grotesque short story "Lieutenant Kijé," Yury Tynyanov brilliantly depicts this mechanism. However, Tynyanov does not deal with purposeful deception but with an accidental, absurd-paradoxical one, which has taken on a life of its own.

Thus, suggestive deception secondarily influences the idea of reality. This occurs to such an extent that on the basis of what came after people make break-neck conclusions about what came before and identify the temporal succession of events with a cause-and-effect relationship. They are inclined to see in it a confirmation of certain rules, regularities or tendencies. They become susceptible to pushy tendentious *teleological* interpretations of events in propaganda that discounts these events: "it had to be this way," "everything was going this way," "what happened is the culmination of the whole series of events."

Under the influence of a surprising and negatively shocking event, many witnesses may conclude – even against their previous beliefs and all their knowledge – that this is what had to happen, that what happened was inevitable, that this confirms certain judgments and expectations. In turn, since the actual causes and springs (and even sometimes the very fact of deliberate action) are hidden from witnesses, it is therefore easier in after-the-fact interpretations to attribute to the effects – or rather to suggest – different causes than in reality.

Deceiving provocation supporting malicious accusations is nothing else but *fabricating false evidence*. At the same time, it is such a method of persuasion that affects people's thinking through emotions and attitudes, even if the "evidence" did not stand up to the criticism of common sense. This is why deceitful provocation is also multifunctional. It can serve equally well for manipulative self-presentation, discrediting the opponent, diversion, and for rationalizing (obeying, justifying) the manipulator's own actions, and in the long run for revising the hierarchy of authorities and criteria of credibility dominating in a given community.

The far-reaching goal of deceitful provocation (as opposed to ad hoc calculations) is to create a false image of reality in the minds of observers and addressees, including the substantiation of one's own lie and the suggestion of one's

own authoritativeness. In this sense, it is a tool in the struggle for the “rule over minds.”

4. Discrediting Provocation

Discrediting provocation is based on eliciting reflex reactions and associations or imposing impressions, evaluations, and emotions on reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices against rivals, opponents, and any other subjects – even if they are impartial, neutral toward the conflict, or even friendly to us – whose attitude, mere presence, or even very existence is inconvenient for us and constitutes an obstacle in achieving our own goals. The result of our efforts should be a permanently unflattering image of the adversary, undermining his credibility or even the impression of ultimate compromise.

Thus, the ultimate goal of such a provocation is to permanently eliminate the opponent from the game by creating an impression or strong conviction – assuming that this is a common or dominant feeling in a given society, environment – that he is not trustworthy or not even worthy of participation. A successful “provo-discreditation” is an excellent justification for a predetermined but pretext-seeking policy of discrimination against certain environments, groups, and political parties. It is an elimination in the symbolic sense that happens by issuing, imposing on the surroundings or even pretending a spontaneous social verdict of civil death, moral crossing out, and self-crossing out.

A slightly less ambitious but also satisfactory goal is to temporarily undermine someone’s attractiveness and credibility, thus also to question the status of the opponent, limit the scale of his influence, and even his possibilities for action. However, this does not preclude the achievement of a long-term goal for what is not now may happen soon. The perpetrator still gains time, and the process of exclusion may happen in episodes.

Finally, the minimum goal is an effective situational blow: to hurt someone’s image with a detail, even a secondary one, to present specific statements, ideas, initiatives, announcements, decisions, achievements in an unfavorable light. Contrary to appearances, such occasional, formally one-time results can also cumulate, following the blow, recalling in new circumstances; this is where cumulative and permanent discredit schemes come into play. In any case, many a temporary but prestigious defeat, accurate criticism of a specific mistake, a mistake made in response to an attack or criticism – for instance succumbing to emotions, disproportionate anger or persistence in relation to criticism or insult – permanently undermines the existing capital of prestige and trust. Not everything passes without a trace. Of course, soon afterwards, the witnesses of

such an incident usually do not remember what it was about, what mistake or sin was committed by someone who was caught or provoked by some challenge, but many of them remember the general impression: that something was wrong there, that he is neither so perfect, nor so efficient, nor so honest. This is why both volunteers and hired specialists in discredit services (notorious negative campaigning) exploit unflattering or controversial details so zealously and so often. They know that “nothing goes to waste in a good kitchen,” that waste can be useful in a stew.

People may achieve these short-term and long-term goals by “spoiling the atmosphere” with one’s own affronts and artificially created incidents arousing consternation, distaste, a sense of blameworthiness, by persistent disavowing, harassing and stigmatizing one’s adversaries with epithets, by making tendentious or completely false accusations and accusations, or by entangling their opponents/victims in various traps, embarrassing or downright compromising situations without a worthy exit. In the parasitic version, it consists in eagerly picking up and exaggerating in one’s own interpretation all “second-hand” pretexts for disqualifying others.

The tactics and methodology of discrediting provocations differ according to the characteristics of the situation, points of attack, preliminary recognition of the weak points of the object of attack, preliminary calculation of the chances of success of certain variants of action. The most typical forms of discrediting provocations could be included in the following catalog:

- a) *occasional unmasking* provocation,
- b) “*bait*,”
- c) *enticing* provocation;
- d) *tracking* provocation;
- e) *demonstrative-ritualistic* provocation.

Occasional-unmasking provocation involves “rewarded vigilance,” a display of reflexivity in noticing and turning to one’s favor of a situation, an event, or some awkwardness, a mistake. Someone is caught doing something that either objectively gives them an unflattering account of themselves, or in any case can be suggestively interpreted and authoritatively judged as worthy of pity, embarrassment, condemnation, punishment. The matter receives “publicity,” usually disproportionate to its actual magnitude, its importance. This exaggeration and commentator’s obtrusiveness is a kind of second-degree provocation: an artificial imposition of the “topic of the day” and increasing the importance of even trivial and marginal issues.

It may be a success achieved on the principle of “every dog has its day,” when the discloser has no merit in his discovery, did not know anything beforehand, did not expect, did not anticipate, nor was he set and prepared to wait for an opportunity. It just fell to them out of the sky, they just did not miss the opportunity. However, more often – just as is the case with reporters, sensation hunters, who do not know (like fortune-tellers) exactly what to expect, but know from what range, or detectives, who already have and are testing their clues and hypotheses – it is, so to speak, paradoxically, an unintentional hunting for an opportunity.

Provocation based on the scheme of “teasing” is, of course, based on maliciously suggesting someone’s belief, expectation, promise, behavior or ambiguous gesture, proposal, offer, which turns out to be a bait, maneuvering someone into a contact, meeting, acquaintance, which turns out to be a trap. Sometimes it may even be an open persuasion to commit a foolishness, mistake, wickedness or crime. In such a case, the discredited party acts as if ordered by its perpetrator. This is an action from the repertoire of perfidy, because it involves artificially inducing and then abusing someone’s trust, delivering a blow from the position of a business partner, accomplice, friend, ally, guardian, protector, advisor, confidant.

This is related to enticement provocation, except that the source and nature of the surprise is different. What is the nuance? When someone models their actions on the police’s “sting” scheme, the victim does not expect the trap or has a low estimate of the risk. On the other hand, when someone tempts, they do not hide the fact that they are persuading to do wrong, to violate some norms, but they also encourage “bit by bit,” rewarding successive phases of overcoming hesitation, resistance, and reinforcing incentives-attractions. Sometimes, the risk is not hidden, which arouses in the victim a “taste for adventure,” a desire to try the “forbidden fruit,” a childish satisfaction from the mischief. Contrary to appearances, such adventurous or morally subversive satisfactions are also tempting for people in adult and exceptionally serious roles: frustrated civil servants, complacent members of parliament from the third row, dismissed ministers eager for a little revenge on their colleagues, and so on.

A tracking provocation requires no comment. It is snooping, “looking for a hook” – with the assumption that we know where – but also “buying” even the most suspicious and exaggerated news – leaks, testimonies of witnesses of questionable reputation and credibility – carefully observing and following the target – almost like in professional surveillance – in an attempt to steal embarrassing intimate or business secrets. This method is popularly used especially

within the framework of “political services” by journalists – under the banner of “investigative journalism” – or specialists in negative campaigning.

Finally, demonstrative-ritualistic provocation is based on masterful bigoted creations, on transforming one’s own instrumental hypocrisy into a means of pressure on one’s surroundings, even emotional and moral blackmail. The provocateur assumes a principled and hysterical pose. He plays the moralist and moralizer, suggestively revealing the immensity of his surprise and shock... what he has been waiting for a long time and what pleases his mischievous soul. The provocateur stages a spectacle of holy indignation with which he not only stigmatizes the victim but also terrorizes its surroundings, forcing them to participate in a ritual, exemplary moral execution under the slogan “there is no place for such people among us,” “this is a crime and crime must be punished.” The emotional interpretation of events imposed on the surroundings – which almost no one manages to oppose for fear of being accused of not defending endangered values or of defending a crime – is supposed to legitimize the strongest disqualifications of the opponent, the harshest accusations, the most brutal insults. This usually leads to an effect of entrapment and automatic prejudging of the issue, which is at best controversial, problematic. Thus, the demonstrative and ritualistic scheme of provocation is an iron element of every campaign.

Discrediting provocation can be based on both causative and deceitful actions. Its distinguishing feature is the specific task rather than the tools used.

5. Multifaceted and Syndromatic Provocations

The above division is not disjunctive but conventional. From a logical viewpoint, it is a typology, not a classification. We take here into account only the separateness and peculiarity of these three functions; the needs, aims, and ways to achieve them. However, this does not at all exclude the interweaving of these functions in various specific actions, nor does it assume a complete difference in the way these functions are realized or a separation of techniques and means of a causative or deceitful character. For example, deception is in a way also a causative activity, but it creates appearances of facts, facades, and fictions perceived as if they were reality and not material or psychological facts based on distorted perception of real facts. A deception may serve both to increase the influence and prestige of the subject of manipulation to discredit the opponent and divide – based on false perceptions suggested by others, especially by disorientation and diverting attention – or to incite to decisions and wrong or even suicidal actions, having the characteristics of self-sabotage. In the practice of

political action, we encounter many “mixed,” multi-type provocations, namely deception-discrediting, deception-diversion, discrediting-diversion.

XII. Contact Causative Provocations

Causative provocation may fulfill multiple specific functions, carried out with a variety of means and in accordance with different patterns of behavior of the subject.

1. Basic Functional Typology

On the basis of ideal types, we may distinguish the following varieties of causative provocation:

- *reconnaissance*;
- *stimulative*;
- *maneuver*;
- *diversionary*;
- *pretextual, or assecurational-rationalizing*.

We should treat this functional typology as an abstract systematization and a tool for analyzing specific actions rather than a literal one-dimensional inventory. Already the distinction between causative, discrediting, and deceitful provocation is a conventional division, not a disconnected demarcation. The same is true of the qualifications of causative provocation. By distinguishing side by side, separately, for instance stimulative provocation and maneuver provocation, we do not assume that these must be two different and separate actions, but only adopt expressive terms for different aspects of even the same acts of provocation or functions that – although not identical – are very often fulfilled in a certain correlation (synchronization) or sequence (when the accomplishment of one task makes it possible to achieve yet another goal).

Because elements of competition or confrontation and struggle or outright war statistically predominate in political action over positive and constructive action, the typology of provocations from the standpoint of their function also includes more negative and destructive than positive and constructive varieties of provocation (in the sense as in Chapter Eleven).

We should remember about the difference between ostentatious, frontal, direct exertion of pressure on a subject (hence provoked by a statement or gesture addressed to them, a promise, threat, or attack on their safety or state of being) and the pressure exerted indirectly by controlling the social situation, trying to regulate their position, include or exclude them from the game, support, hinder or thwart their efforts, impose their ideas and modify their aspirations by manipulating the social atmosphere and the image of phenomena. Therefore, among the causative provocations, we may distinguish *contact* provocations (which

include exploratory and the whole range of stimulative provocations) and *deceiving* provocations (which include maneuvering, diversionary and seductive provocations).

As the name suggests, the task of exploratory provocation is reconnaissance. It is the equivalent of a military action – reconnaissance – which includes a special form of “reconnaissance by fire.” We provoke an event that must have great social resonance or we ourselves behave in a defiant manner provoking various reactions and impressions in order to find out what condition our environment or a particular adversary is in, what is he capable of and prone to. We do this to predict on the basis of bold experiments and small-scale tests his behavior, compactness, and efficiency of functioning in a planned proper clash on a larger scale. Obviously, not every way of recognizing someone else’s aspirations, intentions, and abilities is a provocation. Observation or simple analysis of documents does not have such a character, but any experiment (“let’s see what he will say, how he will behave in the situation we have plotted, when we introduce factor C into the game”) or “teasing” is a provocation.

Stimulative provocation is an attempt to directly – mainly through communication – control the psyche, mentality, attitudes, and above all, specific decisions and behaviors of individuals or groups by using behavioral patterns of “stimulus–response” through suggestive pressure causing specific impressions, moods, images, including illusions, by inducing unconditioned or conditioned reflexes. The perpetrator of the provocation arouses certain attitudes in its recipients, its addressees, and induces them to act in accordance with his will by means of signals of his presence and intentions, and information directed at them or suggested (“planted”) to them, which is supposed to arouse interest, approval, distancing, opposition, anger, indignation, or spite. Usually, the stimulus provocation has the form of a paratheatrical game, an “actor’s” psychotechnique: it is the self-exposure and “performance” (creation) of a given subject that is supposed to influence the experiences, course and direction of reasoning and acts of will of the recipients so that they lose their distance to the situation, their own knowledge and emotions, their self-control, and instead surrender to cleverly veiled suggestions or intrusive pressures of the perpetrator.

Particularly in a conflict situation, provocative stimulation consists in inducing and even forcing the opponent (victim) to behave in an unwanted way by means of challenges, various forms of teasing, incitement, insults, threats, threats or calls, announcements, promises, allusions. Unwanted because they contradict his aspirations and principles, for instance a pacifist or neutralist worldview, contradict his social image as a cultured, tolerant, moderate, balanced, prudent person/group, or are socially unacceptable and condemned.

Maneuver provocation is based on the mechanisms of indirect control, so it consists in provoking by one's own moves such events, creating such situations, states of affairs, alternative possibilities of situation development, such a scale of choice and such necessities, which allow to impose certain priorities on the objects of influence, exclude some of their undertakings or cancel the effectiveness of efforts already made, thwart or change their intentions. Unlike in stimulus provocation – whose important components and instruments are specific codes of communication, specific rhetoric and symbolism, and props that carry it – what matters in maneuver provocation is an objectivized pragmatic calculus, typical for games (strategic and tactical ones) devoid of this communicative setting: a sober diagnosis of the situation, the balance of forces, an assessment of the level of risk and the already visible threats, and the chances of one's own success. The provocateur communicates with the provoked even without words or signs addressed to him. The provocateur “speaks” in the language of actions, faits accomplis, surprising, anticipating, or hindering actions, playing for time, and artificially accelerating events – everything that he is able to cause without announcements, declarations, exchanges of information, agreements, against the will of the provoked person, and that imposes on him (as a state of affairs with certain undeniable consequences), the scope and character of his decisions, determines (as a rule, it limits or selectively expands in certain matters and directions) his freedom of action.

Two objectives intertwine in diversion. On the one hand, we aim to confuse the enemy as to our intentions, our situation, our potential, and at the same time to disorient him in a situation hitherto clear or by creating a new and surprising one. On the other hand, we aim to introduce confusion in his ranks. We achieve both of these goals mainly by disrupting victim's functioning, whereas communication and stimulus pressures and “situational directing” are a secondary, supporting means of influence.

Thus, *diversionary* provocation consists in causing such phenomena and behaviors in the opponent's environment or in its ranks and structures that will result in destabilization, disintegration of the system of alliances of that opponent or its internal conflict and decomposition, disorientation of leaders, members and followers, weakening or disappearance of identification of participants with the whole movement, institution, group, with its values and symbols. As we may see, diversion here can be both an end in itself (disintegration and disorientation of the enemy camp) and a means of discredit.

A particular form of diversion is *infiltrational* provocation used especially in police and intelligence operations and based on acts of sabotage, compromising

and conflicting behavior undertaken by “our people” who have infiltrated inside the enemy camp.

Pretextual provocation is the creation of a deceitful but safe excuse for one’s own conduct, including, in particular, deliberate and premeditated actions that without the crafting of a pretext would have to be condemned or even socially punished.

2. Exploratory (Reconnaissance) Provocation

An unconventional or “out of the box” action, seemingly desperate or primitive and therefore perceived as nonsensical, is in fact a “trial balloon;” a way of testing some larger whole in a partial trial. We force the adversary to reveal hidden intentions, carefully camouflaged forces, and latent reserves and so we verify and concretize data on the adversary’s layout of forces, resources, and mobilization capabilities. At the same time, we get to know his way of reacting, not only his efficiency, reflexes, mobility, but also his readiness to counteract or to make concessions, the limits of his patience, factors throwing him off balance and disturbing his self-control, we study experimentally his susceptibility to prompting, suggestions and stimuli.

It is a widespread method of war preparation. For instance, consider border provocations like regular violations of airspace by aircraft, artillery shelling of border areas, incursions of armed troops or groups of saboteurs into the territory of a future war enemy.

However, this method has numerous equivalents in “civilian” operations. Thus, for example, many a head of one or another institution tries to find out the loyalty of the subordinates and the functioning of the whole team in a critical situation, “in the hour of trial.” The head checks this through various experiments. He spreads rumors of his resignation or even ritualistically submits the resignation and waits for the reactions of the subordinates and associates or he stages and directs a spectacular sharp public criticism of his activity or submits exemplary self-criticism. Among politicians, Mao Ze Dong was a master in this method; of course, he always drew practical conclusions from his reconnaissance. His most brilliant achievement in this field was the Hundred Flowers Campaign (a spectacular liberalization of cultural policy) thanks to which he knew what to erase soon after (including during the Cultural Revolution).

A Hundred Flowers... To Be Cut

Let us recall the circumstances of this case. In the mid-1950s, proponents of a pragmatic, rather than overtly sectarian and repressive, policy toward

nonpartisan intelligentsia (along with Mao Zedong) dominated the Chinese Communist Party leadership, which was associated with calculations of how to use the potential of scientific, technical, and cultural cadres in the intended modernization and construction of the state's superpower status. The price for winning these circles over (with the prospect of progress in their "partyization") was to be a relative and controlled liberalization of cultural and scientific policy, recognition of the intelligentsia's competence as critical advisors to the ruling party.

In intellectual and educational circles, the issue surfaced in 1956–1957 in the Hundred Flowers Campaign, named after the slogan: "Let a hundred flowers bloom together, let a hundred schools of thought compete." As part of a general improvement in working conditions – greater access to foreign publications, more free time, and more scope for initiative – the intelligentsia was encouraged from May 1956 to criticize Party cadres imposing their will on them. Mao estimated that out of a total of at least five million intelligentsia—that is, high school and college graduates—no more than three percent were then hostile to Marxism. Therefore, criticism of the bureaucratic style and methods of the party within the Hundred Flowers Campaign will be constructive, representing a "non-antagonistic contradiction" among the people, acceptable in the context of total loyalty to the communist system.¹⁷

People did not immediately pick up the invitation to critique. The experience with the Party's repressive style of operation was too fresh, while the tradition of authoritarian rule in China was too old and continuous.

The Chinese intelligentsia knew very well that if you stick your head out, you may lose it. For a year they said nothing. But then, in May 1957, they began to criticize the Communist regime with increasing vehemence. They attacked its basic tenets, style of work, doctrine, and practices. Within five weeks, the Hundred Flowers Campaign was over.¹⁸

One was completed, or rather summed up, in order to immediately begin another one, which was a kind of counteroffensive.

When in mid-1957, the Hundred Flowers Movement revealed the serious dissatisfaction of the intelligentsia with the CCP regime, Mao Zedong turned to class warfare against the resistant intelligentsia and from June made them the target of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. There was a purge among party members at this time, as sluggishness and selfishness froth among party bureaucrats. Some made acquaintances with the insecure intelligentsia, and the latter recoiled from becoming "red" in heart. Thus it was possible to attack these two recalcitrant groups together.¹⁹

17 J. K. Fairbank, *Historia Chin. Nowe spojrzenie*, Gdańsk 1996, p. 338.

18 Fairbank, *Historia Chin. Nowe spojrzenie*, p. 338.

19 Fairbank, *Historia Chin. Nowe spojrzenie*, p. 338.

In fact, there were not two, but three categories of the inconvenient people. Using the same opportunity, the Chinese government inflicted blows on both the obvious opponents of the system and the party maintaining the monopoly of power, and on inept functionaries, pests in their own ranks, and committed supporters of the system who expected a different style of leadership and governance. This did not deviate from established historical patterns:

The Chinese emperors sometimes opened the way for criticism (yanlu), and often received more than they expected. Mao and his colleagues were frightened and disillusioned by the outbreak of criticism in 1957, so they promptly retaliated by making the intelligentsia and some members of the Party the target of the Anti-Rightists Campaign. The Party removed between 300,000 and 700,000 skilled workers from their jobs and branded them as “right-wingers,” enemies of the people. The result of this was to be the decapitation of the People’s Republic, the liquidation of those people who were most lacking.²⁰

To this day, scholars of Maoist politics argue about Chairman Mao’s intentions and calculations at the time he launched such a risky propaganda and mobilization campaign. There is no consensus as to whether he was so cunning and far-sighted or whether he overestimated his expectations but knew how to exploit even a setback. A longtime correspondent of Polish Press Agency in Beijing wondered over this in the 1970s:

The short-lived nature of this “liberalization” course is interpreted in various ways. Generally, people emphasize two supposed motives for Mao initiating the “hundred flowers” against the position of the other leaders, including Liu Shaoqi. They think that Mao misjudged the public mood and believed that the people’s opinion, stripped of all restraints, would side with him and support his line. This would have been an important asset for the Chairman in his increasingly sharp disputes with other members of the leadership. Moreover, people believe that Mao hoped that under conditions of unfettered speech, his enemies would reveal. However, the first motive seems to have been the main one. Mao always believed that the masses would obey him. This time he was wrong. In spite of the PRC’s undoubted achievements, the public, mainly the intelligentsia – both new and old – was discouraged by the constant actions, purges and campaigns against the enemy, the criticisms and self-criticisms, the public courts and the never-ending rallies. Under conditions of unfettered discussion, society spoke out against these methods, which found expression mainly in the “newspapers of the great hieroglyphs.” Furthermore, there were also voices against the party and its leadership and demands for the restoration of multi-party democracy of the parliamentary type.²¹

20 Fairbank, *Historia Chin. Nowe spojrzenie*, p. 339.

21 St. Głabiński, *Mao i inni*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 26–27.

Delia Davin – author of the Commander’s biography published much later – has a similar opinion:

Mao’s motives in launching and then reversing the Hundred Flowers Movement have been much debated. He himself later claimed that he had intended to persuade ‘poisonous weeds’ to reveal themselves so that they could be cut down. The truth is probably more complicated. At the beginning of 1956, foreshadowing the Great Leap of 1958, Mao was advocating mobilization for a programme of rapid industrialization. His more cautious colleagues tried to rein him back. Mao attempted through the Hundred Flowers Movement to woo the academics and managerial and technical experts whose co-operation would be required for the new economic programme. International events also influenced his behaviour. Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Party in February 1956 had set in motion processes of ‘destalinization’ in the Soviet bloc.²²

Forms of Extraction

Let us note that one objective – the attempt to mobilize and confirm mass support – does not exclude the other, that is the detection of “weeds among flowers.” However, from the viewpoint of the effects of this campaign and the benefits that Chairman Mao derived from it, it remains a secondary issue that motives, intentions, and calculations are so difficult to verify. In any case, it was an initiative provocation: an encouragement and even a call for frank criticism. Even if it was not a premeditated, cynical ploy – Machiavellian productive provocation – we may at any rate treat it as... “self-parasitic” as the initiator knew how to draw conclusions and profits from a potential failure.

Usually, people fulfill the *extraction task* in one of three forms:

- * by taking certain inspiring and stimulating actions by extracting the subject, for instance creating situational and “atmospheric” incentives for sincere statements, confidences, disclosures, creating or reinforcing certain temptations and occasions, creating and accentuating certain situations, namely gaffes, threats, insults, direct assault, which force an immediate and thus usually spontaneous, sincere reaction, to reveal feelings, intentions and equipment;
- * by inducing persons or groups of outsiders to behave and make statements that require a reaction and thus cause someone to reveal themselves against their will or (against their will to maintain discretion) to reveal something prematurely; or as such covert control of the contacts under surveillance that makes it possible to obtain inaccessible information (here we deal with

22 D. Davin, *Mao Zedong*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire 1997, p. 59.

surveillance methods in the broadest sense of the word) and to arrange situational tests of someone else's intentions and capabilities;

- * by urging – with one's own clear pressure – the other party to give an unambiguous answer to questions, demands, claims; this pressure has either the form of suggestions, open persuasions, calls calculated to elicit a positive response, or, on the contrary, calculated to arouse reflexes of resistance, opposition, perversity, rebellion.

Most of such actions are commonly referred to as “teasing.” This term derives from rational connotations as teasing can mean (1) let someone closer, allow for more, or (2) decrease restraint and increase the sense of freedom and stimulate the need for self-expression.

Reconnaissance provocation differs from a stimulative provocation in that in this case someone is stimulated not to intentions he did not have or actions he did not plan or in any case has not yet prejudged, but only to reveal what he is capable of, what his inclinations, strengths, and weaknesses are. In a stimulative provocation, we provoke in the sense that he will do what he did not want to do or what he merely considered as a possibility. On the other hand, in reconnaissance provocation, we provoke in the sense that we make someone reveal, reveal what the person would like to hide.

3. Types of Stimulus Provocation

Stimulus pressure serves to achieve both constructively defined goals (creating something and thus confirming one's belief in the rightness of one's views and aspirations), negatively defined goals (the desire to deny something), and destructively defined goals (by undermining, crossing out, destroying something). The specificity of stimulus provocation lies in the mode of action (goal achievement) while the functions are coupled with other types of provocation. The activation of desired reactions, usually by means of indiscriminate stimuli, can serve the purpose of preventing a hostile attack, provoking a conflict that the opponent wants to avoid, discrediting the opponent, and justifying one's own intentions (as allegedly secondary, and not preconceived).

Beginning with “pure stimulation” (arousing the desired sensations, experiences, feelings, intentions, decisions, behaviors irrespective of what purpose it serves) we will assume that it is possible to reduce the positive and negative functions of provocations based on the “stimulus–response” to three categories:

- *promotional* provocation – coercion of specific interests,
- *compulsive* provocation – forcing a specific behavior,
- *motivational* provocation – mobilization or demobilization.

Promotional Provocation

We commonly associate the concept of promotion either with education (qualifying grade for the next class, semester; the act of awarding a title, degree and diploma ceremony) or with the sphere of commercial activities (sale of records, books; brand promotion; promotion of the region among potential investors, tourists and residents). All these phenomena have a common denominator contained in its root *promotio* means “support, propagation,” from the verb *promovēre*, “to spread (expand), move something forward.”²³

The Planes of Promotion in Politics

In the case of politics, it is first of all about the promotion of *ideas* (which happens through classical indoctrination and propaganda) the promotion of subjects, that is social forces, political groups, and personalities (possible thanks to political advertising and political marketing, especially electoral one) and the promotion of *issues, problems, and tasks* (meaning advancing reflection on them and practical solutions, the elementary condition of which is to make the environment aware of the importance and urgency of these issues).

The task of such promotion is, first of all, to make the presence of a given idea, subject, issue to be solved noticed and respected, to appreciate the importance and significance of a given issue for solving various other problems and tasks.

There is a feedback loop between the promotion of ideas, subjects, and issues. Both ideas and concrete problems, tasks, ideas for solutions and social initiatives are most often personified or at least associated with certain political parties, churches, states, so the spreading of certain views and the solving of certain problems requires that the people who do this are well known. On the other hand, in a rationally functioning, productive society, it is in the interest of people hungry for exposure and recognition that they be recognized as the ones capable of making these ideas a reality and solving the problems. But here – in the ease of obtaining or provoking such an opinion – lies a serious social trap.

The provocative form of promoting ideas and principles is based on the fact that in order to promote them, or at least gain respect for them, one chooses the formula of a challenge: polemical, confrontational, warlike rhetoric and symbolism, or scandalizing, iconoclastic or show-off, modeled on the patterns of commercial branding.

23 Cf. Wł. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem*, Warszawa 1994, p. 414.

The provocative form of promoting political actors is connected with the assumption that they are better noticed, extracted, recognized as forces or influential personalities, if we create situations in which they become menacing, dangerous for others, irreplaceable in certain coalition and personnel configurations, they prove to be a revelation or a “last resort,” or they appear mysterious, unpredictable, holding the surroundings and the entire society in a kind of check, or at least the impression is created that “one cannot get bored with them,” that whatever they say, decide, or do, it will have a groundbreaking or lasting significance. This can become a mannerism of soapbox politicians: just to stay in the center of events, to arouse passions, to surprise everyone again.

The provocative form of case promotion involves using typically provocative methods such as: surprising with an unconventional or even iconoclastic way of acting and informing about something, challenging the existing norms and standards or dominant subjects in a given circle, shocking, appalling, maneuvering others into a situation controlled by the initiator, stirring up or publicizing and exaggerating existing controversies and conflicts. By their means, perpetrators force the environment to pay attention to a certain problem, causing a state of embarrassment, controversy, confusion, making it difficult to pretend in the future that this problem does not exist.

Case Promotion and Self-Promotion

It is not uncommon for the promotion of an issue, idea, program, or demand to be, in a way, a *second-degree provocation*. A provocation of the first degree is then an action that becomes a reason for considering a given problem, for instance a protest or revanchist action (demonstration, picketing, blockade, hunger strike, agitational happening, self-immolation), a terrorist act (assassination, kidnapping, taking hostages, sabotage connected with making demands sanctioned by blackmail), causing a scandal or sensational incident during a public meeting, an act of profanation or blasphemous speech, an open letter, or a public denunciation. The chosen way of public appearance guarantees that it will become a social event (today especially a media event) it will attract attention, thus it will create an opportunity to convey a certain message which otherwise would either not get through to the news and public awareness, or would not be noticed, or would be ignored. On the other hand, the message presented thanks to the creation of such an opportunity is usually a provocation in itself, because it disturbs the established hierarchy of importance of the issues, undermines the accepted axioms or ideological and political dogmas, brings to the fore the underestimated issues

or the issues that are consciously, shamefully and hypocritically passed over in silence, becomes an act of polemics or correction of a stereotype or an official lie.

As we may see, the substantive (and not purely sociotechnical or narcissistic) understanding of promotion is connected with defining, exposing, and interpreting the significance of a specific social task, a challenge to civilization, with forcing understanding and solving a specific category of problems; for instance ecological, socioeconomic, or worldview. This is the promotion of the issue (idea, problem, task) and not the promotion of individuals or groups in isolation from the mission they are to fulfill.

Self-promotion may have both instrumental and servient character (as a tool for promotion of a problem, important task and social interest), but also one that is intrinsic (autotelic). In the first case, drawing attention to oneself and gaining prominence by some person or organization promotes the resolution of some social issue even though it is not altruistic. This resembles the situation in a court, when the reputation, the very name of a well-known lawyer or prosecutor is already an important factor, it makes even an involuntary impression on the public and on the judges themselves, but if even this satisfies vanity and serves well the interests of the attorney, from the social viewpoint it remains a means of acting on public issues and interests. In the second case, it is quite the opposite: the value in itself is the personal or group feeling of importance, fame, popularity. The goal in itself is to draw attention to oneself, to remain in its center. We know this from the history of art and literature. Many artistic (pseudo-artistic) or literary scandals or happenings are accompanied by uncertainty or dilemma whether a given provocation is a way of drawing the attention of an artist (even a well-known and respected one, but not understood) to something important that he has to convey to others, to the ideological, aesthetic, or stylistic disputes or innovations, or whether it is an exhibitionist display by a burnt-out artist or a graphomaniac and mythomaniac, perhaps even a fraud.

Attention as a Goal in Itself

Charles Derber was the one who pointed out this deviant or even pathological tendency. Derber states that modern civilization is dominated by a progressive process of autonomization of such a value (so far rather instrumental) as drawing attention to oneself and remaining in the center of attention whereby, as in the self-promotion of Hollywood stars in the interval between one premiere and another, the pretext for refreshing the audience's interest is completely irrelevant ("the attention-seeking culture"). Social attention becomes an intrinsic good, satisfying an equally intrinsic need to show off and feel noticed, even singled out.

