What does it mean that Communism has ended?

Disintegration of the dissident counterculture and politics of memory in Post-Communist Poland.

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Abstract

The study contributes to understanding of the role of collective memory in the public and political life of post-Communist Central Europe. The author provides a critical account of the disintegration of the dissident counterculture during the first months of the Polish transition. The political process that become to be known as the 'war on the top' was one of the founding moments of Poland's recent history, highly consequential for the shape of public life after 1989.

The author analyses its ideological sources and concludes that the single most important factor that made the conflict inevitable was the clash of two politics of collective memory of the two oppositional subcultures that found themselves on a collision course in the aftermath of the establishment of the first non-Communist government. The author shows that in the course of the 'war on the top' both parties discursively enacted politically charged narratives of transition which, on the one hand, corresponded to their respective subcultural memories, and, on the other hand, constituted a backdrop against which the two groups struggled for imposing political taxonomies consistent with their knowledge-political interests and oriented at moral exclusion of the adversary. Finally, the findings of the study are interpreted in the larger Central European context, using a Czech-Slovak example. In terms of methodology, the author brings together theoretical insights from various fields of social inquiry: memory studies, cultural and intellectual history, and social theory of knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

'Ladies and Gentlemen, on June 4, 1989 Communism in Poland has ended' – announced the actress Joanna Szczepkowska on the daily news almost exactly two decades ago. This June, people all over Poland celebrate this day with pride and joy. We like to think about ourselves as the vanguard of the 'Autumn of Nations' that brought back freedom and independence to the countries on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain making possible their 'return to Europe'. We are happy that twenty years ago the Poles as a nation won their place in history and a secure future. While this is all very well, my purpose in revisiting the days of the bloodless revolution of 1989, is not commemoratory.

I will tell the story of the 'war on the top', a strange war – also bloodless – that led to the disintegration of the oppositional counterculture in the first months after the June 1989 elections. This strange war was one of the founding moments of Poland's recent history, highly consequential for the shape of public life after the fall. The internal struggles between two fractions of Polish dissidents – the architects of the Round Table Accords on the one hand, and a group of right wing oppositionists, on the other – had the stake in control over the process of political change and, more specifically, over the social infrastructure of political support comprising a network of institutions, some legalized and others created in the course of the electoral campaign. In my work I elucidate the unfolding of the events and its consequences, but I am mostly interested in the ideological aspect of the clash and the political divisions that emerged in it aftermath. For what was strange about the 'war on the top' was not the conflict itself. Given the mass character of the dissident scene of the late 1980s, unbroken by the backlash of the Martial Law, oppositional groups were too many and too different in terms of both ideology and praxis to entertain a unified 'post-August camp' a serious possibility even before 1989. The surprising part was the level of ideological polarization and the viciousness of the rivalry[1].

The discussions about the disappearance – if not in person, than in 'spirit' – of the dissidents from the political scenes of the post-Communist East and Central Europe boil down to two

[1] Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2003), p. 516.

dominating narratives. The first one tells: 'once on the margins of society, to the margins of society again they returned'[2]. The oppositionists were never popular amongst the non-dissident members of the Communist societies for whom their great moral standard, nonconformist values and even the sheer obstinacy in resistance was hardly bearable. Also, their anti-political identities were not compatible with the routine, the half-truths and the triviality of 'normal' politics in particular and the boredom and consumerism of Central European return to 'normalcy' in general[3]. If the first narrative takes the dissident identity as the point of departure, the second underscores the knowledge-political interests. It goes to show that, all the contrary, the dissidents are doing just fine under new circumstances. Marginalized under Communism, they 'corrected their trajectories', allied themselves with a fraction of the Communist establishment to bring about the changes and, after the fall, became part of the elite, living from the oppositional 'rent' or performing as 'organic intellectuals' of the post-socialist middle class[4]. Both narratives are to be treated rather ideal-typically, but even in general terms, they are not sufficient to describe the 'war on the top'. On the one hand, given the exceptional size of and mass support for the Polish counterculture, its members enjoyed public popularity and prestige both before and after 1989. On the other hand, however, their knowledge-political interests can explain the 'event' of the rivalry, but not its intensity and drastic character. As I will try to show, both interests and identities – in short, the interest in the symbolic worth of the identities – were invested in the 'war on the top'. Most important, however, was a third factor. The thesis of this work is that it was the politics of collective memory that played the most important part in the polarization and disintegration of the democratic opposition in the aftermath of its final victory.

'Collective memory' is somewhat a protean concept, but I take it as an enabling rather than disqualifying trait. This work lacks an overall methodological exposition of what collective memory is and how it works. I use it contextually – much in convergence with Clifford Geertz's 'thick

[2] Barbara Falk, *The Dillemas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2002), p. 354.
[3] E.g. G.M.Tamás, 'The Legacy of Dissent' in *Revolutions of 1989* (London: Routledge, 1999), ed. by Vladimir Tismaneanu.
[4] E.g. L.P. King and Iván Szelényi, *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and power* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

description'[5] – and try to inscribe it in the discursive practices of the actors themselves. Some clarifications, however, are necessary. I use the concept of 'collective memory' in two different ways. The first draws conclusions from Andreas Huyssen's observation that "human memory may well be an anthropological given, but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality, the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change"[6]. I contend a post-Communist transition is a very specific 'regime of temporality'. Going from totalitarianism to liberal democracy and from socialism to market was a unique historical process which produced its own tensions. Did we leave the history of bad times already? Are we there yet? – those questions are not easy to answer. The answer depends on how both the totalitarian past and the promised future are understood. A transition is a moment when collective memory is in-the-make and that remake is a part of my story. Second and more prosaically, I write about the collective memory of two oppositional subcultures that had the mayor role in the 'war on the top'. Here the concept of 'collective memory' addresses the way in which both subcultures position themselves against and identified with the Polish historical tradition of dissent. A link between the two contexts is provided by J.K. Olick's idea about the 'path-dependence' of collective memory[7]. I claim that the incompatibility of the 'narratives of transition' produced by the two dissident fractions steamed from the differences between their subcultural memories. Accordingly, my understanding of the political with regards to memory is twofold. First 'politics of collective memory' refers to the struggle for over 'universalization' of the particular narrative of transition as hegemonic. Secondly 'politics of memory' refers to the fact that – as I will show – each of those narratives constituted a backdrop for a specific political taxonomy which positioned the rivals on the 'totalitarian', that is, excluded side of the rivalry.

[5] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.
[6] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.2.
[7] J.K. Olick, 'What does it mean to normalize the past? Oficial Memory in German Politics since 1989' in *States of Memory: Continuities, conflicts and transformations in national retrospection* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), ed. by J.K. Olick.

In my understanding of political taxonomies I am indebted to political theorist Chantal Mouffe[8] who points out that it is *not* the orientation towards dialogue and consensus, but the way in which political differences are articulated, what makes a public sphere democratic and liberal. According to Mouffe, the task of liberal democracy is eliminate the antagonistic relations – which, in her view, is impossible because of the very nature of the political – but to transform them into adversarial relations between rivals which consider themselves as equals. The most important part of my argument goes to demonstrate that the self-destruction of the Polish oppositional counterculture owed much to the fact that both rival taxonomies carried a heavy load of moral exclusion and this is why the rivalry between the two dissident groups could not be transformed into adversarial politics.

In the chapters 2, 3 and 4 I present a detailed account of the narratives of transition, their embeddedness in the subcultural memories of the two fractions and the political taxonomies they supported. The analyses are preceded by an overview of theoretical strategies dealing with intellectuals in general and dissidents in particular (chapter 1), in which I have found useful to connect together two strands of social enquiry which tend to follow separate routes: the more formal orientation of the sociology of knowledge and the approach of cultural and social history. I show my preference for the field approach as it appears in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu and Dick Pels because of the relational and non-reductive logic of analysis it encourages. I am closer to Pels than to Bourdieu in terms of formal rigorousness and use the term 'dissident counterculture' instead of 'intellectual field' to underwrite the specificity of circumstances. I show usefulness of the field approach with reference to examples from the cultural and social history of the Intelligentsia. In the concluding chapter, I summarize my findings, relate to the possible reservations the reader might have as for the specific role Lech Wałęsa had in the clash, and finally, I try to relate the Polish case to the broader Central European context. The opening question of this piece is as follows: what does it mean that Communism has ended?

[8] Chantal Mouffe, *On the political* (London: Routledge, 2005).

CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Approaches

> Whatever the intellectuals are, it was they and they alone who designed the definitions and who contested them. Any attempt to define intellectuals is an attempt at self-definition; any attempt to accord or deny the status of an intellectual is an attempt at self-construction[9].
> **Zygmunt Bauman**

> For the purpose of a more precise characterization of the intelligentsia, it may be acknowledged first, that *the intelligentsia is not a class* and, second, *that it is not in a position to form its own party* … Above all, it has to be recognized that there is no group that is as divided internally (bank manager, professor, 'yellow press' journalist, bohemian), and that this division is a division according to *classes*. More than that: the formation of a party of intellectuals would inevitably lead to fascism[10].
> **Carl Mannheim**

> All realities come with their spokespersons. They do not stand alone and cannot speak for themselves. Re-inscribing the 'place' of the spokesperson therefore ties all realities back to the performative act without which they would not become real[11].
> **Dick Pels**

Intellectuals: going on the road, ending up in a field.

The history of intellectuals is the history of treason. Far from being only a *façon de parler*, the trope of 'treason' provides meaningful insight into the specific collective form of life that we call the 'intellectuals'. The denunciation is in the air, whenever the intellectual 'chooses the side of the barricade' or, inversely, proudly professes partisanship of non-partisanship. If it is in the air, that is because 'treason' implies a previous position of holding somebody accountable. The censure is possible, in other words, precisely because intellectuals, unlike other social collectivities, speak on behalf of entities which are never homogenous with themselves. In this sense, 'treason', taken as a social relation, is the reverse of the relation of representation. The tension between representation

[9] Zygmunt Bauman, "Love in Adversity: On the State, the intellectuals, and the state of the intellectuals" in *Thesis Eleven*, 31 (1992), p. 81.
[10] Karl Mannheim, "The Sociology of Intellectuals", *Theory, Culture and Society* 10 (1993), p.75.
[11] Dick Pels, *Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in spokespersonship* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.XIII.

and treason is therefore a good point of departure for approaching the study of intellectuals in the context of the social and, especially, the social relations of power.

What is common to the intellectuals as a social formation is the *epistemological privilege*. This particular privilege derives from the fact that *realities come with their spokespersons*[12]. Every society, even the least developed, believes that there are objects, forces and phenomena, which are not accessible to the senses, and yet endowed with agency, not directly observable, but influencing human fortune: gods, atoms, microbes, the unconscious, the nation, good and evil spirits, the revolutionary class, the popular will, the invisible hand and the psychological barriers of the market. That realities come with their spokespersons does not imply reducing everything to 'discourse'. The objects of science as well as social subjects, under certain circumstances, can and do *object* to how they are represented. Perhaps the ability of the social and natural things to object to what is told about them is indeed the ultimate measure of the objectivity of a representation[13].

Nevertheless, to the extend that culture depends on mobilizing absent realities, in the realm of science as well as in politics and aesthetics, whatever is 'out there' is there because it is discursively constituted, performed and staged. And for all things social, the intellectuals are the *spokespersons*. They are shamans, priests, natural and social scientists and ideologues. Intellectuals are those who are believed to have a privileged contact with the invisible and their mission is to represent what otherwise is not 'out there' to the rest of society. They are those who make the oracle speak; those who know that the market is capable of self-regulation under every conditions; they are the Jacobins who replace the King's two bodies with the new agent of history, the people.

The expression 'epistemological privilege' underwrites what otherwise may sound strangely awkward – the inevitable mixture of claims to knowledge and claims to power, that some intellectual self-descriptions still try to keep apart. However, since the very act of representing opens a gap, a space of contingency which subverts the claim to identity between the represented and the spokesperson, in other words, if speaking *for* others entails speaking *in the place of* others, the threat that the mundane and the worldly, passions and interests, will permeate and slip into the gap, is

[12] *Intellectual as Stranger*, p. XIII.
[13] See Bruno Latour, "When Things Strike Back: a possible contribution of 'science studies' to the social sciences", *British Journal of Sociology*, 51 No. 1 (2000), pp. 107–123.

constantly present[14]. As Peter Winch brilliantly remarked, the claim to responsibility on the basis of the greater knowledge "is not only an admission of accountability, but a claim to power, and these two aspects may be so interconnected that an admission of accountability in some cases can *amount* to a claim to power"[15].

* * *

The theoretical approaches to studying intellectuals can arranged be according to how they deal with the tension between representation and treason, that is, according to (1) how they situate the intellectuals as a collective within the knowledge-interests continuum and (2) what level of autonomy they attribute to it *vis-à-vis* other collectivities. Along this two axial dimensions (see fig.1) fit the majority of the 'schools', epitomized here by their 'founding fathers'[16].

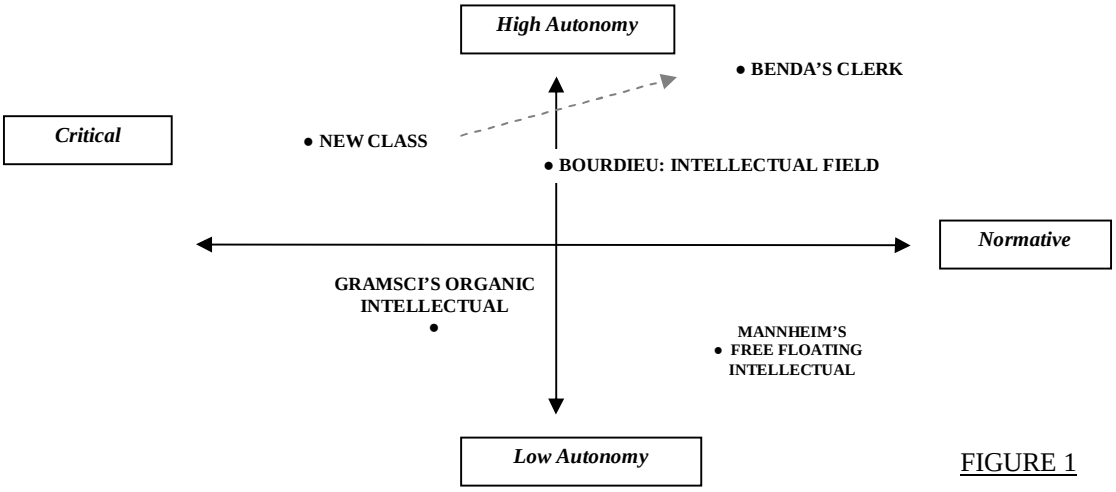

FIGURE 1

Perhaps the most exemplary statement of mission and collective responsibility of intellectuals belongs to Julien Benda's *La Trahison des clercs*[17]. In his historical survey, the French essayist argued that the constitutive condition of progress of the western Civilization lied in the separation and distinction between two spheres: that of the laymen – the locus of application of the scientific ideas, where passions of politics reign – and that of the clerks – the isle of dispassionate reflexivity guided by the rules of universal Reason alone. Once the intellectuals had betrayed their

[14] *Intellectual as Spokesperson*, pp. 1-27.
[15] Peter Winch, "Introduction" in *The political responsibility of intellectuals* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) ed. by Ian Maclean, Allan Montefiore and Peter Winch, p. 4.
[16] For an alternative conceptualization, see Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens, "The Sociology of Intellectuals", *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002), pp. 63-90.
[17] Julien Benda, *The treason of the intellectuals* (New York : Norton, 1969).

mission, giving away their autonomy, mingling with the layman and providing scientific rationalizations to their mundane passions – especially the classist and racist ideologies – the Civilization found itself on the verge of collapse.

Ernest Geller demonstrated the week point of this truly heroic plea for the autonomy of Reason in the most elegant way. In his brief but analytically sound article *La trahison de la trahison des clercs* Gellner commented that from a shared idea of 'nature as revealed by Reason' can follow quite disparate claims: the respect of universal values on the one hand, and a 'choice of a barricade' on the other. What for some is the treason of the universal mission, for others is being on the right side of history, and acting according to history's necessary laws[18]. He reminded that both social Darwinism and Marxist socialism are chapters of the intellectual history of western rationalism as legitimate as the professed humanism of Benda.

Gellner's remainder is all the more pertinent if we take into account that Benda's essay was a requiem to a collective project French republican intellectuals embarked upon in the course of the Dreyfus Affair. In one of their manifestos, the Dreyfusards claimed:

> We alumni and alumnae of the colleges are the only permanent presence that corresponds to the aristocracy in older countries. We have continuous traditions, as they have; our motto, too, is *noblesse oblige*; and unlike them, we stand for ideal interests solely, for we have no corporate selfishness and wield no power of corruption. We sought to have our own class consciousness. "*Les intellectuels!"* What prouder club name could there be than this one[19].

As Kurzman and Owens aptly noted, this self-representation was an image of an anti-class: a class whose very identity consisted in the denial of any relation to the spheres of politics and economy. Free from corruption that the incorporation in the world of political and economic passions entail, they perceived themselves as bearers of interests conterminous with the interest of the society as a whole[20].

