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Мир после пандемии. Новая реальность или цифровой Гулаг?

Аннотация. Пандемия оказалась своеобразным полигоном для современных социальных инженеров. Уже известные социальные антиутопии показали реальность, в которой и люди, и целые общества находятся под постоянным наблюдением, и каждая сфера жизни подчиняется только интересам государства.

Ключевые слова: ГУЛАГ пандемическое общество; COVID-19; контроль

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The world after pandemic. New reality or digital Gulag?

Abstract. The pandemic turned out to be a specific testing ground for contemporary social engineers. Already known social dystopias have shown the reality in which both people and entire societies are constantly monitored, and every sphere of life is subject only to the interests of the state.

Keywords: Gulag pandemic society; COVID-19; control

At the Beginning of Dystopia or anti-utopia?

On 1 January, 2020, the Beidou system started working in the People's Republic of China [Wang, 2016]. It is assumed to be a navigation system designed to support transport or travel, just like the American GPS system or the Russian GLONASS. However, while for the last two positioning people or vehicles is the main, and often the only task, Beidou is part of a much more total Social Trust System (STS, Chinese 社会信用体系, shèhuì xìnyòng tǐxì). Since 2015, the Chinese government, in cooperation with private entities, has been trying to apply the system in several Chinese cities. In addition to satellite positioning, every citizen of China is a subject to the supervision of several hundred million street cameras. The system probably also includes CCTV cameras installed in workplaces. Public space users are positioned and tracked almost everywhere. In addition, the Social Trust System has been equipped with the face recognition application [Domański, 2018].

Some analysts suppose that right now there are more than two cameras per every citizen of The People's Republic of China, and eventually there will be more than 6 of them. Chinese authorities praise the STS, and as an example of its usefulness, first showed an increase in respect for order regulations, and from March this year the usefulness of the STS during the fight with a pandemic. The system itself is based on points awarded to each citizen, which he loses by committing any offenses. The effect of losing all points is the deprivation of human – an already not very extensive – civil rights. And so, any unruly Chinese citizen may be deprived of the right to take a loan, the right to use airline services, high-speed railways or study at selected universities [Domański, 2018]. Including all belonging to the golden goblin, as the leading Chinese universities are called.

The STS also assumes the division of the society, which is more similar to the caste system than to China class society known from Marxism. What is more, you can find there elements of social stratification almost directly referring to Plato's *Republic*. The very assumptions of the system points are awarded, among others, for sorting garbage, paying bills on time, charity. Points are deducted for: offenses, crimes, fines, excessive use of computer games and having friends with low rankings [Kozieł, 2020].

Especially the last point is a gate to introduce a kind of caste segregation, in which there will be no chance for social contacts between people of different levels. Although it would seem that the System would remain a specific invention, characteristic only for China, it turned out that the representatives of the „free world” began to speak about it quite enthusiastically. Voices of interest appeared in Australia and the European Union. What is important, they appeared before the COVID-19 pandemic [Kostka, 2019].

Pandemic. Dawn of a new reality?

Pandemic turned out to be a kind of testing ground for contemporary social engineers. Already known social dystopias showed a reality in which both human individuals and entire societies are subjected to constant control; every area of life is subordinated solely to the interest of the state, which manipulates social reality, and every human activity is considered only in the light of the interest of the state. The authors of these dystopias; Orwell, Huxley, Zamiatin or anti-utopias; Ishiguro, Vonnegut or Zajdel show the world in which control of social behavior is total. What is more, it is the authority that creates social activity, ensuring that there is no place for spontaneous behavior [Bobonich, Meadows, 2018].