This also applies to political life. Even the purely statistical proportion between politicians understood as leaders of serious social forces, spokespersons of distinct views and programs, decision-makers taking up, regulating, and solving key social problems (for which power, fame and popularity is only a means) and “politicians” reduced to the dimension of solipsistic (self-absorbed) media stars, that is personalities known for the fact that... they are known, and not for any lasting and socially significant achievements, for continuous, consistent, socially representative views and actions.

We also see politicians pursuing attention in novel public and private ways as we move into a new era of politics as spectacle. Politics in every age has a quality of theater, and politicians from Caesar to Napoleon have been driven by overweening egos and an insatiable hunger for public adulation. But rarely has politics turned so transparently into a race for attention as in turn-of-the-millennium America, where the passion for power seems rivaled only by the desire to be in the public eye.²⁴

This is a significant qualitative change. In order to do anything, one has to mean something, obtain an appropriate position and influence commensurate with it and one’s own potential. In turn, to obtain this position and influence, one has to “exist” at all. So far, this scheme looks rational. However, it turns out that in the conditions of an extreme mediatization of politics, a rule like in a subversive pamphlet novel by Kosiński: it is enough to be. It is enough in a double way: because the magic of formal roles, prestigious titles and media-political spectacles makes even people who are bland, without a program, without an idea and without personality seem important and extraordinary not because of who they are, what they are by nature, but because of where they are, who they are with (in alliance, in battle) and the motivation of the participants in “big politics” may boil down to efforts to first break through, get to the top, make a name for themselves, and then just stay as long as they can, at any price.²⁵

The political pursuit of attention reached a sublimely absurd pinnacle during the Clinton and Lewinsky sex scandal, in which so many of the players seemed to morph into surreal publicity hounds. Congressman Bob Barr, for example, one of the Republican House impeachment managers, typified the transformation of politician into aspiring media star, grooming himself to appear regularly for months on one or another talking-head TV show. Journalist Jennifer Mendelsohn noted that Barr had a reputation of being

24 Ch. Derber, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life*, Oxford University Press 2000, p. xxii.

25 I analyze this mechanism in M. Karwat, *Figuranctwo jako paradoks uczestnictwa. Eseje przewrotne*, Warszawa 2004.

“superhumanly available” to the press, and one besieged TV producer noted that “He’ll come on at the drop of a hat.” On the other side of the aisle, Democratic Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, also a leading performer in the Lewinsky drama, is reported to have hogged the podium in Congress or any other available stage for countless hours and was described by *Newsday’s* Elaine Povich as “like the Energizer bunny. She keeps going and going and going and going.” Likewise, Democratic Senator Robert Torricelli of New Jersey “is absolutely shameless,” being so hungry for press that, according to the *Baltimore Sun’s* Karen Hosler, before an event “has even happened, Torricelli has already faxed out his comments on it.”²⁶

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that pretenders with exaggerated ambitions compensate for the lack of a program, supporters, and professional competence with a trivially simple provocative manner of drawing attention to themselves, reminding about themselves and adding significance. To be and “count in the game,” it is enough to use salon bon mots, but equally well ridiculous slips of the tongue and stupidities uttered with reverence, scandalizing statements and incidents, excesses, iconoclastic or, on the contrary, ritualistic empty words calculated to attract attention and make an impression, provoking quarrels and bidding in the repertoire of inflammatory. Unfortunately, the scheme of (self) promotional provocation enables also such personal super-effectiveness in a sterile and socially wasteful prevention and career.

Compulsive Provocation

Compulsive (extortive) provocation is an action that aims – through its own direct pressure – to force the opposing party to practically deal with an issue, to react to an event, to make an inconvenient decision in a troublesome matter, or even to take unwanted – or at least unplanned by someone – action in accordance with the expectation, requirement, demand of the initiator.

This is not an extortion by force but by situation. The addressee does not give in under the pressure of the applied force or threat in fear of losses or as a reaction to already felt discomforts or punishments, but because in the resulting situation either it is not appropriate (according to his own rules or social requirements and expectations) to behave otherwise, or it does not make sense, is no longer profitable or possible at all, because he is restrained and limited or somehow stimulated (irritated, outraged, honored, excited) by the very presence of the perpetrator, his arguments, demonstration of emotions, the resulting reactions of the surroundings, which he would prefer to avoid.

26 Derber, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

In any case, the response to a compulsive provocation can rarely be to ignore the pressure. It is a provocation that compels a response, whether in the form of acceptance, support, obedience, or in the form of resistance, disagreement, opposition, spite. The perpetrator is almost guaranteed that the addressee of the pressure will have to respond to it in one way or another. In turn, this response may be anticipated and factored into one's calculations, plans.

Such a compulsive provocation is certainly an individual or group protest action in the form of a hunger strike, road blockade, occupation of a building. The announcement of general mobilization or the ordering of military maneuvers at the border is a challenge to which it is difficult not to respond, usually an analogous move for balance (also mobilization, state of readiness).

In literary works and in popular but at the same time ambitious thriller films, we may find very vivid illustrations of not only simple, as if mechanical, but also fine mechanisms of manipulative extortion. Let us note two examples among the countless ones.

In Friedrich Dürrenmatt's subversive and revealing drama *The Visit* we have the following situation. After many years, a fabulously rich old woman visits her hometown, still remembering the injustice she suffered at the hands of a particular man, but also the indifference of her surroundings. She implies that she would be willing to generously support the city of her youth, but the impunity of the perpetrator of her injustice, who still lives here and enjoys respect, is an obstacle. The result of this suggestion is easy to predict: first the citizens of the town wrestle with their thoughts and carry out an awkward examination of conscience, and then they satisfy the expectations of the sponsor and their own greed, cleansing their own conscience with a ritual voluntary execution: lynching. Effective incitement in a spicy sauce.

Another example is a thriller *Ransom* with an excellent performance by Mel Gibson. In the movie, we encounter a conscious and brilliant performance of the protagonist: a millionaire blackmailed by kidnappers with a threat of his child's death. Soberly realizing that paying the ransom is no guarantee of saving the child, but only ensures that the criminals will go unpunished, he takes up the challenge against the advice of the police and the dramatic protests of his distraught wife in a form that knocks out the persecutors. He announces a reward ten times higher than the gigantic ransom for the identification and capture of the perpetrators of the kidnapping, addressing them from the television studio: you will never see "your" money, but you will also never and nowhere be safe, you cannot predict when they will get you. Now you are the ones to be afraid, you are the game that everyone is hunting. And indeed, this shocking

move completely reverses the original relationship between the one who dictates the terms and controls the situation and the one who is vulnerable.

The distinction between promotional and compulsive provocation is relative and fluid: successfully forcing the perception of an issue and its social importance and appreciating the pressure to do so, usually entails forcing a process of analysis and decision-making. However, this is not an automatic consequence. Reactions to a provocative promotion can be tactical evasions, prevarications, or stalling, or they can – even with the best of intentions – succumb to mechanisms of inertia. The reaction to the first, second, and subsequent promotion of an issue or idea may also be a counterproductive behavior, a demonstration of ill will, a counterprovocation, for instance, in the familiar style: “this is what we want: protest, strike, and demonstrate, and we will lock you up for disorderly conduct.” Thus, compulsive provocation may concern an issue that has long been known, verbally appreciated, or for years has been at the center of heated disputes and mutual counteractions, so it no longer requires promotion, but instead requires some kind of decision in one direction or another.

Motivational Provocations

Strong communicative stimuli (signs directed by the perpetrator to the addressee) or situational and “atmospheric” stimuli (the influence of the resulting situation and a particular social atmosphere on the impressions, moods, emotions, and decisions of the subject caught up in the situation and succumbing to that atmosphere) primarily affect the nature and strength of motivation. The so-called *positive* motivation (the need and desire to achieve certain goods, the intention to create something that serves us and other people well) is one thing, and the *negative* motivation (the desire to avoid something or the desire to oppose or even destroy something) is another. Both positive and negative motivation may occur with greater or lesser intensity and determination. The subject may care about something very much or he may be less passionate and zealous about it.

Therefore, one of the most important types of causative stimulus provocation, present not only in political actions but in all situations of social cooperation (for example in economic management, in educational processes, in attempts to consolidate and heal or break up certain communities, for instance marriages) is precisely the artificial strengthening or weakening of the motivation to undertake and continue one’s own efforts and to cooperate with others.

With regard to the direction of this influence – in plus or in minus – it is necessary to distinguish between mobilizing and demobilizing provocation.

Mobilizing Provocation

Mobilization stimulates activity, activates healthy ambition, evokes readiness to undertake but also to crown with practical results some effort, induces some subject (individual or team) to use its own (potential resources, equipment, experience, skills, relationships with other people that will result in support) and to cooperate with others. This notion refers both to a situation in which one is just about to embark on an undertaking and to a situation in which one should sustain one's efforts and endeavors, overcome difficulties and other people's resistance, overcome one's own weaknesses, finish the work one has begun, or defend the endangered work. In the first case it is expressed by the scheme "Get to work!"; in the second: "Get a grip, pull yourself together!"; and the common denominator for both situations is "Do what you're supposed to do!"

In such calls we refer both to the subject's own needs, to the internalized values, which became a duty, a matter of honor, the voice of conscience, and to subject's obligations (formal or honorable) his emotional ties with other people (friendship, love, loyalty, solidarity, ideological community). Thus, mobilization signals have the following meaning: "do it because you yourself need it; fulfill your promises; do what your honor, your ambition, your faith, your debt of gratitude, your professional duty, your work discipline demands; don't let down those who need you and count on you."

People may mobilize others with arguments, gestures, or emotionally eloquent and meaningful symbols.

This kind of influence is a common phenomenon in educational relations, the teaching process, the organization of work, the leadership of teams, the management of enterprises, religious rituals, advertising and promotion of goods, election agitation, war propaganda.

However, not every form of mobilization is a provocation. We may call mobilization a provocation only when it overcomes the inner resistance of the subject inclined to activation, activates efforts and determination contrary to initial attitudes and surprising for the subject with the transformation of indifference to an issue, a task or discouragement and doubt into the involvement of a person or a team that cares about it and makes it a test of its own value.

Thus, provocative character (manipulative, not simply persuasive or coercive) is the feature of such a mobilization that is based on exploitation of:

- * hidden ambition: "Have you resigned yourself to the idea that you mean nothing, that you are lousy; Will you let them set you up, decide for you, insult you?" In an advertisement for fancy cosmetics or outfits: "You're worth it!"

- * a sense of shame or humiliation: “Will you not answer? Do you accept to be a laughingstock, an object of scorn or pity? Can you live with a sense of humiliation?”
- * a sense of threat: “If you do nothing about it, if you do not resist, you are condemning yourself to defeat, to annihilation.”
- * a sense of competition: “Are you going to let him win? Swallowing the victory of these proteges and spinsters? Do you want everyone to believe that she really is better than you?”
- * the desire for revenge or the moral compulsion for revenge: “Show him how it feels to be cheated, abandoned, innocently accused. It’s time to get even, the clan doesn’t tolerate wimps, they won’t forgive failure.”
- * spite: “Prove to them that it’s not over. What are you afraid of? That’s what they’re counting on, that you don’t want to, that you’re scared. Would you rather pretend you don’t understand? Perfect, let them think you’re an idiot.”
- * existing temptations: “Such an opportunity will not happen again! After all, no one will know. It costs nothing to find what others have lost.”
- * unmet and suppressed needs: “You’ve waited so many years for this. Catch up! You’re hungry: then eat! Now you can show what you can do.”
- * a sense of identity and community: “You owe this to your fellow believers, to your fellow combatants, to the shadows of your ancestors. You cannot fail, be in solidarity; stay true to yourself, to your ideals.”

A *mobilizing* provocation may come in various types.

Of course, it can serve well to consolidate certain teams, to strengthen mutual identification, loyalty and solidarity among members, attitudes of readiness to work together, to make efforts and even sacrifices for the common good. Then it is an incentive to participate, to help, to make sacrifices, to intensify efforts, to rebuild something that has been neglected or destroyed, but which is still important and valuable.

However, it is also possible to artificially mobilize people, namely to incite them to behaviors related not to the affirmation of some values, but only to their negation: without seeking or indicating a positive alternative. Then it is an encouragement for instance to discriminatory behavior, to persecution, to acts of revenge, to ritual and practical forms of participation in the work of destruction.

Demobilizing provocation is targeted in the opposite way.

Demobilizing Provocation

Demobilizing provocation is intended to cripple the adversary’s (victim’s) ability to act by shaking his self-confidence, sowing confusion in his feelings and

thoughts. It is different to diversionary provocation, which is intended to tip the victim toward inconsistency, chaos in work or misunderstandings with partners.

The means to achieve the above are surprise, confusion, and disorientation, but also undermining or destroying team or individual morale, sowing doubts, and overwhelming dilemmas, undermining or overturning confidence in one's own abilities and chances, and thereby creating a sense of futility in further effort, resistance, or struggle. This coincides with diversion but unlike pure diversion, this type of provocation is based on confusing the opponent with our visible external influences, for instance by disregard, contempt, which throws us off the trail, depresses us, by a demonstration of strength or agility which makes us feel that we do not stand a chance in comparison or in battle.

In a way, *demobilizing* provocation is the opposite of other forms of stimulative provocation, (whether it is an attempt to mobilize and encourage, or an attempt to induce uncontrolled behavior through "emotional coercion"). The goal is to deprive the other party of its ability to act, but not by using circular maneuvers in its environment, not by launching pressure from its surroundings, and not by its own obstruction, but by having a destructive impact on the morale of the attacked individual or team, undermining its positive motivation for action, replacing it with a paralyzing negative motivation (a sense of uncertainty, distraction, hesitation, doubt in one's own strengths and in the rightness of one's aspirations and efforts, and even fear).

The means of demobilization is a frontal attack on the sense of identity and self-dignity of a given individual or group, on its emotional balance. The behavior of the perpetrator of the attack is aggressive in the sense that the most important thing for him is to demonstrate the dislike, malice, hostility, to show (and if possible impose on the environment) the disregard, contempt, and at the same time the feeling of impunity.

Even a primitive individual, for instance a hooligan with the mindset of a simpleton and a boor, perfectly understands how depressing aggressiveness and demonstrated self-confidence can be, how easy it is to stifle the victim's resistance to further, much more serious attacks with mere samples of insolence, ruthlessness, verbal or physical brutality. Similarly, many a "pick-up" or "conquest" on the level of "unwanted come-ons" is based on the overpowering effect of impertinence and arrogance. Drastic criminal acts, namely extortion, robbery, or rape are all the more premised on the multiplication of advantage through the victims' fear of greater suffering or fear for their lives.

The mildest form of demobilizing provocation (or rather, demobilizing-diversive provocation) is spreading rumors and gossip with a defeatist flavor, exposing, and quoting evidence of the environment's dislike or distance from the

initiatives or expectations of the subject under attack. More severe are allusive or explicit warnings or unequivocal threats; while more drastic are physical attacks on bodily integrity, for instance unlawful nudging and psychological assaults on the sense of dignity.

Despite appearances, this aggressive method is even more tempting for those who use aggression and even violence in refined and conventional forms, requiring a certain finesse, mastery of relatively restrained form for painful attacks than for attackers embodying boorishness and rudeness

In the aggressive forms of political struggle, the scale of attempts to demobilize the opponents (up to their suppression, to persuade them to give up their own aspirations) stretches from elementary discriminatory behaviors (affronts, harassment) through the escalation of malice (by making a kind of chess check the opponents with efficiency and obstinacy in mockery, derision, mocking, stigmatizing epithets and labels, or with accusatory zeal, with a cannonade of slanders, insinuations and calumnies or the most severe accusations which are true but disproportionately exaggerated) and finally with regular campaigns aiming at stigmatizing and shaming, and by this breaking someone's resistance, their will to defend themselves and their sense of dignity.

4. Compulsive Provocation to Fight

The most well-known and frequent form of stimulus provocation is to force an involuntary response to defiant behavior that does not fall within the standards accepted by the addressee ("I will not lower myself to this level; people of my type or status ignore such behavior, that's the wrong address") and contrary to the recipient's will to participate in something, especially to engage in a confrontation ("I don't want to argue, fight; I won't get dragged into a brawl; I won't even give you a pretext for your taunts and assaults").

At first glance, this is probably the most primitive form of provocation, all the more so because it is associated with the repertoire of children's quarrels, backyard fights, or hooligan taunts out of boredom and the need for entertainment, inelegant pickup lines, marital quarrels turned into a bidding war with malice, humiliation, and finally throwing plates. The scheme is indeed unsophisticated. It consists in offending, upsetting so severely that the recipient, who is restrained and controlled, would be moved and carried away, especially that he would exaggerate in his reaction of hurt and anger. To strike so painfully and dangerously that he desires to respond or that, unwillingly, he begins to defend himself, in other words, to fight back. To pinch someone (remaining unnoticed) in order to make him hit me in front of everyone. To provoke such a scolding that he

would lose his nerve and that everyone would hear how vulgar this distinguished person is.

This type of provocation is used very willingly not only because it is not sophisticated, does not require too much imagination and ingenuity, and is therefore the most “democratic,” accessible to all. The reason for its popularity is rather its *cost-effectiveness*: with relatively little effort on our part, we achieve much greater energy and moral damage to our opponent. The second reason for its popularity is the calm confidence of the provocateurs that the scheme of relations between a certain type of stimuli and a certain type of reaction will not fail, so all we have to do is to press the right button, hit a sensitive spot.

Potential Vulnerability of Taunts' Addressees

Often, the attacked subject himself is aware both of the hostile intentions themselves and of the intention to justify them by provocation. Hence, the subject does everything precisely not to be provoked. Is this a sufficient obstacle to prevent the success of a taunting, seducing, malicious and malicious blow or to discourage such methods? Not at all.

The victims of crude provocations to quarrels or fights are also – or perhaps especially – those who take as their virtue the principle: “whatever happens, control yourself, do not let yourself be provoked.” This attitude is as much an excitement and encouragement to the attacker as resistance in a courtship. And as in that realm, the provocateur knows well that “it is only a matter of time and perseverance” that the balance of the limits of patience and composure and the limits of insolence determines the outcome.

The goodwill or blame game evident in the “they will not provoke me” attitude is ruthlessly exploited. Harassment by provocations is intended to weaken the opponent’s vigilance or to snatch at a cheap cost what would be a detail in the basic fight. Here is a historical example: the intensification of Hitler’s provocations against the USSR, Stalin’s maniacal-naïve patience, and the directive in force until the very last moment – until the day of the attack – “do not respond to provocations,” exceeding the measure of one’s own safety. Accustoming the opponent/victim to constant provocation resembling training is to anesthetize it also in the sense that – with time – the victim loses the measure of things, does not perceive the difference between appearance and essence, purpose and pretext, and so on. Thus, paradoxically, one can disarm through provocation. Then “stimulation” is a dialectical form of demobilization – demobilization through constant mobilization, which with time seems to be a meaningless waste of time and begins to be shown more and more as if.

The Paradoxical Reliability of Realized Extortions

Why, then, is stimulus provocation almost always effective when it is not necessarily a surprise – even as to timing, let alone form – since the subject under attack is aware of its goals and its own losses, set to thwart the aggressor’s calculations?

The mechanism works “nonetheless.” Its effectiveness is guaranteed by four factors:

- *conditioned responses*, in which direct reactions to stimuli are independent of consciousness, will, choice, thought of the subject, but inscribed as an “automaton” in a certain scheme of conditioning;
- at least initially, the activation of such strong emotions makes the subject affected by the taunt or covert attack unable to contain, control, or suppress those emotions; these may include, for instance pain, a sense of harm, indignation, anger, and a desire for revenge;
- *the use of the first reflex of reciprocity* (a blow for a blow, an insult for an insult); *without not reckoning the incommensurability of this reaction* (the bully is the one who responded with a stronger blow, because this proves his bully nature and hooliganism);
- *the creation of a literally forced situation* (being pinned down, a situation of no return or a life-or-death choice, the need to defend, counterattack);
- *the creation of a conventionally forced situation*: in the light of the accepted standards of dignity, principledness and various conventions in a given circle, the subject cannot behave otherwise than to react, to join in.

The last element is effective both when the opponent has been attacked or otherwise harmed and when the opponent witnesses someone else being harmed, insulted, or threatened. In the first case, the opponent has an honorable duty of self-defense, either in the physical sense or in the sense of symbolically defending dignity and evasion of this may lead to being accused of cowardice or stupidity: “did he not understand that they were laughing at him?” In the second case, the opponent is driven by an irresistibly internalized sense of loyalty, solidarity, duty of care, duty of ally. The unintended ally of the provocateur is the power of social rules and norms (moral and customary norms; codes of honor; group and professional ethos; knights, soldiers, clerks, merchants) commonly accepted, recognized, respected, and enforced, because they are backed up by various sanctions and the pressure of social opinion. Moreover, the provocateur uses the power of the victim’s own, especially voluntary, commitments. These include a variety of commitments: due to conditional taking of social roles (when a condition of assuming and performing a role is a commitment to do

something), due to acting in a natural role (for instance father, mother, compatriot, tribesman), and due to one's own claims (when commitments and promises are integral to efforts to gain support, get elected to office).

This is when the provoked subject *cannot behave differently*, even if this is not what the subject wanted and wished to avoid, even if the subject knows that – in this way – he fulfills the enemy's wish, which works in favor of the enemy and against oneself.

XIII. Seductive Causative Provocations

Unlike contact provocations, which elicit the desired reactions from the environment or a specific addressee as a result of directly addressing them with a message or with an action that challenges or “teases” them, seductive causative provocations are based on the fact that the intended effects (in the form of shaping the situation, imposing a certain atmosphere, and changing the balance of power) are achieved by the perpetrator through actions that change the conditions of functioning of a given environment, becoming an obstacle to the freedom and effectiveness of opponents, while increasing the scope of freedom (if not outright arbitrariness) of the provocateurs.

These actions are threefold seductive: (1) because they lead their rivals and opponents off their original path, have the effect of changing their goals and the “trajectory,” the pace, and sequence of their moves, while depriving them of the possibility of co-control over the situation and its course; (2) because they make them dependent on practical moves and on the verbal-symbolic game of appearances played by the provocateur (let us note by analogy how dependent a football player is on the opponent who is “on the ball,” on his delaying moves, on his deceptions, on his advantage based on the fact that it is rather his move that will determine what will happen in a moment); (3) because they are connected with causing confusion, discoordination in practical actions and disorientation in the cognitive and decision-making processes of the object of influence.

1. Types of Maneuvering Provocation

Provocative tactical maneuvers are an attempt to achieve one of three objectives:

- (1) to prevent phenomena unfavorable to the given subject;
- (2) to arbitrarily control the subject and plane of political play with a view on gaining one’s own tactical advantage, even privileging one’s own position, and weakening that of opponents, restraining their freedom of action and ability to carry out their plans;
- (3) equally arbitrary regulation of its course (sequence and pace of events, resolutions) with an analogous intention.

Preventive Provocations

Preventive provocations are attempts to prevent undesirable actions of an opponent or rival or inconvenient but possible and predictable natural events or programmed by the rhythm and calendar of political life, for instance the principle

of tenure, constitutionally binding deadlines for passing a budget, forming a government, or calling elections.

Two Forms of Preventive Provocations

Preventive provocations come in at least two forms:

- (a) in the form of anticipating, beating the moves of rivals and opponents with their own decisions and achievements, which to some extent prejudge what is possible, what is necessary and what is excluded in the subsequent actions;
- (b) in the form of creating more or less effective and permanent barriers, obstacles, or at least brakes for the aspirations, intentions, plans, decisions and efforts unfavorable to a given subject; the maximum goal is to prevent inconvenient initiatives, to thwart their attempts or to cancel, invalidate their results, while the minimum goal is at least to cause with one's own resistance such high costs of pushing through and continuing these operations, such high social losses and the opponent's own losses, that they lose their sense, attractiveness, support, social consent and turn the expectations and social pressure toward other, alternative solutions, or to cause social pressure to abandon the sabotaged undertakings.

We will call the former type of prevention *anticipatory* provocations and the latter – *obstructive* provocations. People may use these modes of action not only separately or alternatively but also complementarily.

Correlation of Prevention with Other Functions of Provocation

Preventive provocation is often coupled with other types of causative provocation.

Thus, in authoritarian regimes, a fairly popular way of “nipping in the bud” or disrupting various troublesome initiatives and predictable events, for instance petitions, rallies, troublesome foreign trips of troublesome citizens, inconvenient press conferences and at the same time “making life unpleasant” for “restless” citizens, dissidents – that is discouraging, demobilizing – have been and still are preventive arrests, sometimes even legalistic ones, because they fit within the legal period of detention without charge. This is a combination of elements of anticipatory provocation, demobilization, and obstruction.

Within the democratic rules of the political game, a typical preventive countermeasure is a “race against time for place” undertaken by political opponents – a place of assembly or march, chosen specifically to prevent opponents from gathering or marching. It is more than a preventive action. It has the hallmarks

of provocation, because of the clear accent of challenge and malice. In this case, it is a combination of anticipatory, obstructive, demobilizing, and diversionary provocation.

Another example is the attempt made some time ago by youth activists of the right wing to register in advance an organization whose abbreviated name, also reserved in its acronym form, would be SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) so that the left-wing initiators of the new party precisely under the name SLD would be forced to look for a new name and a new signboard. This was to prevent the politicians of the “post-communist” left from maintaining the continuity of associations and appealing to the simple habits of the voters who had so far voted for the SLD as an electoral bloc of several parties and organizations. It was a combination of a preventive (anticipatory-obstructive) and diversionary provocation.

Thematic Provocations

Attempts to arbitrarily control the topic, scope and plane of a political game (a public debate, propaganda or election campaign, prosecutorial or parliamentary investigation into an affair, constitutional or local referendum) are called *thematic provocations* as they proceed on the assumption: it is I who dictate what we will talk about, in what categories and in what context.

These thematic provocations assume two forms:

- * artificially focusing and absorbing the attention and energy of society (and especially the interests and efforts of opponents) on problems, events, incidents, scandals, and appropriately interpreted actions of others or of one's own, suggested, hinted at, or obtrusively imposed by a given subject (these are *absorptive* provocations). It is not only the case that at the chosen moment, the provocateur tosses a rotten issue to the others or brings to the fore one of many, often marginal, issues. It is also the case that it is the provocateur himself who decides how long this spectacle and commotion will be sustained, and when it may be interrupted or replaced by another. This gives the provocateur a kind of power over the general public.
- * ingenious and effective diversion of attention from issues that are inconvenient and troublesome for the subject by exposing and exaggerating the importance of other issues, imposing other “topics of the day” and priorities (these are *substitutive* provocations, often – and rightly so – associated with attempts to obscure, “cover” some issues by others, by “substitute topics” and reversing the “attacker–attacked” relationship).

What do we need to divert others' attention from? From our own mistakes, slip-ups, compromises, prestigious defeats, from information contradicting our news, assurances and announcements, from threats, the recognition of which could discourage our clientele, allies to something. A "substitute theme" may be prompted by a discreet or intrusive suggestion, imposed by an aggressive propaganda campaign, or enforced by a practical action creating some new state of affairs on another issue, in another field, in another place. Instead of what is inconvenient, the focus is to be on what has been suggested. In the jargon of politicians and journalists this has recently been called a "cover-up," due to the fact that one affair "covers" another. This term is unfortunate because there is a long tradition of calling various front structures for camouflage a cover-up, for instance tactical and technical training of terrorists under the cover of studying the Koran.

In a way, a substitutive provocation is complementary to absorptive provocation: after all, the substitution of one "topic of the day" for another is also based on the artificial focusing of attention on something else and entangling the surroundings in the solution of a substitute or emergency issue – a permanent issue which is always at hand, as is the case recently in Poland with historical settlements, lustration. The difference is that an absorptive provocation is the creation of a problem or conflict that did not exist before, the creation of an affair or scandal that would not "explode" on its own despite widespread knowledge of the specifically stigmatized phenomena, while a substitution provocation is the "reheating old issues" or the transformation of one of many, typical, and not always the most important issue into an issue that is supposedly exceptional, crucial, and especially important right now.

Modulating Provocations

In turn, attempts to arbitrarily regulate the course of a political game could be called a modulating type of provocation. I mean here an analogy between tactics of political players and physical processes or rhetorical and musical techniques for modulation is:

The physical process of transforming a current (usually electrical) of one form into a current of another, more convenient for further use. It is adjusting the pitch, force, and timbre of the voice to the content of the spoken words. In music, it is a melodic and harmonic transition from one key to another or the use of changes in pitch, intensity, and timbre during the performance of a musical piece.²⁷

27 Wł. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem*,

The artificial and arbitrary modulation of the political game understood in this way takes at least two forms: (a) the form of *accelerative* provocation (artificial acceleration of certain decisions, events, reactions of the environment, strengthening of the intensity of the political dispute, intensification of negotiations) or (b) *cunctative* provocation. In practice, political game is most often based on alternating, uncontrollable, and difficult for others to predict effects of acceleration and deceleration of certain events, artificially prolonged delays (and thus keep one's surroundings in check), which gives the provocateur an advantage due to the fact that he arbitrarily determines the most convenient moment and place of decisions.

Tadeusz Kotarbinski aptly characterized the essence of cunctative tactics:

To delay for so long the execution of the measures intended to disadvantage the adversary, until we reach the moment from which the adversary will no longer be able to counteract us effectively. Is it not an instance of the application of the rule of expediency when a small party in parliament refrains from declaring its position on a question until the voices of the great opposing parties have been balanced, and thanks to the method of cunctation, this small party will be able to tip the balance of power?²⁸

Delay may also be an element of obstruction, a form of defensive tactics, a negative provocation. But then the delay is intended to make it too late for some hostile action or by then the balance of power will have changed. On the other hand, in offensive tactics, cunctation is either a prelude to future surprise or a way of strengthening one's own position and securing the privilege of making the other participants in the game dependent.

A model lesson of such modulation is the tactics of football teams, based precisely on the interweaving of offensive and defensive, dynamic and static elements, such as imposing a quick pace of play (in order to tire and exhaust the opponent, to provoke his mistakes, to score points before the opponent has time to recover) to hold the ball and to slow the game down (either with a phlegmatic pace or with irregularities that multiply the breaks in the game) in order to regenerate one's own strength, to lull the opponent's vigilance, to surprise him with a sudden re-acceleration.

The use of modulating provocation tactics in political games and struggle is particularly evident in three places: (1) in the media, which politicians instrumentally use through their press conferences, leaks, and timely interviews to suggest the importance of issues and qualify the political situation, for instance

Warszawa 1994, p. 336.

28 T. Kotarbiński, *Prakseologia*, Część I, Wrocław 1999, p. 404.

as a crisis or breakthrough situation; (2) in parliament, where the order of tabling and passing, and the very possibility of introducing to the agenda certain legislative initiatives, bills, the deadline for their consideration and passing, is the subject of serious pressure and transactions; (3) in the prosecutor's office, which acts under political pressure or even on command, when proceedings in some cases are carried out at an impressive pace, and in others they are slowed down "as if by order," while the change of political situation may fundamentally change the object of zeal and efficiency.

Anticipatory Provocations

Forestalling someone's own move in this sense may be a successful provocation in that the pre-emptive action we take thwarts the adversary's planned move because there is no longer room or time for it, because the situation caused by the pre-emptive act renders earlier calculations and plans obsolete, or it cancels out certain courses of action altogether. For example, if one were to introduce a state of emergency, discussions about a list of negotiating demands suddenly become like last year's snow; if I establish diplomatic relations with a rival government, then overnight I deprive the representatives of the government seeking recognition or of the government that has so far been with me in formal relations of diplomatic status.

Anticipatory provocation is an action intended to anticipate the enemy's act and thus thwart his plans or, in general, to prevent certain specific actions of the enemy, to derail his intentions. This is precisely the effect, for example, of the kidnapping or assassination of the most popular candidate from the enemy camp in an election, who would certainly have won the election if we had allowed him to run in it.