If Dreyfus Affair constitutes the 'primal scene' of modern study of intellectuals, that is because it harbors the constitutive dynamics of intellectual rivalry, in which the *theoretical* competition between the ethos-oriented and the standpoint-bound objectifications of 'intellectuals'

[18] Ernest Gellner, "La trahison de la trahison des clercs" in Ian Maclean, Ian, Allan Montefiore, Peter Winch (ed.), *The political responsibility of intellectuals*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.17-28.
[19] Kurzman and Owens, p. 64-65.
[20] Ibidem.

translate into *intellectual* strategies of self-construction. In the course of the political scandal and the 'coming out' of the Dreyfusards was countered by ferocious response from the ranks of both anti-Dreyfusard right and syndicalist left. The anti-intellectual intellectuals, left and right, took the plea for the public salience of the autonomy of Reason to be an instance of exceptional delusion on the part of uprooted university professors and *literati*, alienated from what they wanted to pass for the primary reality of Class or Nation. For the ventriloquists of this new political ontology of the social, there were no intermediate or transcendent positions – the real treason of clerks consisted precisely in the attempt to usurp it. It was only through the immersion in the pristine solidarities of Class of Nation, how one could grasp the vision of the social totality[21].

The most intellectually elaborate version of the classical standpoint theory came from the neo-Marxist Italian thinker, Antonio Gramsci. In his view,

> Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields[22].

In his formulation, the ethos exemplified by the Dreyfusards, the image of intellectuals as an autonomous social group, independent of the fundamental classes contending on the 'original terrain' of the capitalist economy, was, if not an illusion altogether, a thing of the past. The role of the 'traditional intellectual' was no longer attainable in the modern capitalist societies, where all social positions would ultimately be distributed along the sides of the great divide determined by the relations of production. Still, Gramsci attributed a key role to the 'organic' intellectuals' of the two fundamental classes - not only did they cater for the 'homogeneity and an awareness' of their class of belonging, but also waged the 'war of positions' for the cultural 'hegemony' over different class fractions and intermediate strata[23].

Gramsci's attempt at reasserting the autonomy of the political in its symbolic and discursive nature, while salvaging the Marxist dogma of the 'last-instance causality' was truly heroic. Nevertheless, it remains paradoxical. For if, 'in the last instance', there is a short circuit between the

[21] See *Intellectual as Stranger*, p.69-80.
[22] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p.5.
[23] See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 47-92.

positions in the economic sphere and its expression on the level of (political) consciousness, why should one need to theorize the intellectuals separately? If, on the other hand, it is the intellectuals who provide the proletariat with the sense of 'homogeneity and awareness', in what precisely consists the '*organic* bound'? The same antinomy applies to the self-proclaimed heralds of the national 'regeneration': if the nation is substantially an 'imagined community'[24], what is exactly meant by 'revival'?

As Dick Pels has argued, the problem with the classical standpoint approaches emerges when the critiques of the 'will to power' behind the idea of the autonomy of Reason invoke in their turn "a state of ontological sovereignty, 'out there', in an autonomous world which precedes and predetermines all representation"[25]. In more general terms, Pels notes that

> The pertinent dilemma which then arises for the… idea that all human thinking is situated, context-bound, and position-relevant, is that all these standpoints, situations or contexts have in turn to be spoken for, must be discursively represented and enacted in order to have a critical impact upon other arguments, other situations, other contexts. The fundamental axiom about the existential or positional determination of thought (or 'situated knowledge'), i.e. the entire operation of relating human cognition and valuation to a determinate social-existential base… appears to beg the question of…spokespersonship for these determinations, connections, and roots[26].

According to Pels, both the Bendian-normative approach and its critics succumb to what he calls the 'metonymic fallacy of intellectuals', that is, the operation of discursive effacement of the hiatus that separates the spokespersons from the objects or subjects they claim to represent.

The problem of intellectual spokespersonship constitutes a point of departure for a plethora of the 'New Class' approaches[27] constructed in analytical tension if not opposition to the Marxist tradition. Anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin, Wacław Machajski and Roberto Michels preceded Leon Trotsky, the Yugoslav revisionist Milovan Djilas and the Hungarian dissidents George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi in debunking political Marxism as the ideological rationale for party intellectuals' own knowledge-political interests. The party vanguard, the main line of this argument goes, who allegedly represented the historical conscience of the proletariat, quite in disregard for the empirical

[24] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006). See also Kurzman and Owens, pp. 74-77.
[25] *Intellectual as Spokesperson*, pp. XII-XIII.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] For general orientation, see Dick Pels, *Property and Power in Social Theory. A study in intellectual rivalry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and power*.

'trade union mentality' of the workers, would end up exercising the dictatorship not in the name of, but *over* the oppressed masses once the capitalist relations of production had been abolished. In an instance of an exceptional lucidity, Machajski even spoke of 'knowledge capital', monopoly over which, exercised collectively by the party, would serve the basis for the new relations of exploitation[28].

All the 'new class' theories advance the idea of the collective autonomy of the intellectuals *vis-à-vis* other social groups, and put emphasis on the shared knowledge-political interests inscribed in the relation of spokespersonship, instead of subscribing to the self-representations of the spokespersons[29]. However, its authors strangely forget to put themselves in the picture, which is all the more remarkable if one remembers that all of them were dissidents, marginalized from the mainstream socialist circles of their times. In other words, while their own position allowed them to see the dark side of the avant-garde, they (interestingly) deemphasized that intellectual rivalry that counters the tendencies towards corporatism inherent in the collective autonomy of the intellectuals.

Karl Mannheim's theory of 'free-floating' intellectuals was another remarkable attempt at dealing with the paradox of situated knowledge[30]. According to Pels, Mannheim, no less than the New Class theorists, was preoccupied with the fact that Marxist class theory potentially could function as a "convenient vehicle of self-effacement which legitimated a peculiar play of presence and absence in which 'workers' metaphorically substituted for their invisible spokespersons"[31]. He therefore transposed George Lucács' theory that it was only from the 'alienated' standpoint of the proletariat that one could have a picture of the capitalist system in its totality, into the intellectuals. While the dualist ontology of the social, which Mannheim 'inherited' from Marxism, prevented him from theorizing the idea of an autonomous collective subject other than the fundamental classes, he

[28] See Andrzej Walicki, *O Inteligencji, liberalizmach i o Rosji* [*On Intelligentsia, liberalisms and on Russia*] (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), pp. 66-67; King and Szelényi, pp. 24-29.
[29] In this overview I do not include what you could call a 'normative' or 'quasi-normative' variant of the New Class Theory, developed mainly in response to the postwar evolution of Capitalism in the West, labeled 'post-industrial/knowledge society', in which welcomed the putative rise to 'class' power of the managers and other 'intellectual workers' at the expense of the old propertied class, in view of the alleged higher rationality and moral capacity of the former. See James Burnham, *The Menagerial Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960); Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-industrial Society: A venture in social forecasting* (London: Heinemann, 1974); Alvin Gouldner, *The future of intellectuals and the rise of the new class* (New York : Seabury Press, 1979).
[30] See Karl Mannheim, op. cit, and idem, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[31] *Intellectual as Stranger*, p. 93.

maintained that the intellectual milieu, because of its diverse social recruitment and the equalizing effect of the education, configured a privileged vantage point from which the vision of the social totality could be achieved and the mission of mediating between the entrenched class interests embarked upon[32]. In a sense, Mannheimian theory can be read as the reverse of the New Class approaches. Although it puts emphasis on the (class-bound) internal divisions between the intellectuals, it does not contemplate the eventuality that in the intellectual rivalry there might be an element of complicity, in virtue of the commonly shared, culturally legitimized, strategic position.

To sum up, all approaches described thus far fail to analytically come to terms with the tension between representation and treason inherent in the practice of spokespersonship. Apart from the 'metonymic fallacy of intellectuals' both the normative approach epitomized by Benda, as well as the classical standpoint theory exemplified by Gramsci, presuppose an objective *point of departure* (the value-free intellectual ethos vs. class embeddedness), and, hence, remain blind to the internal divisions or, what is worse, irreflexively take the *internal divide* for an *external boundary*, demarcating for example the 'intellectual' and the 'populist' (or 'bourgeois' versus 'proletarian') as separated and contradictory spheres. They fail to grasp, in other words, that the intellectual spokespersonship itself is an object of struggles for symbolic legitimacy, its dominant form being constantly renegotiated. While the revisionist Marxist and anarchist approaches aptly conceptualize the dark side of the epistemological privilege, they fail to grasp the plurality of standpoints from where knowledge-political claims might be advanced, that constitutes the generative principle of internal struggles for symbolic legitimacy. Mannheim, sensitive when it comes to the intellectual rivalry, fails to conceptually grasp 'complicity in adversity' which is inscribed in the strategic autonomy of the intellectual-cum-spokesperson.

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Against this background, the concept of the 'intellectual field', elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu, deals with the tension between representation and treason remarkably well[33]. The notion of 'field' stands

[32] *Intellectual as Stranger*, pp. 81-109; King and Szelényi, pp. 34-37.

[33] See especially *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1991). For a critical introduction see David Swartz, *Culture & power : the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of

for both a 'field of forces' – a heterogeneous structure of *relational* differences, in which properties of every position are overdetermined by internal relation to others – and a 'field of struggles' between the actors who seek to maintain or alter the power patterns, by taking control over the dominant principle of hierarchization of the positions. Power to determine this 'dominant principle of domination' is the mayor stake in those struggles, because it is this principle that endows the field with its *specific* logic. The logic of the field constitutes a set internal constrains, irreducible to broader 'social conditions'. It is the field-specific constrains, and not the short circuit between the social conditions and objective interests, which determines the space of possible discursive and non-discursive practices.

Bourdieu conceptualizes the specific case of the intellectual field without reducing the polar duality of representation and treason, or 'interest' and 'disinterestedness' to any of its poles[34]. Seen from the *outside* the intellectual field possesses a 'relative autonomy' with regards to political, economic and religious worlds. According to the French theorist, 'disinterestedness' of intellectuals should be understood only in this *relative* and *genetic* sense, that is, *vis-à-vis* the interests dominant in other social universes and as a product of historically evolved institutional conditions of distanciation from these universes that make the methodical effort of cultural production possible and sustainable. 'Autonomy' and 'disinterestedness' steam no so much from value-freedom inscribed in the nature of intellectual inquiry, but result from collectively organized, pragmatic efforts at symbolic legitimization of the cultural production as an object of worth, independent with respect to the capitals dominant in other spheres[35].

To the extend that these endeavors succeed and the monopoly on cultural production of the representations of the social world is established, every intellectual field runs the risk of social closure and corporatism, or even attempt at imposing its own logic and rules on other universes, the most notorious example of which was the Dreyfus Affair. However, Bourdieu notes, that

Chicago Press, 1997); Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, Moishe Postone (eds.), *Bourdieu: critical perspectives* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1993).

[34] Dick Pels, "Knowledge Politics and Anti-politics: Toward a critical appraisal of Bourdieu's concept of intellectual autonomy", *Theory, Culture & Society* (24) 1995, pp.79-104.

[35] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, "The corporatism of the universal: The role of intellectuals in the modern world", *Telos* 81 (1989), pp. 99-110.

corporatism (not to mention the 'kingdom of the philosophers') remains most of the time in the realm of fantasy of some, is not so difficult to explain once the intellectual field is approached from the *inside*. Internally, despite its specific stakes, the intellectual field resembles every other social universe: it is a space of competition between scholars, artists, critics and experts, who strife to make their cultural assets valuable and who struggle to make their particular mode of spokespersonship in the realm of science, culture and expertise dominant for the field as a whole and as against the broader public background. Although Bourdieu himself maintained that his description is a disinterested objectivization of the 'game as a whole' and his later career embraced the *Realpolitik of Reason* (where 'real' stands for a realistic, value-free, scientific judgment)[36], from this agonistic conceptualization actually follows that the danger of corporatism is avoided only to the extend that the unequal distribution of cultural worth is (at least in practice) countered by the affirmation of pluralism of truth and method[37], and as long as the intellectuals struggle for the 'universalization of the social conditions of access to universality'[38].

In the context of the above discussion, it is pertinent to comment on the reasons why Bourdieu considered both the 'free-floating' and the 'organic' renderings to be not particularly valid. In relation to the former, he spoke of the 'charismatic ideology of gift' that detaches the cultural product from the site and condition of its production and transforms the effects of social competition in the intellectual realm into a Heglian dialectics of truth and error[39]. The latter, in his opinion, was an after-image of the 'structural homology' between the marginalized in the intellectual field and the oppressed *tout court*, in which similarities suppress the differences, the suppression of which corresponds to what Pels calls the 'metonymic fallacy'[40]. From this pluralist and agonistic approach clearly follows, that any hope of a value-free definition of the intellectual spokesperson should be abandoned. He would probably agree with Zygmunt Bauman' comment that "Any attempt to define intellectuals is an attempt at self-definition; any attempt to accord or deny the status of an

[36] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian meditations* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[37] Pels, supra.
[38] "The Corporatism", p.109-110.
[39] Cf. *Distinction, Pascalian Meditations.*
[40] "The Corporatism", p.103.

intellectual is an attempt at self-construction"[41]. Two last remarks are in order. The scope of the present study renders impossible following the field approach with all the formal rigorousness of Bourdieu. Secondly, I use the term 'dissident counterculture' instead of 'intellectual field' to underwrite the specificity of circumstances.

Polish Intellectual Field in Critical Retrospection

While the emergence of autonomous realms of intellectual rivalry seems to be a fairly universal phenomenon in the modern history, every intellectual field is embedded in a particular social context and evolves according to its own historical trajectory. Copious and well documented social and cultural historiography on the French Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards[42], German Mandarins and *Bildungsbürgertum*[43], or of the Intelligentsia in Poland[44] and Russia[45], goes to illustrate that every intellectual field has a multilayered history, with its specific stakes, its *loci* of intensive discursive condensation, its strong and weak traditions, orthodoxies and heresies, and the social and cultural conditions that shape them. Even in case of quite recent pasts, the clearer picture of the whole trajectory, the thicker the description[46]. While by no means it is possible to review here in detail the long record of more or less scholarly self-portraiture of the Polish Intelligentsia, a true *genre* in its own right, it would be relevant, I believe, to address some questions present in the recent scholarship, in order to illustrate a set of practical issues regarding the field-approach and connect it to the other master trope of this inquiry, that is, the concept of "politics of memory".

[41] Supra.
[42] See Christophe Charle, *Naissance des "intellectuels", 1880-1900* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, c1990); Fritz Ringer, *Fields of knowledge: French academic culture in comparative perspective, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Bourdieu, "Corporatism".
[43] Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German academic community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Jürgen Kocka and Allen Mitchell (eds.), *Bourgeois Society in nineteenth-century Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).
[44] Jerzy Jedlicki, *A suburb of Europe: nineteenth-century Polish approaches to western civilization* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999); Andrzej Walicki, *Poland between East and West: The controversies over self-definition and modernization in partitioned Poland* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1994); Fiona Björling and Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath (eds.), *Words, deeds and values : the intelligentsias in Russia and Poland during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Lund : Lund University, 2005); Maciej Janowski , *Polish liberal thought before 1918* (Budapest : CEU Press, 2004); Janusz Żarnowski, *State, society and intelligentsia: modern Poland and its regional context* (Aldershot, Hampshire : Ashgate/Variorum, 2003).
[45] Isaiah Berlin, *Russian thinkers* (London : Penguin Books, 1978); Richard Pipes (ed.), *The Russian intelligentsia* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1961).
[46] "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", p. 3-30.

It is widely assumed that the specificity of Central and Eastern European Intelligentsia – as compared with the educated strata in Western Europe – is due to patterns of uneven development of modern social and economic structures. Given that cultural developments and technical skills travel faster than the material infrastructure in which the former could be implemented, at the very birth of the Intelligentsia as a social formation was the effect of the overproduction of the professions with respect to the overall social structure and particularly to the 'deficit' of the bourgeoisie, which – as in the case of the (western) countries that had benefited from a more 'organic' growth – would provide the market for their professional products[47]. In the mid-nineteenth century, the strata of those committed or compelled to earn the living with their professional skills (majority of them coming from the ranks of the impoverished gentry and burgers, nourished in later period by the emancipated women and Jews) was still fragile and scarce, and their relative social detachment not only facilitated their collective self-identification, but, more importantly, catered for an acute sense of existential estrangement that could be overcome and sublimated in a variety of ways.

In the countries near, yet backward with respect to the Western core, two models of intellectual spokespersonship developed (ideal-typically), in which the effort at re-connection was given a discursive form of an ethos of civic commitment[48]. In Germany, on the one hand, a clerkish model of *Intelligentz* or *Bildungsbürgertum* prevailed, in which the Heglian notion of the 'universal class' was appropriated as self-understanding of those who, in virtue of their greater Enlightenment perceived themselves as entitled to define the interests of the nation and called to carry out the task of modernization. The Russian *Intelligentsia*, on the other hand, translated their experience of existential uprootedness in to a specific form of social and political radicalism. By no means a contradiction-in-terms, this intellectual populism was based on the idea that the epistemological privilege constituted a social privilege as well, acquired at the expense of the suffering of the common people and, hence, that it was imperative for the Intelligentsia to repay its debt by destroying the unjust social order that had engendered it. While the 'German' intellectual was oriented towards what he believed to be a modern, liberal pattern of harmonious relations between

[47] *A Suburb of Europe*, pp. 173-200. Cf. *Bourgeois Society in nineteenth-century Europe*.
[48] The following classification draws on Andrzej Walicki, "Polish Conceptions of Intelligentsia and its Calling" in *Words, Deeds and Values*, pp. 1-12.

the bourgeois civil society and the State, the Russian specialty was a radical-democratic utopia of a organic community, free from Zarist despotism as well as unspoiled by the vices of the Western Civilization. Needless to say, while *specific* to the region, the above described forms of being (an intellectual) were neither unique not even predominant in their respective societies, meeting, serious, at times reciprocal, competition.