At the time the pandemic was announced WHO in the following statements recommended its member states to take various activities to limit the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations were not binding, so individual countries interpreted them quite freely. The range of activities here was very different; from India, which locked almost 1.4 billion citizens in their homes, to Sweden, which did not accept any restrictions, assuming the emergence of herd immunity, or Belarus, whose president denied the mere fact of a pandemic. Residents of individual countries also reacted very differently; from docile submission to regulations to extreme volunteerism ordering Spanish fans to bypass the imposed restrictions by gathering in front of the stadiums instead in the stands. The Italians almost ignored all restrictions explaining their behavior with a national character. (Perrone, 2020). Belgians

bypassed the introduced regulations crossing the borders with the Netherlands en masse, which were not closed [Q&A on coronaviruses, 2020].

In the coronavirus bastion, China, anti-pandemic regulations were extremely restrictive. They were not the same for all regions, but they were strictly observed. The authorities did not shy away from the most severe financial and administrative penalties imposed on those who did not comply with sanitary regulations. The rules of conduct adopted by the Chinese authorities were enthusiastically received by the World Health Organization (WHO) which with the mouth of Tedros Ghebreyesus, almost immediately began to set Chinese solutions as an example to the rest of the world. Many politicians from almost every corner of the world began to use the phrase *new reality* very often. It is worth taking a closer look at the content of this phrase. And so at the beginning you can see a decline in social mobility. In most countries prohibitions of free movement between cities are introduced almost immediately after the detection of infections. Traveling within cities or regions is also very limited. There is no single pattern here and they may be very different from country to country.

A society of distance

Work takes on a completely different character. Remote work is introduced on an unprecedented scale. The assumption is to result in less frequent contacts between people, thus reducing the possibility of coronavirus transmission. Similar restrictions are introduced in education at all levels. Both students as well as pupils are forced to acquire knowledge remotely. The closing of shopping centers forces both companies and their clients to transfer their activities to the internet. A process that is nothing new for young and middle age people creates new challenges for the older generation.

Social distance, which is supposed to minimize the effects of a pandemic, turns out to be a threat to the mental health of people subjected to restrictions. What is more, after the first weeks when many societies tried to *familiarize* the orders, sometimes treating them as a kind of fun, low spirits and depression appeared which were effects of isolation. In addition, forced absence from work did a negative impact on many people livelihoods. In Italy it resulted in selling out valuable items after canceling the lockdown, and in Spain, the rapid impoverishment of society and the need to distribute free food by the state and local governments [Gates postuluje biometryczne, 2020].

Some countries have introduced additional regulations specifying the distance between people moving on the streets or face covering orders. In stores, offices and corporations an order to disinfect hands has been introduced, both by employees and by clients. The next stage was the implementation of special applications that were mandatory to be installed on the phones of people considered infected, while the rest of the people were encouraged to install such applications. Officially, the authorities declared that the application is only to protect the safety of coronavirus victims and persons that could be in touch with quarantine participants. However, some programmers quickly noticed that the application gives access to data that can in no way be related to the health of users. Bill Gates, followed by WHO and some politicians began to push further ideas that were supposed to be helpful in fighting the

pandemic. The first of these was the immunity passport (Gates postuluje biometryczne, 2020). In the first version it was supposed to allow you to move around the world, but subsequent ideas went much further. Today it is said that you need a passport to get a job. What is more, Gates himself does not hide that according to him a pandemic can be an impulse that will accelerate Earth depopulation he is an ardent advocate. He proposed at a conference on climate change to reduce harmful carbon dioxide emissions by reducing, among others, the world's population by up to 15 percent. In his opinion, this can be achieved through the implementation of special "reproductive health" programs, as well as through the use of appropriate vaccines [Planowanie pandemii i depopulacja świata, 2020].