An example of such an anticipatory provocation (in this case: an unsuccessful one) was the the decision of Margrave Wielopolski to accelerate the conscription of young men to the tsarist army, which was supposed to thwart the insurrectionary plans. However, as we know, the "conscription" only accelerated the outbreak of the uprising, which was insufficiently prepared.

In international relations, the most complex type of preventive action, which has all the hallmarks of provocation (as an attempt to arbitrarily coerce or block something in advance) obviously are preventive wars, along with actions that do not officially bear such a name but are called an intervention (euphemistically and in proportion to the advantage of the party having the initiative).

Obstructive Provocation

Obstruction means to hinder or block something with a view to a total or partial thwarting of some intention or action already underway, or at least to cause a delay that would be beneficial to the obstructor or – sometimes – to force various concessions on the other party that cares about the proposed action, bargaining for something in exchange for the abandonment of obstacles. In the conditions of divergence or contradiction of interests, opposite aspirations, communication barriers resulting in potential or already accumulated conflict, this type of political action is particularly popular.

Types of Obstruction

People use obstruction both as an end in itself and as a means to an end.

Autotelic obstruction is often motivated on negative envy and vicarious satisfaction (I am unable to realize or impose my own aspirations, but I can prevent the realization of others – be it in revenge or because I am driven by resentment and spite, however irrational).

On the other hand, instrumental obstruction serves defense (“I block what is inconvenient or dangerous to me, in defense of possessions and sometimes principles and my own identity) prevarication, or offensive purposes (paralyzing my opponent’s intentions and efforts paves the way for my efforts).

Obstructive provocation has much in common with preemptive provocation. However, there are several differences. First, preemptive influence seeks to prevent something that we can actually make impossible or obsolete *before it begins* whereas obstruction is a brake reaction to something that we could not prevent but can stop in progress. Second, preemptive provocation may serve not only and not so much to derail something in advance as to secure a better start, a better chance, or a privileged position.

The Forms of Obstruction

These are the most typical manifestations of obstructive provocation:

- * an open and defiant *blockade*; in a literal form – material, physical (road-blocks, picketing in front of a building, a sit-down strike, blocking a parliamentary rostrum) – in a procedural form (cancelling the proceedings of some body by causing a lack of *quorum*; a popular method of parliamentary obstruction: presenting countless amendments to projects and formal motions interrupting, delaying or invalidating voting), and finally, in a conventional,

symbolic, ritualistic form (for instance, a demonstrative boycott of elections, a conspiracy of silence on the part of the witnesses of an event).

- * *cunctative* tactic of opportunism, deception, stalling, conducted in such a way that the time of suspension is time gained for the obstructionist and time lost for the blocked party. This trick is often used in legislative and administrative actions (manipulation of deadlines on the verge of “stretching,” so that someone does not have time to do something, so that it is too late, so that the rights expire). The same is sometimes done by litigants and parliamentarians. *Parliamentary obstruction* is the use of all possible legal formal pretexts to drag things out, delay votes and the passing of laws, namely by deliberately exceeding speaking time, tabling and justifying endless amendments, procedural motions, and other similar actions.
- * the use of “*fait accompli* politics,” that is unilateral and arbitrary actions that deprive the rival or opponent of a choice, putting him “against the wall,” facing facts that are unacceptable and at the same time difficult or impossible to remove, in a sense irreversible (we may associate it for example with the wartime tactic of maliciously violating the truce and entrenching in newly occupied positions).

However, we should not equate the “*fait accompli* politics” with a cycle of obstructive provocations. *Fait accompli* have a threefold status and application: (1) they can be a *method of obstruction* (for instance, sabotaging agreements on truce, armistice, or peace, sabotaging negotiations by actions that will undermine the credibility of one of the parties, derail – in a psychological and moral sense – the sense of the talks or literally make it impossible to continue them); (2) a *method of extortion* (bargaining for a better position in the case of negotiations on territorial issues, on prisoner of war exchanges; attempting to legalize illegal undertakings, cf. construction manipulations); and (3) a *method of prevention*, that is keeping always abreast of the opponent (see Chapters Twenty to Twenty-Two).

2. Diversionary Provocation

The essence of diversion is to *disrupt or paralyze an opponent’s ability to act or even exist* by creating confusion, causing disruption and states of disintegration, and stimulating group decomposition, which can be brought about using several channels of influence:

- * by influence from without (*external diversion*, for instance in the form of unmasking propaganda, but also in the form of attempts to divide the hostile

camp, “putting a cat among the pigeons,” and *destabilizing actions*, which are the social, that is economic, legal and psychological equivalent of technical acts of sabotage);

- * by influence from within (*internal diversion*, consisting in instrumental use of the natural internal divisions in the enemy camp, finding in it and supporting natural, perhaps even sovereign ideological or tactical allies, but equally unaware tools of someone else’s policy, and in particular *infiltration*, that is infiltration into a foreign and hostile center, intelligence influence serving both to gain information to weaken the enemy and to actively harm); or
- * by causing dysfunctional changes in the opponent’s consciousness (in his emotions, knowledge, orientation in observed situations); in this case, the key to advantage over the opponent is *disorientation* (diverting attention from something important, falsely suggesting something, causing illusions and uncertainty, dilemmas, doubts, confusion in thinking) and *disinformation* (misleading, giving false news, or the biased distortion of the content of true news).

Infiltrational Provocation (Intelligence Provocation)

Infiltrational provocation used in political actions is related to investigative methods, but it also differs from ordinary surveillance. Infiltration into the ranks and structures of the adversary is aimed not only and not so much at observing and recording the intentions, plans, decisions and materialized behavior, actions, of the adversary, but at inducing actions convenient to the inspirer. These actions may come in two types: (a) foreseen and inevitable actions controlled by the provocateur in terms of moment, place, course, direction, (b) actions stimulated by an insider introducing inconsistencies, mistakes, decisions, and compromising acts. The complement to what the provocateur (who has infiltrated an environment) deceitfully persuades to do, are his own destructive actions undertaken on the spot, from the inside: fomenting or artificially stirring up internal conflicts and the resulting partisan games detrimental to the unity and efficiency of a given system (in the form of mutual intrigues, squabbles, permanent prejudice, and divisions) and undertaking disinformation and disorientation actions, and even activities typically involving sabotage.

Actions of the first type (anticipated, controlled, and used at the appropriate time) are the method used by criminal police in their fight against the criminal world, both to gather evidence of guilt and punish the guilty in the majesty of the law, and to vicariously harass unpunished criminals. Examples include the so-called “controlled buy” of narcotics; smuggling, which is tolerated because

it is controlled until it happens; creating a situation in which the offender can be apprehended in the act; using “snitches” and following up “minnows” who have already been unmasked or possibly blackmailed to reach the “big fish” (the breadcrumbing method). The political police use similar methods in working out illegal organizations, especially subversive ones, conspiratorial networks, and other “villains.” However, this repertoire is not the privilege of the police. There are also agentic forms of control of the activities of one party by another.

An example of the use of actively diversionary (rather than purely reconnaissance and tracing) methods of infiltration in political struggle is police terrorist provocation (allowing for a terrorist attack or an act of stealth murder, inspiring such an attack or even organizing and carrying it out by a police agent), which serves to compromise a radical organization, provide a pretext for repression and even delegalization. Another action with a similar purpose and character is the insertion of “hooligan elements” among the participants of a law-abiding and peaceful demonstration, whose task is to transform the demonstration into riots, acts of vandalism and looting, which in itself already gives testimony to such a “riot” and justifies the appropriate labels for the participants (“social margin,” “troublemakers”) and at the same time justifies and makes necessary the only reasonable action: to disperse. In this case, the diversionary provocation, combined with elements of deception, smoothly turns into a pretextual one: the fabrication of an allegedly objective reason (presented as a necessity, not an act of choice) for pacifying and repressive action.

3. Pretextual Provocation (Insurance and Justification Tool)

Provocations often serve to provide a reasonably plausible or at least perfunctory and formal justification for premeditated actions, the intent of which has long been established and the true motives and proper intentions must be concealed. Thus, justification involves the creation or use of a *pretext*.

Pretexts’ Essence and Functions

Let us remind that a pretext is an apparent reason for someone’s behavior, masking the real motives, intentions, and aims; a false justification or excuse for behavior, which is doubly false because, first, it is insincere (“I don’t believe it myself and I wouldn’t believe it if I were you, but I want you to believe it”) and, second, based on fabrication, falsifying the image of the real characteristics and conditions of the situation and the behavior of the subject.

People may use pretext both in defensive or adaptive behavior and in offensive, expansive, and even possessive action.

In the former case, the pretext is an instrument of prevarication, that is a veiled and ascetic refusal or evasion, meaning an attempt to evade answers to troublesome questions, to call for the fulfillment of inconvenient obligations. The *evasion* consists in not refusing outright and thus not burning the bridges behind one's back, not exposing oneself to responsibility for insubordination, insincerity, an act of allied adultery, and others. The subject uses an ingenious excuse and subterfuge. *Excuse* is a fraudulent argumentation that has the appearance of truth or plausibility and credibility, sounds logical and rational, and is designed to portray deliberate behavior – avoidance or veiled denial – as a necessity. *Subterfuge* is a practical action that aims to create a situation in which the fulfillment of expectations, requirements, commands, or one's own prior commitments turns out to be impossible or at least difficult. According to the scheme: if only I could, I would do it, but you can see for yourself that I cannot.

However, a pretext or evasion used in defensiveness rarely has the characteristics of provocation, while pretexts used for assaults, acts of pillage “in the name of the law,” acts of retaliation, persecution, torts, attempts to get rid of rivals in one's own camp are usually the setting for provocation or the culmination of provocation.

In the latter case, the pretext is not only a cover (a smokescreen) for a pre-determined and planned practical provocation, but it is also a provocation in itself. This is because it usually creates a strong impression, a challenge to the environment. The impression is usually a result not of the validity and reliability of the argumentation, not of the originality or ingenuity of officially and formally declared reasons for action or stated necessities, but rather of the contrast between what the recipient hears or reads and what his own mind tells him.

People often utter or publish pretexts for violent actions pro forma. Frequently, they are not very logical or clearly contradictory to commonly known facts “stretched” in argumentation. The pretexts fulfill their role not necessarily because someone (especially a victim of assault, betrayal, or misappropriation, or those around them who are aware of the situation) believes them, but for other reasons. First, for some recipients, false justifications may be convenient (as an opportunity to play their own game for their own benefit) or it may be convenient not to question them. Hence, the recipients are not only ready to keep up appearances, to pretend that they take it seriously, but they even want to believe it. Their hypocrisy means that the subject acting in bad faith on the basis of prevarication and ruthlessness is not alone and has a kind of “cover;” for instance, it is impossible to immediately stop it or punish it with the sanctions provided for in the given situation. Second, the very fact of having “one's reasons” for the action taken is conducive to treating that action as normal, standard (even if it

otherwise seems controversial or wrong, unjust or unreliable). People perceive the one who has “his reasons” better and treat him better than the one who acts – in the opinion of those around him – completely unjustifiably, according to his own whim. Third, even weak and criticized justifications or unmasked deceptions make it possible to bargain for at least partial recognition of the legitimacy of the deeds performed: since the matter is so contentious, the positions so contradictory, then apparently “the truth lies somewhere in the middle,” apparently each of the parties, and thus also the one who is lying or deceiving, has some rationale that needs to be acknowledged, taken into account. Thus, to a certain extent, people legitimize even unlawful acts or show understanding for amoral conduct. The response to an obvious crime may be not prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator but mediation services or arbitration, in which the opposing interests, rights, and rationales of the victim and the persecutor, the victimizer and the perpetrator of the abuse or plunder receive equal consideration.

An aggressive pretextual provocation usually is very close to deception or is even coupled with deception, that is the creation of appearances and illusions through the use of various facades, smokescreens, and practical actions that suggest and pretend a certain state of affairs that would justify the attacker. In general, it is not enough to justify verbally, in a twisted, hypocritical manner, a course of action that is exposed to the disapproval and condemnation of the surroundings, especially an attack motivated by possessive purposes or a desire to destroy someone. It is necessary to substantiate these false declarations and subversive interpretations of events, of other people’s and one’s own deeds. This is made possible especially by propaganda modelled on illusionist art. However, pretextual provocation as causative provocation differs from pure deception in that it does not so much rely on the use of pseudo-information and disinformation, virtual appearances and dummy phenomena conducive to the creation of other people’s illusions, as on making such illusions plausible by causing events and creating states of affairs that are real designations of false notions and statements. For example, if photomontage, falsification of a document, passing on false news deprived of material substance remains a typical deception, then the actual carrying out of an attack, causing a shooting, real burglary and stealing weapons from a military storehouse is a causative action, which may possibly give it an ostensible and false setting, a tendentious interpretation, for instance ascribing the perpetration to someone else, insinuating known inspirations, pointing the finger at alleged protectors.

When it comes to the ways of fabricating or improvising pretexts for actions forbidden or exposed to the disapproval of the surroundings, we find here both a repertoire of verbal or gestural stimulation, false suggestion based on direct

hints, advice, comments, overinterpretations and under-interpretations, exhibiting dummies and props used to deceive, and the repertoire of stimulation and indirect suggestion made possible by various maneuvers and by taking advantage of the fact that the addressees of provocation are prone to inertia and thus are inclined to interpret each successive political spectacle and its decorations in established conventional categories, according to a certain tradition and their own habit, which is enough to falsely suggest them without actively and criminally lying.

Rationalization and Insurance

Creating a pretext for an attack, for an attack on someone's interests and elementary rights, especially for acts of an expropriating or criminal nature by means of practical actions and propaganda justifies the two-term name for this type of provocation "insurance-rationalization provocation."

Rationalization consists here in elevating acts or entire operations undertaken for low motives, such as the desire for conquest, exploitation, and extermination, or vindictive impulses, the desire for retaliation and to outdo someone else in the effectiveness of one's revenge. The range of ideas for demonstrating the rightness and necessity of one's own actions extends from interpreting conflict situations in such a way and suggesting such a line of reasoning that almost the entire environment recognizes the provocateur's argumentation as logical and convincing, and his actions as rational and justified by something deserving recognition to ostentatious perversity, for instance such that the aggressor is presented as a victim forced to defend himself, while the victim is presented as a brutal aggressor. Such tricks were a specialty of Nazi propaganda in the period leading up to the Munich Agreement, the breakup and annexation of Czechoslovakia, and the war against Poland.

Insurance is the second function of the pretext: even an aggressor who is ruthless and sure of his strength takes reasonable care not to increase the power of resistance or to risk increasing support for his victim, and even more so to have excuses to avoid responsibility and punishment in case of failure for breaking certain rules, for abuses, for crimes. Therefore, when someone fabricates a pretext for a war of aggression, he does so with a view to present an evident attack as a preventive measure ("we have anticipated an inevitable hostile attack") or even as a worthy "response with interest" ("we see no reason to respond, because the interest is considerable), or preferably as a desperate defense of the attacked carried out under the slogan "I don't want to, but I must."

Reactions of the adversary/victim or the entire milieu or public opinion to taunts, to surprising (and well-prepared or well-publicized) incidents, to accusation campaigns, to scandals provoked in the right place and time are provoked with enough precision to guarantee the indignation and condemnation of our adversary and acquiescence or authorization for us. Ideally, a provoked incident, conflict, or imaginative staging is perceived as evidence of a threat to the vital interests, elemental safety, and dignity of the provocateur, a threat that offers no other choice and requires firm behavior.

The justification scheme is familiar: "I did not want it, it did not even occur to me or it was alien to my principles and aspirations, but – see for yourself – I was forced to do it, in this situation I had no other choice."

This is exactly what the Nazi regime did on the eve of its attack on Poland: a carefully planned and prepared aggression for the benefit of its own and international public opinion was presented as a necessary defense, inevitable after the limits of patience and security had been exhausted. The fact that dignity and security no longer allowed one to act otherwise was to be evidenced on the one hand by the abundance of all evidence and manifestations of goodwill, proposals for compromise and on the other by an equally abundant record of "persecution of the German minority" and hostile acts.

Using a pretext to justify (excuse, legitimize) actions decided on in advance is not always based on creating such a pretext by one's own action (taunting, causing unrest, spreading slander). Sometimes, it is simply taking advantage of an opportunity, which is someone else's mistake, awkwardness, an opportunity created by someone else's dispute or a natural disaster, an accidental tragic event.

The thing provoked or unscrupulously used as pretext is at the same time a factor of insurance in a twofold sense: it protects from the risk of failure, ineffectiveness and makes it possible to avoid responsibility, the punishment deserved (for ill will). The fact that I have a justification for my actions to someone else's detriment (even if this justification is clearly exaggerated) reduces the risk of others (especially outsiders, who are guided primarily by their own convenience, and thus to whom my pretext may be convenient) treating me as the proper initiator of conflict, attack. I am relieved of responsibility by what is presented as a compelling necessity (for instance, necessary defense); of the duty of loyalty or secrecy like force majeure, for instance a state of public or international emergency; of the duty to keep (admittedly, inconvenient for me) contracts by the fact that my partner abuses or breaks the contract.

The characteristic feature of all provocations, which is diverting attention from one's own actions and focusing it on the real or imagined actions of the opponent, also serves the purpose of secrecy. According to the principle of "the

best place to hide something is in plain sight,” we may hide well behind the harm and complaint of someone harmed by us and not be conspicuous in the confusion caused by us.

*

Moreover, provocations that are mainly and typically causative may be multifunctional, for instance they combine preventive and exploratory, stimulatory and rationalizing, demobilizing and obstructive, diversionary and obstructive functions. Moreover, the provocative syndrome may consist in the fact that a given act is at the same time one of the varieties of causative provocation and, for example, discrediting or deceitful provocation. Deceit may be the factor which makes it possible to prevent something, to stop some action, to diversify or to recognize the real intentions and real potential of an opponent. Moreover, discreditation as such allows, prevention, obstruction, diversion, and provokes the environment of the discredited subject to reveal the degree of real support and trust for him.

Distinguishing “pure types” of provocation on a functional level does not mean that every provocation must be either one or the other, that it can fulfill only one function in only one way. On the contrary, by its very nature, provocation is a multifunctional and multi-type activity (several simultaneous tasks carried out using several different, though correlated, means). Instead, this typology provides us with criteria for qualifying each specific provocation act, in which, after all, the key question is what the perpetrator intended to achieve and to what he owes his eventual success.

4. Suggestive Understatements

A characteristic variety of seductive syndromatic (multifunctional) provocations are those with a discrediting dominance, that is in which the seductive discrediting is an anchor for further effects, for instance demobilization of opponents, effective obstruction (thwarting or inhibiting their actions that are planned or that already began) forcing a change of intentions, justifying one’s own previously decided and prepared moves by the pretext obtained during the discrediting action.

Among these “not only discrediting” provocations, a particular a mode of action which consists in selectively targeted, and strongly suggestive to the audience, disclosure of information (more or less complete, true, reliable) obtained by deception has gained popularity. At the same time, the suggestiveness of such “gifts” for the media and the public opinion results both from the spicy, sensational or at any rate arousing controversy and collective emotions content of

these disclosed and publicized news, and from the suggestion of the recipients that the one who makes available what someone else wanted to hide deserves trust for this reason alone.

The starting capital or the gain of the provocateurs is in this case the public trust (“we trust you because it is a journalistic provocation, that is a manifestation of servility, of the public mission of the media;” “we trust you because such an unmasking action is a merit for society”); and the perpetrators try to deprive their victims of the same capital. However, trust is often also a “working tool” here, usually abused, because someone comes into possession of some information and disposes of it arbitrarily precisely thanks to the abuse of trust in the source or disposer of this information. Sometimes, a person may also become someone else’s tool because of trust in the one from whom he obtains information or “clues.”

Deliberate selective indiscretion is the malicious use of social demand for information and potential trust in the one who provides it against the will of others (who does not want to provide the information, apparently wants to hide something) to the one who reveals spicy, sensational things. A special feature of such indiscretion is the use of what is in some sense proprietary information. Proprietary in two ways: (1) either two-three parties to some one-time conversation or negotiation are bound by a (often even unspoken but obvious) confidentiality agreement because of the interests of both parties, their security (a natural consequence of intimacy and familiarity is both honesty and the corresponding discretion); (2) or it involves legally reserved and protected information (various state secrets, official secrets, trade secrets of companies, legal protection of personal data to safeguard privacy and intimacy).

This deliberate indiscretion is selective in the sense that we reveal (publicize, make public) what is convenient for us at a convenient moment (when it supports our game) and we give the selective and biased information the taste (appearance) of the “whole truth,” thanks to which we control social reactions and influence political decisions concerning personnel and personnel matters, the conclusion or termination of agreements, the implementation of certain projects.

Let us discuss the two simplest ways of provocatively steering political events through selective indiscretions: (a) sneaky (triple sneaky) recordings, (b) controlled leaks.

The technical difference between the two is that a leak is the acquisition of information about someone (later used against them) from sources other than contacting them themselves, while sneaky recording is used to extract messages or comments, ratings, terms from someone to use these against them later.

Sneaky recordings are in this sense a triple manipulation in that (1) people obtain them thanks to the abuse of the interlocutor's trust, (2) the content of conversations recorded for publication is provoked, controlled according to a hidden intention, so that it becomes evidence of something preconceived, (3) the recipients of such a "retransmission" are suggested by an intrusive propaganda thesis, not realizing or not accepting the complex context of the discussed issues and statements, taking for granted the meaning of what was taken out of the context that is wider and not always known to the audience.

Both the initiators of the recording and the journalists or politicians using the leak manipulatively treat the scheme *part as a whole*. This is because they present fragments of documents or a conversation which is only one link of some game, negotiations as if direct acquaintance with them (and only with them) would be enough to establish an authoritative opinion on the matter at hand, also with regard to accusations of crime.

To this list of provocations based on deliberate indiscretion, we could also add wiretapping. However, this is a special kind of activity. It is formally authorized only by the intelligence services and the police and is presumed to be sanctioned by the prosecutor or the courts, although it does happen (especially in the case of journalists performing political services) to eavesdrop, peep, and cause scandals by publishing compromising materials obtained illegally by means of detective methods. Provocation based on wiretapping has a twofold nature. If the eavesdropped people are not aware of this fact, they fall prey to provocation in the sense that their sense of security and corresponding frankness, effusiveness, talkativeness, and gossipiness becomes an ambush for them; quite similar to an attack carried out in such a way that someone lurks on a passer-by walking along a beaten track. On the other hand, if the person under surveillance is aware that he is being observed, his correspondence ceases to be his private secret, and conversations are eavesdropped on and recorded, then he is being provoked in the sense that the created situation of constraint and imprisonment provokes him to behave in ways that, contrary to his intentions, will also provide arguments against him (for instance warning friends is another clue, or even grounds for further interrogations or searches, as is an attempt to hide or destroy documents). Because of this specificity, we will leave out wiretapping as a police or para-police type of provocation.

The effectiveness of "public disclosures" and leaks is somewhat guaranteed. The bait is and must always be effective with a wide audience: the media (who cannot ignore sensational material), the public opinion (that gets intrigued and excited even before it thinks), the politicians (who are forced to comment, respond, protest, correct or gain an opportunity to prey on the competition's

troubles), and not infrequently, the public prosecutor's office (which must check whether gaining and disclosing such information is not a crime, and also whether such information – just as with official or anonymous denunciations – does not prove that someone has committed a crime). So, one way or another, the “disclosers” are doomed to success. The guarantee that an issue will be noticed, arouse passions, force interest and consideration is at the same time a guarantee that some proper goals will be achieved, such as discrediting someone and consequently eliminating or marginalizing them; obstruction, prevention, diversion (thwarting certain intentions, creating confusion); forcing completely different decisions than originally planned.

The inverse, but also complementary of selective indiscretions are disorienting provocations.

They fulfill a task similar to that of selective indiscretions: they are to absorb the opponent's attention with the information suggested, to suggest something strongly to him, thus diverting attention from other information and actions, and at the same time to confuse, deceive, or even trap in some respect. Their minimal aim is to weaken the opponent by making him waste time and energy, which he could use better, to draw this person into a game, which at first, he is unable to grasp, to provoke him to make mistakes. The maximum goal is to disarm the opponent and to do it in such an original way that the victim zealously assists in acting to his own detriment.

In contrast, the difference between selective indiscretions and attempts at confusion lies in the means used and in the different configuration of pure types of provocative action.

Selective indiscretions (deceitful recordings, leaks, random and carefully chosen disclosure of information from wiretaps, observations) are based on a two-stage effect. First, someone creates a sensation, fascination with the revealed information or a sense of satisfaction: “That's what we have found out. We now know what's coming, what some people have done, what others are up to. Now we understand what is going on.” Then comes a sense of insufficiency since the information is incomplete and partially unverifiable. This feeling of insufficiency may cause twofold effects. On the one hand, this may be the demand for further information on a given issue, the receptiveness of its recipients, their susceptibility to “completing the picture” by more and more biased coverage in commentaries and subsequent revelations. On the other hand, it might be the feeling of being overwhelmed with details and speculations or even subversive reactions: “someone wants to “set us up!”

However, on balance, this more and more apparent distortion of information zeal pays off, because regardless of further public reactions, the opponent

himself suffers damage to his image, prestige, credibility, succeeds in thwarting some of his intentions and decisions, crosses out some of his achievements, merits, causes a regrouping of political forces, often also a change in the balance of power. It may happen that as a result of a campaign that turns to one's favor the effects of selective disclosure of documents or just rumors and gossip, the opponent is "shot off," that is permanently stigmatized and excluded from the circle of personalities or groups that have social trust and influence.

Disorienting provocations have a different addressee. While selective indiscretions are an assault on the image and social influence of the adversary through induced public confusion, provoked public reaction, and embroil the adversary in having to deal with a dropped cuckoo egg and explain himself, confusion is an action aimed directly at the adversary.

The second difference is that in selective indiscretions, the known and supposedly certain element is a part of the knowledge about something and the implicit element (subject to conjecture, hypothesis, speculation) is the whole, while in disorienting provocations it is almost the other way around: the opponent who is the addressee of the "guiding signs" is convinced that he is dealing with the whole, and the only puzzling or even unimportant thing are the details. The basis of disorientation is, so to speak, reversed.

The recipient of revelations from sneaky recordings, intercepted or planted documents, declarations revealing the shroud of secrecy reasons in this way: "I already know a lot, but I need to know even more, I am waiting for the continuation of the series." The recipient is confused on the basis that the more he knows (or rather: thinks he knows) the more confusion, absurdity, naiveté, and delusion there is in his perceptions. The further into the forest, the more trees, the easier it is to get lost – or the better it is to stick to the known path. The recipient's inquisitiveness is specific in that it is already programmed: the recipient waits for information that would confirm the ideas and expectations suggested to him. In other words, the recipient knows in advance what the essence of the matter is, but he only wants to know the details, assuming that they will confirm rather than verify them. That is why it is so easy in media-political campaigns to unleash scandals according to the trivial scheme "to make mountains out of molehills."

On the other hand, the addressee of seductive disorienting provocations (diversionary- deceitful provocations) immediately believes the appearances and illusions served to him. the recipient makes his decisions based on the conviction that he is dealing with a state of affairs that has already been formed and established, and which is moreover obvious. Only after the fact is established, after it is effective, does the recipient become convinced that he has been deceived or "let up the garden path." Relatively –in the case of a bluff – the recipient experiences

“total uncertainty,” meaning he is in a quandary as to whether to completely reject or completely believe what is partly true and partly a fabrication, a pretense, or something problematic. The recipient is in this situation like someone to whom they want to sell fruit that is “not entirely fresh” and who cannot be sure whether it is then edible or spoiled.

But what exactly is intentional, seductive *disorientation*?

It is an attempt to selectively use information to make the adversary either succumb to false suggestions, misleading impressions, illusions, and the game of appearances played against him. Hence, the adversary is misled or experiences a sense of ambiguity, inconsistency, or unverifiability of what he knows, which at the same time makes him depressed by the awareness that he does not know or cannot determine the extent of his ignorance: “I do not know what I do not know.” The result of such a maliciously imposed distraction is confusion in adversary’s thoughts, hesitation, inconsistencies, or a permanent state of uncertainty: “I’m not sure what I actually know and what I don’t know; I’m not sure if I know what I know or if I just think I know; I’m not sure what I can afford; I’m not sure what my opponent can afford, what he is going to do.”

Therefore, the psychological effect is either paralyzing the opponent’s ability to make any decisions or the ability to control him in this “controlled chaos” in such a way that he makes decisions convenient for the provocateur and harmful to himself.

People achieve this effect of disorientation (with all its consequences) using a variety of tactics, techniques, and means. In the deliberate disorientation of opponents, there are elements of stimulation (mobilization or demobilization) absorption (focusing and “binding” attention, energy) diversion, and deception. In this sense, disorienting actions are syndromatic provocations.

A classic disorientation is based either on diversionary actions (with the admixture of other functions) in which case it is based on disinformation and the creation of confusion in the opponent’s thinking and decisions, or on deception, that is, on suggesting to the opponent a carefully posed “virtual reality.” Since these methods of influence are probably the best recognized and the most often analyzed in various monographs, historical contributions, the so-called non-fiction, and in theoretical studies, for dessert we will serve here only the analysis of *bluff*’s workings and its effects in games as a strange, spicy mixture of simulation (pretending), masking (concealing), and checking the opponent with ambiguity, mystery, and unpredictability.

XIV. Ensnared by Bluff

A particular form of seductive provocation is *bluff*.

Revelations originating from selective indiscretions – revealed wiretaps and sneaky recordings and controlled leaks – gain good reception primarily because they create an illusion for the “consumers” as if someone had let them in on the keyhole; and a second illusion: that what they preview in bits and pieces is authoritative for the whole. The naiver recipients of propaganda even feel as if they are really following the course of events live and are themselves also witnesses, co-participants or even experts in the matter. However, these forms of provocation are mainly suitable for organizing and justifying attacks on the enemy with the participation of the public. A different kind of controlled disorientation is needed when the actor himself is threatened with defeat or when he wants to gain more momentum in an action than his actual potential allows. Nothing prevents us from achieving more than our real power allows, if we know how to *bluff*.

1. Tradition of the Word and Its Misunderstanding

The origins of the word “bluff” are unknown. All that we know is that it appeared as a jargon term in the seventeenth century. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it was probably first recorded in 1674. The original literal meaning of “bluff” referred to a characteristic tactic found in the game of poker: “(originally in the sense ‘blindfold, hoodwink’): from Dutch bluffen ‘brag’, or bluf ‘bragging’.” The current sense (originally US, mid 19th century) originally referred to bluffing in the game of poker.”

What are these poker tricks, which are not cheating but an acceptable way of playing? First of all, the ability to give the impression that you have a better card than your opponents and a better one than you really do, which is supposed to discourage them from raising and encourage them to prematurely acknowledge the victory of the clever player. To bluff, then, is to make your opponents believe in the strength of your cards by high bidding or other means, so as to induce them to abandon the game.²⁹

To induce someone with a semblance of power to give up a game they would have won, especially at the starting point – it is a deft trick indeed.

Second, bluffing in general is about keeping a “straight face.” An impenetrable face, impassiveness, the ability not to betray one’s emotions, not to show one’s

29 P. Gammond, *Blefowanie*, Warszawa 1991, p. 7.

weaknesses, unpleasant surprises (“I need not have exchanged three cards for even worse ones!”) all this makes the player’s intentions and possibilities remain unguessed and unpredictable for others for quite a long time. It is this psychological effect that allows you to make up or minimize your losses, to win back, and above all to win even with the weakest card, as it is not the best card in itself, but the best bidding or game tactics that determines victory.

People quickly adopted the term in all gambling games, rightly perceiving that in general, the essence of gambling is not only taking risks, but also the typically provocative ability to obtain some kind of advantage, winnings that are not covered by one’s own potential at the moment of making the decision. This ability is coupled with the ability to disable stronger rivals by making them hesitate, delay a move that requires reflex and determination or withdraw from the game. A bluffer is a provocateur in the sense that he achieves gains commensurate with the impressions, appearances, illusions, or dilemmas that he can induce in others, not with his actual strength. Cunning the bluffer’s strength, it is the equivalent of the potential equipment, armaments, or powers that the bluffer does not possess.