Now, in the formative period of the Polish Intelligentsia in the years 1830-1870, both these ideal-typical forms were *refracted* by the specific historical circumstance – the loss of state sovereignty and the repartition of the former Commonwealth's territory between Prussia, Austria and Russia – but still constituted equally viable possibilities. While the Polish Intelligentsia as a whole was neither as pro-statist as its German counterpart, nor as anarchical as the Russian radicals, the historian can clearly distinguish two divergent models of spokespersonship for the nation, which oriented the civic commitment of the intellectuals[49]. On the one hand, the greater part of the Great Emigration after the November Uprising was committed to the idea of the social and political revolution which, unlike the previous, gentry-based upheaval, would not only bring back the Commonwealth's independence, but also transform, legally as well as ideologically, the peasants into citizens. Despite the acute awareness of the dependence of their endeavors on the benevolence of the mayor political powers, the Polish democratic circles tended to align themselves with the utopian socialists and radicals of the West, choosing the utopia of universal justice and freedom between peoples to the 'actually existing' Western modernity. On the other hand, the Intelligentsia from the Great Duchy of Poznań in the Prussian partition – amongst whom the use of the term itself originated to (self)identify a new, distinguishable social formation – conceived of their task more decidedly in terms of spokespersonship for Western-patterned modernization and although never opposed political conspiracy altogether, it put emphasis on immediate and practical aims, the 'organic work' that would bring material improvement and institutionally organize the Polish-speaking society independently of the Prussian State[50].

[49] Cf. "Polish Conceptions".
[50] Cf. Jerzy Jedlicki, *Błędne Koło 1832-1863*, vol. 2 of Jerzy Jedlicki (ed.), *Dzieje Inteligencji Polskiej do Roku 1918* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, Neriton, 2008).

After the tragedy of the 1963 January Uprising, which buried the radical claims of the young and belligerent Intelligentsia together with its proponents, the latter option came to the fore and preserved its dominant position well into the interwar period. In the Russian partition The liberal circle of Warsaw Positivists[51] sought to drastically recast the romantic representation of the nation. They rejected the libertarian imaginary as a residue of an anarchical and self-centered gentry mentality, that obscured the reality of a politically, mentally and economically backward country, which owned its misfortunes not so much to the conspiracy of foreign powers, but to its own ineptitude in the face of the competition between nations for civilizational progress. The imperative of modernization, which closely followed the guidelines of Henry Thomas Buckle, Herbert Spencer and Mill, legitimized in turn the agenda of 'work at the foundations' which not unlike the 'organic work' of their predecessors, aimed at establishing a network of independent social institutions, through which the material aid as well as educational and technical skills could be delivered to the greater society.

The liberals found its counterpart and intellectual rivals in the Kraków concervative circle in the Habsburg Galicia[52]. The conservatives advocated a programme similarly centered on civic improvement and legalism. However, while Aleksander Świętochowski, the leader of the positivists, did not hesitate to proclaim, dubbing Descartes, that 'the nation has its Intelligentsia, therefore it exists'[53], the conservatives presented themselves not so much as the new 'universal class', but as the 'organic intellectuals' of the gentry who in their view was the carrier of the historical traditions of the nation. Not surprisingly, the 'historical class' they sought to represent bore a uncanny resemblance to their spokespersons: it was ideally devoid of the libertarian vices of the old and strategically strengthened by the virtues of the most talented members of the professions, whom she would embrace and co-opt.

While during the bulk of the later nineteenth century the field of intellectual rivalry was organized around these two poles, around 1905 and after that revolutionary upheaval, it became

[51] See *A Suburb of Europe*, pp.205-237; Brian Porter, *When nationalism began to hate: imagining modern politics in nineteenth-century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 43-47.
[52] On the conservatives, see "Polish Conceptions"; cf. Magdalena Micińska, *Inteligencja na rozdrożach 1864-1918*, vol. 3 of *Dzieje Inteligencji*, pp.80-113.
[53] Quoted in "Polish Conceptions", p. 12.

clear that the radical traditions of the Polish Intelligentsia were not dead, but only dormant[54]. On the left, socialist intellectuals such as Ludwik Krzywicki and Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, attacked the positivist agenda of the liberal Intelligentsia for its '*laissez-faire*' outlook and presaged its future absorption into the ranks of the proletariat, but at the same time appealed to the romantic traditions of the 'penitent gentry'. On the right, the ideologue of the 'national chauvinism', Roman Dmowski, brought the Spencerian element of the positivist program to its social-darwinist consequences, claiming at the same time that his *Thoughts of the Modern Pole* should replace the abstract and imitative "intellectualism, aestheticism and ethicism" of the Warsaw circles as an agenda for the nation's modern destiny and a blueprint for more efficient 'work at the foundations', oriented not only towards material progress and moral improvement, but also towards the national self-assertion and against the nation's enemies, most notably, the 'Jewish element' and the 'cosmopolitan' intellectuals (which quite often happened to converge in one and the same group of people)[55]. Both socialists and nationalists followed on the footsteps of their French contemporaries, at the same time challenging the legitimacy of the epistemological privilege of the post-1863 generation, and erecting themselves as spokespersons of the alternative imagined communities. Also, at the turn of the century, the main lines of friction of Polish intellectual field coalesced: the debates about the real and desired shape of modernization, its necessary social agents, the dilemmas of activity and collaboration, the question of the mental and moral residues in the Intelligentsia's discourses, the very prospects of its existence – all these discursive nodal points will return in the discussions along twentieth century.

An overview of the historical genesis of Polish intellectual field was pertinent in order to underscore the qualities of the field-approach, notably, its usefulness in providing a de-centered historical description which does not substitute the plurality of variants of spokespersonship for the any particular 'ethos'. Jerzy Jedlicki, who has researched on late nineteenth century Intelligentsia more than any other historian, seems to share this basic methodological tenet. In his view:

[54] On the desmise of Positivism, see *A Suburb of Europe*, pp. 241-287; *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, pp. 75-103.
[55] See especially *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, pp. 157-232.

> Obviously, Warsaw positivism and with its offensive agenda of europeanization, was a Polish intellectual ideology *par excellence* and has been considered as such by intellectual and literary historians. Fine, as long it is acknowledged that, despite the temporary triumphs of the positivist conquest, which had weighted so much on our image of the whole epoch, Polish culture of the period contains an equally powerful, although temporarily withdrawn conservative-catholic potential, growing nationalist impulse and, on the other hand, the impulse of the radical social critique[56].

This work of de-centering is all the more desirable, since the recent scholarship has followed this tendency to overemphasize the importance of the liberal-conservative tradition, a good example of which is to *Inteligencja w Polsce*[57] [*Intelligentsia in Poland*], a recent collective volume on the twentieth century experience of Polish intellectuals in multidisciplinary perspective. Although most of the contributors would probably agree with Hanna Palska and Maciej Chojnowski as for the 'amorphous nature of the concept, or rather, its real correlate' and the 'methodological problem of the blurred distinction between the subject and the object of the inquiry'[58], at the same time they judge some of the intellectual discourses more 'fitting' than others. Magdalena Micińska, author of the otherwise essential study of the history of Intelligentsia in the period 1864-1918[59], apparently considers the discourse of the generation of intellectuals that came to dominate the semi-public life in the aftermath of the January Uprising to be the general matrix of the Intelligentsia's 'ethos' and their times the 'golden age' of the Intelligentsia as a whole. She deplores "deep intellectual changes, which at dawn of the nineteenth century shattered the relative unity of the attitudes of the Poles and in the following century, led to the definitive polarization of the attitudes of the Polish Intelligentsia"[60]. That she seems to conflate the 'univocality' of the represented and its liberal spokespersons is by no means an appearance, since she regards the radical intellectual traditions as destructive for "the very basis of the ethos of the Intelligentsia, uniqueness of every individual, personal skills and education, and the imperative to use those resources for the good of the others"[61].

[56] Jerzy Jedlicki "Przedmowa" in Maciej Janowski, *Narodziny Inteligencji* 1750-1831, vol. 1 of *Dzieje Inteligencji*, p. 10.
[57] Henryk Domański (ed.), *Inteligencja w Polsce: Specjaliści, twórcy, klerkowie, klasa średnia?* (Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 2008).
[58] Maciej Chojnowski i Hanna Palska, "O wielopostaciowość pojęcia 'Inteligencja [For polymorphous character of the concept of 'Intelligentsia'] " in *Inteligencja w Polsce*, pp. 21 and 26.
[59] Supra.
[60] Magdalena Micińska, "Dzieje Inteligencji Polskiej do roku 1918" in *Inteligencja w Polsce*, p.65.
[61] Micińska, p.68.

About the socialist intellectuals – and her opinion is similar with regards to its nationalist counterparts – she comments that

> Representatives of that particular Intelligentsia took active and most of the time leading part in constructing the ideological agenda… decidedly a-intellectual (*ainteligencki*), if not anti-intellectual (*antyinteligencki)* in its nature. At the same time, the ideological imperatives their voiced gave rise to the most radical critique of the Intelligentsia, which condemned not only the errors…of the Polish enlightened strata, but indeed attacked the Intelligentsia's very position of an integral part of the social organism, undermined its reason for being and presaged its disappearance in the near future[62].

There are various difficulties with Micińska's propositions. First of all, she transforms a particular historical circumstance – the virtual disappearance from the public life under partitions of the radical models of spokespersonship in the aftermath of the hecatomb of 1863 and the subsequent repressions, admittedly, brought about mainly by the radicals themselves – into a seemingly natural, reified form of existence, whose standards she later employs to 'measure' the degree of separateness from the apparently uncontestable 'ethos'. Indeed, she assumes that to challenge the dominating position of the liberal intellectuals, with their model of spokespersonship and their social and economic agenda, is to undermine the very identity of Intelligentsia as a whole, even though she admits that 'socialism and leftist thought in general' attracted the mayor part of the post-positivist intellectuals. She, thus oversee the fact that, for example, much of the revolutionary socialist ideology, despite its 'scientist' penchant typical for their times, drew wholeheartedly from the democratic populism of their Romantic predecessors. Ludwik Krzywicki, translator of *Das Kapital* and the leading Marxist of his generation invoked the doctrine of 'debt to the people' as the ethical orientation of the 'critically thinking intellectuals' in his 1905 pamphlet *Sic itur ad virtutem*[63]. Other attempt at reviving the democratic élan is one of the central tenets of the critical theories of Stanisław Brzozowski[64]. Thirdly, to take anti-intellectual spokespersons discourse at face value is to efface the 'performer behind the performance' just like the radicals themselves, granting substantial reality to the imaginary communities they sought to represent.

[62] Ibidem.
[63] See Walicki, "Polish Conceptions", p. 8; On early socialism, see also *A Suburb of Europe*, ibidem.
[64] See Andrzej Walicki, *Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Polish beginnings of "Western Marxism"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

This last comment is even more relevant when it comes to the recent renderings of the history of the Intelligentsia under Communism. Again if, following Janusz Żarnowski[65] and Hanna Palska[66], the historian took the liberal-positivist spokesperson to be the '*meter of Sèvres*' for the Intelligentsia as a whole, she would forcefully have to share the authors' conclusions that the ruling Marxist-Leninist ideology was a direct negation of everything the 'old Intelligentsia' stood for. While it is true that the official spokespersons of People's Poland did not welcome any 'free-floating' elements, whose freedom was effectively and more or less violently circumscribed, writing the history of the Intelligentsia under Stalinism and post-Stalinism in terms of 'collective martyrdom' conceals instead of revealing the complex relations between the party and the State, on the one hand, and various fractions of the Intelligentsia on the other. In other words, it is to assume that the effacement of the autonomy of the intellectual field (and of civil society in general) under State Socialism worked only one way, as if Jan T. Gross' argument about 'totalitarianism from below' did not apply to the knowledgeable[67]. As if the great debate about the 'genealogy of the Polish Intelligentsia' initiated in 1946 by Józef Chałasiński's attack on the 'gentry mentality' of the 'old' intellectuals'[68] did not repeat the same arguments which used to be to brought against its rivals by liberals, conservatives, nationalists, socialists and anarchists consecutively. To put it differently, even if the Intelligentsia indeed *only* 'contributed in the deconstruction of its own ethos'[69], it is more than plausible that it 'participated' in this deconstruction with home-made tools.

Moreover, taking the 'golden age of the Intelligentsia' as the benchmark, makes it hard to understand the attractiveness amongst the Polish dissidents of the alternative traditions, not only the neo-Marxist, as in case of Jacek Kuroń's and Karol Modzelewski's *Letter to the Party*[70], but also

[65] Janusz Żarnowski, "Inteligencja w Polsce niepodległej, w epoce komunizmu i na progu transformacji" in *Inteligencja w Polsce*, pp. 81-102.
[66] Hanna Palska "Walka o kadry i pierwsze rzesze 'wykształciuchów': Nowa inteligencja w stalinizmie" in Inteligencja w Polsce, pp.129-159; idem, "Inteligencja twórcza w latach 1948-1956", ibidem, pp. 160-182.
[67] Jan T. *Gross, Revolution from Abroad : The Soviet conquest of Poland's western Ukraine and western Belorussia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp.112-120. Gross argues that the effacement of the boundary between the state and the civil society, a key characteristic of Stalinism, did not amout to State violence, but also consisted in the 'privatization of the public realm', that is, the 'use' of the coercive power of the State by the subjects against others. Cf. Marci Shore, *Caviar and ashes: a Warsaw generation's life and death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
[68] Józef Chałasiński, *Przeszłość i Przyszłość Inteligencji Polskiej* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 1997 [1958]).
[69] Palska, "Inteligencja Twórcza", p.168.
[70] Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody Niepokornych* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 1996).

early twentieth century radical thought described masterfully by Bogdan Cywiński in his *Rodowody Niepokornych* (*Genealogies of the Insubordinate*)[71], the reading of which constituted the formative experience for many an intellectual committed to the Solidarity movement, whose threat to the Communist government resided precisely in the fact, that it challenged its monopoly over the representation of the 'working people'.

Furthermore, the lack of a truly *critical* approach to the party's *mise-en-scène* of the social and cultural realties pushes the analysis uncannily close to confirming that – the propertied class eliminated – the Socialist state actually favored the 'working people, urban and rural', as affirmed in its constitution. Perhaps the fact that the *upward mobility* from peasants and proletarians into working Intelligentsia was such a cherished slogan in the workers' republic, should be interpreted not only in the light of 'intentional world' the official propaganda as compared to the actual outcomes[72], but should also induce the historian to rethink the power relations under state Socialism, preferably along the lines of György Konrád and Ivan Szelenyi's *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*[73], in which scientific socialism is not uncritically condemned, but taken seriously and critically at the same time, which leads the authors to reveal that knowledge-political interests of the Intelligentsia under Communism were far from incompatible with the 'teleological ethos' of the once existing people's republics. Their variant of the New Class approach, especially in its later, Bourdesian redevelopments of Szelenyi, constitutes an important point of reference also in this study.

[71] Exerpt in Gale Stokes (ed.), *From Stalinism to Pluralism. a Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945* (NY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 108-114.
[72] Palska, "Walka o kadry", pp. 140-147.
[73] György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The intellectuals on the road to class power* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1979).

CHAPTER 2: What does it mean that Communism has ended?

On August 24, 1989 Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first non-communist prime minister of what was still formally People's Republic of Poland, announced in his exposé:

> The government I shall lead can not be held accountable for the mortgage it inherits. It does have, however, influence on the circumstances in which we are bound to act. We draw a thick line under the past. We will be responsible for what we will have done to deliver Poland from the present state of collapse.

The process that would eventually lead to Mazowiecki's speech began with the constitution of the Citizens' Committee formed by a plethora of eminent dissidents and Solidarity activists, elected and headed by Lech Wałęsa, leader of the trade union delegalized in the aftermath of the Martial Law in December 1981. The Committee assumed the political representation of the society in the negotiations with the government officials concerning economic and political reform of the state. The narrow margin of popular consent to the communist rule had been shrinking ever since when the government made public the rejection of the blueprint for restructuring of the collapsing socialist economy in the referendum in November 1987. The basis of legitimacy was further limited by what became to be known as the 'Sinatra doctrine' of the reformist Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who renounced the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of Eastern European countries in favor of letting the communist leaders of Warsaw Pact nations 'do it their way'.