Another known visionary, Elon Musk, sees the future of humanity in symbiosis with artificial intelligence [Eadicicco, 2020]. The development of artificial intelligence will quickly deprive thousands of people of work. Combination with artificial intelligence will improve a man who will be able to compete in some areas with digital intelligence. The billionaire said: "In 20 years there will be about 12–15 percent unemployed in the world. Governments will have to introduce universal basic income. I think it will be necessary. We will have no choice". Musk, however, goes further and as early as next year announces the implantation of implants in human brains: „We probably have a chance to place the implant in a human body during the year. We should be sure that it will not endanger health and will actually provide the expected functionality”. For now, he declares that the implant will have the task to stimulate those human nerves that are responsible for the organs of movement. This will enable paralyzed people to return to a normal life. It will also help in learning foreign languages and will even restore lost sight and hearing. At the same time it would be a kind of interface that would allow a person to work with artificial intelligence. It is worth adding, however, that Musk recognizes the dangers of the development of artificial intelligence. He has repeatedly warned against excessive hopes associated with the development of artificial intelligence and the dangers it carries. In one interview he said: „With artificial intelligence is like summoning a demon. In all those stories where there is a man with a pentagram and holy water. He is always sure that he can control the daemon. And it never ends well” [Stawska, 2020].

Pandemic or social engineering?

With few exceptions, state authorities around the world have used the pandemic and panic that accompanied it to tighten up the law regulations. It seems that at the beginning they achieved the expected results. Societies frightened by the pictures viewed on TV screens were easily convinced to keep distance, constantly disinfect their hands, cover their faces or stay at home. As it often happens in such cases, some societies tried to familiarize the new situation through various types of activities sometimes staggering on performance: doctors and medical rescuers were applauded on the balconies, collective singing was organized, restaurant owners promoted their artistry by delivering take-out food. However, it soon became apparent that these activities cease to be fun in the long run. What is worse, they are deadly for the elderly, decrepit or bedridden who cannot participate in collective anti-pandemic therapy [Malinowski, 2020]. It soon turned out that the pictures used by the media often have no

connection with reality; the emergency room in Italy turned out to be identical to that in the United States, rows of coffins set up in the church were not intended for victims of a pandemic, but for victims of a marine disaster a few years ago, and the youngest pandemic victim turned out to be, as needed, a Serbian, British, American or Tunisian [Pawela, 2020].

You also did not have to wait long for the economic effects of the COVID-19 lockdown. In the south of Europe, the economy was slowing down at an alarming rate. Along with this appeared poverty unknown to the generations living today, after all accustomed to a comfortable and prosperous life. Meanwhile, the World Bank predicts that the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic could push over 60 million people worldwide into extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is considered to be a situation when a person spends less than \$ 1.9 a day on survival.

It is difficult to say today whether it was the pandemic that was the catalyst of the global crisis, which is compared today with that of 90 years ago. However, the images seen in the media strongly speak to the collective imagination. Pictures from the USA, where countless crowds of people line up for food, probably everyone knows. Similar images can be seen on the streets of European cities. In rich Geneva, food is regularly distributed by NGOs. Queues reach a kilometer, and only on Saturday (May 16) more than 2.5 thousand free packages were spent [Kucharczyk, 2020]. In Italy, the poverty line has been exceeded by over 3.7 million people, estimated the Coldiretti farmers' union. This is over 1 million more than before the crisis. Europe's rich countries are not crisis-proof. The European Federation of Food Banks estimates that only in Western Europe the number of needy will increase 25–30 percent. The ranks of those in need are supplied primarily by those working illegally, on junk contracts, the municipal precariat, and all those who were deprived of jobs and livelihood due to the crisis [Horizon Magazine, 2020].

No future?

Will the no future slogan turn out to be a description of reality in the coming months or years? It is difficult to answer this question unequivocally. The pandemic is still officially ongoing, despite the increasingly common behavior in which all restrictions are ignored. The scale of the economic collapse will probably be known in a few to several months. Individual countries declare their successes or failures in the fight against the crisis and the accompanying pandemic differently. Social radicalization is also increasingly visible. It is often seen, moreover, that a pandemic is only a catalyst for protests that arise from problems that have swelled over the years. It seems that we still have to wait for the assessment of the scale and extent of the phenomenon.

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