An inherent part of these gambling tactics is exaggerated favorable self-presentation. However, such behavior is typical of all games and gambles, including those on serious matters with serious consequences. Hence the generalized meaning of the word “to bluff,” which means to boast in an extreme, sometimes gruff manner. This meaning was later changed to “pull the wool over someone’s eyes by creating the right impression.”³⁰

As noted by various dictionaries – usually without critical commentary – in everyday language, the term has become so accepted that people use it in an expanded or even overly expanded sense. For understandable reasons, a thesaurus, indicates the intensity of association, the relationships between terms rather than word’s specificity: “1. To mislead; 2. To make something up.”³¹

Both misrepresentation and fabrication are attributes of lying or cheating. But what is the difference between bluff and deception? In another dictionary, apart from the same core – to mislead – we also find an accent on the peculiarity of bluff: “Conduct calculated to mislead, intimidate, or surprise someone.”³²

This second part already brings us closer to the essence, but after all, not every case of intimidating or surprising someone is a bluff. We may describe the

30 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, Warszawa 1991, p. 7.

31 W. Cienkowski, *Praktyczny słownik wyrazów bliskoznacznych*, Warszawa 1993, p. 15.

32 L. Wiśniakowska, *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, Warszawa 2007, p. 47.

intent behind the adequate use of the term with the definition from yet another dictionary: “If someone is *bluffing*, they are pretending to do something that they are not actually going to do. “Or are they bluffing? Maybe they just want to scare us?”³³

The second example from the same dictionary accurately suggests the criterion distinguishing a bluff: “A bluff is an attempt to mislead someone by the person who is bluffing. It was believed in Berlin that this was a bluff on the part of the English and that in a final situation they would withdraw their assurances.”³⁴ Indeed, pretending unbreakable intentions, the grandiose announcements of something we do not intend to fulfill are rightly associated with bluffing.

A broader definition of bluff, which goes – figuratively speaking – beyond the realm of gambling and is applied to any situation where people play a game due to a difference of interests, goals, and strengths, has a point, but under one condition. We must remember that any act of misleading, intimidating, discouraging, or persuading someone to do something, or defeating him by confusion or surprise – is not a bluff, although all such acts belong to the realm of manipulation and provocation. However, the distinctive feature of a bluff is not the aforementioned psychological effects themselves and their influence on decisions made by people deceived by some pretense, but the factor that makes such a deception, such a disorientation possible. This factor is the suggestiveness of the behavior of the person using a peculiar smokescreen, combined with the difficulty of verifying the idea or assumption provoked by it or the riskiness of trying to check what is the appearance of his strengths and what is the real strength.

2. Characteristics of a Bluff

Tadeusz Pszczołowski very clearly and accurately captures the essence of bluffing on the margins of his analysis of rhetorical art and eristic.

The principle of bluffing is well known to card players. However, even those readers who have not yet had to deal with tactics of the type discussed here will easily understand it after becoming familiar with the following examples: / An eastern fairy tale tells of the wise Aisha, who in a besieged and starving city ordered to find a calf, feed it with grain and let it go outside the walls. The besieging enemy, having killed the calf, decided that there was no hunger in the stronghold because they fed the cattle with grain, and

33 M. Bańko (ed.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, Vol. 1, Warszawa 2007, p. 129.

34 Bańko (ed.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, p. 129.

abandoned the siege. Aisha did not use a verbal bluff but a bluff-action, which is sometimes called a stratagem.³⁵

The successful bluff here consisted in suggesting so strongly to the enemy, in making the “deception” so plausible by the prop, that the enemy did not even check whether it was really so. But was it a naive, foolish reaction? Not at all! The rationale behind the decision was that if the besieged inhabitants of the stronghold were in a critical situation, they would not allow themselves such a luxury even to deceive the enemy. Perhaps that is why the enemy did not suspect that such an intrusive communication of “we hold tight “could be false. “Another bluff was the defendant stripping naked in front of the high court, as he wanted the judges to conclude that he is insane and receive a sentencing to treatment instead of prison.”³⁶

There is a certain similarity here to the previous situation, namely, the threatened person defends himself with a simulation, pretending to have something that he does not have. Only that in this case the person has not (virtually) added advantages to himself but pretended to be weaker in some respect than he really was in order to avoid or mitigate the inevitable punishment. And indeed, one may bluff to one’s disadvantage in order to gain an advantage or secure a lesser loss. However, bluffing is rightly associated with a situation, in which one gains more advantages and qualities in the eyes of others than one has, advantages disproportionate to one’s potential, respect greater than one’s actual possibilities of threatening or impressing others would provide.

Another example of a bluff is an old Jewish joke. Two competitors are talking: / “Where are you going?” / “To Minsk.” / “Shame on you! You say that you are going to Minsk, so that I think that you are going to Pinsk, and I know very well that you are going to Minsk” / Now, the principle of bluffing is simple: I do something or say something in order to make my opponent come to a conclusion that I want to implicitly suggest to him. In the Jewish joke, we even have a piled-up bluff. The competitor going to Minsk tells the truth in order to make the other competitor think that he is lying.³⁷

Peter Gammond calls such tactics a double bluff and also sees an even more sophisticated form of it. “It involves telling the truth as if it were a bluff; as a result, people think you are bluffing when you are not.”³⁸

35 T. Pszczołowski, *Umiejętność przekonywania i dyskusji*, Warszawa 1974, p. 297.

36 Pszczołowski, *Umiejętność przekonywania i dyskusji*, p. 297.

37 Pszczołowski, *Umiejętność przekonywania i dyskusji*, pp. 297–298.

38 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 8.

What does a person gain in this way? In a possessive action, the effect is the same as a lie, with the assurance – from possible punishment – that one has told the truth. Such perversity is also a graceful defense or insurance tactic, when on the contrary, telling the truth exposes one to punishment or retaliation. This is how the weak defend themselves against the possible fury of persecutors, especially those who demand – under penalty – a confession of the truth, a confession of something, but who also punish for the attestation of such a truth, which spoils their plans. Gammond goes even further by explaining that “a *triple bluff* is an even more difficult art and should be used only by experts. Such a bluff has all the qualities of truth, except that the truth itself is a bluff. It is an art often practiced by politicians and clergymen.”³⁹

Intelligence or counterintelligence people who play a sophisticated game with the likes of them on the opposite side definitely use the triple bluff as well. Thus, a first-degree bluff is when I bluff by telling or suggesting untruths about my strengths and intentions. The second-degree bluff is when I bluff by telling or suggesting the truth so that the truth will be considered a bluff (subversive truthfulness). The third-degree bluff is when my misrepresentation of my strengths and intentions refers to a truth that I have previously stated, revealed, or hinted at, but precisely so that it will be considered a bluff.

Pszczółowski's guide also shows the use of bluff as an eristic trick. “In order to gain the trust of others, the skilled participant occasionally admits his mistakes and even finds them himself. Then, he uses his reputation as a reliable discussion partner.”⁴⁰

The implication for the listeners, the witnesses of such ritual self-criticism, is very strong: we deal here with a serious man who can afford to distance himself and who has the courage to publicly admit to being wrong. In fact, such conventional behavior costs him nothing. On the contrary, he is rewarded for his insincere act of reflection or, even more so, his insincere expression of remorse. However, it is something more than an image deception (I am supposed to appear better than I am, paradoxically thanks to my own mistakes, about which I speak myself and with which I gain an effect perhaps better than in efficient self-praise). Indeed, it is a bluff, because while gaining recognition and credit, the man also creates the expectation that in the future, he will correct these mistakes and avoid others. So, he not only pretends to be a modest and prudent man, but

39 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 8.

40 Pszczółowski, *Umiejętność przekonywania i dyskusji*, p. 298.

also suggests intentions he does not have. And with this pretense he wins people over, as if he had already improved.

Often, such a disputant claims with a lot of nerve that he can easily justify his opinion if only his fellow participants do not believe him and want a full argumentation. In the depth of his soul, he hopes that they will not ask for it, because he would not be able to cite anything to support his theses.⁴¹

This is one of the characteristics of a bluff: I declare my willingness to do something, even utter an obligation, hoping that this alone will make such an impression that no one will ask about the cover for such declarations nor demand their fulfillment. The recipients are to buy the cover alone, as if they were buying the whole book. A counterpart of such argumentative manipulations (“believe me on credit, because I have the arguments at hand, only it is a waste of time, if the result will be the same”) are now popular behaviors of politicians or politically involved and committed officials, prosecutors consisting in making very firm judgments, categorical evaluations and especially strong accusations; all the while hiding (from demanding justification or giving details) behind procedures, the good of investigation, confidentiality of information.

Likewise, the disputant who makes it clear that he can easily deal with his opponents and justify his thesis is bluffing. However, he cannot do so because no one will believe it. The bluffer starts playing a victim who is restricted in his freedom of speech, afraid of the consequences and unwilling to put himself or others at risk. And deep down inside, he is afraid that one of the participants might say: Come on, it will be accepted! Card on the table! The bluff used by this discussant can only be effective in an atmosphere of pressure, lack of freedom of speech.⁴²

In this matter, Tadeusz Pszczołowski is probably overly optimistic. Apart from the martyr, the persecuted, or the man fearing revenge, it can also be effective when full freedom of speech and full rights are guaranteed after the discussion (or interrogation) if the manipulator resorts to emotional and moral blackmail, when any polemic with him is qualified as a confirmation of his myth that he is inconvenient for someone, that they will shout him down.

Of course, it is easier to bluff for someone who is considered trustworthy and reliable. One can then effectively abuse the trust of others. “The better a person’s reputation, the more truthful, open, and honest he is considered to be, the easier

41 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 8.

42 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, pp. 298–299.

it is for him to use tactics to mislead his opponent, of course if he does not bluff too often.”⁴³

Leaving aside the ethical issues and the moral face of a bluffer, one should note that any and all bluffs are possible as long as the appearances used are believable, the predictions or warnings probable, and the puzzling, mysterious or ambiguous gestures or words give reason to consider the dilemma rather than take it for granted. People may believe an enigmatic speaker or player in the sense that – willingly or unwillingly – they believe him to be the only one who knows how things really are.

3. Definition and Specifics of a Bluff

In the search for an adequate definition of bluff, it is best to “go back to the source,” that is to refer to the gambling origins of a concept that has already inspired other serious users as a metaphor. For our purposes, the poker meaning of the word “bluff” seems perfect.⁴⁴

We may find a literal – precise and largely accurate – poker definition of bluff in Kopalinski’s dictionary. It contains an indication that there is an analogy between card games, war, and political games with serious social consequences:

To outbid one’s opponents in poker in order to dissuade them from further play by giving them the false impression that one’s hand is stronger than theirs; to intimidate, dissuade, or intimidate; to demonstrate (the appearance of) strength by (vain) threats, trumps (which one does not possess), especially at cards and in politics.⁴⁵

In this sense, it is indeed misleading, but in a special way, not identical with either the common lie (or also lies in many subtle shades, degrees) or deception. The poker trick (equally well known in diplomacy or war games) has to it the peculiarity that misleading the opponent is a consequence rather than a starting point; as in lying or cheating. It is a consequence of “positive” suggestions (allusions, which are perceived, as it were, “over the top”) or “negative” suggestions (understatements) rather than explicit statements of states of affairs or predictions. The bluffer’s victim comes to certain conclusions, and even more often dilemmas, on his own (though not without help) rather than receiving ready-made reasoning. Gammond takes an even more radical position: “we do not

43 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 299.

44 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 7.

45 Kopalinski, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i obcojęzycznych z almanachem*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 72–73.

want to use the term “cheat,” because we want to separate the fine art of bluffing from lying or deception with a clear line. The cheater wants to mislead, whereas the bluffer only wants to keep his opponent in a state of uncertainty.”⁴⁶

Therefore, a liar or a cheater presents to us a lie or a delusion as a certainty, while a bluffer creates uncertainty and with this created uncertainty, he can keep someone from doing something or be quicker than the hesitating enemy.

In the civilized world, the real purpose of a bluff is the desire to maintain one’s own position (without completely surrendering or humiliating oneself) in the face of a social, intellectual, or business opponent. A bluffer does not like to be outsmarted, especially by someone who is clearly superior to him in knowledge. Real victory is achieved when you get your opponent to throw their cards on the table in a gesture of resignation before you do so first.⁴⁷

This is the perfect bluff: the potential winner surrenders or withdraws, and the potential loser wins by resigning. The weaker player wins against the stronger player by outsmarting him. “You may add to your score three points if you won against an opponent significantly more intelligent than yourself, two points for a tied score (that is if your opponent was equal to you), and one point if you had an idiot for an opponent.”⁴⁸

Someone might ask: why is a bluff necessary in a duel between a rational man and one that is not so clever? Is it not enough for him to have the advantage that he possesses, whereas in the case of someone else’s advantage or balance of power and equality of chances, he must make up for it with cunning?

Well, there are situations when the stronger must bluff against the weaker, the wiser against the dumber. The first occurs when acting with good intentions (for instance, as a guardian or friend), the subject encounters resistance and stubbornness comparable to that of a combat situation, which creates a social trap because by acting against someone for his own good the wiser would have to expose him to loss and in some sense humiliate him. In such a case, it is better to outwit the resister and bluffing is morally less flawed than lying and cheating. The second situation occurs when the subject is stronger, but the rules do not allow him to settle the dispute by force, or when he reaches for undue goods. In such a case, bluffing in social bargaining, which induces the weaker party to make concessions or give up its own rights, in a sense legitimizes his gains.

46 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 7.

47 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, pp. 7–8.

48 Gammond, *Blefowanie*, p. 8.

4. False Suggestion and Evoking Uncertainty

Provoking impressions and moods which cause exaggerated awe of partners or opponents is possible in two forms: either by a *false suggestion* of someone specific or of the whole environment, or by *evoking a feeling of uncertainty*. In the former case, the basis for success is creating an illusions or exaggerated assessments and calculations (for instance, that someone has a lot of money because he raises the stakes at an auction, that someone is waiting for the reinforcements to arrive any minute). In the second case, we sow doubts in someone's assessment of the situation, the balance of power, and dilemmas in his prognosis and resolution of how to behave under such perceived circumstances ("Maybe he has or maybe he hasn't got; maybe he will fire or maybe he won't? I don't know, I can't be sure, but I won't risk checking. I'm wrestling with my thoughts and as a result I don't know myself anymore what to think about it, what to decide"). This state of disorientation – suggestion or distraction – serves to demobilize or easily persuade someone to do something they would not do without the stimuli.

False Suggestion

False suggestion consists in making someone believe that we have something that we do not have or that we have more resources, equipment, weapons, abilities, connections, influence than we really have. However, we are talking about a *suggestion* and not for example, a lying boast or the use of fake banknotes. A bluff is based primarily on the pronunciation of what is not explicitly stated. A bluffer guides someone – with gestures, half-words, hints (more often covertly than overtly) – into a line of reasoning that will cause the person to come to the "right" conclusions and decisions on his own. The bluffer suggests it in such a way that the person later suggests the "right" conclusion to himself with assumptions, aroused attitudes, expectations, and predictions.

On the border of bluff, we may find such clear signs addressed to someone as: a purely ritualistic, noncommittal declaration of intent, a statement of intent and further steps made in an exaggerated manner, an apparently forced confirmation of something by someone intrusively questioned or a gesture or decision, an operation that has the flavor of a threat (for instance, general mobilization, border maneuvers as a foretaste of possible military action). However, they have the signs of a bluff only when in the eyes of addressees who are not naive and rational these statements sound credible, the announcements look likely, and the possibilities of events signaled by them are perceived as completely real and maybe even inevitable.

Sometimes, this line between knowing for sure that something is possible, the intrusive and exaggerated suggestion of the interested party, and uncertainty becomes blurred. We know that something is possible, that it can happen sooner or later (“it’s just a matter of time”_ and we know that someone is interested in making us believe their suggestion, that “it has already happened,” but we are bound by uncertainty as to whether it has already happened or not. Then we give in to the exaggerated suggestion on a “better safe than sorry” basis. For example, the Kim Jong Il’s nuclear scare and blackmail would not be as effective (extorting food aid, among other things), if its likelihood were not supported by the regime’s militaristic nature and the test explosions it has conducted, which experts know, even if simulated, are also harbingers that the country is close to producing nuclear weapons that can be used.

All in all, the bluffer’s image is shaped in an exaggerated way based on great overstatement and the self-confidence he demonstrates. The resulting deception has the support of the probability that the recipient being shocked, surprised, intimidated or confused, put in a state of uncertainty and danger, has no way of checking or verifying the suggestion or will just be so strongly suggested (will believe or will be afraid of risk) that he will give up the “check” move.

False suggestion (as a kind of deception, misleading) can cause someone to be either mobilized, teased, incited to do something or demobilized, discouraged from doing something in the belief that it is not worth trying or completing one’s work, that there is no chance, that one will lose or be punished. Thus, false suggestion serves to force – without any real means of pressure or execution of the will – some decision, to force obedience to the will, or to force abandonment of some intention or effort already made and in progress, or to force a concession. In any case, it is directing someone’s decision, such as paradoxically controlling the decisions of the stronger. An imposed misdiagnosis results in a wrong decision or in any case in a course of action which does not correspond to the real balance of power, to the real possibilities of the suggested subject.

To Arouse a Sense of Insecurity

The second form of bluffing is to create the impression of an unclear, unrecognizable, unverifiable state of affairs and thereby create a sense of uncertainty in the addressee. This feeling of uncertainty disturbs or even paralyzes addressee’s decision-making process. It stimulates, intensifies and exaggerates doubts and dilemmas. It fosters fears, and therefore, evasive and precautionary behaviors (“I give up something I already have in my grasp”). Moreover, it promotes inconsistency of thought (“I attack, I risk excessively, then I delay too long or withdraw

prematurely”). As a result, sometimes a victim of bluff gives up an attack that would have brought victory, enters into negotiations when he could have stood his ground or, for example, enforced his authority, the rules of hierarchy, and official or military discipline, or accepts a compromise when he has a decisive or overwhelming advantage (however, made up by a false impression or a sense of uncertainty).

Such tactics is known even in love games, when the ambiguity of certain behaviors makes it impossible to be sure who is flirting or having an affair with whom. This is to arouse jealousy and thus revive extinguished feelings, but it also allows to provoke a false impression that one is very successful, to impress the object of potential adoration or conquest. In these games, partners do not always try to increase their attraction by bidding in actual relationships, betrayals, and pursuits. Sometimes they exert effective pressure only with ambiguous situations and behaviors that are intended to make the other party care about attention, about keeping their partner.

The equivalent of such amorous maneuvers are some coalition games. Thus, a party endowed with limited “coalition-making capacity” and intending to bargain for a stronger position than its real status would suggest, raises its price by conducting survey and showcase talks with rivals or even opponents of its current partners or even by not entering into talks (because, for example, no one wants to conclude agreements with it) but only by making alternative offers in public. At the same time, the party hopes not for their acceptance (perhaps doubtful, impossible in advance) but for softening the previously insufficiently compliant partner dominating in the coalition. Such a party paradoxically wins a tender that it drew up itself and in which no one else intended to participate. It is a move similar to threatening a stronger partner-hegemon who lacks an independent majority with repeated and implausible pledges to break the coalition. It does not matter that it is commonly known that these rebels-blackmailers have more to lose, are more afraid of losing their jobs and early elections. Moreover, it does not matter that in this case hardly anyone believes in the sincerity and reality (feasibility) of these threats. It is enough for the stronger partner to think what would happen if, however, the vassalized but rebellious partners really did leave. They bargain some kind of regrouping that is beneficial to themselves.

5. Passive Bluff Vs. Active Bluff

A careful analysis of various cases and forms of bluffing shows that we may achieve the effect of suggesting something over the top or the effect of shaking someone’s confidence in two ways: either through one’s own statements in a firm,

categorical tone, when the sender demonstrates self-confidence that is meant to intimidate the other party and make them susceptible to his suggestions or through eloquent behavior that is restrained, ambiguous, puzzling, whose effectiveness lies in the fact that it appropriately directs the recipient's impressions, while the sender allows the recipient (and possibly discreetly helps him) to guess what he should guess, to experience doubts and hesitations. In the latter case, if you push the bluffer to the wall, he always has an excuse: "I didn't say that! I cannot be held responsible for what conclusions someone draws from my silence, from my "I do not confirm, I do not deny" answer, from my "I cannot answer that question" statement."

Therefore, we should distinguish between *active bluff* and *passive bluff*. The latter is perhaps not the best term, but in any case passivity should not be taken literally: the bluffer is "passive" only in this sense that he refrains from statements, hints, does not turn toward the recipient, but remains an object of his interest and fascination with what is unknown in him, while still controlling as actively as possible the impressions, emotions, reasoning and decisions of the other party, to whom it may even seem that he is the one who has the initiative, who is the one who "coaxes out information," forces to declare himself, or tests the ground. In reality, the one who positions is being positioned himself.

Passive Bluff

A typical manifestation of the passive bluff is the coquettish tactic of making others believe that it is worth seeking contact with us, but it requires effort. At first, I tease, arouse appetites, allow myself to be asked, the more I wriggle, the more the expectation for my revelations grows, the more pressure I exert, thus intensifying the impression that I have something important to say or hide, and thus I become important myself. The specially accented formalism fulfills a similar role ("I am not authorized, this does not belong to the case, this is not in the file") as it inspires with its laconic quality, evasions, and smiles a series of unanswered questions, stimulates unsatisfied curiosity and inquisitiveness, and thus it absorbs the unexplained matter focusing attention on oneself.

Not infrequently, it is an idle, purely promotional behavior: politicians who have nothing important or concrete to say (because they neither have such knowledge nor are responsible for further decisions and the course of affairs, they are at most close to the keyhole, but do not belong to the decision-making circle) attract hectic journalists, gaining an opportunity for rhetorical displays (bon mots, anecdotes, improvised or old jokes). The effect of running away from the actual topic is that the media, commentators, experts or other politicians

attribute some special meaning to the fact that someone says nothing or does nothing on a given issue at a given moment. This kind of bluff is a banal but effective self-promotional provocation.

When used for practical purposes and not as an idle show-off, the passive bluff allows one to emerge defensively from difficult situations. Here, too, the principle of provoking presumptions as conjectures supposedly obvious is at work. In fact, a man who only smiled mysteriously when asked about his income did not lie about being rich. A politician asked from whom he has the news to which he refers and inundated with a list to choose from – may answer that he has no authority to cite a name, thus allowing one to presume that it is someone on that list. A politician may achieve an analogous effect when he does not deny, not correct, not let slip other people's interpretations and conjectures attributing to the subject a connection to some cause, to a group of people, when this ensures prestige or the widespread belief that he is under someone else's protection.

Moreover, passive bluffing may be parasitic behavior, which involves joining in someone else's action, albeit without open identification or impersonation, for instance: a driver who takes advantage of the fact that a column of government cars is passing through a traffic jam, quickly follows the column as its "tail." The driver does not formally pretend to be anyone, nor does he give the sign "guess who I am." The driver just does not mind that everyone thinks his vehicle is closing this caravan and makes way for him as well.

Active Bluff

To actively confuse others about our intentions and strengths is to influence by suggesting or causing someone's confusion and hesitation through one's own words, gestures, actions directed at someone or calculated to make them observe and draw conclusions. Such influence is possible both in a radical and expressive form and in an allusive, restrained form. In any case, one does it on the principle of giving someone a sign (a significant behavior, a suggestive utterance that gives food for thought and makes some assumptions).

In the expressive version, it is an overstatement (exaggerated or not justified at all) about one's own potential, resources (a good card, resources, guarantees) intentions, or more often, a gestural or maneuvering equivalent of a statement having the characteristics of a clear message causing the addressee's confusion in assessing the sender's intentions and possibilities of action. The subject makes it clear: "I am strong, determined. I'm really going to do it! I have enough ammunition! The police will be here in a moment!"

In the allusive version, it is a deliberately misleading use of a tool (material, verbal, or symbolic tool based on a quid pro quo scheme) a potato passes for an unlocked grenade.

Let us recall how clever Adam from the Polish young adult book *Szatan z siódmej klasy* (Satan from the Seventh Grade) terrorizes the bandit who kidnapped him and drove him away in a car. Adam puts a pencil to the kidnapper's back and very convincingly shouts: "Hands up!"

This is a scene typical of many thrillers (escapes, chases, shootouts, fight scenes). The one who made a threatening face and reached into his jacket pocket did not say that he had a gun, that he was going to shoot – someone just understood it this way. On the other hand, the one who quite frankly said that he had a gun did not add that it was unloaded or without bullets for he also had no interest in such accuracy.

A special case of an active bluff are threats and menaces, which we do not know if they can be fulfilled at all, or that knowing them to be true, we cannot predict if the subject will fulfill them. It is similar with promises and announcements like "I will arrange it!" or "in my drawer there are ready drafts of more than a dozen laws!"

An active bluff may be either an initiative provocation (I present my intentions and strengths exaggeratedly without being asked) or a reactive provocation (I bluff in response to someone else's pressure, for instance awkward questions, demands, or requests, to which I cannot help but respond, but I may do so in order to hide my own embarrassment, prevent someone else's control, or disarm someone else's resistance).

An example of such a reactive form of bluff requiring reflexes and consequences is the famous and ingenious heist on city treasury carried out by an unemployed shoemaker from Köpenick who, having come out of prison, dressed up in a captain's uniform, picked up a military police patrol from the street, took it under his command and entered the city hall with it, behaving very commandingly and firmly.

The mayor, Dr. Langerhans, later recounted: "I was in my office when suddenly the door opened. An officer stood before me with two grenadiers with bayonets on their guns. He asked if I was the mayor of Köpenick. And when I confirmed, he declared that he was arresting me by royal order." / "But excuse me, please explain.... protested the mayor." / He heard: "Not a word! You will receive an explanation in Berlin, at the main guard-room, where you will be taken immediately!" / "But at least show me the arrest order," the mayor insisted. / "Keep quiet! These soldiers are my identity card, and I will show the order in Berlin. If you say one more word, soldiers will take you in their hands," the officer threatened.⁴⁹

The impersonation of the officer's status and the pretense of bizarre orders is only a deception, bluntly called a fraud. One element of this deception is the reactive bluff (an explanation awaits in Berlin) and the initiative bluff used to strengthen the probability and credibility of this creation (a vague threat about what the soldiers were to do with the disobedient official, uttered in the hope that the clever conventional-symbolic ruse would not have to be verbalized with brutality, that the threat alone would suffice).

After the mayor's expedition, the captain went to the cash register. / "Who is the cashier?" the officer asked. / "It's me," Mr. von Wiltberg introduced himself. / "Please close the cash book and show the balance as you are under arrest," the officer stated. / The cashier asked for what reason. / "You will find out in Berlin," he heard. There were altogether 4002 marks and 37 pfennigs in the cash box, some of it in shares; 3557 marks and 45 pfennigs were in cash. The takeover protocol was signed by the cashier and the officer who took the money. The confused cashier left for Berlin under guard.⁵⁰

Thus, the fake officer repeated the Berlin bluff.

Crime perpetrators are very eager to use bluff in various scams, assaults (when they do not want to shoot, but they need to scare and intimidate) also in their dealings with the police and prosecutors, when knowing the expectations (for instance, a political order) they are aware that their testimony is worth its weight in gold so then they start playing games as if they were flirting.

Another professional fond of bluffing is the politician.

For some, it is a chronic condition, a habit. These people even believe that politics by its very nature is a parade of braggards, that this is how it should be: to announce what we do not intend to do or cannot do, to frighten others when we ourselves are afraid, to make mysterious faces, to replace the imperfect mode with the perfect one: "we have finished. . . . preparations for the inauguration." Philippe de Beaumarchais mercilessly summarizes this style of acting with the words of his protagonist:

To pretend vast Secrecy where there is nothing to conceal; to shut yourself up in your Chamber, and mend your Pen or pick your Teeth, while your Footmen inform the attending Croud you are too busy to be approach'd – this, with the art of intercepting Letters, imitating Hands, pensioning Traitors, and rewarding Flatterers, is the whole mystery of Politics, or I am an Idiot!⁵¹

For all others, it is just an occasional tactic dictated by necessity.

50 Gromek, *Kapitan samozwaniec*, p. 44.

51 P-A. C. de Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro (or the Follies of a Day)*, translated by T. Holcroft, 1784.

Part Four: Syndromatic Brutal Provocations

Brutal provocations also have a syndromatic character, namely they are of multifunctional and multi-type character.

But what does “brutal” mean in this context?

- * *Arbitrary*: a party in a dispute acts as a judge in its own case, and usurps the right to judge and sentence others, including the unlawful use of procedures and sanctions that are equivalent to – or a parody of – judicial or administrative measures, or even punishes the resistant and opposing parties with acts of malice;
- * *demonstratively aggressiveness*: as a manifestation of hostility, bad will, intent to harm others, combined with a desire to suggest or impose on others attitudes of resentment, distrust, hostility, hatred, contempt for the attacked subject;
- * *openly destructive*: as an attempt to undermine or cancel someone else’s achievements, merits, titles to glory, reasons for respect; and even a sentencing to death – physical or moral and civil; and, at the same time, as an act that destroys the foundations of social coexistence in the form of rules of tolerance, mutual trust, the ability to work together across divisions for the common good;
- * *possessive*: as a pursuit of particular, not necessarily due benefits at the price of depleting the possessions of others and as an attempt to preserve appropriated goods and benefits by discouraging, deterring, intimidating or attacking those who defend their own values or those who seek to enforce the principles of justice, the rule of law and decency;
- * *blunt*: as a negative challenge, ostentatious violation of the rules of the game accepted in a given circle, moral principles, legal norms, standards of good manners, but unlike the acts of contestation or iconoclasm, not in order to overcome the relics, facades and hypocrisy of the standards of authenticity, but only to evoke in the victims of its arbitrariness and aggressiveness a sense of powerlessness, helplessness, which is used, among others, to demonstrate its own sense of impunity, superiority and cynicism.

To a varying degree, these traits are present in specific provocations characterized by an attitude of ruthlessness and striving for success at all costs.

By brutality we usually mean ruthlessness in conduct. Indeed, this is the essence of this trait. However, it occurs in different forms, contexts, and with varying intensity.

The popular stereotype identifies brutality with mental and emotional primitivism, that is with rudeness, boorishness, and with what this pathology stems from, namely mental limitation and complete lack of empathy. In this popular view, the matter is simple: a dumb person must be a boor, a brute by nature is deprived of the elementary ability to coexist and get along with others, he achieves his goals by pushing with his elbows, snatching from others as in the primitive struggle for territory and feeding grounds, he destroys not only those who consciously resist him, but also all those he finds along the way as obstacles; he also has no regard for the collateral damage and costs of his own aggressiveness.

This is not strict, at least not in the realm of actions that combine deception with force. Brutal forms of political action (or, for example, business shark fights) are rarely manifestations of such literal primitivism, but rather a well-thought-out component of tactics. Furthermore, instrumental brutality (as opposed to the inherent and spontaneous one) turns out to be more credible and effective in the behavior of individuals and groups who are predisposed to it, that is who have certain inclinations and predilections. An actor who is good-natured by nature can play a brute convincingly; but in politics (and even more so in the wars of large corporations or gangs) it is impossible to pretend to be a brute effectively. This portrayal must be backed up by appropriate talents and actions. Otherwise, there is danger of ridicule and of showing off someone else's actual brutality.

In this more subtle sense, brutality does not necessarily stem from boorishness, lack of civility, sadism, aggressive compensation of complexes and frustrations. It may be an intelligent, though morally and aesthetically repugnant tactic in the conduct of individuals or teams driven by pragmatic calculation. The tactic of ruthlessness is popular especially among those who have deliberately and fondly chosen an extremely Machiavellian style of operation, based on a combination of cunning and demonstration of power, lack of moral restrictions, scruples, and even cynicism. For the demonstration of a cynical attitude does not necessarily condemn one to defeat (if it is morally compromising); it can be both a proof of advantage ("I will not back down from anything") and a source of even greater advantage ("When you hesitate or retreat, I move up").

Brutality involves the recognition of violence as the most effective and perhaps the only sensible and possible method in a situation of conflict or struggle to unilaterally push through one's own interests.

Violence is a destructive (in intent and effect) use of force that makes it possible to break or ignore the resistance of another party, to get one's own way as a

result of disarming, overpowering or wounding someone, paralyzing them with fear, suffering, humiliation and the extent of losses, damage, which is greatly aided by the sense of powerlessness and helplessness aroused in the victim, the irreversibility of what has happened and further threats.