One month later, in an interview with the legal monthly *Konfrontacje,* Bronisław Geremek proposed an 'anti-crisis pact' that would entail the legalization of Solidarity and other independent associations in exchange for the recognition of the legal and political order on behalf of the opposition. Alongside the protest against the price increases, the legalization of Solidarity became the main demand in the new wave of strikes spreading across the country in spring and summer of 1988. Having quelled the strike in the Lenin's Shipyard Wałęsa proved to be still commanding respect and support of the workers as well as the rest of the society, the fact that was corroborated in debate with Alfred Miodowicz, the leader of the official trade unions (OPZZ) broadcasted nationwide on public television – opinion polls made in its aftermath revealed Wałęsa's lasting

popularity. The reformist fraction of party followed the events with the increasing willingness to share the burden of responsibility for the radical economic decisions with the opposition, even if it had to be in return for some political concessions. The discussions regarding the form of the possible negotiations began in August 1988, involving general Czesław Kiszczak – responsible for the internal affairs since 1981 – and Lech Wałęsa, accompanied by observers from the Church hierarchy.

The Citizens Committee was formed in December of the same year to shape the political strategy and the make-up of the side representing the society in the Round Table talks which began on February 6, 1989. Before and during the negotiations, the representatives of the party, the opposition and the Church held parallel meetings in the government villa in Magdalenka outside Warsaw, to discuss the general framework of the talks and to resolve the bottlenecks in the negotiation process. Not all dissident tendencies were represented in the committee, most notably, Moczulski's KPN, radical youth groups such as Federation of Fighting Youth, and the 'Working Group' comprising a number of August 1980 Solidarity leaders in conflict with Wałęsa. Some of those groups rejected the negotiation as an act of treason, which enabled the Solidarity representatives to present themselves as 'moderates' which was a useful argument to be played against the instrumentalization of the liberals/hardliners division by the party representatives. The Accord signed on April 5, 1989 comprised joint 'positions' on the issues of economic reform, trade-union pluralism and the political reform. Most important was the last one, which included the establishment of the office of president with great prerogatives in the sphere of internal and external security and announcement of the 'non-confrontational' elections in which 35 percent of the seats in the *Sejm* and all seats in the newly established Senate would be filled on the basis of free vote. The date of the elections was set on June 4.

The events accelerated. Wałęsa and the National Executive Commission (KKW) of Solidarity recommended endowing the Citizens' Committee with the task of running the electoral campaign. To this purpose local citizens' committees were formed, with the additional purpose of preparing a list of regional candidates out of which the national Committee would compose a all-Solidarity list. The groups which did not participate in the Round Table run independently. The

campaign was promoted by Solidarity's own daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Paper) with Adam Michnik as editor-in-chief and Polish television broadcasted programs of Solidarity Studio. Electoral posters depicted Gary Cooper from High Noon wearing a Solidarity badge and the candidates, 'Wałęsa's Team' were photographed with the trade union's chairman. Despite PZPR's substantial propagandistic advantage, when the results arrived Communism it became clear that Communism in Poland was on its way out, at least according to the expressed desire of the 62 percent of the eligible voters, who rejected the overwhelming majority of the 35 officials on the 'national list'. Solidarity won all but one seats in *Sejm* (161) and all but eight seats in Senate (92). The vacant seats were filled in the second round, the democratic oppositions taking remaining share. In the light of PZPR's total defeat, not anticipated by any of the parties, it took both some time to find a way out which would neither provoke the Communist 'base' nor ignore the society's verdict in which case calls to overthrow the regime 'from below' could be expected to gain popularity. Despite the initial resistance of Mieczysław Rakowski, party's candidate for leadership of the government, and thanks to Wałęsa unexpected call for alliance with the former satellite parties, the variant originally expressed by Adam Michnik in his article 'Your President, Our Prime Minister' was passed. On August 24, the first non-Communist prime minister had its inaugural speech.

* * *

The phrase 'We draw a thick line under the past' made history, quite independently of Mazowiecki's intentions. It came to symbolize the clarion call for revision of the narratives about the country's recent past from the vantage point of an uncertain present and a future more unknown than ever. Many years later, Paweł Śpiewak, a historian of Polish collective memory, recalled that in those days "the time was felt anew as something aflame and valuable. We left the cyclical rhythm of recurring crises, the time of everlasting expectation. We entered the time of change, every day gave into the new, the unpredictable and the uncertain".[74] The times were changing, the present became indeterminate, but so did the past. The communist power had been successfully challenged, but the way that happened, opened a space for contestation of the representation of the past deeply embedded in the collective memory of opposition against the party and the state. Before it could be

[74] Paweł Śpiewak, *Pamięć po Komunizmie* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005), p.17.

avoided (if it ever was avoidable) the 'thick line' became the main line of friction within the emergent intellectual field of post-Communist Poland. In a way, politics of memory was unavoidable because of the very nature of the transition.

The Spectres of Collective Memory

Collective memory and its politics is not a *peripheral* problem. It cannot be simply reduced to a sort of compensatory discourse of traditionalist intellectuals and politicians which accompanies the underdeveloped societies – Central European or other – on the road to modernization, its 'cost' that has to be 'overcome'. Neither is it typical to the periphery, nor (in the other sense of the word) a marginal problem of the modern Western culture. On the contrary, many analyses of the 'memory boom' – the sudden prominence that the gaze turned backwards has gained in private and public life worldwide and increasingly since 1980s – suggest its centrality to the historical transformation of the structures of temporal experience. "Human memory – Andreas Huyssen aptly remarks – may well be an anthropological given, but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality, the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change"[75]. Hence, memory itself has a history, and the historistoricization of collective memory implies not only an examination of the changing representations of the past, but also of the ways people experience the relations between the present, the past and the future. It is both about what *and* how we remember, about the different pasts people believe in and about the *regimes of temporality* within which the mnemonic practices take place and which shape its form. Intensification of mnemonic practices occurs when historically and socially specific regime of temporality becomes destabilized. Since the political can be defined precisely as the dimension of the ontological indeterminacy and openness of everything social[76], I suggest that politics of memory should be understood with reference to the contingent space that opens between the moments of contestation and the stabilization of a temporal regime.

[75] *Twilight Memories*, p.2.
[76] *On the Political*.

Thus, it is in the very nature of the transition to open the space of the political. The type of social change implied in the concept of 'transition' is understood most commonly as a change between a set of political and economic institutions (from state socialism to capitalism and democracy), as well as a change of sphere of cultural influences – movement from East to West. However, a 'transition' is also a regime of temporality within which the difference between the past, present and future becomes blurred. A sagacious chronicler of the Great Divide of 1989 wrote that

> In that year the past fell to pieces and became extinct. Millions, hundreds of millions of people in the former Communist world became lost; they lost their future because their lost their past…Gone were the certainities, the pillars of one's life: the recurrent familiar events, the rhythm of life, the everydays and the holidays, the well-known street names, the social significance of neibourhoods the meaning of the photographs in the family album, the social capital, the knowledge of one's private and professional world, the stability of memories, the comprehension of private and public history. What remained was unknown. At that point between the lost and the not-yet comprehended, historians, politicians, and professional and amateur self-proclaimed experts offered support: to remake the world[77].

Before the transition, the present accommodated with ease the present pasts as well as the future anticipations. A non-transitional temporal regime has the form of a *trajectory*. During a transition, however, the presence of the past becomes problematic, and so does the future. It is problematic not only because of the simple fact of coexistence of the new and the old realities, and its paradoxical outcomes, within the same temporal realm. It is also because the past of the transition is almost always a 'history of bad times'[78]. In most of the cases, transition is a modality of a historical change which is about leaving the bad times behind is as important as the future ahead. The Communist party has lost its power, its institutional structures has been dismantled, its banner withdrawn from the parliament; and yet the paint on the new social-democratic sign-board is too fresh, the informal networks are believed to persist beneath the formal appearances. The institutions of liberal democracy has been installed, but there are reasons to fear that the dissident hunger for unlimited public expression, repressed for so long, will devour the fragile order before it takes root. The once oppositional trade-union, despite the interests of the workers its ought to represent, operates as a shield of the neo-liberal economic reform, whose most active beneficiaries are the formerly socialist

[77] István Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of post-Communism* (Standford: Standford University Press, 2005), p.8-9.
[78] *Retroactive Justice,* p.3.

entrepreneurs, and yet the danger of a backlash of the legacies of once existing socialism persistent in peoples mentalities and habits, appears to be inevitable.

Hence, the very gesture that attempts at leaving the past behind conjures up a spectre. As Jacques Derrida brilliantly remarked on the margins of the *Communist Manifesto*, if there is something as 'spectrality', it logics consists in undoing the distinction between, on the one hand, the present – the actual and effective reality – and, on the other hand, absence, lack of effectivity and actuality, the time of the dead that no longer have a hold on the living[79]. Literary deconstruction apart, I strongly contend that there are historical moments – and that a transition is precisely such a conjuncture – when it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between 'the future-to-come and the coming-back of a spectre'[80]. The transitional past takes a form of a spectre – an unwanted presence that has to be conjured away and ever threatens to come back in the future. *To 'draw a line under the past' is at the same time to 'under-line' its unwanted presence.* Undeniably, one does not witness a spectre unless one is prepared, in fact, unless one desires to see it. And the specters themselves are quite ambivalent creatures. Threatening as they may be, they are also – not unlike *Casper*, the protagonist of the cartoon series – 'friendly ghosts'. They allow people living under transition to realign they pasts, presents and futures in a new way, bridging the gap between the desire of temporal stability – a clear-cut diving line between the unwanted past and the potentially radiant future – and the confusing perceptions. It is threatened, therefore it exists. In this sense, the transitional politics of memory can be understood as practice and process of restoring the temporal order which produces its own specters.

The 'thick line' was not so much about separating oneself from the past, as about producing temporal difference, reconnecting the past and the present in a meaningful way. The dilemma posed by the transition cannot be understood in terms of 'amnesia against remembrance', as some intellectuals argued at the time. On the contrary, it was the *proliferation of possible versions of collective memory*, that contributed to the predicament. As we shall see below, before long it became evident that in the emerging public sphere – among the intellectuals who offered themselves to

[79] Jacques Derrida, 'Spectres of Marx', *New Left Review* 1 (205) 1994, pp. 31-58.
[80] 'Spectres of Marx', p. 35.

'remake the world' – there was no shared understanding of what exactly the historical conjuncture triggered in 1989 joints and disjoints. In this sense, the 'thick line' should be conceived not only in temporal terms, but also in spatial terms – as a ideological divide within the emerging intellectual field. Those two aspects – the strategies of making a temporal difference and the strategies of political and intellectual distinction – overlap and cannot be discussed separately. To underscore the homology between the two does not amount to making a claim for '*presentism*'. Indeed, I find no good criteria to settle the question of whether the drive for the political distinction determined the position-takings in the memory struggles, or was it the other way around. It does involve, however, a claim about the self-reinforcing logic between memoro-politics and intellectual power.

Hauntology

Following the Roundtable Accords, the 'non-confrontational' elections and the constitution of the first non-Communist government in 1989, two rival versions of collective memory began to crystallize, each of them with distinctive – and increasingly polarized – narratives concerning the meaning of dissent, the character of the transition, and the spectres haunting the process. Their discursive articulation was involved in the logic of the political and ideological confrontation principally between the heirs to the legacy of democratic opposition, representing different orientations within re-legalized Solidarity. Apart from the former dissidents, a number of independent voices became engaged in the controversies, with relative lack of partisanship of what remained of the party ideologues. The nodal points of the debates in the emerging public sphere considered the fate of the Solidarity in the new circumstances, the moral and mental condition of the post-totalitarian society, and the place of the former functionaries and beneficiaries of the regime in the democratic public life. All those debates had a substantial retroactive impact on the rival versions of the public understanding of the past.

For the members of the Citizens' Committee – the intellectuals who participated in the Roundtable discussions, became members or intellectual supporters of the first non-communist government – the agreement reached in the Roundtable talks and validated in the semi-free elections was the founding moment of the newly regained freedom, a pivotal event which radiated both

towards the future and back into the past, over-determining their meaning. At the same time, however, it was a non-event, a transitory period which lacked a clear cut dividing line between the old and the new. That the economic and political structures have been only partially dismantled was not the biggest worry – what the architects of the 'historical compromise' feared the most, was the totalitarian legacy persistent in the habits and inclinations of the society, a part of which belonged to the logic of the system, the other alien to it but 'conserved' by forty years of Communist rule.

For Bronisław Geremek, the unquestionable mastermind of the Round Table Accords, the transitional character of the Polish realities consisted first and foremost in a set of specific paradoxes of political and public life. The same communist general that decided to crush the Solidarity movement in 1981, in 1989 was the head of the state. The state regained independence and democratic public life, but the political contract that had initiated the changes still held. As a consequence of the political contract one part of the deputies in the parliament expressed – for the first time in almost half a century – the legitimate will of the nation, while the other part was appointed by of a regime that no longer existed. Therefore 'transition', according to Geremek, should be understood not so much as a drastic moment of rejection of an authoritarian system of government and economic planning, but as a 'period' of time in which the bases of a pluralist and democratic social order are only starting to take shape. Furthermore, what motivates his evolutionary approach are three types of threats to the fragile institutional arrangements which follow the emancipation from the communist dictatorship. First of all there is the danger of populism, which feeds on 'egalitarian illusions' common to the post-communist mindset, which can easily fall prey to the political demagogues. Secondly the deficit of democratic 'way of thinking' coupled with institutional weaknesses may breed authoritarian temptations. Thirdly, while 'under Communist rule the simplest form of resistance was the appeal to the national feeling', in the face of massive social transformation it can easily deform into 'nationalism'. Those three dangers, Geremek argues,

> neither erase nor diminish the chances that stand ahead of the Central European countries in the transitional period. They justify however the gradual character of the changes and account for a philosophy of action which demands a necessary transitional stage in the passage from authoritarianism to democracy[81].

[81] Bronisław Geremek, 'Polski układ nadziei', *Tygodnik Powszechny* 17.06.1990.

It is all the more so, he continues, since the experiences of the socialist countries demonstrate – by exclusion of the alternative endeavors[82] – the indissoluble link between democracy and the market. The collapse of the Central European economies, which destroyed the remaining illusions about the possibility of its improvement, expresses the only radical break with the past. However, the resistance of the existing structures is so strong, that the 'programmatic radicalism of economic liberalism plays a destructive function with regards to the old system and constitutes a necessary element in the transformation towards democracy'[83]. Since the radical economic strategy entails necessary 'social costs', which in combination with the raised material aspirations and broadening participation in public life might lead to outbursts of 'populism and demagoguery', extending the moment of passage between authoritarianism and democracy seems all the more necessary.

Lastly, Geremek deplores that the civic involvement in the public life.

> Societies moving towards democracy need civic involvement. Thus, the main process of the transition to democracy is the metamorphosis of the subject into a citizen. And in this process there is no greater and more important capital than social trust. It can be generated through commitment to public life.[84].

The civic involvement has radically dropped down since the time when the democratic opposition had created the structures of the autonomous civil society – educational organizations, political parties, and finally, the independent trade union – in protest against the totalitarian state. If Geremek does not go beyond expressing the concern about the slowness of the 'metamorphosis of the subject into citizen', it is probably because at the same time – although it is not explicitly stated – he associates the forms of involvement inscribed in the Polish model of civic society (especially the unions and parties) with the kind of social mobilization the reformers would like to avoid. Since civic involvement declines, but its mobilization does not seem prudent, how to generate the 'social capital of trust'? According to Geremek's conclusion, the commitment can be substituted by emotional attachment to Solidarity as 'framework of hope' which engenders 'acceptance for sacrifice'.

[82] That is, the revisionist attempts at democratizing socialism, and Chinese attempts at introducing market mechanisms into the socialist economy. Writing under impression of the Tien'anmen Massacre, Geremek underestimated the rulers of the People's Republic of China.
[83] 'Polski układ nadziei'.
[84] Ibidem.

Apart from the eminent figure of its author, Geremek's argument is important because of its exemplary character for the narrative of temporal production of the architects of the Roundtable agreement. Giving meaning to time entails here explaining the contradictions of the first phase of the transformation through appeal to the legacies of the old regime both embodied in structural mechanisms and in the post-totalitarian mentality. The political moment in between authoritarianism and liberal democracy is explained by the mental inclinations towards populism, nationalism and the desire for a strong leader, while the radical economic measures working against the aspirations of the society for improvement of the material conditions are justified in the light of inertia of the economic structures. The threat of the return of the old regime, whether in its structural or mental form, is counterpoised to the 'framework of hope', a passive attachment to the symbol of Solidarity which must fill the void left by the civic commitment.

The main treads of this narrative of transition appear in different forms in the efforts of other prominent figures supporting the Mazowiecki's government path to transformation. Father Tischner, the chaplain of Solidarity back in 1980, coined the term '*homo sovieticus*' to refer to the residues of the totalitarian past persisting in people's minds and habits. From the perspective of the Church, says its intellectual representative, Communism did not amount to the totalitarian power structure nor to an economy based on false premises. Communism constituted a mirror image of the church, a new form of neo-paganism, with a rival 'conception of man'. The distinction between material and immaterial loci of the old regime is all the more important since the former can be 'defeated', that is, dismantled, while the latter has to be 'overcome'. 'Defeat consists in the material destruction of the enemy, while overcoming entails an inner metamorphosis – a substitution of his faith by one's own'[85]. What was the 'conception of man' embodied in *homo sovieticus*? He was essentially a 'one-dimensional man' deprived of the 'vertical dimension of existence', his existence understood as the satisfaction of needs alone.

> Homo sovieticus, according to the classics, could not have a 'soul'. It meant, first of all, that he was all 'matter', that is human raw material to be constantly molded by work. More importantly, it also meant that all his internal life could be reduced to the 'consciousness determined by its material conditions'[86].

[85] Rev. Józef Tischner, 'Dokąd prowadzi ta droga?', *Tygodnik Powszechny* 19.11.1989.
[86] Idem, 'Homo sovieticus: Między Wawelem i Jasną Górą', *Tygodnik Powszechny* 24.VI.1989.

The soviet man, according to Tischner, was a 'socialized man'. The socialization consisted in the double denial of the rights to possession – the right 'to self-possession', individual autonomy and dignity on the one hand, the property-rights on the other.

Firstly, the totalitarian society was a 'monological society', based on the premise that there is only one vantage point from which the truth and meaning of human existence can be grasped – the vantage point of power. From the point of view of the totalitarian power, its subjects are only 'carriers of particular illusions', determined by their short-term interests and hence unable to possess a deep insight into mechanisms of social life determining the 'interest of the whole'. Since 'only a subject of truth may become a subject of power', put themselves on the side of the truth, the subjects must reject their individuality, and become 'socialized', that is, identify with their particular point of view with the point of view of power.

Overcoming totalitarianism means here the transition to 'dialogical society' in which every citizen is equally a 'carrier of truth' and in which there are no privileged vantage points. It does not exclude the relation of power; it entails, however the supposition about the equal distribution of truth and illusion between the leaders and the led. In the dialogical society 'the definitive truth about social life does not fall from the skies, like rain drops on the earth, but grows from the bottom, from the depths of individual experience and common understanding of people'.

There transition the 'monological' to 'dialogical' society, Tischner argues, is a 'pivotal event' for the community, but paradoxically, the transformation is not easy to notice, since it takes place without external signs. 'Revolution in the realm of cognition comes ahead of the revolution in the realm of power'. The institutions, the party, the police remain the same and a couple of samizdat journals do not seem to make much change. 'From within the totalitarian system, however, the change is fundamental and irreversible'. Once the party recognizes an independent point of view, its legitimacy based on the monopoly of truth-and-power begins to erode. The profound, revolutionary meaning of Solidarity followed from the fact that

> The legal recognition of an independent trade union meant at the same time the recognition of a vantage point on all social matters and its relevant truths, which is permanently independent from and critical with respect to the powers[87].

[87] Ibidem.

Although the Martial Law indicated that the first reaction of the party consisted only in attempt to 'feign dialogue', it was only first phase of the its ideological decomposition, that finally lead to 'real dialogue'. Nevertheless, concludes Tischner it would not be prudent to asses that *homo sovieticus* is gone for good. 'The past habits weight over the present and refrain the development of the dialogical society'. On the side of the power, there is *nomenklatura*, understood not in the narrow sense of the functionaries of the old regime docile to its every commandment, but in the broad sense of hosts of those who truly believed in the 'principle of socialization' and really 'socialized themselves', for whom 'the necessity of an internal metamorphosis strikes at their very heart' and who are willing to 'defend their heart with their very lifes'. On the side of society, there are those who, in relation to power, still act as if they were communist subjects. This residue of *homo sovieticus* consists both in the demand for somebody who would define how 'things really are' and in the demand that 'those on the top' should identify themselves with the particular point of view of 'those at the bottom'. Lastly, among the 'fruits' of living under totalitarianism is the inclination towards 'moralism', which consists in substituting economic, political and meritoratic criteria of legitimacy with the ethical criterion of 'clean hands', a criterion 'in principle correct, but dangerous in its consequences'.

As for the 'possession of things', Tischner's argument continues, the soviet man believed that his worst enemy was the institution of private property. Communism created an existential situation, in which the need to 'have' and the work necessary to satisfy it was divorced from the title of property. At the same time, its abolition led to exasperation of the needs, rather than its final satisfaction. Through the consecutive stages of the crises of shortage the socialized state rejected its principles of just distribution – the first one, 'everyone according to his needs', the second one 'everyone according to his work' – only to reach the phase of 'socialist consummerism',

> whose essence consists in using and taking pleasure in the use of what is 'socialized property', what is 'mine' and 'not mine' at the same time. If a capitalist 'consumes' something, this 'something' must be first his property. When the 'socialized man' consumes, he consumes something that in fact was never his…[communism] refused men the right to property, but granted the right to consume, therefore promoting the worst kind of consumerism, which is the usage of somebody else's goods[88].

[88] 'Dokąd prowadzi ta droga?'.

At the same time, *homo sovieticus* had a false conception of work. Whereas in the 'normal' circumstances the 'criterion of work is the growth of capital' – and an activity that does not 'breed and multiply' it cannot be considered work – Communism not only created a large amount 'illusory' work, but also imposed that 'illusion' on its subjects who believed that it was the 'authentic' thing.

To be able to discern between the 'illusory' and the 'authentic', to understand 'socialized' goods as 'somebody else's goods' is to have entered already into the second stage of the transition which corresponds to the passage from 'the subject of truth to the subject of law'. According to Tischner, 'rule of law' consists fundamentally in the recognition of property rights, and the 'subject of law' is who recognizes that 'the basis of ownership is the right to ownership'.

> The conflict over ownership is twofold: it is a conflict over things and a conflict over the right to things. The conflict over things sometimes resemble an ordinary theft: the man just takes what he needs and what he considers 'his' despite any regulations…The conflict over rights goes deeper. It is not about things anymore, but about right to things, that is, a new social order, damaged by the revolution. There is a moment in the life of a society when it passes from the level of the struggle for things to the level of the struggle for rights. That moment is hard to define, but still one is entitled to assess that in the process of becoming of the civil society that moment is decisive. Thus hitherto subject of social truth becomes a conscious subject of rights. It marks the emergence of the foundations of the legal order[89].

This second stage is even harder to reach. Since 'defeat does not equal overcoming' and *homo sovieticus* is only partially connected to the Communist ideology, but buried deeper in one's mentality, according to Tischner it is very plausible, that this form of captive mind will outlive the collapse of the system and displace the 'promise of Communism' into the capitalists. An obvious sign of its permanence is everything that undermines the efforts to constitute the legal framework of property rights, especially the protest against exploitation of labour, re-privatization, the effects of the hyperinflation on the living condition or the unpaid wages. To be *homo sovieticus*, Tischner suggests, is to fail to recognize that the only alternative to exploitation is getting one's life 'wasted', the fact that is widely recognized by all those un-captive minds who queue for an American visa and hence, in reality, 'choose' to be exploited.

It is not at all certain whether father Tischner meant that workers in Poland should in fact 'choose' to work with no social security and labour rights, as it often happened at the other side of the Atlantic. Since 'the criterion of work is the growth of capital' – in this sense the capitalists

[89] 'Homo sovieticus…'.

resemble workers far more than those deprived of the means of production – it is also not very clear at which point *homo sovieticus* would cease to exist, unless we assume that at some final stage everybody would become capitalists. What does seem evident, however, is that in Tischner's case the spectre of the old regime no longer takes the form of the product of some social mechanisms (nationalism as the symbolic vehicle of resistance) or political language (populism based on 'egalitarian illusions'), but becomes incorporated in the mentality of *homo sovieticus*. The spectre does not appear on the discursive surface; the surface is only an external expression of the internal state, indeed, of the state of being *possessed* by the legacy of the past. Even though *homo sovieticus* is devoid of the 'vertical dimension', yet, retrospectively, the external signs (e.g. egalitarian demands directed at those 'at the top') suggest that his non-existent soul is nevertheless haunted by the daemons of the Communism. And the very condition of being possessed puts him outside the fringe of the 'dialogical society'. It is safe to assume that Tischner's intention was to describe a general phenomenon and not address any particular group. Nevertheless, if Solidarity's heritage is judged in the light of the 21 postulates – with its theme of 'emancipation of labour' – the resulting paradox is that the very same social actor who had made the emergence of the 'dialogical society' possible, has patent troubles with 'overcoming' its mental habits, and hence cannot be considered as a legitimate participant in the community of dialogue.

The discourse on totalitarian possession, in its different modalities, became one of the most pronounced themes in the emerging post-Communist public sphere. Elżbieta Wolicka[90], for instance, wrote about the residues of 'post-totalitarian mentality' which haunt the 'collective sub-conscious' of the post-communist societies and menace the emergent Popperian-style 'open society'. Not unlike Tischner, she identified the surface expression of this deep knowledge with the 'class consciousness', a conflictual worldview imposed on the community by the experience of 50 years of 'socialist democracy'. Whereas in the 'normal societies' the social status is constituted by 'natural differences', and upward mobility relies on 'hard work and achievements' alone, under Communism, this natural order become distorted by the mechanism which produced hierarchies based not on merit, but on 'connections', political decisions and opportunism. Hence, the conflictual

[90] Elżbieta Wolicka, 'O mentalności posttotalitarnej', *Znak* (3) 1993.

worldview imbued in the minds of the communist subjects was not so much a consequence of the really excising class antagonism engendered by state socialist system of redistribution, but a protest against 'artificial' hierarchies as opposed to those embedded in natural distinctions. The clear implication is that while egalitarian demands had legitimacy under Communism, with the 'return to normality' and the restoration of natural order of social differences the class consciousness becomes a form of 'false consciousness' which has outlived its legitimate context. It is not the social inequalities as such that the new community inherits, but a way of thinking about the social inequalities which can potentially undermine the emergence of the natural hierarchies based on merit. Apart from the 'class consciousness' Wolicka identified another posttotalitarian symptom in the understanding of citizenship related to 'unrestrained freedom of expression of opinions, demands and particular interests' – as opposed to the sense of civic responsibility and respect for lawful order – which can lead to the resurrection of 'irrational daemons' and 'authoritarian atavisms'. Not surprisingly than, she concludes that 'the prospects of leaving behind the antinomies of the post-totalitarian legacy should be revised in the light of the possible regress in many aspects of collective life'.

While in Tischner's and Wolicka's version of the narrative of transition the issue of nationalism was hardly present, many other intellectuals who wrote from the positions supportive of the Citizens' Committee saw in the national megalomania and xenophobia the greatest hazard to the transition process. And just as in the case of *homo sovieticus*, the threat took the form of the return of the spectre. The writer Jan Józef Szczepański was not alone when, answering a survey about the prospects of 'survival of the fall of Communism', he warned, that

> The ideas of independence and sovereignty which we so cherish are not as unambiguous as you might suppose…the lofty ideas of independence and sovereignty do not exclude terror, aggression and genocide. I belief that ultimately Poland will evade it, but there exist intermediary levels of intolerance, xenophobia and parochial dogmatism. These are sufficient to hamper the democratic aspirations. This is what I fear the most about Poland. We can see even today, that once corset of totalitarian discipline has cracked, the daemons of the past reemerge[91].

In the first years of the transition, the daemons of the past constituted the single most important issue of involvement in the public sphere for Adam Michnik, formerly one of key Polish

[91] Jan Józef Szczepański, 'Demony przeszłości', *Znak* (3) 1991

oppositionists, who in the middle of the electoral campaign of 1989 was appointed by Lech Wałęsa editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, soon to become the most widely read Polish daily. In his article about the 'Trappings of Nationalism'[92], Michnik spoke of two counter-hegemonic projects that struggled against the totalitarian state. First of those was the idea of the civil society, resurrected by Central European dissidents and embraced by Western intellectuals Right and Left, albeit for different purposes. As this contradictory reception suggested, the idea of the civil society went far beyond the traditional political divides between left and right, or – correspondingly – between prospective and retrospective utopias, to create a genuine anti-totalitarian political identity, not reducible to the particular political subcultures it integrated. However, Michnik argues, there was another way to be against totalitarianism. Communism in Poland had been rejected also in the name of the 'Catholic State of the Polish Nation' the nationalist doctrine with its roots in the repertoire of the interwar Right, where the 'national feeling' is understood in terms of struggle for survival and *Lebensraum*. The former project was 'humanist and European', the latter 'nationalist and particularist'.

According to Michnik, the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia as well as the case of the post-Soviet organization *Pamiat* reveals that 'totalitarianism in the terminal phase leaves the legacy of aggressive nationalism and tribal hatred'. In this sense, the fall of Communism does not necessary entail the triumph of the civil society. Its enemy's enemy does not become civil society's ally once Communism is over. Instead, if the political project of civil society is defined mainly through the prism of its anti-totalitarian identity, than in Michnik's argument there is a suggestion of complicity between xenophobic nationalism and its former oppressor, despite, as it were, its fierce anti-Communist edge.

The thesis about nationalism as the 'terminal phase of Communism' may be given a twofold reading. In line with Geremek's interpretation, it can mean that under Communism, nationalism constitutes the simplest 'common denominator' of resistance. In this case the its 'return' may be read in terms of demand for retributive justice. However, it can also refer to a 'demon of the past' quite independent with regards to Communism and corresponding to a deeper historical layer, which was

[92] Adam Michnik, 'Pułapka nacjonalizmu', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 10.02.1990.

restrained by the totalitarian State but resurfaced on its ruins[93]. The later case undermines nationalism's claim to retributive justice, showing that since it has its own record of wrongdoings, it cannot legitimately speak from the position of the victim.

Michnik develops the second idea in his article on 'Three fundamentalisms', which opens with poses the problem of the historical consciousness. The representations of the past, Michnik argues, have always shaped Polish attitudes and political ideas. The more it is important to unravel historical myths and stereotypes, especially with respect to the Second Republic from interwar period, which was both denigrated by the Communist propaganda and idealized by the anti-Communist opposition. It is all the more vital, since

> without such a reassessment, we are doomed to idealize our past, we are doomed to a sense of history burdened with myths rather than sober judgments, and we are doomed to be defenseless against what might be called the revenge of memory, a memory that was for years relegated to our subconscious[94].

More specifically, Michnik pledges for reassessment of the assassination in 1922 of Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of the young Polish democracy, who was shot by a fanatic Eligiusz Niewiadomski, in the aftermath of a fierce nationalist and anti-Semitic campaign in revenge for the electoral support given to Narutowicz by the ethnic minorities. He judges highly symptomatic that the murder did not become a 'pivotal fact' in the historical consciousness of the Poles, pushed over the brim of amnesia. What applies to Narutowicz, applies as well to the 'anti-democratic evolution' in the political thought of three great ideological camps of the interwar Poland – the National Democrats (*endecja*), the Socialists (PPS) and the supporters of general Pilsudzki's dictatorship (*sanacja*) – and to the history of the Catholic Church.

To the extend that the Poles are unable to 'overcome' their past by reassessing the legitimacy of the political legacies, they are vulnerable against the present dangers. What endangers

[93] There is a third interpretative possibility suggested by Michnik in his conversation with Kołakowski, namely, that nationalism provided a compensatory legitimization to State Socialist countries where the belief in the Communist ideology has been abandoned. According to Michnik, this was the case of Serbia under Slobodan Milošević. Third interpretation is contradictory to the second one, unless we assume that under Communism, there were a 'good' nationalism which provided legitimacy to the post-totalitarian state and a 'bad' one which the state combated. The two theories are also reconcilable if we rely on the premise of the 'totalitarian symmetry', in which the 'extremes meet' and one can stand for the other. I doubt, however, whether the later was Michnik's intention. See 'Komunizm, Kościół i czarownice', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 21-22.11.1992.

[94] Adam Michnik, 'Three Kinds of Fundamentalism' in *Letters from Freedom: post-Cold War realities and perspectives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.178.

the present, Michnik clearly implies, is not so much the immediate legacy of Communism, but vicious heritage rooted deeper in the collective memory. 'If I had to define the new phenomena that are now appearing, with greater or lesser force, on or below the surface of current political debate, I would point to the reemerging danger of fundamentalism'. Fundamentalism – the utopia of the flawless, harmonic community, delivered from all the conflicts other than the conflict between good and evil – is a *new* phenomenon in so far as it has been released in the aftermath of Communism's collapse, but at the same time it is *reemerging* from the depths of the collective memory where it was hidden from the critical insight of the community.

According to Michnik, the future-to-come can turn into the coming-back of three fundamentalisms. First of all, he speaks of *national* fundamentalism, which understands the interest of the community in terms of 'my country right-or-wrong', compels to justify the wrongdoings of the members of national community, and perceives every instance of critique as an attempt to vilify the nation. Michnik connects the xenophobic reactions against the critique of the Polish minority in Lithuania and the discrimination of the Roma and Jews, to the 'historians' debate' in Germany and the Le Pen phenomenon in France, in order to suggest that the 'revenge of memory' is a pan-European phenomenon (given that in Europe's recent past, only fascism can be considered as 'international' nationalist ideology, the suggestion may be pushed even further).

The other local predicament that should be contextualized in pan-European terms is the religious fundamentalism – a magical solution which retrospectively attempts at obliterating the boundary between the *profane* and the *sacred* and reconstitute the society on the basis of an uniform set of (christian) values. Just as there is a difference between (critical) patriotism and (fundamentalist) nationalism, there are two Churches: the religion modernized by Vatican II, open to values alien to its credo, and the religion that whishes to 'return to Europe' that no longer exists.