In aggressive political actions, people use different types of force providing unilateral and overwhelming advantage. According to the differentiation of the means of destruction, we can deal with physical, economic, psychological, symbolic, and ritual violence. This also applies to political provocations.

Thus, violent provocations are the political equivalent of warfare, and one in which “chivalric prejudice” are rejected, assuming that the winner is the one who beats his rivals or antagonists by his lack of respect for the rules of the game, his lack of moral inhibitions, his readiness to commit treachery and to “go all the way” in actions that have the hallmarks, if not of cruelty, then in any case of disregard for the dignity and interests of the opposing side.

We will analyze two forms of violent provocations: (1) the method (tactics, strategy, politics) of *fait accompli*, (2) *drastic provocation*. The brutal provocation that “socializes” the harassment and persecution of opponents and also deserves an in-depth and separate analysis is a smear campaign.

The order of the forms is not accidental. It is determined by the level of intensity of brutality and the type of destructive force applied – always demonstratively, but with varying results.

We will begin with force applied indirectly – a maneuver that “hurts without touching,” weakens the opponent’s forces without a tangent that occurs in a physical clash or mental compact. This is the character of *faits accomplis*. They are brutal, ruthless insofar as they consist in extorting one’s own benefits by unceremonious and defiant violation of norms and rules that are binding in a given circle, including one’s own obligations, in repeated and cumulative truce, “tightening the screw,” pressing the opposing party to the wall, which gives way either because it has weak morale, or because it has too many ideological, moral and legal inhibitions, or because it has too much to lose and does not take the risk of a double-edged confrontation, the risk of resistance without a guarantee of success and avoidance of further damage.

Smear campaign is a destructive provocation that unleashes a stream of collective aggression at “a designated address.” It is a campaign provoked or even directed by someone aiming at stigmatizing, surrounding, isolating and eliminating the inconvenient – the resistant, rivals and opponents. It involves civil and moral death. At the same time, honoring some allows to check, intimidate and subjugate others.

In this case, the provocateur plays a twofold role. First, he initiates – directly or indirectly – events that are to provoke social agitation, feelings of indignation, anger, disgust, hatred, desire for retaliation, and then he selectively controls these emotions, gradually including others – generally not fully aware of the object and goal of the game, not fully sovereign – participants in the action, taking advantage of their disorientation, fear, conformism, low motives, sense of occasion or naivety accompanying principled attitudes and good intentions. Overtly or covertly, the provocateur controls the manifestations of psychic, symbolic, and ritual violence. The provocateur transforms his political quarrels into a spectacular public-symbolic execution of his opponent (sometimes a scapegoat). He creates the illusion that his particularistic game is a manifestation of popular opinion and collective will. For this reason, we may assume that the campaign is an *orchestrated mega-provocation*: multistage, multilateral, cascade, or avalanche. It is like a self-propulsion of accusations, a perpetuum mobile of accusations, attempts to explain, defend, or oppose, and further suspicions and accusations.

The final piece of the analysis are *drastic* forms of provocation, which include militia actions; provoked riots, pogroms, suicides, massacres; secret or spectacular assassinations. The drastic nature of these acts is associated with the demonstration of physical force, contempt for the dignity, health, and life of the objects of attack, with the fusion of physical and psychological cruelty, with the transformation of pragmatic extortion into ritual and bloodthirsty spectacle. What do such provocations provoke? They provoke fear, anxiety, a sense of helplessness in the face of existential threat, meaning they paralyze and stifle resistance, not only of the weaker but also of those stronger than the perpetrators (as evidenced by the experience of terrorism). At the same time, these provocations strengthen, promote, and “advance” perpetrators in the hierarchy of political influence because those who are dangerous and unrestrained in their ruthlessness become important and influential. They force their goals upon those around them not in proportion to their representativeness but in proportion to the threat, terror, and havoc they wreak. And this is precisely what fits the definition of provocation. It is an act that settles something that was unsettled, forcing something that seemed unlikely or impossible.

XV. Premises for the Provocative Tactic of *Faits Accomplis*

The phrase “*faits accomplis*” is as concise as it is capacious, and even in colloquial speech and journalistic jargon it has a precise meaning, this time not far removed from the sense given to the term in scientific analysis.

1. Circumstances of Application: Conflict, Antagonism

Proceeding according to the rule of *faits accomplis* is first characteristic of conflict situations, especially those arising against the background of an antagonistic conflict of interests, that is one that cannot be overcome within the existing system of relations and in which the parties are guided by the simplest principles of exclusivity: “either them or us” and “who outsmarts (breaks or destroys) whom.”

Subjective factors may also be the base of the conflict, in which the two parties mutually refuse to trust and give in to the other party, exclude in advance the possibility of goodwill and agreement, compromise. These factors do not necessarily always reflect a divergence or fundamental conflict of interests, but they may be related to the limitations of participants’ consciousness. Such factors include different and opposing mentalities (“being on different wavelengths”); communication barriers (resulting in misunderstandings, misreading others’ intentions; accumulated prejudices); and, finally, rigorously treated ideological identification that makes it so that “there can be only one truth,” and therefore, rightness can be only on one side – that of the adherents of “truth.” The duty of the follower of a given ideology is then at least not to give way and not to deviate one step from the sacred principles and beliefs, to show superiority over those who deny them, who insult them by not sharing them, and even more so by an alternative profession of faith. As a rule, ideological commitment implies the maximum goal, which is the conversion of dissenters, profaners, blasphemers, heretics, unbelievers, followers of “obvious” Evil and Falsity.

The psychological correlate of such situations is the overwhelming influence and escalation of negative emotions caused by mutual prejudices and resentments. Such emotions as spite, stubbornness; obstinacy, vindictiveness; desire for punishment, retaliation; disgust; contempt and sense of superiority over the rival, opponent, antagonist; irrational personal hatred or rationalized ideological hatred.

The consequence of such a situation is usually the action of at least one of the parties, and often both, which corresponds to the popular notion of doing something to spite someone, of acting out of spite, of getting one’s way at all costs. This is accompanied by – and reinforces the motivation for actions that not only cancel the agreement and intensify the conflict, but also make it difficult or close

the way back – a particular kind of malicious satisfaction that someone who is forced to do something (be it by force, peer pressure, good manners and conventions, his own commitments, experiences), if he manages not only not to give in but even to make a shocking turn, surprise and render the opponent helpless.

Acting in accordance to the rule of *faits accomplis* is one of the most obvious forms of provocation: both because it is an *ostentatious* action (exceptionally defiant both as an act of refusal and as a demonstration of malice, hostility, or arbitrariness) and because we can clearly see here the attribute of provocation, namely the *settling by one's own unilateral action of something that was not settled in itself* but which could have taken place differently or been resolved differently in the case of bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

2. The Origin and Meaning of the Term “Faits Accomplis”

The terms “*faits accomplis*” and “*faits accomplis* policy” came into common circulation thanks to the French, which for a long time was the international jargon of diplomats from various countries. *Faits accomplis* literally means facts *fulfilled* or *accomplished*. The term also refers to decisions and actions that determine something, complete something, or bring someone's position to a practical and extreme consequence. And at the same time, they are the expression and fulfillment of someone's will. The fulfillment (sometimes even final) of some intentions, desires, aspirations previously limited or suspended, admittedly by the will of the subject himself, but under pressure from the environment, peacemakers, partners, allies, or enemies. “Fulfillment” or “completion” consists here in the fact that someone has dotted the i's and crossed the t's with his choice of conduct and what he has caused by his own actions. This often means that a certain matter is closed or at least that the next move made by the participants of the game can no longer be arbitrary, can no longer be the fulfillment of their intentions and expectations, since one fulfillment cancels out or at least hinders the other.

The phrase “*faits accomplis*” adopted in the Polish tradition rightly draws our attention to the fact that it does not refer to all events, states of affairs or occurrences which must be taken into account by the initiator of a subsequent action, but only to those which are the result of previous intentional actions; deliberate actions undertaken in the belief that what has been accomplished in a way “sets,” directs and limits what may follow. Because the essence of “*faits accomplis*” is that one's use of a certain possibility limits the freedom of maneuver of the remaining participants to such an extent that it thwarts and excludes some of their moves, imposes certain necessities on them; whether they want to or not, they must accept what has happened against their will and respond to the resulting

changes, threats. In a way what one participant in the game has done determines what the others can or must do. The linguistic and logical imperfection of this well-worn phrase lies in its tautological or pleonastic character, which even linguists seldom discuss. After all, “*faits accomplis*” is a tautology, since the word “fact” itself means accomplishment, something that has been accomplished. However, the terminological tradition became fixed and an attempt to change this linguistic habit would probably prove unsuccessful.

3. The Origin, Evolution, and Contexts of the Term “Facts”

The word “fact” occurs in specialized (legal, political, journalistic) and in colloquial Polish, which is also the case on other languages. The word “fact” is a participle of the Latin verb *facere*, “create, make, formulate,” and *factum* “created, made, formulated,” which originally referred to both the act, the action, and its result, that is the work. In any case, this word referred to those elements of reality that were related to human activity, to the creation of reality by human effort, not to all elements of reality that man encounters, not to phenomena that are self-contained or created without human participation.

Over time, the understanding of a fact as any phenomenon, for instance an event that took place or is taking place at a given moment, as if before our eyes, has become common in science, in the language of the media, and even in everyday speech. Moreover, today we call facts not only actions, events, “happenings,” complex processes – in this sense revolutions, the gradual collapse of empires, civilizational transformations, permanent changes in customs are historical and social facts – but also the properties of phenomena, that is these properties, and even recurrent tendencies and regularities that are objective in nature, that is, independent of human consciousness, will, and judgment: “the inertia of physical bodies is a fact that must be taken into account when designing means of locomotion;” “the mortality of living beings is a fact that nothing can change.”

Alongside this ontological understanding of a fact (what exists, what has happened or must inevitably happen, what is regardless of our wishes, imaginings, illusions) a gnoseological notion has also become widespread, connected with the cognition of reality and the assumption of the possibility of knowing what exists, existed (but has ceased to exist), or can arise and exist. In this cognitive sense, by facts we mean phenomena whose existence can somehow be observed and registered, checked, confirmed, whose features can not only be accurately determined, but also checked, even measured and determined in general accordance. Undoubtedly, it is important that the objectivist language of facts is supposed to contradict the subjective language of judgments, wishes, values.

Facts understood in this manner are not subject to discussion (in the sense that we may argue about interpretation, but not about the existence of certain phenomena). The virtue of the rational man is “humility in the face of facts” (that is accepting them, regardless of one’s own expectations, acceptance, satisfaction).

Never mind that this colloquial obviousness has been undermined in science, along with the myth of “bare facts” and “presuppositionless analyses,” with the assumption that language only reflects reality (and not, for example, deforms or co-creates it). Moreover, the phenomena of “psychological facts” (what people imagine, how they perceive phenomena, what expectations and prejudices they have, cause effects comparable to the influence of the real characteristics of phenomena; popular belief, even if it is an illusion, also becomes a social fact, a determining factor, and so on) and “media facts” (that is what exists at all, what happened and what is determined by media selection of information and interpretation of phenomena) strongly challenged this commonsensical viewpoint. Nevertheless, the stereotype of “the facts are what they are” still functions, and it defines the common attitude toward the concept itself.

4. Practical Manipulation of the Concept of Fact

What do *faits accomplis* tactic or policy have to do with all this?

The perversion of *faits accomplis* tactic consists in blurring the distinction between a fact in this ontological extended and objectivized sense (what it is, how it is) and a fact in the original sense (what has been done). The addressee is forced to react to someone else’s achievements (which are, after all, arbitrary behavior, the result of someone else’s choice, and the result of what in itself was not determined, nor did it have to happen at all) as if he were to react to a sudden change in the weather. He is supposed to refer to someone’s act from a moment ago or a week ago, as if he referred to hundreds of years of heritage in nature or the history of a nation or region. Both are to be equivalent to an existing situation, a state of affairs inherited, an unforeseen and unplanned event, but hence also difficult or impossible to prevent. We transfer the way of thinking regarding facts-events, facts-coincidences, and, in a way, facts-objects to the consideration of facts-accomplishments. The cognitive notion of fact is also subject to manipulation here: the object of provocation is supposed to agree to something in the sense of an act of will (to acknowledge it, to accept it, or even to take it for granted, as the lesser of two evils, as the right solution altogether) in the same way that it is difficult for him to disagree with the fact that something has happened. The recognition of the fact on the basis of undisputed knowledge of the state of affairs is to be the same as the recognition of the state of affairs as the only

possible. The obviousness of a past event equals the obviousness of a decision. The undeniability of a fact identified with the irreversibility of that fact is to lead to the recognition of the irreversibility of that fact (it was a necessity, this is how it had to end).

This kind of extortion is nothing more than sanctioning voluntarism and bad will and, in any case, unilaterally settling bilateral and multilateral divergences, disputes, and conflicts.

5. Objectification Mechanism

To some extent Ovid's maxim "*factum abiit, monumenta manent*" – meaning the event is past, the memorial remains – refers to acting on the principle of *faits accomplis*.

The mental shortcut "monuments" potentially defines all permanent (and not short-term or ephemeral) effects of the deed, which then live their own lives and are for the next participants in the life of a given community something foundational, a legacy, a starting point. They are "monuments" inasmuch as they immortalize (a philosopher or sociologist would say: objectify) and commemorate the deeds of their perpetrator, and in a way, the perpetrator himself. Just like the creator of a work of art or literature, the perpetrator of an act with fixed results lives in his works. His achievements remind us of his existence, are a testimony of his contribution to the development of a given community, not infrequently they also constitute his posthumous testimony of identity, that is who he was in the light of his works, what distinguished him from others, what was original and unique in his achievements, merits or mistakes and the social damage caused.

Admittedly, this mechanism of objectification is more applicable to actions undertaken with a long-term goal in mind, especially as part of a well-thought-out and ambitiously programmed diplomatic, military, revolutionary, or economic strategy than to ad-hoc actions that are merely an element of war, propaganda, electoral, or negotiating tactics adopted by a subject in a specific situation, dictated by the specific circumstances and the balance of power characteristic of the moment. Therefore, not every provocation based on a scheme of *faits accomplis* objectifies to the point of leaving a lasting mark decades and centuries later. However, some of them have become monumentalized in this way. For example, in more than one colonial or post-colonial war, "some entered an area only to prevent others from entering it," after which they stayed, and so it has remained on the map. Moreover, they did not even have to be a disputed but neutral.

6. Particular and Negative Reinforcement

The objectivization of *faits accomplis* has its own peculiarity when compared to the posthumous fate of works of art, literature or science, which is what the term is more commonly associated with. Both the perpetrator (the “creator”) of *faits accomplis* and the creator of works of art have a similar ambition: to preserve the results of their actions. However, their motivation and intention are different.

Usually, a creator wants to leave a permanent trace of himself on the principle of constructive action, one that is useful for all potential successors. He also thinks of the contemporary recipients of his actions and works as someone with whom he shares his property and achievements. The value of a work of art is indicated by the extent to which it has become a common good; the universality of its qualities and the universality of the creator’s consciousness.

The perpetrator of *fait accompli* reasons in the opposite way: his action is dictated by a purely particular interest opposed to the other, other’s particular interest, and often to the general interest, for he was not prepared to give up anything of his own or his newly acquired advantages, he was not willing to make any self-limitation or sacrifice, not even based on reciprocity, compensation, and under common control. The perpetrator is guided by another old maxim “*fiat iustitia, et pereat mundus*” – let justice be done, though the world perish, while this “justice” is interpreted like in the case of two ever-fighting neighbors, meaning justice happens to winners.

The perpetrator of *faits accomplis* does not want to share. Quite on the contrary. The perpetrator fights for exclusivity, for sanctioning his gains – even if they come from plunder. By his actions, he does not create anything, but only blocks, appropriates, or destroys. The tactic of *faits accomplis* is used with destructive or at least obstructive intent. It is not a positive or constructive kind of provocation in the sense we used in Chapter Eleven.

However, there are exceptions to this rule of non-constructivism and particularism: the same tactics is sometimes used in social conflicts to defend the interests of the whole against arbitrariness, privacy, short-term particularistic thinking, to force respect for certain principles and superior values. Thus, we can also find it in numerous protest actions, blockades, pickets organized, for example, by ecologists, pacifists, emancipation movements. In such a case, it consists in anticipating by the initiators of the action the actions that are considered socially harmful, in thwarting actions that have already begun.

7. Brutal Negotiation Tactics

We must temper this generalization by considering the nuances of tactics (and only of tactics, not strategy) of war, business or politics. It may be that the “*faits accomplis* policy” does not aim at some final solution (like Hitler’s horrendous *Endlösung*, the Final Solution) at the irreversible destruction or irreversible appropriation of certain goods, at the immortalization of one’s own presence or domination, but is merely a “bargaining coin.” In this case, it serves only to improve or even privilege one’s own position in a situation where the subject himself is willing or forced to bargain and make concessions.

The typical manifestations of such brutal negotiating tactics are: a state that has committed itself to a cessation of hostilities within the framework of a ceasefire and with a view to peace negotiations, deliberately lengthens its “braking distance,” that is “falls behind” in stopping its army rushing forward in an assault, and even performs a defiant, shockingly brazen maneuver: it unilaterally violates the terms of the truce by unexpectedly beginning the occupation of a mutually agreed buffer zone by an army that has already halted hostilities. For what purpose? To repeat the ceasefire and peace talks from better positions, from a different starting point, for instance 100 kilometers away. Another example, from the experience of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Jewish state, which has pledged to stop building its settlements in the occupied territories, and even to dismantle existing ones in the areas to be returned (in exchange for guarantees to stop terrorist and guerrilla attacks from the opposite side, which were also broken) adopts a witty interpretation of its concession: “I am already leaving, only first I have to finish what I started. But I will not start any more construction projects, I give you my word.” And, of course, it cannot manage to enforce the obligation to evacuate its own citizen-settlers. They rebel, they demonstrate, they are accused of treason, they are outraged that they are being abandoned by those who had encouraged them to settle. And the authorities, embarrassed by this, discreetly keep quiet about the fact that this resistance and rebellion is to their liking: “as you can see, *we would like to keep our word, but we have considerable difficulties doing it.*”

7. Being Maneuvered into A No-Win Situation

Faits accomplis are phenomena that are more than accomplished – since they have already occurred. They are phenomena that determine something and thus cancel out other possibilities. They are irreversible or at least difficult to reverse, erase, or overcome. The principle known from the colloquial saying’s “what’s done is done” is here fully on point. A subject in the face of *fait accompli* is

someone who experiences not only a sense of surprise, dismay, opposition, but also a sense of helplessness, powerlessness. He finds himself in a situation with no way out, or at least with no good (dignified) way out.

A psychologist Tomasz Witkowski provides a good illustration of such a mechanism analyzing the shades of some marital disputes:

When the husband returns from a long business trip, he finds the apartment redecorated and painted. He is immediately furious because he has already discussed the matter with his wife, and they have agreed that they would postpone the renovation and redecorating until next spring and that they would pay off the mortgage. They were also planning a more thorough renovation and not just painting, so they would have to repeat what they had done now next year as well. Questions and allegations arise immediately. The wife starts justifying. "It was so dirty, and the furniture was really falling apart. I only wanted to do something for this house. Can't you understand that?" ... And at this point, a rather ugly procedure begins to unfold that turns the victim into the perpetrator! After all, this unfortunate woman was assaulted by her husband! After all, she wanted to do the right thing, and he, as usual, is cruel, angry, and insensitive. He attacked her again!¹

Thus, a unilateral action with lasting and costly consequences for the one who would like to reverse it is subversively discounted, usually by shifting responsibility and blame for the conflict to the other side of the conflict or just a difference of opinion. The one who wants to change the situation imposed on him without an agreement or in violation of one, turns out to be the perpetrator of unnecessary tension, the one who complicates a matter that has already been properly resolved, for it has been decided.

When the procedure repeats several times, God forbid in the presence of others, we have the image of a tyrant and his oppressed victim. The method of *faits accomplis* is even more perfidious than "all or nothing." In the latter, there is always the possibility of "getting out of annoying oppressions with a superhuman effort of will." In the case of *faits accomplis* there is no such possibility. The victim has two choices: / 1. Accept the status quo, which is tantamount to consenting to further "faits accomplis." / 2. Fight for the right to co-deciding, which in turn condemns the victim to playing the role of perpetrator.²

The imposed alternative is a schizoid "no way out" and a trap. After all, each of the possible behaviors in this state of affairs means a kind of legitimization of someone else's arbitrariness, a one-sided settling of the issue to the disadvantage

1 T. Witkowski, *Psychomanipulacje. Jak je rozpoznawać i jak sobie z nimi radzić*, Wrocław 2000, p. 145.

2 Witkowski, *Psychomanipulacje*, p. 146.

of the surprised and disregarded party. The first option has a well-known consequence: “give him an inch and he will take a mile.” Option two is no better: it resembles the situation of a car owner, who in this sense “bargains” that he buys back his property from the thief. Moreover, the defender of one’s property or the participant in a dispute over rights to something is placed in the role of a litigator, a troublemaker, and, consequently, the perpetrator of further troubles.

Unfortunately, the *faits accomplis* procedure is not limited to marital disagreements. Let us imagine a large company in which the members of the management board are fighting individually for their position in the eyes of their subordinates. One of the vice-presidents, responsible for for instance payroll policy, goes on a week-long vacation. When he comes back, it turns out that on the will of the president, the department directors have been granted very significant pay rises, moreover, their company cars have been exchanged for new ones and are at least a class higher. Imagine the look on the Vice President’s face when he returns from vacation... And now imagine the thoughts racing through his head... What decision should he actually make? Can he challenge the salary increases? If he dares to, it certainly won’t be in public. After all, the fact that they were granted during his absence quite clearly points to him as the person who is holding back salary increases. Will he be willing to publicly praise and accept the president’s decision? It is doubtful, unless he consciously exposes himself to the opinion of a conformist and sycophant who changes his views like a flag in the wind. If he so affirms the president’s decisions, why did he not make them himself, despite his authority in this respect? Whichever way you look at the problem, the victim of manipulation is in a big mess and one can suspect that his statements and reactions will be followed very closely. And the manipulator’s profits? Recognition and gratitude from the employees. After all, he took advantage of the vice-president’s absence to oppose his wage policy and do something for them, the employees.³

Now, let us put in the place of the president, vice-president, members of the board, and directors the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, and we will find ourselves in the realm of politics, on the terrain of inter-party or intra-party games, sometimes tormenting the ruling party. The decisions of the outgoing government, which is still uncertain of the election result or is expecting an election defeat - made on the account of its successors and substitutes look similar. It is quite a popular demagogic trick: it costs nothing to pass a buck in the form of a budgetary or tax obligation or some inconvenient (and perhaps even difficult or impossible to implement) law, which is supposed to be the merit of the old government and a problem for the new one as repealing the law

3 Witkowski, *Psychomanipulacje*, p. 146.

will expose them to public disapproval, while its non-implementation (failure to fulfill what they did not want and what was not their idea) to “principled” settlements.

A more common example of “fait accompli” is an unauthorized construction. Until recently, until the law was changed, people built wherever they wanted without paying much attention to permits. What a tyrant a court would be if it ordered the demolition of a dwelling house at a time when there was a housing crisis. Hence, we ended up with fines (anyway lower than the cost of legal construction) and many such “faits accomplis” stand till this day. There are at least a few in my immediate vicinity.⁴

The reason for legalizing such a doubly unlawful development (because it was carried out without a permit and in violation of legal, technological and ecological conditions required for each building) is trivial: recognition, first *de facto* and then *de jure*, of the results of an unlawful act costs less than an attempt to enforce the law.

In fact, we may generalize this factor: *faits accomplis* are a way of acting that involves transferring the costs of unilateral and arbitrary actions to the party in a legal relationship, armed conflict, or political dispute whose rights, interests, or demands have been disregarded and violated.

8. The Active Use of... Inertia

Tadeusz Kotarbinski insightfully presents the rationale for applying the method of *faits accomplis* in his praxeological writings, in the parts referring to the abstract, universal theory of combat.

When examining the basic methods used by people to increase the effectiveness of their actions, we find overt or covert illustrations of this rule [rule of *faits accomplis*]. It is somehow connected with a kind of inertia of reality, with the fact that in terms of many factors, things tend to remain what they are, and on the contrary, that bringing things out of the state in which they are in terms of one of these factors requires real effort. It follows that people who act often act as if they were acting according to the following rule: if you want things to be this way in the future and not that way, and if you can achieve this without hindrance right now, try to ensure from now on, in advance, that things are in the state you want them to be in, so that when objections arise, things will already have been arranged according to your will and that those who oppose it will be forced to change what you have done previously.⁵

4 Witkowski, *Psychomanipulacje*, pp. 146–147.

5 T. Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia, Część I*, Wrocław 1999, p. 163.

The key issue here is the balance of the relationship between pressure (effort, endeavor) and resistance. Therefore, the far-sightedness of conduct consists in either achieving something or taking some advantageous position before potential or already revealed opponents notice it, before they resist or prevent our moves, or to take action exposed to resistance at such a time and place that the resistance is less and insufficient; to push through one's efforts before that resistance becomes effective.

When we take a closer look, we see that the rule [of *faits accomplis*] requires a certain generalization. After all, not all things have a general tendency to persist. There are states of affairs prone to change. In these cases, the fact of having previously achieved a certain state of affairs could have the effect of making them behave quite differently at the moment in question. A person who wants sweet milk the day after tomorrow and prepares it for himself today will have only curdled milk the day after tomorrow. But these changes, such as a change in the quality of milk, occur regularly and things that have a tendency to change have a tendency to change in a certain way, to pass under certain conditions from a stage that exists at a given moment to another stage that is in a certain relation to the previous one.⁶

What conclusions will a politician draw from this? He will understand that in decisions and actions of macro-social importance and scope there is no freedom in choosing the subject, time, and place of forcing one's will and interests. It is not enough to be decisive and try to surprise others when we want to decide something in our own way and to our own advantage. A typical mistake that politicians make is a false start, moving prematurely and hastily ("faits that are unfortunately *accomplis*") or maneuvering and turning too fast for those on whom the success of the enterprise also depends on. Furthermore, this applies to politicians with an ultramaciavellian temperament and talent. Paradoxically, even outsmarting the surroundings may fail when the act of cunning becomes obsolete – following the imposed, galloping pace of events – faster than the "tricked" ones have time to notice it and realize the manipulator's plan with their foreseen reaction.

According to these conditions, when generalized, our last rule [of *faits accomplis*] will have the following form: he who wishes a certain state of affairs to come about after a certain time, should, before encountering obstacles, endeavor to reach beforehand such a stage in the development of the things to which this state refers, that same, lawful evolution will lead things to the desired stage, so that hostile forces will have to encounter resistance to the evolutionary tendency. It is obvious that if the evolution of

6 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 163.

things consists in leaving them unchanged in the aspect of interest to the acting subject, this rule is transformed into the previous rule [of the efficiency of action]. If the opposite conduct in question is carried out by an opponent who acts consciously against us, our rule becomes one of the rules of struggle.⁷

Thus, the optimal tactic of a subject intending to unilaterally impose something on its surroundings, or at least to guarantee something to itself while excluding those who will also be affected, involves such a course of action as to set in motion by artificial impulse the natural course of things. This is only seemingly an antinomy. Many social phenomena do not arise spontaneously, without the initiative or interference of certain subjects, but human action can become the first link in the chain of causes and effects and their correlates (accompanying phenomena). The ability of social control consists precisely in competent recognition, selection, and pulling of the appropriate lever and not in “manual steering.” A person who understands this can not only use occasional tactics of *faits accomplis* but also implement a long-term policy, a strategy of *faits accomplis*.

In the realm of disputes, that is of verbal warfare, the application of this rule is known in the form of the rule of overwhelming the opposing party with the burden of proof, *onus probandi*. This is because it is very important that our opinion has value without even being proven by us, while the opponent must prove his in order to gain recognition. In the courts, the law favors the accused over the prosecution whenever it applies the principle: *unusquisque praesumitur bonus, donec probetur contrarium*.⁸

The colloquial wisdom of “first come, first served” corresponds to this. First mover advantage may indeed give an overwhelming advantage, paradoxically to the weaker one in terms of potential, resources, or (as in debates and court trials or competitions) the quality of arguments. It may also work to the advantage to the more cunning one in maneuvers based on a simple rule: if I take it, he will not have it anymore, if I ask him first, before he starts questioning me (and he might have something to question me about), he will be forced to answer, and thus to agree to the imposed plane and topic of conversation. Kotarbiński illustrates this with an apt example of race and conspiracy behavior in personal-employment games:

In the field of political discussion, we know the application of our rule under the name of the principle of creating *faits accomplis*. It is applied in such a way that something

7 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 163–164.

8 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 164.

happens so that a particular man, and not someone else, is appointed to a position before the parties know of the existence of that vacancy and begin to support their candidates, and before the opponents make any effort, to the best of their ability, to make changes in that position.⁹

The case is similar in the games that accompany decisions that are no longer employment-related, but substantive and concern the disposal of goods, social resources, granting or withdrawing benefits, privileges, entitlements, basic rights, etc. In such situations, it is often the case that decisions are made in secret or that they are announced and set to take effect at a point in time that no longer allows for effective counteraction, suspension of implementation, or coordination with other decisions on related matters. For instance, on June 1, I notify you that on June 2 there will be an increase in prices.

However, moves of this kind are best known and widespread in diplomatic situations and warfare ones taken in cases of territorial conflict and as a tool of the policy of territorial expansion or conquest.

In armed combat, it is often very important to occupy a certain area militarily before anyone notices it and becomes concerned about it. The idea is that the enemy should later try to expel from the position the one who has occupied the area. It becomes obvious that we may regard our rule as the equivalent of the following postulate: it is necessary to ensure early on that the state of affairs we wish to achieve is defended by us at the moment when the enemy carries out an action against it, instead of being conquered in battle. It is necessary to face the adversary in the position of defenders who have something, instead of being attackers.¹⁰

This is because, people assume in such situations that it is easier to conquer something without resistance (for example, to occupy an undefended area, to make some decision as the first and only one, when no one is yet thinking of another) and to defend the conquest, which becomes our advantage and our additional armament, than to “take back” something or to master it while struggling against someone else’s counteraction.

If we take this rule in its entirety, we may call it the rule of *faits accomplis*. It is easy to see that this rule is one of the special cases of the postulate for the proper management of resources, and especially of the postulate for the conservation of forces. This results in mechanisms of reality and a given situation doing for us, at least partially, what would otherwise require special effort on our part. In this way, we may achieve beneficial results with relatively low resources.¹¹

9 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 164.

10 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 164.

11 Kotarbiński, *Dzieła Wszystkie, Prakseologia*, p. 164.

Therein lies the paradoxical essence of the tactic in question applied to specific situations as a one-time move. It is the active control of the inertia of phenomena. In the initiative provocation of putting the opposing side before the fait accompli, a twofold inertia is exploited. First, the inertia of the opponent's attitude. Since the opponent is surprised by an act of truculence or an unceremonious demonstration of power and what in everyday life is called cunning, his reaction is always delayed. The first instinct is to reason and respond to what has occurred as if the radical change had not yet occurred or as if the opponent had not noticed it, although this is only a difficulty in switching to new tracks, a trouble in getting used to a completely new situation. And even if the opponent has not stopped in the thinking and attitudes at the previous stage, opponent's consciousness is up to date with the change of situation. It was the ability to decide and react quickly has been disturbed by the emotions aroused, by too conflicting feelings and aspirations, by too many doubts. In addition, the opponent's motivation and determination is not as strong as that of the one who rushed to be the first one and block the other, for the opponent knows that while it takes a short time, for example, to break the terms of a truce, it takes a long time to try to enforce them and restore the status quo, and that there is a dubious guarantee of success. Second, the inertia of the state of affairs the provocateur has caused and the used resources work in his favor. For example, if the provocateur has blown up a bridge, it obviously takes less time to blow it up than to rebuild it and is rather difficult or impossible under fire from those who have quite literally burned the bridge behind them. One might say that a deceitful change rewards and privileges its perpetrator.

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I explained why we may work this way and why it may be so effective. Now, let us see how it is done, in what sense it is a provocation, and what kinds of provocations are intertwined in what is called a tactic or an ongoing policy of faits accomplis.