The third trapping of fundamentalism has a genuine Central European, and, specifically, dissident, origin. Underground activity, Michnik argues self-reflexively, engendered a 'moralist mentality' which, not unlike religious fundamentalism, does not serve well to discriminate between the moral norm and the political rules of the game, the distinction which in liberal democracies is

crucial. Although every political discourse should be founded upon values, the anti-politics of the anti-Communist underground transposed in to the democratic game can transform into fanatism.

Interestingly, Michnik recons the most recent past for yet a fourth danger, which he prefers not to call 'fanatism' but nevertheless considers potentially disturbing. That is the political discourse of the labour protest in general and of Solidarity in particular, which according to the former leader of the Workers' Defense Committee can be properly defined as populism. Granted, it was a voice of protest against a totalitarian state and in the name of 'freedom and dignity', but nevertheless it was articulated in a populist discourse. It was populist, because it was irrational. That it was irrational, it is demonstrated by the fact that it operated a dichotomized distinction between 'us' and 'them', which, according to Michnik, does not belong to the language of 'analysis of political or social interests'. Secondly, at the very heart of the workers revolt was the demand for social justice, a product of an 'egalitarian consciousness, which for decades legitimated communist rule'[95]. A revolt against the system in the name of the values espoused by the system, Michnik comments, is not altogether consistent. In other words, since one cannot demand social justice unless she or he is a communist, an anti-Communist social movement making Communist claims is a clear example of absurdity, a fact justified only by the absurdity of the system as a whole. But that is not all. 'We also have to tell ourselves finally that the revolt against communism in Poland, and what a successful revolt, was the revolt of the crowd'. The assumption here is that the language of workers protest was populist simply because it was 'popular'. The rational discourse, the discourse of democratic-legal procedures, was the language of the dissident elite. It was a language of reason, but at the same time, a 'powerless' cry in the wilderness. 'The Communists – Michnik recalls – began to take account of the opposition only when it was backed by the crowd'. Since the crowd, by definition, is a dangerous but passive mass of back-standers, it is not surprising that even the 500 days of Solidarity's 'carnival' was not enough time to make the crowd learn the procedural rationality. Instead, it was the elites who learned that 'we are effective when we speak the language of the crowd'.

Since the experience of Solidarity left a populist mark on the 'we' of the elites, Michnik continues, there is a danger that under new circumstances the demand for social justice will take to

[95] 'Three kinds of fundamentalism', p.181 (Translation Modified).

exposed a position within a public sphere, whereas 'the market that is currently being constructed in Poland has no place for social justice as one of its key ideas. The role of the market is not to ensure justice but to force people to be efficient and creative. Justice may be served by a redistribution of goods but not by market mechanisms'. The return to the 'language of the crowd' which had been (irreflexively) 'encoded during the period of anti-communist struggle' can undermine the fragile parliamentary order, contribute to the 'anarchization of public life' and create the climate for the coming of authoritarianism.

The side of the past, the excluded side

If the 'thick line' Mazowiecki referred to in his speech on 24 August 1989 was meant to express a break with respect to the past, than this divide was never symbolically drawn. Instead, for the intellectual supporters of the first non-Communist prime minister the transitional temporality took a form of a very thin line, constantly endangered by the spectres. Where their fears real? Where they a minority ahead of their time, whereas the vast majority remained locked in the pre-democratic past, prone to all the vices typical for authoritarian societies? Were the Communist so successful in transforming people into 'soviet men', creatures devoid of spirituality and sense of freedom, their reason reduced to the satisfaction of needs? Was the 'revenge of memory' a plausible future-to-come? Did Polish 'historical consciousness' hide an uncanny secret of the contamination of the inter-war political languages with 'fundamentalism'? Could the experience of Solidarity be reduced to 'revolt of the crowd'? Well, are spectres real?

One way to tackle the question of spectral ontology is to say that the ghosts of the past are not real in the sense of being a part of the collective imaginary which may be traced to its underling social conditions. For example, much of psycho-social post-effects implied in the notion of '*homo sovieticus*' can be understood in terms of what Pierre Bourdieu calls 'histeresis of habitus', the concept that refers to a situation when a social actor, endowed with psychological dispositions that have been shaped by and adjusted to operate in a specific social milieu (habitus), looses this social sense of orientation once she has found herself, more or less permanently, in a circumstance that

requires a different set of dispositions[96]. Without any doubt, this sort of difficulties in readjustment did exist in the course of a radical transition from plan to market and from power-monopoly to democracy. But from the quite founded expectation that that many social trajectories would be broken along this difficult path does not automatically follow what kind of political articulation, if any, would be given to the sense of social disorientation. Even though the formation of collective identities can be traced back to some social conditions of possibility, these conditions are only necessary, but never sufficient. Between the identities and their conditions there is always an autonomous space of the political, within which different discursive modalities of collective articulation of individual experiences are negotiated.

In this sense, *homo sovieticus* captures a lot more than an acute observation. It contains a surplus of meaning which transforms a social process into a quasi-reified mental residue, just as the imagination transforms uncanny silhouettes and strange sounds into phantoms. And just as some spectres are 'real in their circumstances', so is a performative act of classifying a person as 'possessed' by its past habits. A person that is unable to properly handle its past cannot be granted a legitimate voice in the debates about the common future. Now, if in the process of the negotiation of collective identity of the possible disadvantaged, the disadvantaged are to choose between a subject-position that calls for a temporal self-exclusion (*homo sovieticus* should privatize it sense of injustice as a shameful past habit) and the other that provides an outlet to their exasperation through of wholesale contestation of social and political order, the disadvantaged are likely to confirm the most disturbing prophecies. The same might be argued about the 'revenge of memory'. From an identification with a certain political tradition does not immediately follow, that the act of identification will bring about the same consequences it had brought about in the past. The collective identities neither preexist on some natural grounds of 'relations of production' or 'national essence', but are shaped in the political process. To argue that an act of identification with the political legacy of the interwar Polish state will lead, in the present, to the same nightmarish outcomes of their clash in the past, is to grant them an essential 'nature'. Not only is it 'not altogether consistent' with the critique of essentialist thinking implied in the notion of

[96] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 125-169.

‘fundamentalism’ – the erasure of the political in the name of an a-historical ethnic or religious substance or the ‘iron laws’ of historical process – but also it actually contributes to reinforcing the demarcation line between the spokespersons of the tradition and the spokespersons of the ‘open society’.

If I insist that ‘spectre’ is useful notion in describing the politics of collective memory, despite its perhaps doubtful citizenship in the republic of human sciences, it is precisely because it underwrites this performative logic of transitional memory-work. The spectre, unwanted presence of the past, is something conjured up in the very same moment that it is conjured away. Its mode of presence is something in between the famous Santayana’s dictum that ‘those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it’ and a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, a clear distinction between a spectre kept at bay and a usable, but demonized past is not always easy to draw. Where history is a ‘history of bad times’, that is, in Central Europe and in Poland in particular, the politics of collective memory – drawing thick lines under the past – serves to delimit the boundaries of the public sphere. To find oneself on the side of the past often means to be on the excluded side.

CHAPTER 3: Adam Michnik and the locus of totalitarianism.

In this chapter, I would like to connect the transitional hauntology with collective memories of the dissident subculture to which its proponents belonged. I understood the relation between the two along the lines of J.K. Olick's idea about the 'path-dependence' of collective memory. Olick argues that 'images of the past are neither dictated by the past nor wholly invented in the present, but result from an ongoing dialogue in which earlier images shape and constrain what can be done with them in successive presents'.[97] My contention here is that knowledge-political alone do not explain adequately the narrative of transition of the dissidents supporting Mazowiecki's government, but rather that *hauntology* constituted an attempt at universalization of particular subcultural memories under radically different circumstances. In what follows, I try to confront Adam Michnik's earlier writings with the transitional hauntology. The assumption here is that they are representative for the broader fraction of Solidarity elites. The analytical decision to attribute one author's *personal* thoughts and feelings to a broader group of intellectuals may be considered doubtful. Since my intention is to identify positions within a broader intellectual field, I find this generalization inevitable. I would also add that although there is no good way of judging the representativeness of individual intellectual production in terms of 'reflecting' other intellectuals' opinions, some authors are more influential than others, and undeniably, this is Michnik's case.

The two ancestors, two conversations.

Adam Michnik spend most of his time in prison talking to his dead ancestors and the questions he addressed were always of his immediate concern. Czesław Miłosz[98] was not altogether wrong to say that Michnik's prison writings were a kind of political activism pursued by other means, and author himself seems to confirm that in the conversation with Cohn-Bendit[99]. At the same time, these were very personal conversations. They steamed from necessity of finding new ways to give the meaning

[97] Olick, 'What does it mean…', p. 264.
[98] 'Foreword' in Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. XIV.
[99] Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*, p. 66.

of dissent, once Marxist revisionism had been abandoned. Farewell to Communism meant not only a sort of ideological orphancy but also a memory loss. It required reaching beyond post-war political languages into the 'shadows of forgotten ancestors' but in order to do that, one had to dissipate the 'shadows'. For the regime, Michnik recalled in 1973, remolding the representation of the past was as important as controlling the present.

> No wonder: those who can succeed in reigning over perceptions of the past will also be able to manipulate thoughts about the present and the future. This is especially the case in a country where history has often served as a pretext for disputes about the present. Uncovering lies about the past frequently allows us to discover our own identity. A key to the past can unlock many of the myths being created today. This is what happened to me[100].

To engage in a conversation with the ancestors, it was necessary to abandon the official version of prewar history of Poland, according to which beyond Communist underground there was simply no politically usable past to reach for. Michnik grew up confident that whatever was wrong about the postwar Poland, there was no reason to juxtapose it to the Second Republic, where so many people were disadvantaged and persecuted for their beliefs, just as his parents were. It was one thing to conclude that the revolution had been betrayed and that the socialist ideals were being distorted, but it was a completely different thing to criticize post-Stalinist realities from an 'anti-Communist' standpoint, and certainly not from the perspective of prewar independentist political thought. The historical figures that epitomized it, Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski, were profoundly discredited at the time. The former was the leader of the chauvinistic and anti-Semitic National Democracy (*Endecja*), the later a dictator who in 1920 waged war in the name of the bourgeois Poland against the forces of progress, set up political trials and interment camps for his adversaries and imposed an authoritarian constitution.

Michnik's experience of Polish March 1968 posed a serious challenge to the anti-fascist narrative. The March Events – the anti-Semitic and anti-Intelligentsia campaign launched by the party propaganda against the last attempt by the revisionist Intelligentsia to make First Secretary Gomułka deliver on his promises of democratization and economic reform made during the Thaw – came as a shock not only because it revealed a 'backward, stupid, chauvinistic and xenophobic'

[100] 'Shadows of forgotten ancestors' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 202.

subculture within the ranks of the Party, but also because the 'pogrom was conducted with the active consent of a significant of the population', who also approved of the Prague invasion. What is more, a sector of the Intelligentsia reacted to the persecutions of the dissidents with a petty satisfaction of the reasonable who had known right from the start what conspiracies would lead to. As Michnik would recall in 1973, the March Events brought about a series of questions, which redefined the spectrum of political choices. If before 1968 he would ask 'who betrayed the revolution' or 'who were the enemies of emancipation', afterwards the questions were rather,

> which Poles could believe this? Did there exist in Poland a tradition that justified these convictions? Did the knights from the Kingdom of Darkness and Ignorance who believed themselves to be the only Poles worthy of that name have a tradition to claim? Had there been others in Poland before them who used their participation in anti-Semitic pogroms as a source of national pride?[101]

And hence the forgotten ancestors re-emerged from the shadows. This first conversation was rather a shadow play in which the two great figures of prewar Poland stood for two attitudes towards national community and towards Russian oppression. Michnik recalled that in the period preceding the Second Republic Dmowski not only choose the path of collaboration with the Russian officials, but also fueled the resentment of the 'smart alecks sitting around in Warsaw's cafés' of his day who condemned the conspirators just as harshly as they hated their Russian masters. Dmowski argued that Polish irredentist activities were in fact the working of a Jewish revolutionary conspiracy and that 'real Poles' would put and end to disorder if only they were granted proper means. In reality, the Jewish conspiracy Dmowski referred to were the socialist fighting squads of Józef Piłsudski.

Dmowski epitomized the kind of patriotism that in the name of 'preservation of national substance' fed on the pettiest human instincts developed in captivity. Piłsudski, on the other hand, came to symbolize

> a revolt against a large part of Polish society. It was a revolt against conformism, intellectual and moral sloth, against the backwardness of his compatriots. Piłsudzki understood perfectly that the defeat of Russia would hardly restore national sovereignty; the Poles themselves would have to want this sovereignty[102].

[101] 'Shadows…', p. 204.
[102] 'Shadows…', p. 207.

Piłsudski, Michnik reminded somewhat self-reflexively, was not only the commander of the paramilitary forces, but also the editor of the illegal *Robotnik*[103] [The Worker] . According to the leader of Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the fight for 'sovereignty' of the captive minds of his fellow citizens was the prerequisite of national independence. The weapon of 'free, independent, uncensored printed word' was as important as arms and bombs. Dmowski's 'political realism' provided justification to the culture of fear and lie, fed on hatred toward other cultures and resentment toward those who believed – as Michnik-Piłsudski did – that 'a nation that lives without the essentials, that forgoes the defense of things that are sometimes elusive and indefinable, thereby renounces its own culture, retreating to the level of a tribe'[104].

The first conversation with the ancestors was not exactly the kind of esoteric 'art of writing' the philosopher Leo Strauss would have appreciated. It was a discursive shadow play. Dmowski was submissive to the oppressors, uncritical of the nation's moral faults, and resentful towards those who testified their high moral standards through action. Piłsudski was a rebel both with regards to Russia and his own nationals. If the Communists, Michnik suggested, were borrowing from the legacy of *Endecja*, and with remarkable success, the dissidents should abandon the strategy of reforming State Socialism from within and find the courage of Piłsudski to win back the hearts and minds of the society from the state of captivity. Perhaps the most important Michnik's conclusion – clearly drawn under the impressions of March 1968 – was precisely the relation of political oppression and moral degeneration. That the captive state produced captive minds was a given – an intellectual could either feed on that reality or rebel against it and try transform the society from below. The identification with a Piłsudski-type partisan intellectual involved at the same time a sense of alienation from the captive society and deep antagonism toward opportunistic and conciliatory positions of the fellow intellectuals, who 'put a gag over their own mouths and deny themselves their basic professional duty, *the duty to speak the truth*'[105].

This reading of the historical dilemmas of Polish political thought had, however, one substantive problem. Idealizing Piłsudski the romantic revolutionary from the late repartition period

[103] The KOR activists will borrow the title for the workers-oriented samizdat journal circulated in 1977-1981.
[104] 'Shadows…', p. 209.
[105] 'Shadows…', p. 207. Italics in original.

did not translate well into explaining Piłsudski the dictator of the Second Republic. In 1973 Michnik could only bet on the 'early independence-minded, socialist Piłsudski' not unlike the revisionists of 1956 who had opted for the 'early' Marx.

* * *

The second conversation, 'Conversation in the Citadel', took place several months after the imposition of the Martial Law in December 13, 1981. The Citadel once was a fortress built by the Tsar Nikolai I on the outskirts of Warsaw in the aftermath of the 1831 November Uprising, to control the city and persecute its irredentist citizens. By then, it had been converted into a museum. Michnik's Citadel was the prison in Białołęka. As for the interlocutors, these were the same eminent dead, but between 1973 and 1982 the one of the dead had undergone a substantial change. On the one hand, Michnik discovered that there was also an 'early' Dmowski, more complex than the stereotypical image of nationalist ideologue boasted by the far Right and denounced by the Left. On the other hand, the main aim of the second conversation was to trace the 'totalitarian temptation' on both sides of the ideological spectrum to their 'innocent period'.

The reevaluation of Dmowski and *Endecja*, inspired by a brilliant and well documented study by Barbara Toruńczyk[106], consisted largely in the reappraisal of 'realism'. Contrary to the previous interpretation, National Democracy did not belong in the 'conciliatory camp' after all. Moreover, Michnik came to consider that Dmowski developed and original 'philosophy of activism', which – as a matter of fact – resembled the practices of Workers Defense Committee (KOR) - his own oppositional group – to a larger extend than the revolutionary practice of the socialists. On the one hand, Dmowski believed that in his day the limits of 'legal' resistance were so narrow, that not bridging them amounted to self-deception. On the other hand, distributing illegal leaflets and organizing patriotic manifestations was only an element of the greater overall strategy of opposition, which aimed at 'internal self-organization' of the nation independently of the invader and his legal code. Self-organization meant principally creating autonomous – legal or not – institutions of intellectual life and educational activities among students and villagers. Endecja now

[106] Barbara Toruńczyk (ed.), *National Democracy: an anthology of the political thought from 'Przegląd Wszechpolski'* (London: Aneks, 1983), quoted in *Letters from Prison.*

appeared as a radical movement of Intelligentsia aimed at regaining national sovereignty, whose political realism consisted in accepting a gradualist, long-term strategy of building a network of independent social institutions in place of both the revolutionary at on-time act and the conciliation within legal limits[107]. What is more, Michnik went as far as to say that Dmowski better than any other political thinker understood the modernity of the national question. While the Socialists were nation-blind or remained stuck within the framework of the old commonwealth, obliterating the burgeoning national aspirations of Lithuanians and Ukrainians and their conflict-laden nature, *Endecja* saw the inevitability of the antagonism, and in this sense it was more 'modern', however misplaced were the conclusions it drawn from giving a correct diagnosis[108].

What is however far more interesting is Michnik's answer to the question of the 'totalitarian germ' latent in both anti-conciliatory movements. Thus the author of 'New Evolutionism' localizes it not so much in the utopian ideology, as in the revolutionary practice of the 'underground'. Undeniably, strong ideological motivation was a necessary precondition. But the decisive factor was the sort of 'psychology' a conspirator acquired throughout his activity. In the case of Polish socialists,

> Pretotalitarianism had two faces. It lay, on the one hand, in the nature of the doctrine itself, which attempted to comprehend and embrace the whole wealth of society's life in its categories and concepts. It lay as well in the nature of the organization, the form of which was said to guarantee success in the Polish workers' holy war against Russian autocracy[109].

On the one hand, there was the utopia of society delivered from social antagonism, a new dawn emerging after a revolutionary debacle. The ideological promise had to be strong enough for the socialist to believe that it is worth sacrificing their lives. But believing in the utopia is not how one becomes a 'fanatic of his ideas'. Other circumstances are necessary: the repression of the occupier, on the one hand, and on the other, the indifference and conformity of the 'silent majority'. The more repression and marginalization the conspirator suffers, the more he or she is inclined to believe that the 'professional revolutionary' differs from the rest of the oppressed in virtue of his greater knowledge about general aims and interests, and the more he (or she) comes to despise the narrow-

[107] 'Conversation in the Citadel' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 287.
[108] 'Conversation in the Citadel', p. 287-289.
[109] 'Conversation in the Citadel', p. 295.

mindedness and conformism of non-conspirators. It is all the more so since after all, some degree of compromise with the oppressors is necessary. The conspirator, whose identity rests on rejection of the conciliation, comes to believe that the greatest awareness and faithfulness to the cause makes one immune to the threats that stand before others in the same situation, that in fact, the conspirator is the only legitimate spokesperson of the society in dealings with power.

That, in the last instance, Michnik saw the formation of the 'totalitarian germ' in the revolutionary practice rather than ideology, is even more visible in his treatment of Piłsudski and the revolutionary fraction of the PPS. The commander of the socialist fighting squads never saw much of a difference between ideologically conscious 'class struggle' and a romantic-style national uprising. In contrast to the more consciously Marxist movements such as Rosa Luxemburg's fraction, and later the Communist party, they were oriented first and foremost towards concrete armed actions against the Tsarist system. They were, as Michnik calls them, 'organizers' rather than 'doctrinaires'. And yet the members of the PSS fighting squads also developed a pretotalitarian mentality that was an offspring of clandestinity, alienation and the army discipline of the small teams of armed conspirators.

> The leading cadre, the organizers would say, cannot look out for the moods of the conformist public…On the contrary, these cadres must believe that God himself had entrusted them with the honor of the Poles, that it is they who are the actual realizers of the nation's aspirations, even if the nation itself is unaware of it and is not giving the cadres a mandate for it. Under the partitions this nation lost its instinct for self-preservation and its political reason. This is why this nation must subordinate itself to those who know better, see farther, and – most importantly – are prepared to 'throw their lives onto the pyre'[110].

Last but not least, although Dmowski, in his *Thoughts of the Modern Pole*, counterpoised the lofty, but abstract ideas of social justice and peaceful coexistence of nationalities to a 'healthy national interest' and gave priority to the national 'struggle for survival' over class conflict, this ideological divergence did not preclude an underlying similarity in terms of both experience of marginalization and its reflection in the mindset of a conspirator. What was 'pretotalitarian' about Dmowski's political thought, Michnik argued, was not so much the dogma of 'national egoism' and the picture of the zero-sum game in which only the strong nations survive, which, incidentally was not altogether false in the period of the 'awakening' of the young nationalisms, and aggressive

[110] 'Conversation in the Citadel', p. 297-298.

assimilatory policies of Russians and Germans. The pretotalitarian element consisted in the belief – projected onto the nation from *Endecja*'s own political practice – that the strength of the nation comes from discipline and organization, and that discipline and organization means unconditional subordination to those who have privileged access to 'Polishness' and its healthy national interest, that is, to the national democrats. From the point of view of the guardians of the Polishness, conformism was a sign of moral weakness, but an alternative vision of Polishness was considered treason. *Endecja* presented itself not in terms of a particular project of patriotism, but in terms of a spokesperson of an objectively existing collective. To disagree with national democrats, was to put oneself outside the moral community. *Endecja* viewed their ideological adversaries as 'half-Poles'. And if a Pole was not national enough, it must have been because he was not really a Pole, or because he had become corrupted by an alien element – preferably a Jew. In this way, anti-Semitism was a necessary component of this worldview made in the image and likeness of a disciplined organization which externalizes its internal antagonism onto the image of an *agent provocateur*. In the last analysis, Michnik comments, the two 'forgotten ancestors', despite all the differences and antagonisms, underwent a similar evolution.

> Dmowski and Piłsudski were full of contempt for those people who still suffered this psychology. Yet weren't these same people whom the leaders wanted to educate towards self-determination? Dangerous traits were present I the political programs of that day; traits in which from today's perspective it is easy to see the mark of pretotalitarianism[111].

Michnik's most important conclusion regarded the danger implicit in the fact that the logic of resistance and the logic of liberal democracy are substantially incompatible. Even though 'internal self-organization' of citizens who become subjects and not objects in deciding the faith of their community may be the final goal of the conspiratorial activity, paradoxically, the same force that realizes that goal, possess the greatest threat to the newly established order once the victory had been consummated. The dogmatic mindset and the habits of internal discipline engendered in the underground persist under new circumstances and jeopardize the development of a pluralist public life. That was the case, Michnik argues, of both exponents of the 'philosophy of activism' and of the organizations they established and lead under Second Republic. Endecja was transformed into the

[111] 'Conversation in the Citadel', p. 315.

Camp of Great Poland, with highly centralized structure and explicitly authoritarian goals. After coup d'état in 1926 Pilsudski *de facto* dismantled the fragile parliamentary order and ruled with support of the veterans from the fighting squads and the legions established during the Great War. Both political tendencies espoused the doctrine of the autonomy of the state with regards to the citizens and their civic rights, even though the doctrine was coherent with the ideology only in the case of *Endecja*, whereas – notably – it stood in stark contrast to the 'humanist' values professed by PPS.

Michnik counterpoised the philosophy and practice of activism epitomized by Dmowski and Pilsudski to the ideas developed by their contemporary Edward Abramowski, a radical theorist of cooperativism and acute critic of the tendencies towards autonomization of the spokespersons within the socialist movements, both in its social-democratic and Leninist variants. Abramowski believed that organizational arrangements shaped the character of social change. Social change brought about 'from above', without previous 'revolutionization of social consciousness' could only breed new elites and new order of domination. At the same time he rejected the belief that the coercive nature of the state power would change once it passes into the 'right' hands and he remained skeptical as for the 'temporary character' of the hierarchies engendered for revolutionary purposes within the social movements, especially in countries such as Poland where state power was overwhelming and where the large sectors of population suffered from enduring deprivation of political freedom. Instead of disciplined organizations headed by the elite and oriented towards assuming state power, Abramowski proposed the idea of 'cooperative republic' oriented towards the society and its autonomization from the state through voluntary association based on the principles of self-management. Only the development of civic culture and 'ethics of work' through participation in the cooperatives would put an end to the cycle of revolution and exploitation.

Both conversations were a form of recollection, in which reckoning of the past is prompted by the present dilemmas and serves to illuminate it. Reflection on things happened some eighty years before, Michnik comments in 'Conversation in the Citadel',

> can create an intellectual bridge between the era of our ancestors and now, when it is our turn to strive for independence. All the more so since an important element of the struggle for self-determination lies in an authentic knowledge of our own history. It is necessary to develop one's own approach to the national

> heritage, to form one's own ideological tradition and place oneself in it. Disputes over history are frequently equivalent to quarrels over our identity[112].

If the second conversation is read as a commentary to the first, the intellectual evolution of Michnik is remarkable. In the first case the distinction between the society 'down there' and the revolutionary elites acting from above is taken for granted. The society is represented as a amorphous mass held in mental captivity and surrendered to influences of the intellectuals, who themselves are free of any existential determinations. The intellectual may choose to fuel the petty passions of the captive masses or take a critical stance, but the hierarchical model of the relation of representation is taken for granted. In the second case, Michnik takes a more critical approach toward the dissident intellectual, revealing that the dissident is also determined by his existential situation of resistance, a situation in which he develops knowledge-political interests of his own, not entirely compatible, in the last analysis, with the interests of the represented. Indeed, whereas in the first conversation the locus of the 'pretotalitarian temptation' is on the side of the society (the intellectual can only release it or counteract it), in the second the 'germ' feeds on intellectual marginalization. The distinction between 'psychology of slavery' and 'people who suffer' from it would suggest that the imaginary of the 'captive society' does not correspond to a given reality 'out there', but owes much to the existential condition of the dissident himself. The more marginalized he becomes, the more he is prone to believe in his superior knowledge of the goals and moral integrity. The imaginary of the 'captive society' is the reversal of the existentially determined condition of a 'fanatic of ideas', only retroactively projected onto the empirical collective. That the imaginary overdetermines what is otherwise merely a possibility is further underscored by contrast to the alternative formula of resistance inspired in Abramowski. Notably, a more participatory model of relations between the dissident and the society serves not only to empower the latter, but also prevents the development of the 'pretotalitarian temptation' by the former. In this sense, the organizational arrangement implicit in the idea of 'cooperative republic', which allows for bridging the gap between the dissidents and the broader collective is also a precondition of a successful transition to liberal democracy.

[112] 'Conversation in the Citadel', p. 325.

'New evolutionism' and the limits of evolution

If the conversations with the eminent dead – the questions that are posed and the convictions that the answers support – are shaped by the existential horizon of the living, than in order to grasp the shift in Michnik's understanding of the role of the dissident in relation to the greater public, we need to search for its genealogy in the transformation of the intellectual landscape between 1973 and 1982.

One obvious hypothesis is Michnik's manifesto 'New Evolutionism', first made public in Paris in October 1976. The axis of the argument is provided by the contrast between the 'old' and the 'new' strategies of exerting pressure on the Communist system, March 1968 being a pivotal point. The old strategies, originated during post 1956 Thaw, shared the view that the change would come from above and were oriented towards influencing the Party from the within, counting on the fact that inside the collective 'communist prince' there is a more liberal, reform-oriented fraction, as progressive as the intellectual advisors themselves. Although their unrestrained and public activity constituted a serious breakthrough with respect to the apathy and attitudes of 'internal exile' which dominated the previous years, still, the empowerment of the public sphere independent from the structures of the state was not a necessary element of their endeavors. After Polish March 1968 and the Prague Spring, the belief in the 'liberal wing' of the party, not to mention the myth of the 'good' party leader, proved to be a poor service to the cause of democratization and economic reform. At the same time, while 1968 revealed an open conflict between the authorities and the dissident public, it would be wrong – Michnik argued – to understand its importance in terms of tipping the balance of the 'reform or revolution' dilemma. While the democratic opposition should cast away as 'unrealistic and dangerous' any hopes of overthrowing the party dictatorship while the geopolitical position of the USSR remains unchallenged, at the same time 'real concessions can be won by applying steady public pressure on the government'[113]. Contrary to old evolutionism which aimed an exerting the pressure from within, 'new evolutionism' should direct its program to an independent public, a strategy that entails in the first place the empowerment of the society *vis-à-vis* the state. The strategy should focus especially on the working class, which 'with a steady and unyielding

[113] 'New Evolutionism' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 142-3.

stand, has on several occasions [the waves of strikes in 1970 and 1976 heavily repressed by the government] forced the government to make spectacular concessions', but which failed to bring about substantial changes due to the 'absence of authentic workers' institutions and of models and traditions for political resistance'[114]. In their relations *vis-à-vis* the party, the democratic opposition should take a very cautious stand. On the one hand, without the supposition that there exists a 'pragmatist' current within the party the evolutionary strategy would be impossible. On the other hand, it should not treat the government as a political ally. This cautious stand, Michnik claims, is crucial, because

> If the people of the democratic opposition fail to distinguish the various trends that exist within the power apparatus, I believe they may ignore reality, become fanatical maximalists, and go astray into political adventurism. Identifying their goals with those of the pragmatic wing of the party, however, could lead them to repeat the mistakes of the revisionists, to form false alliances and lose their ideological identity…The democratic opposition must formulate its own political goals and only then, with those goals in hand, reach political compromises[115].

Empowering the sphere of autonomous civic institutions and creating a clear demarcation line *vis-à-vis* the state is neither an end in itself, nor a mere instrument of political transformation. 'Antipolitics' of 'new evolutionism' is just a first, albeit necessary, step towards reform, but at the same time, any reform can not be effective unless the society becomes the subject instead of being an object of change.

Together with Jacek Kuroń's numerous writings[116], Michnik's manifesto laid down the ideological foundations of the democratic opposition gathered around Workers' Defense Committee (KOR). KOR was established following 1976 strikes in factories of Radom and Ursus, with the aim of providing legal and material assistance to the workers persecuted by the authorities. It engaged important figures from both October 1956 and March 1968 generations of dissident Intelligentsia, who raised relief founds, publicized information about the campaign of repressions and coordinated a network of activists, mainly students and scouts. After 1977, when First Secretary Edward Gierek was forced to grant amnesty to both the workers participants of the 1976 riots and the members of the opposition engaged in their defense, KOR transformed itself into Social Self-Defense Committee

[114] 'New Evolutionism', p. 144.
[115] 'New Evolutionism', p. 147.
[116] See Falk, *The Dillemas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe*, p. 184-192.

(KSS 'KOR') taking up a number of new initiatives fostering the institutionalization of basic civil rights, self-organization of workers and peasants, educational and economic reforms and support for the underground press. KSS KOR provided a material and infrastructural base for a number of associated opposition groups such as Movement For the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO), the Free Trade Unions in the coastal region and the Student Solidarity Committee (SKS); for publishing of censure-free journals and books including the establishment of Independent Publishing House (NOWa); and for Society of Scientific Courses (TKN) oriented towards the dissemination of academic education free of official constraints.

Apparently, the distinctive feature of both KOR and the network of independent institutions within its orbit, was publicness[117]. Not unlike the Czechoslovak Charter 77, the assumption was to act 'as if' State Socialism was an open and pluralistic society[118]. While print shops, storage places and archives containing the files documenting Committee's activity needed to be kept in clandestine, the membership – including names, addresses and telephone numbers – was made public. Despite the abuses of Polish law, KOR aimed at legalizing its status invoking the Helsinki Accords and a valid prewar law on relief committees. The recruitment policy was as open as possible, trustworthy personal networks being the only form of selection. Similarly TKN courses remained open to public despite the fact that the sessions were often interrupted by raids organized by the police or student-agitators.

Nevertheless, the expansion the counter-cultural sphere soon began to suffer a serious 'crisis of growth'. On the one hand, maintaining the demarcation line between the civic institutions and the state resulted to be more difficult in practice than in theory and the thinner the line between the communist and the anti-communist, the more blurred the post-revisionist dissident identity would get. A good example is provided by the debate around Jacek Kuroń's 1979 article 'Sytuacja kraju a program opozycji'[119] [Situation in Poland and the Opposition's program]. In the context of the deepening economic crisis, Kuroń alarmed that the popular discontent with the mismanagement of

[117] On pre-Solidarity opposition, see Jan Józef Lipski, *KOR: a history of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL, 1945-1980* (London : Aneks, 1994).
[118] *Dillemas*, p. 36.
[119] Jacek Kuroń, *Polityka i Odpowiedzialność* (Londyn: Aneks, 1984).

the authorities may go beyond any of the outbursts of social anger seen up to date. While the democratic opposition does not want to go beyond proposing a path towards structural reform, its mere existence attenuates the inhibitions against social mobilization, and hence brings the possibility of the outburst closer, especially provided that the memories of numerous riots between 1956 and 1976 are still fresh. In this situation, the bloodshed can be avoided only if the democratic opposition concentrates on initiating a broad social pressure on the authorities, mobilizing a movement toward reform within the official structures and providing a conditional support for a 'liberal' fraction of the party in case it emerges. If the party reaches instead for repressive measures and the outburst of social anger is as great as expected, the democratic opposition should prepare for engaging with direct negotiation with the Soviets, presenting a liberal-democratic alternative to the mono-party rule within the framework of the Brezhnev doctrine along the lines of the Finish experience.