XVI. The Fais Accomplis Policy

The tactic of *fais accomplis* may be used not only on ad hoc basis in a particular case (on the basis that a brutal one-sided stand on one's own in a way settles and closes the case) but also in long-term actions calculated on the gradual dismantling of some social system or on gradual expansion, taking other people's property, territory, and symbolic goods (for example, traditions or identification marks of a community). Following this pattern may even be something more than a tactic in a game that can be decided in a predictable and short period of time. It may even be a *strategy*, a tool of far-sighted action of parties guided by a sense of historical mission, churches with ambitions to convert (that is capture) already "taken" followers, states planning territorial expansion, but also corporations fighting for markets and spheres of influence.

1. The Essence of the Fais Accomplis Policy

If this scheme of action becomes a rule (and not just an occasional tactic, perhaps even used "shamefully") and a tool for expanding and consolidating the influence of a subject by breaking the rules of the game, violating the status quo and imposing its own dominance, or at least defensive "individuality" and tenacity (we are not bound by the rules recognized in the environment, we do not recognize them, no one will force us to make concessions) then we are talking about the policy of *fais accomplis*. "We call a policy of *fais accomplis* its use in power struggles."¹²

In this respect I wish to correct Kotarbiński. It is too narrow a definition as it refers to only one context. Politics as such does not boil down to a struggle for power: it is a game played by the bearers of competing and opposing interests, which break the boundaries of equilibrium and integration of a given socioeconomic system, thus requiring selective regulation. Then, the subject of politics is not only the one who governs or intends to govern but anyone who is capable of articulating, representing, and forcing his own, others', and common interests in the public arena, even if he is unable or does not need to rule or govern for this purpose, and it is enough for him to exert effective pressure, influence limiting others, maintaining control over decision-making processes in matters of macro-social importance. Thus, the politics of *fais accomplis* is a strategy or tactic used not only in the struggle for power by individual contenders (and indeed, the road to dictatorship is usually a politics of *fais accomplis*) but also in

12 Kotarbiński, *Prakseologia, część I*, Wrocław 1999, p. 184.

attempts to realize the aspirations of those who have gained power and are using it in various spheres and for various purposes: to pacify or marginalize opponents, to appropriate the state (see: a dismantling of democracy), but also as a tool of external expansion.

However, not only political forces aspiring to gain or maintain power may use the policy of *faits accomplis*. It can also be a tool of pressure of powerful lobbies, business or labor associations, churches, national minorities concerned with guaranteeing their interests, but not through participation in power, but only through effective pressure and control over the policies of those in power or their potential replacements.

Finally, protest movements, especially those acting under the influence of a sense of determination and desperation, may also use the policy of *faits accomplis*. Observing various protest movements, movements for the protection of human rights, or revictimization actions based on blockades, pickets, and strikes, we often see (apart from spontaneous behavior) clearly coordinated and far-reaching forms of pressure according to the pattern of “salami tactics” (that is cutting off one slice at a time; force one after another without leaving any respite or time for attempts to freeze certain issues or postpone certain decisions).

Many of the changes in the political system were forced through the use of methods of pressure that oscillate between the “salami tactics” and the principle of “tightening the screw” (“We forced one thing? Now we will talk about something more serious”). And so, the political offensive of the Solidarity – halted and suppressed only by martial law – was based not only on a spontaneous but to a large extent on the deliberate escalation of demands and pressures, on a gradual accumulation of social conflict and progressing polarization. Thus, it also had the hallmarks of a policy of *faits accomplis*. Moreover, the radical economic reforms, personified by the “Balcerowicz Plan,” which were successfully implemented during the transformation process, had to a large extent (especially in the later stages, when social consent was melting away and the resistance of particular employee groups was growing) the features of the policy of *faits accomplis*.

2. A Race of Surprises and Their Recipients

The structural pattern of the politics of *faits accomplis* – as a gradual forcing of far-reaching political changes – resembles vividly the colloquial saying “give him an inch and he will take a mile.” For one concession or at least the lack of effective counteraction in one moment and on one issue does not end the matter as such, but on the contrary, it becomes a prelude to a whole series of subsequent attacks on the status quo and on the interests and even elementary rights of the

party making the concession. In this context, Kotarbiński aptly reminds us of the recurring template of colonial or semi-colonial conquests, which are carried out “in instalments” and are covered up by ad hoc, ever new pretexts.

In peacetime an innocent trade mission arrived in an exotic land, nobody's land from the viewpoint of the world's potential; a merchant ship simply brought a few crates loaded with goods. There is no question of any territorial conquests... But the natives are an uncertain and fickle element, they can attack. So, in order to protect their trade, the merchant needs an escort which is readily provided by the caring authorities of the metropolis. This does not entail any claims of superiority toward the new country. At least that is what the reassuring enunciations sound like. But soon a local incident occurs which requires the reinforcement and consolidation of power, and the banners of that power have already been raised on our island, which is under military control. It is now its colony, and if anyone is angry, let him try to take it back.¹³

The aggressor acts with impetus, but with self-control (self-restraint and self-discipline) taming his own impatience as a conqueror and ensuring that the growing satisfaction he experiences does not turn into defiant triumphalism before the finish. He graduates his capture so as not to arouse the victim's vigilance, frighten it or agitate it prematurely, which could unnecessarily increase resistance. The conqueror divides the conquest into stages so that the resistance is not continuous. This gives the conqueror an advantage: for while an attack in instalments may be effective and does not lose continuity of action or cumulative effects, resistance undertaken intermittently becomes futile. Each time, the resister gathers information and forces from the beginning, only belatedly reconstructing the sequence of events. Thus, the resister turns the analysis backwards, while the attacker runs forward with the thoughts and actions.

The initiator of change tears out the whole thing piece by piece or in several places simultaneously but separately so that the victim focuses on the individual pieces separately before the result of the addition becomes evident. With consistency and determination, the initiator pushes through to a pre-planned, far-reaching goal, which for him is obvious from the start, but for the victim is initially a mystery that only reveals itself over time. In this way, the initiator imposes and perpetuates an asymmetrical division of labor in this strange cooperation. The initiator guarantees himself initiative, flexibility, and foresight, while his opponent-victim is condemned to inertia, inability to keep up, and either short-sightedness or helplessness in the face of the prospects he perceives.

13 Kotarbiński, *Prakseologia, część I*, p. 184.

This is an essential attribute of the policy of *faits accomplis*. The reactions of the attacked side, faced with moves that are surprising and difficult to reverse *post factum*, are always delayed, mostly indecisive, hesitant, and inconsistent. Moreover, even if they were rational, adequate to the threat posed and the losses already suffered, the attacker still retains the advantage of anticipation. Before the victim reacts (even if accurately and consistently) to the first act of breaking some rules or obligations, of violating the status quo, the next, more far-reaching act is already taking place, which in a way overturns the sense or possibility of the first protest or counteraction, objectivizes the artificially determined first state and forces to protest or negotiate the next step.

This image is typical of the repertoire of the recurrent history of external politics. It is easy to find its counterpart in the recurring incidents of internal politics. For example, let us imagine a situation in which the government can bring order to relations in each sphere either by submitting a draft law to parliament or by issuing a decree that may later be cancelled by parliament if this institution is not satisfied with it. When opposition is expected from the legislature, the government proclaims the decree as a *fait accompli*. As long as the body of deputies has not been assembled, the decree will remain in force without legal opposition, and then, once it has taken root, it will not be so easy to remove it; especially since a sufficient majority to overturn a decree that is already in force may not be formed, when, on the contrary, it would be relatively easy to form a majority capable of overturning a proposal with identical content.¹⁴

Such a method of arbitrary rule is particularly effective when a unilateral political decision smuggled in by procedural tricks or ostentatiously pushed through in defiance of various protests and warnings gives rise to serious legal consequences (for instance, financial obligations of the state, numerous administrative decisions regulating and sanctioning a certain state of affairs, such as the property of certain social groups), while its reversal would entail both measurable additional social costs and resistance from groups that first benefited from something and then had to bear the losses. Such a way of proceeding is particularly popular among politicians of authoritarian orientation and demagogic temperament. They disarm their opponents by “buying” public approval or even support for certain spectacular moves and by exposing them to a situation in which fighting these moves in the name of superior principles would be to the detriment of those “bought.” For while it is not the case that literally every beneficiary of a demagogic decision has been “bought,” meaning he feels gratitude and identification with the “benefactor” and will be resistant to any attempt to

14 Kotarbiński, *Prakseologia, część I*, p. 184.

restore the rule of law and justice that would deprive him of the benefits he has obtained (however morally or legally undue).

3. Peaceful “Recoveries” of the Third Reich

A perceptive and almost exemplary lesson in the effective politics of faits accomplis is the offensive of German diplomacy in the 1930s, which in a short period of time removed all important relics of the Versailles order: beginning with the legal victory in the plebiscite and the regaining of the Saarland, through the legalization of the armaments of the German army prohibited by the Versailles Treaty, restoring its offensive potential and character, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and finally the annexations carried out by peaceful means and “in the name of the law.”

The experience of this period confirms that an ostentatious and cynical policy of faits accomplis is all the more successful if it is supported by a twisted, hypocritical, and short-sighted policy of appeasement at any price, devoid of forward thinking and elementary responsibility. Hitler and his allies were politicians who in principle relied on the factor of force and ruthlessness. However, at this stage their strength was not so much their own power (still under construction) as the weakness and only seeming resistance on the part of politicians then in power in France and the United Kingdom, representing adaptationist attitudes, crassness and ad hoc particularism instead of the statesmanlike qualities required by the growing threat of war.

Several years after the First World War, step by step, Hitler and his allies underlined the solutions imposed by the victorious powers to prevent the restoration of Germany’s military potential and its territorial expansion with the guarantors of balance and peace taking a passive and adaptive stance. Already the pre-Hitlerite governments were striving for a gradual dismantling of the international tutelage over Germany and for the restoration of Germany’s full sovereignty and superpower status. Politicians of the NSDAP made this a priority and acted unceremoniously: first, without inhibition and with little concern for keeping up appearances, creating facts that contradicted the externally imposed restrictions (expansion of the army, armaments in all fields, with emphasis on the most modern offensive weapons in the land, sea and air forces) and then, with aggressive propaganda and diplomatic pressure, forcing their legalization under international law.

The Declaration of the Five Powers on German Equality of December 1932 did not mean the abolition of the disarmament clauses binding Germany and contained in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. It merely stated that the Geneva Conference and the

disarmament convention being prepared there should be guided by the principle of granting Germany and “other powers disarmed under the Treaties” equality in armaments. However, this was to be done gradually, under international supervision, in the process of further negotiations between the victorious powers and Germany. Thus, the declaration was a general announcement of a decision, which, however, did not take a binding shape, because the Geneva Conference did not manage to adopt the Disarmament Convention. / Hitler, who from the beginning intended to free himself from the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty, could not do so immediately and had to wait for a more favorable international situation.¹⁵

Thus, German claims to change the status of German areas under international control and to German “equality” in the military sphere were made and pursued gradually, formally (until a certain point) not being a policy of confrontation and challenge, but a skillful game in which inconsistent British and French politicians were drawn in. It began with the conflict-free and legal restoration of German sovereignty in the Saarland. Further steps required repeated transgressions of the boundaries of the Versailles international legal order.

The talks between the French Prime Minister Pierre-Etienne Flandin and Foreign Minister Laval in London were important for the evolution of Western policy toward the Third Reich. As a result, a joint communiqué was published on February 3, 1935, which showed that both countries were already ready to abolish the disarmament clauses of the peace treaty, but under certain conditions. As a result of France’s insistence, it included a postulate to continue talks on the establishment of a system of mutual security guarantees with German participation, along the lines of Barthou’s project (the Eastern Pact). Both countries also agreed that Germany could not unilaterally abrogate the disarmament restrictions imposed at Versailles. In their communiqué of February 3, the leaders of France and the United Kingdom formulated the idea of concluding the so-called Locarno Air Pact, an air pact between the signatories of the Rheinland Pact that guaranteed mutual assistance of air forces should one of them become an object of unprovoked aggression by another treaty member. In the proposed pact, United Kingdom and Italy played a different role – not only as states providing security guarantees, but also benefiting from such guarantees given to them by other allies.¹⁶

These are features typical of the game between “tough guys” and “wimps.” The wimp makes principled tirades, confirms the validity of certain norms, warns, then smoothly gives way by proposing negotiations on matters already regulated,

15 W. Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, Warsaw 1996, p. 407.

16 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 408.

to save face sets conditions for negotiations, and then swallows – with the phrase “no unilateral moves!” – completely unilaterally imposed a new state of affairs and a new starting point for these negotiations. With his good-natured attitude, the coward lends credence to the dictate. This is accompanied by a highly original innovation: the guardians of order, who are particularly obliged to watch over the one who questions and violates this order, ask the violator to protect them too!

These arrangements were communicated to Germany in the form of a single coherent whole. However, Germany was willing to accept only certain points. The proposal to join the air pact, implying the official possession of an air force forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles was welcomed in Germany. On the other hand, Germany resented maintaining international control over armaments and the Eastern Pact Therefore, the answer that Minister Neurath gave on February 14 was evasive. However, in general, the London communicate seemed so encouraging to Germany that it invited British Foreign Minister Simon to visit Berlin on March 7. The meeting did not take place on that date, because on March 4 the British government published the *White Book*, which not only warned against large-scale German armaments, but also drew attention to the resurgence of a militaristic spirit in the process of educating young people in Germany. Therefore, it called for a plan to increase Britain's defense capabilities. On the other hand, France extended compulsory military service from one and a half to two years.¹⁷

Such moves have a clear message: “Just don't think it will go easy with us, that we will be fooled or frightened. We know what is coming, we are on guard, we are prepared.” However, such behavior belongs to the ritualistic sphere. It is a demonstration of self-esteem, dignity, self-assurance, reminding that “we have to be reckoned with.” It may also belong to the sphere of negotiation tactics (a tender with the other party should be preceded by flexing the muscles, creating respect, which should curb excessive appetites). Then it is similar to raising the asking price before the transaction. However, if such demonstrations are not followed by actions: concrete moves and a consistent sequence of decisions turn out to be ritual gestures and, from a practical viewpoint, an unreliable bluff.

Both events, properly used in German propaganda, precipitated the announcement of Hitler's decision. On Saturday, March 9, 1935, Goering officially announced that Germany had military aviation, which was forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. At the same time, a proposal was forwarded to London that British politicians would arrive in Berlin on March 25 for talks on armament matters. On March 13, Minister Simon agreed to this. On the following Saturday, March 16, 1935, Berlin announced the decision of the

17 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, pp. 408–409.

Third Reich government to create the armed forces. From then on, it was on Saturdays that Hitler announced important decisions. The note said: "Service in the armed forces shall be on the basis of universal military obligation (Article 1). The German army is divided into 12 corps and 36 divisions, including the police forces, on a peacetime basis (Article 2)." This meant that the German army would number over 500,000 men, which was more than the French army.¹⁸

What then remained of the demilitarization of Germany? What were the limitations sustained for the German ruling party, whose program was known to herald historic revenge and expansion?

Inviting the British and omitting the French was a clear, not to say intrusive, tactical (diversionary) maneuver, calculated to take advantage of the incomplete loyalty and solidarity of the allies, through which the element of rivalry shines through. When the former agree to separate talks – even if they later report back to their partners – the latter no longer have any room for maneuver and must play their game within the framework imposed by the situation.

The West's reaction to the end of the imitation game over Germany's supposed disarmament was very characteristic.

The violation of the Treaty of Versailles caused great consternation in the West. France made an official protest and demanded that a League of Nations Council be convened. However, before this happened, British politicians Simon and Eden visited Berlin on March 24–26. During the talks, Hitler declared to the surprised British that the Luftwaffe was already equal to the RAF, but that it should be given parity with the aviation of France, counted in the metropolis and colonies combined. If England felt it had a weaker air force, it could augment it to the French level, Hitler proposed. It was agreed that matters of the proportion of naval armaments of the two countries would be the subject of bilateral negotiations in London.¹⁹

Quite a tense atmosphere, was it not? In the case of a breach of certain rules or obligations requiring a rigorous response, the best results are to amplify the shock, impose a sharp tempo and self-policing, that is to outdo oneself before the party surprised by such a turn of events has time to react in accordance with what it is obliged to do. Therefore, "we inform you not only that we have aviation, which you have forbidden us to have, but in addition that we have as many planes as you do." Further escalation was pure insolence: "we have already equaled one

18 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 409.

19 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 409.

of the allies, but we have to have enough to balance both of them, that is, to have as much as both of them together and more than each of them separately.” To the relief of this aroused consternation comes the kind, intrusive hint: chase to your ally, equalize with him or try to surpass him in potential (a consistent play on the incomplete sincerity of the British-French “friendship”)

Simon’s report on the Berlin talks became one of the topics at the meeting of the leaders of the three powers: France, England, and Italy. The meeting took place at Mussolini’s invitation in Stresa, a small town in northern Italy, from 11 to 14 April 1935. The Italian-French-British resolution, announced on the closing day of the meeting, was an overview of the major problems involving German policy. The participants agreed upon: 1. a common line of action in connection with the French Government’s complaint to the Council of the League of Nations; 2. support for further negotiations on the Eastern Pact; 3. a stance on the position of Austria; 4. support for the idea of an air pact among the five Western European states, as proposed in the London Communiqué of February 3; 5. an attitude toward German armaments. On this latter point, the resolution stated among other things that: “The representatives of the three Governments have stated with regret that the method of unilaterally cancelling agreements employed by the German Government at a time when attempts were being made to bring about a settlement of the arms question based on free bargaining, has seriously shaken public confidence in the permanence of the peaceful order of things.” Moreover, the participants announced the Stresa Front confirming that the three powers would oppose “by all appropriate means any unilateral violation of the treaties which might jeopardize the peace of Europe.” A separate British-Italian Declaration stated that Italy and United Kingdom were determined to fulfill all the obligations they had undertaken as guarantors of the Rhineland Pact.²⁰

The firmness of these declarations was inversely proportional to actual will and force of will. It was a rhetorical veil for the real intentions of both sides (“we’ll wait and see”).

France’s complaint about Germany’s conduct was considered at a meeting of the League of Nations Council, which on April 17, 1935, passed a resolution against its arbitrary remilitarization, in which it condemned Germany for violating its obligations. The Council appointed a committee of 13 countries, including Poland, to propose measures that would “make the League of Nations Pact more effective in organizing collective security.” / The League of Nations Council’s resolution was met with vehement criticism from Hitler. In a famous speech on May 21, 1935, Hitler primarily attacked the Franco-Soviet Agreement of May 2 and the Franco-Czechoslovak Agreement of May 16 of that year. Hitler considered it to be a military alliance against Germany, much like

20 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, pp. 409–410.

the agreements between France and Russia before The First World War Moreover, Hitler accused France of acting in a manner inconsistent with the Rhineland Pact.²¹

This was just distorting the facts typical for the Nazi propaganda. Defense treaties (to which the Third Reich had given cause) were presented as acts of potential aggression. This sophistry was of course counterbalanced by declarations of peaceful intent and readiness to seek solutions to balance the power in Europe.

London perceived the speech of the leader of the Third Reich positively, so on June 4, the British-German naval armament talks began. At the outset, the head of the German delegation, Joachim von Ribbentrop, demanded that the tonnage of the German naval fleet could reach 35% of that of the British fleet. Minister Simon tried to dispute this, but the Germans refused to make any concessions. Eventually, in a treaty signed in London on June 18, 1935, England agreed that the ratio of the German fleet would be 35:100. Germany was also granted the right to build submarines (U-boats) at a ratio of 100:100.²²

The classic model of negotiation as an attempt to agree or bargain for more or less mutual concessions (“let’s meet halfway”) has taken on peculiar parameters here: halfway means on the other side.

Churchill, a member of the British Parliament at the time, writes that before this treaty was signed, the Admiralty discovered that Germany had secretly built two battleships, “Scharnhorst” and “Gneisenau.” “Faced with such a brazen and fraudulent violation of a peace treaty that had been planned and begun at least two years earlier (in 1933), the Admiralty thought it would be worthwhile to conclude an Anglo-German naval agreement. His Majesty’s Government took this step without consulting its ally France and without informing the League of Nations. At the same time that he was appealing to the League of Nations and winning the support of its members to protest Hitler’s breach of the military clauses of the Treaty, he himself intended, by concluding a private agreement, to disregard the maritime clauses of the same Treaty.”²³

In terms of the British government’s conduct toward its own people and allies, it is colloquially referred to as a suicide. Having outsmarted its surroundings (so as not to interfere with a quick settlement of the dispute) this government outsmarted itself, as it was soon to find out.

21 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 410.

22 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 410.

23 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 410.

The naval treaty was a great success for Germany, because it shattered the unity of the Western nations demonstrated by the Stresa Front. The United Kingdom unilaterally approved the naval armaments of the Third Reich, which practically could no longer be controlled.²⁴

Thus, parasitic provocation also became an element of the German strategy: the unilateral imposition and perpetuation of political change was accomplished not only through the initiators' own moves, but also with someone else's hands, through unilateral acts of allied disloyalty and particularism.

German diplomacy was just warming up: While the world was preoccupied with the Italian aggression in Abyssinia, Hitler saw fit to pursue his next objective: the remilitarization of the Rhineland. From a military viewpoint, this was an extremely risky operation and his generals warned Hitler of the disastrous consequences it would entail. Churchill commented on the situation as follows: "If the French Government had mobilized its army, numbering nearly 100 divisions, and its entire air force – still erroneously regarded as the strongest in Europe – the German General Staff would have forced Hitler to retreat. A similar curbing of Hitler's ambitions would most likely have dealt a fatal blow to his power. It should not be forgotten that at this period France alone was strong enough to drive the Germans out of the Rhineland even without the help that United Kingdom would have given it if France had taken such measures, and in view of its obligations under the Treaty of Locarno." (W. Churchill, 216). Not surprisingly, Hitler considered the first 48 hours after entering the Rhineland to be the most nervous of his entire life. However, it turned out that Hitler's intuition was not wrong: the Western powers did not initiate any concrete actions, and the Fascist regime, which could have collapsed at that point, grew even stronger. It can hardly be said that the action taken by Germany was unexpected. As early as February 1935, in a conversation with the French and English ambassadors, the German Chancellor announced decisive action on the Rhineland question. In December of the same year, Hitler declared that he regarded the Franco-Soviet "military alliance" as a direct threat to Germany, and therefore any consideration of an "air Locarno" was pointless. Later, during French Foreign Minister Pierre-Etienne Flandin's visit to London, consideration was given to how the two countries would proceed if the status of the Rhineland was violated, although this had been established in the Rhineland Pact.²⁵

The allies-guarantors of the status quo functioned in a bizarre way. Since the pact unambiguously specifies what they are jointly and mutually obliged to do in a situation that has long been foreseen, and so it has long been obvious what

24 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 410.

25 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 411.

they are supposed to do, they begin a seminal discussion, exercise their mental agility with interpretive disputes, and consider possible variants of action. And the perpetrator of this confusion feels the incentive to quietly carry out his plan.

However, even in such a situation it is advisable, since it is only one stage of the offensive – and not an end in itself – that the action in violation of international legal norms be presented not as a unilateral challenge (“we enter because we like it and because you can do nothing to us”), but as an act justified by higher reason and necessity. The premeditated action is shielded and elevated by a parasitic pretextual provocation: the invocation of circumstances that compel us to deviate from what others neglect.

The immediate pretext to justify the Rhineland decision was the ratification by the French Parliament on February 27, 1936 of the treaty with the USSR signed in May 1935. Hitler saw this as a violation of the Rhineland Pact by France, although all other signatories had a different opinion on the matter. Despite this, Minister Flandin immediately announced that France was prepared to refer the question of the interpretation of the treaty with the USSR to the Permanent Court of International Justice and to submit to its verdict. On Saturday, March 7, 1936, as German troops were entering the Rhineland, Neurath handed the ambassadors of France, United Kingdom, Belgium, and Italy a memorandum charging France with responsibility for the violation of the Rhineland Pact. “Violating the Locarno Pact, France responded by concluding a military alliance with the Soviet Union, directed exclusively against Germany. Thanks to this, the Pact of Rheinland, concluded in Locarno, lost its internal meaning and in practice ceased to exist.” Moreover, the memorandum contained a whole set of proposals, including, among other things, Germany’s readiness to conclude a twenty-five-year-long non-aggression pact with France and Belgium and similar bilateral pacts with its eastern neighbors; the creation of a demilitarized zone on Germany’s borders with France and Belgium; and the signing of an air pact with Western countries to “prevent the danger of a sudden attack from the air.”²⁶

It is a very efficient, even doubly efficient rationalization, because the chosen pretext not only provided justification for arbitrary, unilateral action, thus violating the international legal order and ignoring other interested parties in the matter, but it also allowed for an excellent effect in the propaganda offensive. A smooth role reversal took place: a country hitherto subjected to control and isolation as a source of threat to security and peace in Europe appears in the role of hegemon, as the initiator and coordinator of a new security system. And the

26 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, pp. 411–412.

reaction of the other side? Perhaps someone has noticed that a new leader is emerging?

The German proposals were taken seriously, and as early as Sunday, March 8, hasty consultations began in Paris and London. Initially, it seemed that France would take some steps, but decisions were delayed while waiting for a clear position from the United Kingdom. However, London stressed that no chance of saving the peace, no matter how small, could be ignored. Nevertheless, if France took military steps, the United Kingdom would fulfill its obligations. However, since the violation of the peace treaties by Germany was obvious, the West had to take a stand.²⁷

Looking at the partner is a finesse method of prevarication tried and tested for centuries: "I will do my duty as soon as my ally does it." It is done with full reciprocity; with gallantry like that of gentlemen at the door: "After you, Sir."

Articles 42, 43, and 44 of the Treaty of Versailles provided for the demilitarization of the Rhineland remaining within German borders, both on the left bank of the Rhine and in a 50 kilometers strip east of that river. In the Locarno Agreement (the Rhineland Pact), which Germany signed voluntarily, these decisions were taken again. The Locarno Agreement stated that if the Rhineland arrangements were violated, "immediate action is necessary, whether because the border is overrun, because hostilities have begun, or because armed forces have accumulated in the demilitarized zone." The first reaction to the entry of German troops into the Rhineland was a complaint submitted by France and Belgium to the League of Nations. Subsequently, representatives of France, Belgium, United Kingdom, and Italy met in London, where they announced a "text of proposals" to Germany on March 19, 1936. It called on Germany to submit the issue of the relationship between the Franco-Soviet Pact and the Rhineland Pact to the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague. It also called on Germany to refrain from further sending troops to the Rhineland. It was further proposed that Germany enter negotiations to revise the status of the Rhineland. In the interim period before such negotiations took place, it was decided to "make all necessary arrangements" for the creation of an international military force which "with the consent of all the states concerned" (and, therefore, Germany) would garrison a twenty-kilometer strip in Germany adjacent to the Franco-German border. Regardless, it was decided to: "bring before the Council of the League of Nations, on the basis of Article 11 of the Pact, the matter of Germany's unilateral action, which constitutes a threat to European security and endangers peace."²⁸

27 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 412.

28 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, pp. 412-413.

It would sound anecdotal if one were to abstract from the implications of such verbal pseudo-principledness. How would it be possible for one who does not enforce his own obligations to enforce others' obligations (even automatically, by following the norms of the Treaty)? The response to the accumulation of unilateral violations turned out to be not the decisive practical reaction envisaged by the treaty, but an operetta-like spectacle of helplessness dressed up in the costume of principledness: a complaint, then "proposals," appeals, an offer of negotiations – in a matter already practically settled by the German incursion – "preparations" for filling the occupied territory and taking the matter before the highest international instance. From Berlin's perspective, these moves looked like a soap opera and could only reassure German politicians that they will succeed. Hitler's leaders and diplomats might have thought to themselves: "Keep it up, don't let go."

Seeing that the Western states were incapable of any action, Germany disregarded the London proposals and found the idea of temporarily establishing a zone in Germany under international supervision outrageous. / In March, the Council of the League of Nations also took up the matter of the Rhineland and invited the German representative to its meeting. The representative was Ribbentrop who in a long speech commented on the arguments presented by Germany in the memorandum of March 7. The League of Nations Council limited itself to a statement condemning Germany's unilateral violation of the treaties but did not pass any sanctions against Germany.²⁹

Thus, by putting matters on a razor's edge, the formally weaker side which was subject to the tutelage of the superpowers – victors of the First World War – actively and practically proved that it was far more determined, consistent, cunning, cynical, and perfectly recognized the inhibitions and inertia of the less zealous winners of the previous war. Step by step, the leaders of the Third Reich quickly lifted the successive restrictions imposed on Germany with a view to preventing the restoration of its military potential and expansionist tendencies.

Already with this peaceful offensive, which allowed for regaining lost positions and strengthening them, German politicians revealed their expansiveness. It really took a great deal of naivety or at any rate wishful thinking (in the style of Prime Minister Chamberlain) to expect that the policy pursued under the slogan of appeasement would provide security for the West (at the expense of the East, because the green light was given for such developments) satisfy the appetites of the NSDAP and prevent another war. In fact, the opposite happened.

29 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 413.

Shortly thereafter, in 1938–1939, by the same policy of *faits accomplis*, preying on the same incorrigibly wishful and short-sighted tactics of appeasement by the United Kingdom and France, the Third Reich government secured for itself equally unpunished “peaceful conquests” in the form of the annexation of Austria, the Munich Agreement sanctioning the incorporation of the Sudetenland, and finally the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, the absorption of the Czech Republic, and the vassalization of Slovakia. The invasion of Poland and the blitzkrieg campaign-pogrom in 1940 formed the bill that the Western allies paid for their programmatic defeatism. By its very nature, the policy of evasion, prevarication and successively rationalized unilateral concessions cannot be a counterbalance to a policy of *faits accomplis*, that is an aggressive, unceremonious escalation of unilateral moves that violate normative limits for particularist expansion and arbitrariness.

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From the viewpoint of the structural typology of provocation adopted earlier (see Chapter Five) the politics of *faits accomplis* is a *unilateral multistage cumulative provocation*. The accumulation of effects (as if in geometric progression) is possible by the fact that the initiative provocation not only imposes a specific direct result, but also turns out to be a trap, as it draws the addressee of the influence into a game whose further course he usually does not anticipate, and whose pace he is unable to follow.

XVII. Faits Accomplis as a Tangle of Provocations

It is time for a synthesis. We should answer several questions: Why do we consider *faits accomplis* a form of provocation? What distinguishes this form of provocation from others? What is the character and profile of this form of provocation from the viewpoint of the structural and functional typology of provocation adopted earlier?

1. The Model Mechanism for Creating Faits Accomplis

The core (though not enunciated in any code) principle of those who want to get their way by using both force and deceit is this: it is much more difficult to reverse, cancel, repair, or compensate for what has already happened than to prevent it. This generalization is related to knowledge applied to positive intentions, such as medical ones. As we know, to treat means to help and not to harm. Any doctor will tell us that it is better to prevent diseases and infirmities than to treat them once they have occurred. Admittedly, in political struggle (and in many other forms of negative cooperation, especially in the economic sphere, in the struggle for investments, concessions, tax rates, tariffs and reliefs) it is not uncommon that we are forced to react precisely to what we could not prevent, even if we could have imagined it beforehand.

Let us refer again to the writings of Kotarbiński and to his concretization of praxeology on the grounds of the theory of struggle.

What, then, does the creation of *faits accomplis* consist in? In short, it is about preparing for negative cooperation by taking a privileged position so that the opponent is forced into a negative position. Hereby, I am explaining a new concept: one takes a privileged position in the pursuit of situation B if, and only if, one has previously created situation A which, by virtue of fixed regularities in the succession of events, leads to situation B either without one's own intervention or with an involvement limited to surveillance either purely or combined with intervention. Similarly, we may consider a person to be in a negative position if at the time of the initiation of negative cooperation he is in such a position that a transition from him to the goal the person wishes to achieve can only be reached by engaging efforts beyond the limits of inertia. The most striking cases of the privileged situation are those in which B arises from A through a simple inertial continuation of what already exists.³⁰

30 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, pp. 344–345.

Kotarbiński does not use the word “surveillance” in the narrow sense of policing but with its original meaning in mind: “vigilance, watchful observation of something (undertaken by anyone, not necessarily by secret services or policemen) with a view to maintaining control over it.”

Inertial continuation is an important component of facts accomplished serially and in an avalanche manner. A passenger who took an unreserved seat in a class higher than the one entitled to it, and who eagerly reported it and legalized his initiative with a surcharge, not only prevents another passenger, who later appeared with an adequate ticket, from taking this seat but also acquires various rights and privileges, for instance eating the company’s refreshments in a comfortable position in the compartment, while his late competitor can at most enjoy the same in the corridor, replacing the table with a suitcase. At first, a tenant who has settled in an apartment or house abandoned by unknown or elusive owners and their heirs disturbs no one, pays maintenance fees, over time acquires rights to the premises or building through a statutorily defined “inheritance,” and then – although he has taken over someone’s property for free – bargains for high compensation in the event of necessary eviction (for example, due to road widening, highway construction).

Things are similar in politics. For example, a temporary administration of a disputed territory by a state is legalized by a mandate of an international organization (of course, only temporarily) until the status is settled, a peace treaty, or a referendum among its inhabitants. Within the framework of this temporary administration, the most permanent civil and military buildings and defensive installations are erected, numerous civil servants, doctors, teachers, police officers, and of course their families, are recruited from the mother country, and finally the temporary administration results in a permanent change of the ethnic structure. Now it is even possible to demand that this long announced and necessary plebiscite of the population happen.

Here are some examples of creating faits accomplis. In a conflict over a given territory, we occupy that territory in advance: it remains in our hands on an inertial basis, and we will only have to ensure that our opponent does not take it from us. In a conflict over a given territory, we must occupy it at an early stage: it remains in our hands on an inertial basis, whereas we will only have to ensure that our opponent does not take it from us.³¹

31 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 345.

Among other things, that is what such advantage consists in in the form of a privileged situation. Usually, it is not a privilege in the legal sense, made in accordance with the rules of law, which must be recognized as legal by the party deprived of such privileges or even directly or indirectly harmed by someone else's privileges. In this case, we are dealing with an arbitrary, unilateral and, in addition, unlawful self-privileging of a party to the conflict, unacceptable on a moral or legalistic basis, but recognized as a result of the unfavorable balance of forces, at least temporary weakness and helplessness of the harmed party. At the same time, an unlawful act of taking, appropriating, or, for example, a personnel decision which is procedurally defective and violates established customs and criteria. or requirements for a nominee often turns out to be a trap for the other party, because in the case of undertaking not a counterattack but a negotiation, it is forced to legitimize this lawlessness taking as a basis the "actual state of affairs" with its various consequences and entanglements. After all, the starting point of negotiations is not the refusal to acknowledge one or another unacceptable fact, but on the contrary, the establishment of a consensual definition of the object and scope of bargains and concessions, which presupposes that the fact that we want to invalidate cannot immediately be considered "nonexistent."

In a lawsuit, those who succeed in presenting their case in such a way that they enjoy the so-called *praesumptio iuris* [presumption of law, for example presumption of entitlement] are in a privileged position, as the *onus probandi* [obligation to prove one's case, for instance burden of proof for charges, accusations or arguments that contradict something] is on the opponent's side. In commercial competition, the advantage goes to the one who delivers the goods to the customer first: inertia will work in his favor, while the competitor will have to go through a lot of trouble to remove from the market products that are already there.³²

Thus, the arbitrary self-privileging of the perpetrator of *faits accomplis* consists in his securing of a double benefit for himself: first, the perpetrator allocates, captures for himself, or takes from others certain goods (first-degree benefit), and then his obtaining of these benefits and this favorable state of possession guarantees a subsequent benefit in the form of a better starting position either in negotiations or in the next trial of strength.

32 Dobrzycki, *Historia stosunków międzynarodowych w czasach nowożytnych 1815-1945*, p. 345.

2. Faits Accomplis as a Challenge

Acting by faits accomplis has all the attributes of a challenge (see Chapter Four). It is an ostentatious demonstration of stubbornness (“I have made my point”) and bad will, a disregard for the other party’s expectations, a sense of one’s own superiority (“I outsmarted you, I surprised you”) and impunity. However, this is not just about emotional, spiteful, and stubborn satisfaction. It is accompanied by a very rational, cool calculation, which shows that such unceremonious behavior pays off, because it allows one either to obtain a better position in the tender (“I start not from the initial, worse, less favorable position, but from the better one, which I secured for myself with my arbitrary move”) or even to determine the outcome of the game at all instead of reaching a compromise or making concessions from part of the obtained benefits and gains. This is possible because the faits accomplis created by a unilateral move are either very difficult to undo as this requires special additional effort associated with high costs that sometimes call into question the sense of such an attempt, or it may even be impossible.

In this sense, we may call a provocateur someone who does not necessarily make any gestures or other signs (like statements) that are offensive, does not formulate polemical arguments in relation to the assessments and claims of opponents, but only “does his job” without paying attention to anyone’s calls for consultations, negotiations, appeals to refrain from decisions or actions, protests, warnings, threats, and behaves as if the opponents did not exist (which in itself is extremely offensive) or as if they had nothing to say on the matter. Moreover, such a person provokes also in the sense that he himself determines what should be agreed upon or at least decided upon under social control, and in the sense that he stimulates the surroundings to an unfavorable change of attitude toward the defeated opponent (as someone helpless, therefore worthy of compassion or even contempt, but not respect, esteem or admiration). Moreover, such a person provokes in the sense that he puts the recipient of its self-will to a severe test, arousing in him the usual mixed feelings (surprise, opposition, indignation, anger, doubt in his own chances, fear of ridicule, isolation, hesitation about potentially risky or in any case ineffective countermeasures).

Hence, a provocateur is also a person who unilaterally pushes through his will and advantage, especially at someone else’s expense, not limiting himself to practical actions without commentary but transforming arbitrariness into a demonstration with separate accompanying symbolic signs, statements, propaganda campaigns, thus emphasizing his intention and putting foot down against any opponents and against the rules of the game. At the same time, the provocateur emphasizes his intention to humiliate the opponents, to put them in a situation

psychologically and morally difficult to bear in view of their prestige, honor, dignity, and even elementary conditions of identity and security.

3. Unilateral Resolution, Settlement, and “Outbidding”

Another reason for considering the method of *faits accomplis* as a variant of provocation – coupled with challenging others – is that the perpetrator guarantees himself the ability to arbitrarily and unilaterally decide on and prejudge solutions in matters in which several parties are interested and whose non-confrontational resolution requires cooperation and agreement on a joint multilateral decision. This does not always involve self-proclaiming or overstepping authority to decide in some way binding on others. More often, it takes the form of a unilateral and, as a result, arbitrary move in matters previously agreed or requiring agreement. Thus, it is an attempt to impose one’s own position, a solution to a dilemma or dispute, favorable to oneself, through an arbitrary and uncoordinated move, one anticipating the behavior of partners (rivals, opponents) and contradicting their rationally justified expectations. The effectiveness of such a conduct without sanction or even the appearance of legal sanction and legitimacy is assured on another principle: post factum discussion is unnecessary as something already happened, everyone already knows how it is and how it will be.

This relates to the factors of *insurance* and *bidding*. The perpetrator of *faits accomplis* is rarely convinced that what he forced through or smuggled out is literally and completely irreversible, that it finally decides something. Willingly or unwillingly, the perpetrator counts with the risk of miscalculating the balance of forces, efficiency, and determination of the opponent and the fact that the external pressure of other forces may make the perpetrator withdraw from the taken positions and give up the deceitfully achieved profits. Even if the matter, which the provocateur tried to settle unilaterally, came back to some arbitration or to a two-sided game without intermediaries, he would be sure that in a new game – for instance in a tender, negotiations, or even in a mutual demonstration of forces – he would begin from a position adjusted in his favor. This is because what the provocateur has accomplished and what is now to be reviewed has in any case changed the balance of power and imposed a new starting point. We see this effect clearly, for example, in border disputes between states. The unilateral violation of truce, crossing the demarcation line and occupying a new part of the enemy’s territory becomes a favorable basis for “bargaining” on a new level. In this situation, even a concession will already mean a profit, for example “we will

withdraw to the old line in exchange for a concession on another issue, or: as a sign of good will, we will give you half of the newly acquired territory.”

4. “Faits Accomplis” as a Type of Extortion

“Faits accomplis” are a particular form of extortion in many ways:

- (1) A fait accompli *anticipates and prevents other facts*: someone’s intended actions or possible events with an alternative focus. As a result of a preventive move, the victims are left to acknowledge what has happened and the consequences of the move. Usually – whether the victims want to or not – they must also give way and give up their aspirations, intentions, claims, or come to terms with what surprised and blocked them, while at the same time with the unpunished violation of binding rules or obligations, and this with the awareness that such an impunity may encourage the perpetrator to act similarly in the future. They must “swallow” humiliation and something that is an outrageous challenge: a demonstration of ill will, a sense of impunity, a sense of advantage based on outwitting by breaking some rules of the game and commitments, or based on brute force.
- (2) The psychological correlate of this real state of affairs is precisely the *feeling of humiliation* of the party outwitted, outsmarted, or overpowered by a demonstration of strength and disregard. At the same time, this situation encourages those deceived or depreciated by the demonstration of someone else’s strength and ruthlessness and their own weakness to look for hypocritical excuses for their own capitulation or helplessness. The defeated party reacts to the consternation and shame of the game with marked cards by trying to save face (or, at least, appearances) in a knockout situation. The tricked or insolently informed about the fact by the very fact tries to “find himself worthy,” to behave honorably, which requires... crookedness instead of chivalry. By its chosen tactics of rationalizing its own appeasement and camouflaging its vulnerability... the victim legitimizes and legalizes unlawful, unilateral, and arbitrary conduct. Thus, there may occur a paradoxical complicity with the “rapist” in maintaining the appearance that nothing terrible has happened. The fruitful propaganda cooperation of Prime Minister Chamberlain with German diplomacy during the bizarre “negotiations” in Munich and after the Munich Agreement is instructive in this respect.
- (3) The objectified effect of an action that creates “faits accomplis” is an *irreversible state of affairs*. Irreversible either literally and absolutely or in a relative sense. In the latter case, the outcome of attempts to reverse the harm or

abuse is uncertain. There may even be a risk that attempts to remedy the situation will only make it worse, and that attempts to make up for losses and regain lost positions or assets will only exaggerate losses. It is often the case that one may reverse the changes, but the cost of “taking back” the subject of the claims and “punishing” the untrustworthy partner – rival, adversary, enemy – would be too high, just not worth the effort.

Therefore, what does provocation by means of *faits accomplis* force? It forces a state of affairs favorable to the provocateur, concessions and changes of plans on the part of the victims, and at the same time a “whistle past the graveyard” type of behavior (for example, when justifying a rotten compromise or capitulation). It forces the initiator to concede a better and improved starting position. Not infrequently, this is associated with conduct that is not only unceremonious, but downright cynical and most literally brutal. This is a tendency well known from armed conflicts. We plan to cease fire. However, with a last treacherous attack, I kill the opponents who put down their weapons, thus forcing negotiations about the demarcation line according to a new state of affairs. We are no longer bargaining from an even position but from a position of two-thirds to one-third since I managed to seize something and weaken you so much that you do not risk attempts at recapture.

5. The Pragmatic Appeal of *Fait Accompli* Tactics

Hence the particular attractiveness and, consequently, the popularity of the method. Here are the main reasons for this attractiveness; of course, attractiveness considered in terms of pragmatism and even cynicism, not in terms of moral satisfaction:

- (1) What has hitherto appeared to be in dispute is arbitrarily settled: “I have made my stand; what I have gained is no longer in dispute but mine; what I have I will no longer give away.”
- (2) What may have previously been a pious wish or a claim impossible to accept and fulfill becomes a fact. The impossible turns out to be real. Ridiculous turns out to be clever. The unacceptable turns out to be swallowable, sanctioned, and therefore acceptable. By subsequent acts of transgression, I push the boundaries of acceptability to my advantage.
- (3) The relative equilibrium – shaky one but an equilibrium nonetheless – between the parties to the conflict and possible negotiations transforms into a one-sided advantage: “I already have, and you will not have anymore.” The formal equivalence of two parties potentially equally and mutually

dangerous to each other and the equality of the parties cooperating at least on a ceasefire, a truce, or terms of a future agreement is used as an opportunity to actually privilege one of the parties as the one who “can do more” and who “may do more.”

- (4) Breaking the rules of the game and one’s own (also voluntary) obligations brings benefits (pays off) but remains unpunished (instead of being punished), which causes a demoralizing effect because a reliable attitude turns out to be ineffective or naive. It is known how the power of an example looks in such a situation, that is whose example is more appealing: the example of the party that acts honestly and loyally toward partners and opponents that establish contact and cooperation.

6. Faits Accomplis Method’s Status and Profile

In the light of the typologies I introduced earlier above, we may qualify the method/tactics of faits accomplis in multiple ways:

As a *discrediting* provocation because the demonstrative disregard of someone else’s will, showing someone’s helplessness, or in any case weakness evidenced by this act such as naivety or ineffective good will, compromises the opponent and undermines his authority and elementary credibility in the eyes of those around him and even more so in the eyes of his disappointed partisans, supporters, whose representative or leader he is. In such a case, the supports see their leader as ineffective and with no idea of how to get out of an irreversible situation.

As a *causative* provocation imposing on the object of influence a certain way of behavior through the influence exerted both on the social situation, the balance of power, the atmosphere in the environment and directly on the psyche.

In particular, these may be the following varieties of causative provocation:

- I. *Reconnaissance* provocation: testing the principledness, degree of determination, reflex, consistency and mobility of the opposing side, verifying the cohesiveness of the enemy ranks and the resistance of the enemy camp to failure, experimentally determining “how far I can go,” how much and what I am allowed to do without suffering consequences;
- II. *Stimulative* provocation, in particular:
 - II.1. *Compulsive* provocation as a double extortion: situational and psychological as mentioned above;
 - II.2. Motivational provocation which fulfills one of two functions:
 - * as a *mobilizing* provocation it encourages others (in their own ranks or in the circle of allies, observers of the situation) to also break the existing rules of the game and commitments without fear and scruples, which is to further

weaken the enemy, and at the same time become a cover and justification for the provocateur;

- * as a *demobilizing* provocation it discourages the opponent to continue their efforts, undermining their morale, that is faith in the rightness and effectiveness of their own actions, causing doubts, dilemmas, temptations to give way, resignation.

III. A *maneuvering* provocation:

III.1 *Preventive* provocation stops something that would be uncomfortable or even unacceptable to us by a pre-emptive maneuver that is as insidious as it is ostentatious, that thwarts something, derails some previously possible solutions;

- * *Obstructive* provocation temporarily blocks, inhibits, delays, or permanently excludes something by its own resistance: thwarting, preventing, crossing out adverse actions of the opponent that would require overcoming this resistance, or for example, the efforts of a mediator, arbitrator in a dispute, conflict.

III.2. *Thematic* provocation (imposing with one's own move a plane of confrontation and possible negotiations, bargaining) is useful in one of the following forms:

- * as *absorptive* provocation it arbitrarily determines facts of ostentatious character, defiant expression imposed by the perpetrator's own act bear important consequences and, hence cause all interested parties and even outsiders to focus their attention on what has happened and what has the flavor of scandal, a shameful or inconceivable act from the viewpoint of the rules accepted in a given circle of people, good manners, and admissibility criteria, which increases the status of the perpetrator and often allows him to carry out other, camouflaged actions under the cover of the commotion, indignation or embarrassment, turning to one's favor the gained time and advantage.
- * as *substitutive* provocation it unilaterally settles something in one case, even a hitherto side issue, strengthens the bargaining power of that party, which in other cases lacks arguments, clout, the ability to obtain benefits or defend them.

IV. *Modulatory* provocation (unilateral, arbitrary regulation of the pace of resolution of a problem or social conflict requiring agreement) may also come in two versions:

- * as an *accelerative* provocation it unilaterally shortens the path to the goal, attempts to accelerate solutions on conditions imposed by the initiator using a “non-returnable challenge;”
- * as a *cunctative* provocation it creates obstacles by unilateral acts of ill will allow the perpetrators to stall, gain time to regroup, and gather forces.

If the perpetrator succeeds in setting in motion such a peculiar chain of people of ill will (following his example in disregarding and violating the rules of the game) then his productive obstructive-demobilizing or preventive provocation turns into a *parasitic pretextual provocation (insurance-rationalizing)* under the slogan “I do it because everyone else does it.” The provocateur’s subversiveness lies in the fact that he invokes what he himself has provoked others to do.

When applied to specific cases and moves, the tactics of faits accomplis may combine these functions, thus, for example, it may be simultaneously a reconnaissance, demobilization, and obstructive provocation. In this sense, “faits accomplis” are a syndromatic provocation, a multifunctional nexus of actions.

A move based on the scheme of “faits accomplis” may also be a bluff, namely an act which confronts the addressee-antagonist with uncertainty as to further intentions and at the same time as to the actual resources, reserves of strength, energy, weapons of a given subject (cf. Chapter Twelve and Fourteen). The subject surprised and depressed by such a move is not and cannot be sure whether it is the last effort of an extremely exhausted and desperate opponent, and thus dangerous again, or just a desperate attempt to encourage himself and achieve what his real potential would not allow or perhaps a warning signal (“I can still do a lot, and I am determined to do everything”), or a deception, namely creating the appearance of greater determination and strength than in reality available to the speaker. These appearances may be convincing enough that the very attempt to “check” is risky as checking may bring losses. As we know, in such situations the stronger subject often does not take risks, gives up potential benefits and conquests or even the enforcement of violated rules, defending its rights and possessions. Thus, the subject withdraws despite objectively being stronger and more dangerous for the opponent. In its aggressive, offensive, and defiant version, a bluff effectively demotivates.

*

Let us now turn to even more violent forms of provocation. If faits accomplis usually are a contactless form of using force (“I used my force at such a time and rate that you did not have time to use yours to defend yourself or prevent my moves”) then a smear campaign is already a direct channeling of violence

(mainly psychological, symbolic, and ritualistic) against victims, while a drastic provocation is an act of physical cruelty aimed at enforcing desired psychological reactions.

XVIII. Drastic Provocation

In Machiavellian politics, programmed to the point of cynicism and ruthlessness, provocations based on brutal demonstrations of force going as far as defiant cruelty are popularly used with the aim of shocking, frightening, intimidating opponents or the whole of society, and thus forcing concessions and demands, which the addressees find outrageous and unacceptable. To achieve the desired effect, the perpetrators are ready to cause even various social disorders and collective disasters and damage, to use crime and displays of sadism, just to obtain sufficient social resonance, to release the desired collective emotion – which they can then properly direct and channel – and to force favorable decisions for themselves, to impose their own will.

We will adopt a rather euphemistic term for these ruthless forms of combating opponents and attempts to subjugate society: drastic provocation. Drastic means as much as blunt, vivid, unsavory, obscene, sharp, violent; from the Greek adjective *drastikós*, “vigorous, effective,” whose etymology is related to drama.³³ Because, in fact, it is such a kind of challenge posed directly to opponents and indirectly to the whole society, such an extortion and arbitrary determination of political solutions, whose effectiveness is based on a moving, shocking psychological effect, on shocking the whole environment with an extremely unceremonious transgression of the limits of elementary respect for the values and rules of human security and dignity, and finally, on checking the objects of attack and forcible pressure justified by the already demonstrated cruelty and destructive efficiency with the probability of even greater threats, damage, and suffering.

1. Tactical and Strategic Calculations of Political Criminals

The above is a way to compensate for own weakness of political actors, whose aspirations for influence, leadership, and power are inversely proportional to their representativeness, the scale of social support, and even to their actual material and technical potential (numbers, equipment, armament). As we well know, representatives of extremist tendencies are often as influential (precisely thanks to their ability to absorb and checkmate their activity and the threat caused) as they are marginalized or socially isolated. This paradox applies equally well to fanatics, fundamentalists who proclaiming themselves leaders of the community, or creators of a new order as it does to conservative, socially alienated, and lonely

33 W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych z almanachem*, Warsaw 1994, p. 130.

rulers, whose power (since it does not stem from the collective will and recognition of their rights) must be based on intimidation, creating an atmosphere of permanent and incalculable danger, confirmed by ritual displays of repressiveness, spectacular crackdowns on the disobedient, opponents, and “traitors.”

Consistent usurper tactics allow for the lack of a social mandate to be replaced by the ability to achieve obedience or capitulation through selective or targeted “blind” abuse of violence in its most horrific forms.

It would seem that the incompatibility of the subject’s own particularistic aspirations with the general interest, insufficient public support for one’s own program or even isolation of one’s own camp, lack of substantive arguments against rivals, or inability to create a clear programmatic alternative to them deprive the chances for changing this state of affairs in the political game. Indeed, this is true, but only in the game conducted in accordance with generally accepted rules.

Goals of Ostentatious Brutality

People seek a recipe for getting one’s way in such actions that effectively disintegrate an opponent’s camp or its system of alliances or consolidate the collective around a new center, thus allowing for a smooth transition (even at the cost of social damage) from diversion to legitimized and sanctioned usurpation. Moreover, people assume that this goal is achieved most quickly and at least cost through the physical elimination of inconvenient personalities or institutions.

The same actions which by extermination or loss and suffering of the immediate enemy are intended to disarm him to create a gap (a vacancy to be occupied) simultaneously serve to incapacitate the wider collective, subjected to forceful suggestions and exposed to a psychosis of fear or at least disorientation and doubt. Brutality becomes the simplest idea to demobilize the enemy camp and effectively obstruct its efforts.

Moreover, the same actions may force moves on the part of the opponent (for instance authorities, opposition leaders, or inconvenient mediators and arbitrators) or justify the subject’s own planned actions (for example intensifying state terror and repression, resorting to extreme measures of subversion or revolution). Therefore, provocations characterized by brutality and cruelty are used both by those in power who seek to suppress resistance or gain extraordinary powers under the pretext of ensuring security, protecting law and order, and by subversive forces operating on the margins of political life, which in this way reward themselves by moving from the margins (the margin of influence, interest, and even more so, social recognition) to the center of events, becoming at the

same time (against the will of the social surroundings) the most important point of reference and at least a temporary “dictator of the following events.”

Terrorist acts, especially such as assassinations or kidnappings, taking hostages, or the recently “fashionable” ritual executions of kidnapped persons or hostages, are the clearest demonstration of this tempting possibility.

A bombing may be carried out to kill a specific VIP, but it is most often directed against mass targets, as it carries many casualties who are bystanders. It is a way to create a psychosis of fear in society and an example of an attempt to influence decision makers “from below.” The terrorized society pressures the decision makers to take appropriate steps. Despite the fact that there are principles of not giving in to the pressure of the attackers, in fact, people seek the solution to the problem not only through forceful solutions, but also through talks. Such steps serve the terrorists to win their case. It is very rare that they are completely successful, but it also happens that an action results in so-called small successes, which are the result of pressure not on the decision makers directly, but on those whom the decision-makers represent or on whom they depend. For this reason, bombings are particularly directed at bystanders.³⁴

The very fact that whether terrorists will carry out an attack, whether someone will die in it, whether it will be an action conducted merely for fear effects (to gain credibility for even the most absurd or formally unfeasible demands), and who exactly will be the victim (the privilege of choosing a victim) is all decided solely and arbitrarily by the terrorist and no one else. This fact alone shows how easy it is with such an action to give oneself the status of an arbiter and master of the situation. For this reason, one might even consider drastic provocation to be the ruler among all provocations.

Below, I offer an example of a drastic provocation by a regime, in this case having a somewhat absurd aftertaste of... a promotional stunt:

Croatian prosecutor's office arrested Ljube Boszkovski, former head of Macedonia's Interior Ministry, accused of organizing a criminal provocation to improve Macedonia's image. / At the turn of February and March 2002, special forces murdered seven innocent Asian immigrants near Skopje and then announced that they had eliminated a group of dangerous Al-Qaeda. At the time, Macedonia was struggling with Albanian guerilla and needed Western support. The Macedonian secret service picked out six Pakistanis and an Indian in Bulgaria who fit the terrorist image and sought work in the West. / Boszkovski's men pretended to be intermediaries who would arrange employment for them in Greece. The agents smuggled them across the border into Macedonia, lured them to a desolate place and finally shot them dead by planting weapons and Albanian partisan emblems. The next day, Minister Boszkovski told reporters about the

34 T. Białek, *Terroryzm. Manipulacja lękiem*, Warsaw 2005, p. 37.

liquidation of Al-Qaeda terrorists. / The West regarded the “success” of the Macedonian special services with suspicion. They were not wrong. In the spring of 2002, the government in Skopje admitted that this action was a planned provocation.³⁵

From the viewpoint of the functional typology adopted earlier, it was a *deception-pretextual* provocation (as a form of faking a phenomenon, an attempt to give meaning and a specific overtone to an event presented in a false light) with a stimulating function, in this case *promotional and mobilizing* (a specific equivalent of extortion known from the sphere of relations between the sponsor and the subject interested in sponsoring). Its drastic nature lies not only in the act itself but above all in the morally moving contrast between the criminal character of this act (committed on innocent victims) and the formally positive purpose it was supposed to serve, that is the inclusion of the state in the front line of the fight against terrorism and obtaining funds for this purpose, the instrumentalization of the formal purpose as a pretext for the fight against Albanian irredentists in their own territory, but not necessarily linked to Al-Qaeda or Islamic extremism in general, and finally, the instrumental treatment and brutal abuse of the victims' trust.

In any case, as we have seen, cold, cynical calculations, an instrumental approach to the suffering and harm caused by one's own destructive actions are inherent to drastic provocations. This could be called rationalized cruelty, since it is fundamentally different from spontaneous cruelty, arising out of feelings of hatred, desire for retaliation, or even defensive reflexes.

Techniques and Means of Rationalized Cruelty

The most typical destructive and shockingly ruthless acts of provocation are usually criminal (most often associated with common hooliganism or banditry) and terrorist actions. In the catalog of such actions, we should at least include the following:

- ❖ *assassinations, public murders* (attacking both carefully selected and random victims) prepared and conducted with both practical (elimination) and propaganda effects in mind, directed so as to turn into a moving spectacle;
- ❖ *kidnappings or taking hostages* that culminate in negotiations over ransom and political demands, an effective form of blackmail, that is unlawful extortion

35 Sł. Cedzyński, *Prowokator pod kluczem*, Gazeta Wyborcza, No. 210.4722, Tuesday, September 7, 2004, p. 11.

with threats and first damages, but incidentally also a form of bidding “who dictates and who must listen” and a show of “who is in charge now;”

- ❖ kidnappings not marked by negotiation but by disappearance without a trace, the unknown fate of the victims (a specialty of Latino death squads);
- ❖ *ritual executions* in front of the public, as criminal actions of self-appointed groups, are reminiscent of gangsters’ squabbles or traditional acts of revenge, but may also be implemented in the majesty of the law, in reference to medieval models of “educating entertainment;”
- ❖ *secretive behind-the-scenes murders*, whose psychological effect is guaranteed not by their spectacularism or “live broadcast” but by their mysterious, enigmatic, and conjectural character, the speculations and rumors they stimulate;
- ❖ *hit squad assaults* (severe beating, sometimes with fatal outcome) are most often conducted with the intention to intimidate witnesses or a person or group belonging to the same social category; sometimes it may be an individualized task (“to discourage him”);
- ❖ *pacifications* are characteristic of authoritarian regimes, especially in attempts to suppress expressions of popular resistance and protest actions, including the dispersal of legal and peaceful demonstrations, transforming police or military actions formally aimed at “restoring order” into a massacre (Bloody Sunday in St. Petersburg in 1905, the massacre on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing on June 4, 1989);
- ❖ ritualistic and simultaneously practical *acts of vandalism* such as the destruction of property and achievements of persons and groups (for example, Kristallnacht in the Third Reich Germany);
- ❖ skillful provocation inspired or caused by incitement, done by subversive groups, by agents of foreign countries, but also, for example, by ruling politicians or demagogic opposition politicians; *riots, tumults, riots growing into “street battles,” lynchings, and pogroms*, posed as a spontaneous anger of the people, a natural manifestation and effect of the conflict, and simultaneously showing visually who in a given society and country exercises the “rule of souls;”
- ❖ *ritual rapes*, aimed at humiliation of those actively abused and the entire group or community they represent (used in the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s on a massive scale to evoke the feeling of powerlessness and at the same time at making subsequent dialog and compromise impossible: a method of “burned bridges”).

The above forms of physical violence and terror often have not only “intrinsic qualities” (as “pleasure in itself,” a way to vent for the perpetrators’ and

instigators' feelings) but also instrumental and pragmatic functions (as ways of "settling matters")

2. The Specificity of Cruelty Social Engineering

The specificity of a drastic provocation lies not in the use of force, and not even in the fact that it is accompanied by ostentatious ruthlessness, even cruelty (so not every act of rape, sadism, vandalism, not every manifestation of hatred and desire to destroy or humiliate is a provocation) but in the fact that in accordance with plans and predictions, the cruelty and the resulting shock, fear, and terror transform victims into participants, even co-perpetrators who act to their own detriment. In this respect, despite its simple form (beat, kill, abuse someone in front of witnesses), drastic provocation comes close to the most sophisticated and perfidious forms of provocation. The behavior of recipients (resulting from surprise at the scale of destruction and the degree of ruthlessness, from fear, indignation, anger, desperation) is calculated into the tactics of criminals. Victims become criminals' tools, extensions of their violent arms. For example, were I to throw a bomb, it would be not only and not so much to blow something up, to destroy it irreversibly, but above all for the resulting reactions and behaviors to bring about the proper goal of my action.

Characteristic Features of Drastic Forms of Provocation

What is the difference between a drastic provocation and a common provocation that is simply *insolent*? Which is actually also aggressive because it is based on ill will, impertinence, and transgression of recognized norms.

Its trademark is ostentatious brutality and cynical cruelty chosen as the best way to make a strong impression, shock, and create a kind of social void. For someone for whom there is no place or who seems to be too narrow in an order based on rules of reciprocity (mutual security, mutual control, responsibility before others, dependence of the success on their approval) can exist or ensure his influence only by "carving out" himself a place of his own in an artificially created social vacuum. The latter is created through a blatant violation not only of rules of political game but also of elementary social norms, the violation of guarantees and sense of security both on a collective (common) and individual scale, especially as a result of primitive ways of the literal elimination of rivals and opponents.

This requires the use of physical violence (a materially harmful and destructive force) and psychological violence (influences destroying the victims' sense of identity and dignity, their mental balance and efficiency, their good name, honor,

elementary social respect). This is where we find a classic example of combined social engineering, that is one in which manipulation is mixed with violence and coercion (in this case, illegal forced extortion).

Forced Extortion Vs. Destruction

But why do we classify such “gangster” actions as manipulative rather than simply in the realm of violence, when the main or only means of combat employed is precisely naked destructive force? For one fundamental reason. There is a significant difference between *forced* social engineering – based on achieving goals through the overt and severe use of force – and *manipulative* social engineering based on deceitful handling of elements of persuasion, suggestion, coercion, and violence. The difference lies not so much in the repertoire of means themselves as in the relationship between the end, the means, and the pretext. Extortion based on the combined effect of one or another act of violence, a coercive situation created by it, maneuvers limiting the victim’s choice and provoked psychological reactions resulting in a kind of “internal compulsion” in the behavior of the attacked subjects.

The use of force in itself is not yet conclusive. Classification is determined only by the context in which the force is used; in particular, the extent of its effects on the victim and the nature of the perpetrator’s intentions (whether destructive, repressive, or merely executory). The use of force as the sole or principal means looks different in the case of coercion and in the case of violence.

When we use coercion, the sole purpose is to compel obedience by suppressing resistance that would cost too much, and to this end the intention is to moderate force, to use it on a scale commensurate with resistance and only to the extent necessary to overcome resistance, to ensure obedience. A person who obeys can avoid disadvantages and losses, or compensate for them over time, which need not be irreversible. The severity of the threat or damage is usually only a deterrent to resistance and encourages compliance, respect for prohibitions.

On the other hand, violence is associated either with the intent to pillage or with the intent to destroy (sometimes even at the cost of self-inflicted losses, in the name of emotional or ideologically rationalized hatred). Not only is the violent subject not focused on limiting the destructive force, but he may even treat it as satisfaction itself.

In social engineering based on violence, a physical or moral attack serves either to maim or even to eliminate the opponent. The object of deliberate extermination is the one who is treated because of his very existence as a living obstacle or as an object of ideological hatred (as it is in extreme interpretations

of the class struggle, in programs of ethnic cleansing, in the sanctified message of religious wars). If the destructive force is not sufficient for the immediate liquidation of the opponent (enemy), then its application serves not only to harm him severely, but to incapacitate him, to transform him into a victim defenseless against subsequent violence.

Manipulation Through Violence

On the other hand, in manipulative social engineering, people use violence only or mainly to enable a maneuver previously impossible or blocked and to prevent a certain move or any move by the opponent.

The use of violence is aimed at halting and reversing unfavorable developments, stopping inconvenient social trends. It enables to discredit an opponent and channel the impetuous impulses of the masses to make it impossible to attack or defend, or even just to hinder normal functioning of an opponent who enjoys greater public support and trust. He who does not count on winning public opinion and authorizing the expression of the collective will bet on the politics of violent *faits accomplis* and paralyzing the collective will. After all, causing a sudden and surprising turn in events is supposed to change the balance of power.

In relation to the opponent, a drastic provocation primarily fulfills a *demobilizing* function. Its goal is to paralyze the opponent with an exceptionally severe and brutal attack, to cancel his sense of security, and to impose on him a sense of helplessness, thus shaking his faith in his own principles and goals, or at least in the possibility of achieving them.

Here then, force used destructively is not simply a tool for imposing one's will or even for destroying the opponent (although it is alright if the one blow suffices) but an opportunity for "political direction:" for playing out situations of confusion and regrouping.

The attackers are not always interested in total destruction. Total destruction leaves no trace and so they might leave no trace of their own existence. The gesture of destruction evaporates in the face of overwhelming emptiness. Yet, many of the demolishers would like to make their presence felt, for the audience and for themselves, to feel their destructive power, their physical and spiritual strength. He who seems to himself his own shadow, revives in a wicked act, feels that he exists. He fills his inner emptiness with it. For the man who sows destruction, the deed has an emotional and social dimension. He wants to be applauded, he wants to protest against the imposed systems that limit his freedom. He wants to intimidate his enemies and give courage to his friends. Complete destruction would make it impossible to fulfill these desires. Total destruction leads to emptiness, to nothingness. There is no sense of success, no trophy that embodies

triumph. This is why many attackers leave traces of their work. The overjoyed victor rides on horseback over the yet unextinguished ruins, the conqueror's banner flies over the ruins; the empty pedestal on which the monument stood is left in its entirety for the spectators to see as a warning. The act of destruction thus conceals contradictory impulses. On the one hand, one wants to liquidate, remove, desolate, to raze everything to the ground. On the other hand, traces of the destructive actions are left as a memento that survives the act of devastation. Destruction moves – like the pendulum of a clock – between the desire for total destruction and the desire to leave symbolic signs.³⁶

Thus, the motives and intentions of drastic acts are an explosive mixture of feelings, in which elements of spontaneity and calculating coexist. At the same time, these elements are not completely opposite and alternative, but harmoniously complementary. A destructive action requires a strong and authentic negative motivation. It is effective on condition that it is dictated by hostility, hatred, contempt (for instance, racial, class, or religious contempt), which is sincere and not conformistically conventional or completely feigned. Destruction requires “no inhibitions,” obstinacy, and viciousness. However, this does not exclude the relative self-control and self-discipline of the subject driven by such passions, and (contrary to appearances) the dominant for action lies not in these emotions or lasting negative feelings but in calculations concerning further indirect consequences of the destructive action. An act of drastic aggression and destruction is then a provocation when its proper goal (situational or even prospective one) is not in itself destruction, devastation, other people's suffering and fears, but the benefits obtained through them. Contrary to the first impressions of victims and witnesses and contrary to stereotypes, they are not about the principle “sink or swim” (also in the literal meaning of death and “sinking”) but, on the contrary, about the radiation effect, the activation of a certain process, for instance decomposition, crisis. In this sense, drastic provocations are usually avalanche provocations, cascading cumulatively (in the sense established in Chapter Five).

This generalization and qualification is confirmed by the experience of terrorist acts, such as kidnappings.

A kidnapping usually does not take place in front of people. The kidnapped person disappears, and the media becomes the theater, through which the kidnappers usually conduct a dialog with the opposing side, because it gives them great publicity. In addition, such action stimulates the imagination of the public, which suggests images often crueler than reality. The threat of murdering the kidnapped person must be an appropriate counterbalance to the prospect of meeting the kidnappers' demands. Decision-makers

36 W. Sofsky, *Traktat o przemocy*, Wrocław 1998, pp. 198–199.

are put in a situation, in which they often must choose between the broader social good, a concept which is impersonal and a concrete person, his health and life. Such a blackmail gives the kidnapers the opportunity to act even from a position of strength despite their objective weakness and the argument of control over the kidnapped person's health and life becomes a great strength, because the decision-makers must take public opinion into account and the kidnapers do not have to care about it. Of course, kidnapers would prefer public opinion to be on their side, but they do not see this as a mandatory condition for their action. What is more important for them is that public opinion influences decision-makers and thus may enable the kidnapers to achieve their goal. However, even if their goal is not achieved, the publicity that such an action brings to the assassins is sufficient reward for them.³⁷

In this sense, drastic provocations are compulsive, for they are a particular form of extortion. Extortion that is neither purely situational or maneuvering nor purely forceful (under the pressure of force someone withdraws or yields), but it is based on the secondary consequences of how a given environment experiences the ruthlessness of the force used, how under the influence of these experiences, it becomes susceptible to control.

The Advantage of the Ruthless

The immediate effect of provocation in drastic form is gaining moral and tactical advantage.

Moral? It sounds absurd, as it concerns an act that is inherently amoral or at least morally controversial, since it generally ostentatiously emphasizes the disrespect of the individual or group under attack, a morally obscene willingness to humiliate and abuse others. However, we may also speak of such a psychological-moral advantage in this case. After all, the perpetrators of cruel acts demonstrate determination, the capacity for self-justification, not infrequently a genuine conviction that their actions are the embodiment of virtue (service to the cause, a lofty mission, integral piety, strong character, and loyalty to the revolutionary), a good deed (after all, there is merit in fighting the servants of Satan, enemies of humanity, vermin, or degenerate races). At the same time, their victims are put to a test, in the face of dilemma between steadfastness and reason, to the temptation to break their principles and burden their conscience in the name of survival or saving others.

The tactical advantage of the perpetrators of attacks or inspired pogroms, massacres, acts of revenge is quite obvious. The one who is better and earlier

37 T. Białek, *Terroryzm. Manipulacja lękiem*, p. 38.

prepared for a new situation that he himself has created can anticipate and preempt others. The regulation of other people's behavior is facilitated not only by the balance of his own preparedness and other people's surprise but also by the creation of an appropriate atmosphere that prolongs or perpetuates this moment of advantage, makes it difficult for the opponent and the whole environment to "get together."

3. The Psychological Side of Drastic Provocation

The repertoire of drastic (brutal and outrageous) forms of provocation is calculated to take advantage of certain characteristic phenomena of social psychology that determine the media impact of certain events and actions, the suggestiveness of others' cues, susceptibility to suggestion.

To Appall and Shock in a Spectacle of Destruction

The most successful provocation is an event that is *appalling* to most of the audience. It must surprise either by the very thing that happened or by its especially drastic form, or by the previously unimaginable scale of damage, or by a previously unknown degree of cruelty, sophistication, and ingenuity in destruction, or by the circumstances of its occurrence. It must shock and evoke negative emotions: a sense of threat, fear, indignation, distaste, disgust, condemnation. The most effective provocations are associated with the violation of certain values, principles, and norms that are universally recognized and respected or at least jointly declared in a community, treated as binding, indisputable, and sacred. This is when the effect of shock, disorientation, and helplessness is guaranteed. It is then that physical or moral violence opens a field of opportunity for those who, in other circumstances, would not be heard or would be ignored.

The effect in the form of social shock and publicity has the function of transmitting power. Paradoxically, thanks to evil, one can gain more publicity than by doing good. Evil repels but fascinates and attracts, the dark part of man's personality and the deeds resulting from it are much more interesting than the seemingly "boring," laudable deeds that do not evoke a sense of unease or thrills of emotion.³⁸

Aggression itself (or clash, destruction) is already a phenomenon that attracts and focuses public attention. If journalists know about it (a snapshot of a trip or a construction site is no news story, but a catastrophe is) and filmmakers

38 A. Kościuk, "Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania," in: B. Kaczmarek (ed.), *Metafory polityki* (3), Warsaw 2005, p. 267.

know about it (special effects are the most interesting scenes, and among them explosions, earthquakes, and collisions are more interesting, a chase without havoc would also be boring), then it would be difficult for people on the “political margin” or politicians who are well-known but not respected not to know about it. They know this and the rule of the second degree: that aggression and destruction is even more socially potent if it is transformed into a colorful and fascinating spectacle, intriguing either with surprises and strong impressions, or with emotions of “what will happen next?!” “can there be anything worse?” In this sense, a drastic provocation usually has the characteristics of an absorptive provocation: it focuses attention on its course and consequences, giving them (and often exaggerating) crucial importance, pushing aside other social problems, other important (sometimes more important) events, political decisions, and actions.

The killer can achieve the effect of spectacular action by choosing an attack carried out in front of others. The perpetrator assumes the role of a director and often also of a participant in a spectacle, counting on the fact that his work will make an indelible impression on the audience of the power of the actor, his ingenuity, audacity, courage; that it will impress and take the breath away; that it will intimidate and frighten. These assumptions are not exaggerated, especially when the perpetrator manages to escape with impunity. In such a case an aura of indestructibility, omnipotence, and mystery still surrounds the criminal. The killer gets what he wants.³⁹

Either way, in the eyes of the public opinion (even if potentially hostile or reluctant) the perpetrator made his name. Contemporary participants of politics know very well that what matters in rankings is not (as it used to be) the evaluation of their creative and productive abilities, approval for their views, aspirations, and actions, identification with their ideas, the feeling of moral rightness of the protagonists of events and momentous undertakings, but only the impression they can make, even if it is based only on the confusion they caused or the spoiling of something without replacing it with something else and better. The media are governed by their own laws and to make a name for oneself or even to make an impact in political life, it is often enough to become a media star (even if only as a scandalist, a troublemaker, public enemy number one). This has long been used in the tactics of terrorists, whose artificially increased leverage is not proportional to the contents of their magazines with bullets, but to the reach of the media they harness to report on their exploits. “The theatricalization of actions is one of the main characteristics of terrorist actions. As Brian Jenkins,

39 Kościuk, *Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania*, p. 267.

a prominent expert on the subject, succinctly puts it, terrorists care about getting lots of people to look at them, not about getting lots of people killed.⁴⁰ In short, terrorist's cruelty is carefully calculated, not mechanical ("kill as many as you can").

The opportunities that came with the development of the media made the terrorists all the more irresistible. Millions of people around the world saw the Al-Qaeda's attack New York. You cannot dream of a better advertisement. The apocalyptic creativity of the terrorists inspired a kind of awe and wonder. Some wanted to see the skyscrapers burning on September 11, 2001 as the most shocking work of art. Nevertheless, our participation in this event, if only thousands of miles away from America in front of our television sets, was carefully planned, and the overwhelming enormity of the destruction and its cruelty made us see September 11 as a caesura in the history of the world.⁴¹

This is the main achievement of the perpetrators of this mega-assassination: they have largely succeeded in imposing the widespread belief that there has been some kind of breakthrough in international relations that a new phase in the history of humanity has begun and that it is defined by the conflict between the Western world and the Islamic world, to suggest the assumption that although they are extremists condemned and prosecuted more or less consistently by their co-religionists as well, they embody the attitude of Muslims toward the USA and Europe. Furthermore, the terrorists succeeded in spurring (*stimulative* provocation) US politicians into action to embroil the USA in an actual (and previously nonexistent or merely potential) conflict with Muslims in many allied countries, to disrupt the relationship of trust and cooperation between Americans and many of their allies in Arab and European countries (successful *diversion* provocation). All of this is due to one bloody spectacle.

Playing with People's Feelings

Like any provocation, the drastic one also serves to create or broaden the social base; to win support for a policy not supported at all or not supported enough. At the same time, it serves depriving opponents of support. Provocation in the form of covert assassination, pogroms, riots or smear campaigns, or a campaign of self-righteousness paradoxically makes it possible to gain or increase support even for a policy whose circle of supporters has previously shrunk radically and became isolated from society.

40 Kościuk, *Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania*, p. 267.

41 Kościuk, *Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania*, p. 267.

But how is this possible?

This is due to certain properties of mass psychology and the influence of the right atmosphere at a particular moment. What they would not support in one situation, the same people may support in other circumstances, guided by different information, different feelings, different suggestion of the environment, changed balance of power, changed hierarchy of authority, updated conditions of group membership, opportunely imposed criteria of group loyalty and solidarity.

That is why a drastic provocation is aimed at awakening certain feelings and experiences in the community, ones that are common, unified, eliminating or marginalizing intermediate (undecided, unstable) and uncontrolled attitudes (moderate and skeptical) and even more so, attitudes which are openly opposed. For such unification of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, for unification of the collective will or, especially, for handing it over to someone as a depository, the most suitable are: the sense of common threat, reflexes of collective indignation and condemnation, sense and reflexes of solidarity.

Therefore, in the analysis of drastic provocations it is necessary to see not only the foreground (against whom the means of destruction were directly directed, who suffered from it) but also the background, in which it is sometimes possible to find the right target (against whom the social reaction will be directed and who will control it). Therefore drastic, even criminal, acts of provocation are undertaken not only by enemies against enemies (as in guerrilla actions or terrorist attacks) but also by “guardians” against “wards.” As we well know, many a dictatorship has been socially legitimized and many a war has gained public anointing as a result of a drastic deceiving provocation by the authorities, for example by the security service, an intelligence agency, or a ruling party militia. The scheme here is trivially simple: beat up or kill one’s own to then cry “They beat our people!” and immediately demonstrate the readiness of the avenger, point out the traces or the guilty. The Nazis perfectly mastered this repertoire (of drastic *deceiving-pretextual* provocation) on the eve of the Second World War. They used it effectively first in the case of Czechoslovakia, in the Sudetenland, and then on the Polish-German border.

Properly interpreted, the meaning of an appropriately orchestrated event helps to direct public impressions and experiences so that they spontaneously impose one desired way of thinking as the only possible or the only right one, the only decent one.

The perpetrator most often toys with patriotic, religious, and parental feelings, which is why we have for example, border attacks, desecration of state or religious symbols, family tragedies. People subjected to the common experience of danger, defeat, harm, or humiliation do not ask questions about anything, they

accept faithfully and repeat uncritically suggested explanations, the sources of which they do not know or which they trust implicitly.

Creating a "Fraught Atmosphere"

The highlight of the drastic provocation is the creation of a specific "fraught atmosphere." It is both an end in itself (sufficient in short-term actions) and an intermediate link, a tool in long-term destructive actions.

It is an end in itself because socially shocking events (for example acts of collective or individual terror, mysterious and dramatic fates of well-known personalities, scandals caused by the disclosure of certain secrets) evoke or sustain existing social tensions, conflicts, renew and consolidate ideological divisions (religious or ethnic) and subjective prejudices, and stiffen the barriers of understanding even among those who could communicate. They can also disintegrate a community to such an extent that its main problem is no longer antagonization and polarization, but outright social anomie. The more homogenized a society is, the easier it gives up aspirations for subjectivity and the easier it submits to the care of a ready-made protector.

On the other hand, it is a tool insofar as the created atmosphere gives rise to attitudes and expectations desired by the provocateurs, gives them an apparent social mandate based on the principle: "do something," "this has to change," "deal with them (these outcasts or pests)," and so on. Thus, the appearance is born that it is "society" that demands, "empowers" the inspirers of the provocation to proceed. In this respect, the social mandate is quite similarly deceitful in reprisals (as forms of psycho-symbolic violence) and in drastic provocations using physical threat and suffering of the victims along with their psychological unsuitability for such literal violence.

4. Participation, Perpetration, Responsibility

Let us now look at the praxeological and ethical side of the issue. How are *perpetration and responsibility* presented in drastic provocation, and the relationship between one and the other? Who are the protagonists, why are they so humble? Why is it generally not difficult to identify the victim but the identity of the persecutors remains a mystery? Why does even an exuberant audience not chant "author, author!?" Why do the winners not bid each other in merit, even if the winners' feast is not a celebration of consent?

The Addressees

The criminal provocative action has a triple circle of addressees.

The first is the direct victim: random (as in group attacks) or carefully selected (as in individual terror). In both cases, the victim is treated instrumentally, meaning the attack is a means to other, appropriate ends. Apart from providing the perpetrator with self-satisfaction, even the tragic fate of a person or group that is the object of the persecutor's hatred is primarily a pretext for triggering other events or social change. If one reaches for the ultimate means characterized by viciousness with a personal touch, it is not only to "relieve oneself" and "get rid of the problem together with the person," but first because the shock caused by the malice and cruelty of such a "personal" attack is guaranteed to cause confusion and force changes in the public mood, in the balance of political forces, in the enemy's plans for the future.

The second addressee is the person harmed morally (by open accusation or insinuation of guilt, if we try to shift the blame onto someone else) or materially, or even physically (if we harm his existence, health, or life). For the victim, the defeat and suffering should be proof of the futility of previous efforts, a harbinger of the destruction of his work. The point is not only to kill or cripple someone but also to make the other one go away or withdraw in a feeling of helplessness, which is to be shared by his followers.

The third addressee of violent actions are those who (according to created appearances, circumstantial evidence, and objective facts, which are, however, perceived non-neutrally) are to make judgments. Most often it is domestic or world public opinion, the domestic and international partners and allies of the attacked adversary. They are the focus of attention and the main effort of action. The provocateur tries to impose on them an interpretation of events and an assessment of the opponent's policy that is convenient to him, through a specific course of action and its apparent meaning. This imposition happens either through deception, false suggestion, or through coercion through fear and anxiety, or in any case through the temptation of a cowardly, faithless, opportunistic adaptation to a changed situation, in which the terrorizing subject seems stronger.

The specific addressee of drastic provocations are also potential volunteers, continuators of the spectacularly started work, who are easy to find in circles prone by nature to distrust and hostility toward all strangers, dissenters, and those susceptible to invitations to bloodthirsty attractions. "The director of the bloody spectacle draws the audience into the game. By acting he imposes emotions, inspires minds, and influences attitudes. He repeatedly demands

complicity in murder and receives it. People let themselves be carried away by unleashed emotions.”⁴²

Principals Vs. Contractors

Only a few drastic acts of provocation are – so to speak – exhibitionist in nature and thus combine a brutal challenge with self-presentation. In most cases, the initiators, inspirers, and patrons are anonymous, and sometimes also the perpetrators themselves (unless, as in gangster games, they are meticulously liquidated so that they can remain unfailingly silent or thrown to the media and the courts to satisfy their half-hearted inquisitiveness).

Therefore, in a drastic provocation, the direct performers are not the most important link. Of course, much depends on their qualities (commitment, zeal, or even overzealousness, lack of scruples, technical perfection, in a word: professionalism) and, above all, the success of the planned undertaking.

But they are not the ones who decide on the goals and how to discount the results of the action. They do not give the action its ultimate political meaning.

Moreover, we should not equate all performers of all possible provocations with blind tools or zealous and overzealous servants.

In special instances, it may even be the case that a violent action is a provocation unintended by the performers themselves, or that its effects are inconsistent with their intentions. A drastic provocation may be an action cleverly suggested by inspirers who are not initially perceived by the performers. It can also be an action undertaken on one's own initiative, independently, but without the awareness that one is serving someone else, that someone else has foreseen it and calculated it into their tactics. The tool of destruction does not necessarily have to be conscious and obedient. It may be deceived, outsmarted, exploited.

In many cases, drastic provocation is based on the fact that only a part of its participants, performers realize the real and ultimate goal of the action, understands even before the action who will benefit from it. Sometimes this involves controlling a terrorist or other group from the outside or from the inside, through an agent-provocateur brought in. Such is, among others, the mechanism of police provocations in relation to various types of radical movements, especially extremist, terrorist movements.

42 A. Kościuk, *Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania*, in: B. Kaczmarek (ed.), *Metafory polityki* (3), Warsaw 2005, p. 267.

Even when all performers act with full awareness of the main goal and identify with it, they do not cease to be a tool that knows well and anticipates only its own action and its immediate results, a tool dependent on the tactics of principals.

A professionally executed provocation may be akin to a “perfect crime.” It may be the case that even the direct perpetrators remain elusive and unknown or at least unpunished in view of the impossibility of proving guilt. An example is the famous case of the disappearance of Polish General Zagórski before the Second World War. And even when the perpetrators are identified and brought to justice, we usually know only the executors, not the principals.

The road from contractors or subcontractors to the initiators, inspirers, coordinators, organizers, and political patrons is long and winding, and above all, barred by numerous barriers. Not only because the “pawns” do not always reveal their higher secrets. Also because they often do not know each other. And first of all, because there are many intermediaries in complex political provocations; the individual links of this chain of “people of good will” are separated by barriers of competence, initiation, and conspiracy. Small contractors do not have to, and in fact should not, know their bosses. The latter should not know the details. In this group of co-participants, the relationship of familiarity is sometimes non-transferable.

Therefore it is so difficult to get to those who had the first and last word. A stealth action or a spectacle under the motto “we don’t know who did it and what else they might do” would miss the point if it were easy to get to their source.

5. Cui Prodest? In Search of Perpetrators

Thus, to understand who is ultimately responsible for such a provocation, knowing no details, one must look for the answer to this question differently. Whoever did the “dirty” work, the ultimate perpetrators must be sought in a more elegant world. We must ask who was interested in the action? Who benefited from it? And who was harmed by it? The answer to this question will clarify the essence of the matter even if it is impossible to determine or prove who personally initiated the action, who sponsored and inspired it, who equipped and armed it, who protected the perpetrators, and who helped divert attention and cover up traces.

Beneficiaries’ Involuntary Indiscretion

This does not mean that the moral and personal responsibility of direct perpetrators of criminal acts is unimportant, nor does it mean that we should not strive against all odds to identify the sources of political dispositions and the creators of the background for the perpetrators. The point is different. If we want to be

really principled and inquisitive in such situations, we must reject all a priori assumptions, all suspicions based only on our own prejudices, other people's whispers and the apparent obviousness of *faits accomplis*.

Whoever wants to know or at least guess what forces guided the hands of the provocateurs should carefully watch the political scene after the fact. Such observations can be very telling. It suffices to observe who triumphs, who is the first to rush with expressions of indignation, sympathy, or recognition, whose presence surprises among the mourners, who is ready to act immediately in a new and unexpected situation, who impresses with sobriety and freshness of ideas, reserve of initiatives at the time when everyone else lacks both the idea and the will.

The spice of the drastic provocation lies in wolves' extraordinary discretion and hyenas' extraordinary indiscretion. We know next to nothing about the origins and course of an event, and we learn more and more about the heirs, the creditors, the aspirants, and the pretenders to roles and positions, the beneficiaries of the new situation.

Unfortunately, knowing is not the same as proving. The knowledge may at most be close to certainty, but it is not certainty. It is this comfort of non-responsibility that makes this exceptionally morally repugnant *modus operandi*... extremely attractive.

6. The Paradoxical Appeal of Drastic Provocation

Why does a brutal action, characterized by cruelty and manifestation of ill will and clearly unchivalrous, turn out effective? That is, it not only provides purely subjective satisfaction and satisfies the desire for revenge or destruction but also allows one to achieve practical benefits make political gains?

A praxeological analysis of political assassinations demonstrates this well:

Assassination is ... an economic activity, because it often allows, at relatively low cost, for the rapid disposal of a designated victim, a group of selected or random people, or entire groups selected on the basis of various criteria. Regardless of whether one employs muscle, poison, dagger, gun, bomb, or gas chamber, the effect is immediate – usually (as there are cases of unsuccessful assassinations) – and it results in death, injury, or bodily harm that leads to death or in the “best” case, but worst for the victim, to disability. The very act of killing may take fractions of seconds, preparations for it – much longer. I mean here the planning for elimination, the collection of funds for the purpose, the creation of a murder infrastructure. Without entering into the ethical aspect of the matter, a bystander may perceive the assassination as a masterpiece, a triumph of human

destructive power over the complexity of life, the richness of which can be wiped out with a single decisive move.⁴³

It would seem that a political assassination's moral defects should cancel out the intended effect since the inevitable and reliable social reaction is shock, indignation, condemnation, disgust at the methods used and those who resort to them, and finally: a sense of compassion and solidarity toward the victims, both completely innocent and those who have been defeated in an unchivalrous manner. From this viewpoint, the prognosis would seem simple: the anonymous and conspiratorial perpetrators (which should be associated with cowardice, or at any rate with militancy, gangsterism) will be even more isolated and excluded from the "normal" political game, while the sacrifices made by the attacked camp will not be in vain because, as a sign of moral opposition and in the name of common dignity and decency, there will be a consolidation of the community, of the movement around those who pay the highest price for principledness, fidelity to their principles and views, whose suffering and harm becomes the best proof of the rightness of their aspirations and their moral superiority over their enemies-persecutors.

Meanwhile, we know that the initiators and inspirers of activities – which violate not only the civilized rules of the political game but also elementary moral norms by creating a threat to their direct opponents and a sense of general danger – nevertheless achieve the intended results; not only despite their victims and despite public opinion but also... with the participation, with the not fully conscious help of the victims' environment.

How is it possible?

We should remember that the social reaction to acts of brutality, cruelty, ruthlessness is never homogeneous, "pure," but is a tangle of mixed feelings.

Common to all witnesses and participants in an event is only a sense of surprise and shock, often also horror. However, this does not mean that this first impression automatically leads all of them to the same attitude-response of indignation and determination to defend or continue what has been attacked. For many supporters of the attacked person, institution, or idea, the shock of the blow causes doubt about the reality of the goal and, in any case, dilemmas and doubts as to whether the price of sustaining previous efforts is not too high, whether the reason and instinct of self-preservation do not suggest resignation or a compromise; or in any case, a decision taken on one's own account – to

43 Kościuk, *Polityka jako zaproszenie do zabijania*, p. 266.

withdraw from what is so dangerous. In this sense, a drastic provocation would be the most extreme form of a demobilizing provocation. In turn, for those from the circle of the attacked camp (current or potential allies or, in any case, sympathizers), the event also sends a clear signal to discourage their support and induce them to keep distance. As a result, it may be that the (generally unknown) initiators and perpetrators of a criminal action are isolated only in a ritual verbal sense, while those attacked – however surrounded by gestures of sympathy, encouragement, and support – turn out to be... isolated in a practical sense because apart from the fact that everyone is with them “at heart,” the space around them becomes empty, as usually happens in a danger zone. Moreover, the attacked may experience expressions of pity – disappointment that they are so weak – on a par with sympathy. In any case, conformists’ support instantly withers in difficult situations, while supporters and informed allies witness a dethronement.

Another reason for the attractiveness of tactics of political assassination (known in particular to terrorists, but also to parties that use militant methods) is the near certainty that whoever acts partly as guerrilla and partly as gangster – being in the minority but attacking exceptionally severely by surprise and with a sense of impunity – rises in the balance of power to the rank of an equal opponent or even one with an advantage: “I may not win elections or plebiscites, I may not become a favorite in popularity polls, but everyone must reckon with me, I can dictate the conditions and key decisions.” Indeed, such a shortcut may indeed be tempting.

Postscriptum

We could say that the art of provocation is like politeness – it is neither easy nor small art – both when it is based on rude or even boorish behavior and when it aims to gain complete control over someone through methods of communication. In a word, like manipulation in general, the use of provocation requires a second thought, even more so – a reflection on the mechanisms of social life, interpersonal bonds, and the psyche; not simply “knowing things,” when one believes to already know everything about oneself, others, a situation, or what might happen. A subtle not primitive look at various forms of provocation makes us aware that each provocation focuses sociological and psychological regularities whose thorough consideration makes it possible to accelerate, delay, or stop something, to prejudice something, and to force something that is not yet mature or that arouses someone’s resistance. Indeed, it is then when the knowledge of provocation turns out to be art.

Mistaken are those who think that provoking someone or something is “nothing difficult.” Some may think it suffices to be insolent, ruthless, or false enough, that it suffices to master once and for all a certain fixed, routine repertoire of tricks that are always at hand, like a dozen different knives hanging on a wall; preferably in an accelerated intensive course for activists or mercenaries of negative campaigning, or even in one evening, reading a guidebook with ready recipes for everything. Tricks whose application is based on conscious and accurate selection from a ready catalog, like taking the right knife from the right hanger. The main thing would be to have good memory (“How did I do it?”), reflex, and practice.

Various specialists in social engineering, “political technology,” marketing, and PR make their clients believe in such statements. Just like we can choose pills or herbs for every disease, they will suggest who to fix with an anonymous denunciation, who with a public accusation, who to enrage so that will spout vulgarisms, and who to lure into a room, tease with coquetry, pseudo-negotiations, then record and publish something spicy. These actions are supposed to simply solve political and even personal problems.

Of course, there is no shortage of home-grown provocateurs, self-made talents with monotonous and one-sided programming, or wizards always at your service. Just as there is no shortage of people who constantly provoke others and constantly cause commotion, quarrels, and consternation. However, they always act this way not because they follow a sophisticated tactic or even strategy, but

simply because they cannot do otherwise, because this is their temperament and character.

Every now and again, public life witnesses people who have neither views nor useful and reliable qualifications, nor ideas for solving one or another social task, but have an irresistible need to be at the center of attention, show off, or outdo others. Such people are driven by morbid ambition, an intoxication with self-importance, a desire to retaliate and torment those they envy, to show their contrariness or stubbornness. Such people will stand their ground at any cost, even on a matter they themselves do not understand. They call themselves politicians, although they often are but soappoliticians. However, in times when public appearance and continued existence are determined only by media coverage and the corresponding level of exhibitionist tendencies – rather than by social verification of the representativeness and productivity of their revealed ambitions – such people can come to the fore. They can effectively absorb public attention and energy, diverting it from serious issues, accomplishments, and resolutions. They can even pretend to be the cause of what is happening, although they only discount political turmoil, situations of deadlock, or crisis. This is a trivial and absurd use of the repertoire of provocations, which is socially costly, even if in form it is grotesque and pathetic and from a historical distance the bloated balloon turns out to be a punctured gut.

The matter looks more serious when the art of provocation is employed by professionals and experts in dirty work. They have an extremely dangerous weapon in their hands. The sinister attractiveness of provocation as a method of political action relates to the fact that it allows for almost completely uncontrolled (usually illegal, self-proclaimed) influence on the behavior and fate of others, on the course of events, and on the state of social issues. Provocation in the hands of Machiavellian politicians assumes an extreme asymmetry, a completely one-sided influence. At the same time, this lack of control over the actor is prolonged by the disorientation that accompanies his plotting, scheming, or unceremonious challenges. This is one of the most important features of destructive political provocations: the possibility of “self-service,” which consists in the fact that an action that cannot count on social acceptance and could encounter opposition and active counteraction comes to fruition precisely because its setting includes selectively focusing, distracting, and diverting the attention of those around it, checking or enticing others with benefits for which they will pay dearly, discouraging and intimidating or compromising and intimidating the resistant few.

Thus, a provocateur gains a colossal advantage. People who are the unwitting objects or addressees of provocation acts or complex provocative operations

are surprised and restrained in their attempts to prevent or reverse the damage, delayed in their perceptions and attempts to anticipate troubles. Moreover, they are induced to reactions and acts by which they harm themselves and the cause, by which they contradict professed principles. Destructive provocations show not only perpetrators' cynicism but also victims' demoralization.

No wonder provocation in politics has such a sinister and demonic associations. However, we should not succumb either to the suggestion that "there is no defense against provocations" or that "a decent person has no place in the world of politics." The only way to counter such an unreliable and dangerous preponderance of spinners, schemers, and people who demonstrate arrogance and exult in own power and cunning is the careful and unprejudiced study of provocation mechanisms to anticipate and recognize threats in advance, to counteract abuse and arbitrariness. The most effective weapon in the fight against destructive provocation is also provocation, but of a different kind: one that stimulates thinking, shakes the dormant mind, and rattles the conscience of society. This kind of provocation sandbags well-known troublemakers to reveal what they really intend through their actions.

Let us not fear provocation. Let us fear our ignorance, gullibility, and helplessness.

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