The responses to Kuroń's article were in their majority negative. His argument was widely interpreted as an attempt at undermining the strategy of creating independent civic institutions outside the realm of the state and curtailing the society's efforts at self-organization and resistance. Especially the group of KOR members gathered around Antoni Macierewicz and the journal *Głos*, saw Kuroń's ideas as a return to the revisionist strategy of engagement in inter-fractional struggles within the party and condemned the thesis about 'finlandization' of Poland as contradictory with democratic opposition's independentist orientation[120]. While Michnik (writing with Jan Józef Lipski) subscribed to the critique of relying on the 'liberal-reformist' current within the party, at the same he reminded that in some cases a degree of cooperation with the authorities is inevitable. For example, a *free* trade union cannot allow the authorities to interfere in the election of its members, but at the same time a free *trade union*, must negotiate with the authorities since that is its function. Also the existence of relief committees such as KOR demands perpetual engagement with the official structures on the various levels, starting from the prosecutor's office, ending with the prison authorities. At the same time, he reminded that

> The opposition acts and struggles primarily among people who have not yet chosen to fight by our methods since those methods seem to involve too many risks for he fighters and since victory over totalitarianism seems distant and uncertain…There are also many groups between the declared opposition

[120] Friszke, p. 428-432.

> and the now-substantial number of people who believe the maintenance of a monoparty to be in their interest that one could say a continuum exists. It can be dangerous when important distinction in views and goals are obliterated. But it would be even more dangerous if the groups fighting for change were to detach themselves completely from the passive population[121].

In the passage above, Michnik indicates another instance of the 'crisis of growth', which resided in the increasing tension between the dissidents and the non-dissident Intelligentsia. That this tension was a mayor concern for the members of the democratic opposition, is demonstrated by the one of the most important polemics about the dissidence initiated by writer and journalist Piotr Wierzbicki and his 'Treatise on Thicks'[122], a pamphlet directed against the broad sector of the Intelligentsia, which privately disapproved of the Communists or even held contacts with the dissidents, rule, but remained submissive nevertheless. The main object of scorn is the rationalization given to the material and intellectual profits gained at the cost of non-partisanship and providing moral legitimacy to the regime. Wierzbicki's diatribes were not unlike those launched by Pilsudski against the 'captive society'. While in 1973 Michnik identified with Pilsudski-type dissident, in 1979 presented serious reservations in response to Wierzbicki's argument. As usual, he pointed to several examples from history of Poland, which went to show both the complexity of motivations and the circumstances in which active opposition was either impossible, or the submissiveness was later redeemed. More importantly, he cautioned against the potential dangers implied in Wierzbicki's way of thinking.

> Oppositionists, who are being south by the police and tormented with house searches, may learn from this text a contempt for those people to whom convictions, temperament, or merely fear dictate another life-style and a different way of serving a common cause[123].

For Michnik, a danger of developing a 'psychology of contempt' has always been present in the conspirational activities of many generations of Poles.

> The conspirator who perceived conformists as resembling slaves found in himself and his friends the pathos and tragedy of the romantic heroes. Seeing maggots in the cowed population, he 'angelized' himself and his friends, fighters for a souvereign and just Poland. The 'angelic character' of the picture he had of himself led him – often inconsciously – to assign himself special rights[124].

[121] 'Some Remarks on the Opposition and the General Situation in Poland' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 153.
[122] Piotr Wierzbicki, 'Treatise on Thicks' in *Poland: genesis of a revolution* (NY: Random House) ed. by Abraham Brumberg, p. 199-211.
[123] 'Maggots and Angels' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 169-197.
[124] 'Maggots and Angels', p. 194.

Both examples seems to suggest, that the institutional framework of the independent civic institutions organized around KOR, despite its public and open character, did not preclude the emergence of what Michnik would latter call the 'totalitarian temptation'. The post-1968 collective identity of the democratic opposition, fundamented in the (anti)political philosophy of 'new evolutionism', encountered serious *practical* obstacles in delimiting its boundaries. In *theory* the new dissident identity was created through rejection of the previous revisionist strategy of 'advisor to the communist prince'. Before the assumption was the communist state was the only agent endowed with political subjectivity, hence the influence should come from within and the social change implemented from above. 'New evolutionism', by contrast, was founded on the idea unless there are two *separate* political subjectivities, any social change would amount to change in the order of domination. Unless the society reconstructs its political subjectivity *vis-à-vis* the totalitarian state, the democratic opposition will repeat the errors of its ancestors and become the new oppressors. In practice, however, as the independent civic institutions expanded and its points of junction with the state multiplied, the difference between the internal versus external pressure started to blur. The tension that resulted from blurring the boundaries had a feedback effect that reinforced the radical strategies of dissent opposed to any form of dialogue. The same applies to the second boundary of 'new evolutionist' identity, that between the dissident and non-dissident public. Here the problem was with clear-cut distinction between those sectors of the Intelligentsia that are 'internally dissident', but remain reluctant to take partisan positions, and the 'active dissidents' who nevertheless discard radical partisanship. Here also the tensions arose between the need to defend a well articulate identity and the aim toexpand the scope of counter-culture. The later necessarily entailed a more benevolent relation to the dissident-to-be public, leading to a feedback effect reinforcing the distance between the dissident avant-garde and the 'captive society'.

To put it more graphically, if the pre-1968 opposition constructed its identity along the lines of the dilemma 'reform or revolution', discarding the latter as impossible and understanding the former in terms of pressure-from-within, the post-1968 opposition defined itself along the lines of 'collaboration or reform' alternative, the second meaning pressure-from-without. However, since the stability of the demarcation line between 'reform-from-without' and 'collaboration-from-within'

was in practice not that easy to maintain, the feedback effect on the dissident identity produced a radicalization of the positions, along the lines of the alternative 'collaboration or revolution'. It was this radicalized dissident identity which brought back memories of the pre-Second Republic underground and its aftermath. If the 'new evolutionist' strategy was designed avoid the pitfalls of the revisionist strategy, it was not immune to the 'pretotalitarian temptation', which, paradoxically, constituted a feedback effect of its successful expansion.

Solidarity and the totalitarian temptation

The mayor shift that took place in Michnik's thinking after the Martial Law was a further growth of anxiety over possible radicalization of the democratic underground. Although his version of anti-politics was constructed against both the passivity of the 'captive society' and the 'totalitarian temptation' of the conspirator, there is a clear change in the emphasis. The original idea, exposed in 'New Evolutionism', was focused on the first *locus* of totalitarianism. In the last weeks of Solidarity's legal existence, Michnik would still oppose what he saw a 'conciliatory' politics advocated by Wałęsa and Kuroń, arguing that the price to pay for a compromise was to high and, hence, the bloodshed would be inevitable[125]. After the Martial Law was lifted, however, the 'captivity' was no longer a problem. The consent to the Communist rule became strictly limited to the 'geopolitical reasons' and the control over the apparatus of coercion. Whatever stretched beyond those limits – principally the attempts at counteracting the economic crisis with a package of reforms – was met with negative response[126].

Admitedly, Michnik saw that the anti-politics of Solidarity was responsible for the 'stalemate' which made the situation impossible or to be more precise, the logic of 'anti-politics' resulted incompatible with the logic of the communist authorities. Solidarity's aim – he commented – was *not* to change the system of government, but to reinforce the boundary between the self-governing institutions and the State. From the perspective of the State and its logic, no such boundary existed. And if there was no such boundary, there was no possibility of discriminating

[125] *Letters from Freedom*, p. 60-63.
[126] On Polish situation after Martial Law, see Andrzej Paczkowski, *The spring will be ours*, pp. 455-482.

between the 'defense against the state' and 'attack on the state', between empowerment of autonomy and 'counter-revolution'. Hence, the party was able to react only in two ways. On the one hand – quite in line with the strategy of pressure-from-without –the party reformers constituted the 'horizontal structures' with the imperative of its 'internal democratization'. The 'horizontal structures' worked against the principle of 'democratic centralism' but stayed within the logic of authorities in so far as it took for granted that it is the party that has 'democratize society' from above. On the other hand, the party 'hard-liners' opted for repression of both internal and external 'counter-revolutionaries'. After the party Congress, the second fraction prevailed. The party was a 'colossus with legs of clay and hands of steel'[127].

The logic of Solidarity (and 'New Evolutionism' in general) was focused around the main goal of 'reconstructing social bonds outside the structures of the state', but it did not include any strategy of coexistence with the authorities once this goal would be achieved. Any political agreement going beyond the imperative of autonomization and entailing cooperation between Solidarity and the government, was treated with mistrust. The union did not want to assault the system, but it saw internal and external impulses for compromise as an assault on its own integrity.

> The mighty and spontaneous social movement – deprived of examples, changing from one day to the next amid incessant conflicts with authorities – did not posses a clear vision of specific goals or a well-defined concept of coexistence with the communist regime…It was a colossus with legs of steel and hands of clay: it was powerful among the factory crews but powerless at the negotiating table[128].

Since there could be no agreement between the one colossus and the other, what prevailed was the 'hand of steel'.

Nevertheless, Michnik claimed, the imposition of the Martial Law did not put an end to the experience of Solidarity. The autonomous institutions were dismantled, but the political philosophy on antipolitics conquered a permanent place within the society. 'These fifteen months have been a lesson of freedom. Solidarity can be erased from walls but not from human memory'[129]. The fifteen months of freedom, according to Michnik, put an end to the 'psychology of captivity'. He returned to the topic from the first conversation, albeit ads a new element. If under Russian empire from the

[127] 'The Polish War' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 35.
[128] 'The Polish War', p. 29.
[129] 'The Polish War', p.39.

late 19th century 'captivity' referred first and formost to conciliatory attitudes of the elites and the resentment towards the dissidents, under Communism it refers also to workers protests.

> The system created a psychology characteristic of communities subjugated by communism. Long periods of apathy and depolitization were interrupted by sudden political earthquakes. These, however, were not followed by programs of reform or by alternative political plans. They were only protests, not reform movements…Polish thinkers and politicians called this atmosphere the psychology of captivity. Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, and Edward Abramowski, who represented conflicting political parties and ideologies, agreed on one thing: a slave revolt has little in common with a movement for social or political change. The rebellious slave does free himself for a moment; but his main desire is revenge, which is rarely constructive. The rebellious slave will at best look for a better tsar, but he has been deprived of his community, his ideals, and his language[130].

Michnik believed that the fifteen months of freedom enabled people to regain the subjectivity, rediscover themselves as citizens and reconstruct the broken social bonds. Although the trade union itself has been crushed by the imposition of the Martial Law, the experience of Solidarity 'struck deep roots in Polish hearts and minds, in work places and private homes', the fact that permitted him to believe that further resistance to the military dictatorship could count on a broad social base. Therefore, Michnik went on to say, while it was necessary to organize underground resistance to Communist rule, the form the resistance should take, should correspond to the imperative of maintaining the liaison between the opposition and the social base. Specifically, the imperative implies that the underground should not take the form of neither armed resistance nor 'Leninist-style' highly centralized organization. Although Michnik recognizes that 'one chronic problem is the conflict between an attempt to maintain a mass base for the movement and the need for the underground union's cadre structure to function effectively', he nevertheless emphasizes that

> The activists must understand that an underground movement makes sense only when it is able to create forms of action accessible to every single Pole, when it remains an open and tolerant movement, and it always remembers that many roads lead to democracy[131].

With the imposition of the Martial Law, the participatory model of relations between the dissident counter-culture and the broader public – delineated back in the 'New Evolutionism' manifesto – gains vital importance. 'A polish democratic state will never be born if democratic structures do not exist beforehand in Polish society'[132]. On the one hand, unless the mass experience of civic

[130] 'On Resistance' in *Letters from Prison*, pp. 50-51.
[131] 'On Resistance', pp. 54-55.
[132] 'On Resistance', p. 55.

subjectivity is sustained through permanent and broad effort, the society will become indifferent to the eventual democratic change. On the other hand, unless the democratic opposition remains integrated into a broad social base, the conspirational activity may itself become an obstacle to the democratic transformation.

> There is a unique type of activist-conspirator, whose characteristics make him as useful in the underground as they are dangerous later on…A spirit of democracy is not one of the virtues required by conspiracy; pluralism is not the style favored by it…A totalitarian regime sees the hand of its underground in every crisis; the antitotalitarian underground begins to discern the involvement of hidden police agents in every one of its failures…The conspirator idealizes the underground, which is not surprising, but this is precisely why he must constantly be reminded that it is not police terror that will bring about real defeat but the hostile indifference of society. An underground that is detached from a base is doomed to become degenerate and weak[133].

The greatest achievement of the 'fifteen months of freedom' – Michnik now argued – was the renunciation of violence. If Solidarity did not confront the Communists in December 1981, it was not only because its leaders wanted to avoid bloodshed at any cost. It was also because active resistance would be contrary to Solidarity's main goal, which was not to conquer the State, but to restrict the scope of its power. The idea of 'Self-Governing Republic', approved at the first (and last) independent trade union's Congress in Autumn 1981 did not represent a project of a social order alternative to State Socialism, but a project of independent public life outside its boundaries. Strategies that would go beyond the preservation of the structure of independent society are bound to apply authoritarian solutions. And whoever reaches for the authoritarian solutions to seize government is bound to govern by authoritarian means. While Michnik recognizes that his position is 'by no means uncontroversial', and that within among the leadership of movement there was a mayor controversy over this point, according to him it only goes to show that after all,

> Solidarity has not been wholly immune o totalitarian temptations. Organized as a social movement struggling against the totalitarian state, composed of people who grew up in the Leading System and were shaped by its totalitarian structures, Solidarity has always been torn between trying to influence administrative decisions and attempting to restrict the omnipotence of the state…Solidarity, and every other social movement in the communist system, will have to confront this dilemma in the days to come. The future of post-communist societies will depend on how it is resolved[134].

The controversy over movement's tactics in the last weeks of its legal existence, Michnik claimed, went beyond the limits of internal pluralism. It did not correspond to a division between the

[133] 'On Resistance', p. 60-61.
[134] 'Letter from the Gdańk Prison, 1985' in *Letters from Prison*, p. 89.

'radicals' and 'moderates' or 'Left' and 'Right' – that is two disparate, but *equally legitimate* positions regarding the common good – but to a more fundamental choice regarding the future of the society as such:

> I think that in Poland the conflict between the right and the left belongs to the past…A different distinction comes to the fore in the era of totalitarian dictatorships: one between the proponents of an open society and the proponents of a closed society. In the former, social order is based on self-government and collective agreements; in the latter, order is achieved through repression and discipline. In the vision of an open society, the state acts as the guardian of safety for citizens; in the vision of a closed society the state is the master and overseer who determines all modes of society's existence[135].

These last words, written in 1985, directly foreshadow the position Michnik will take in the memory struggles during the democratic transition. At the same time, the aim of this chapter was to show that his position relied heavily on particular kind of memory-work which constituted an underpinning of his own dissident identity and possibly contributed to shaping the collective identity of KOR group within Polish democratic opposition. Let me recapitulate the punch line of the argument. I suggest that at the basis of Michnik's political thought there is a strong interconnection between his version of 'antipolitics' or philosophy of dissidence, and the memory of dissidence, or the way Michnik constructs a symbolic thread going from the experiences of Dmowski, Piłsudski and Abramowski in the late 19th century to the post-1968 democratic opposition. At the intersection of those two streams of thought, there is a very intricate theory of 'totalitarianism' which is developed simultaneously through the effort of describing Michnik's own existential situation and his reading of the experience of the ancestors. The object of knowledge that emerges out of this mixture of present and past experiences is of a very peculiar kind. 'Totalitarianism' in Michnik's thought has multiple *loci*. While it is safe to assume that the author of *Letters from Prison* takes the existence of the totalitarian structure of the state for granted, his understanding of the notion is much more interesting when it comes to the level of the social, and the concept of 'psychology of captivity'. There is a remarkable difference between Czesław Miłosz's 'captive mind'[136] and 'captivity' as it appears in Michnik's writings. While both attempt at explaining the nature of consent to the Communist rule – along the line of the often repeated Talleyrand's dictum that 'one can do everything with a bayonet, albeit one

[135] 'Letter from the Gdańk Prison, 1985', p. 91.
[136] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (NY: Random House, 1951).

cannot sit on it' – in the first case 'captivity' refers a sort of ideological seduction exerted by Marxist doctrine mainly on the intellectuals. In the second case, by contrast 'captivity' is a form of consent-without-ideology. The 'captive society' is not so much a society that beliefs in the ideological legitimacy of the System, but a society which strongly believes that the System – whatever its legitimacy is – cannot be challenged. From the 'captive' perspective the System is overwhelming, and hence, the dissent is impossible. The dissent is not provided for, and yet it exists. It exists despite that it should not exist. In the face of this complicated ontological dilemma the captive subject can either reconsider the basis of his consent – which means an end to 'captivity' – or arrive at the conclusion that the dissident is an *agent provocateur* – whether he is acting on behalf of the Communist themselves, other dark forces or out of sheer lunacy, the consequences of his actions can bring about only calamities. Thus captive attitude corresponds not only to numbing of the 'taste for freedom', but, more importantly, to the resentment towards open dissidence. This specific understanding of 'captive society' based on both Michnik's experience of March 1968 – when the society was mobilized against student protest under the banners of anti-Semitism – and on his identification with the marginalized PPS revolutionaries lead by Pilsudski.

Later on, however, he discovered that in this existentially and historically founded image of 'captive society' there is a surplus of meaning, that it is over-determined by the dissident's own marginal situation, and *not* just a reality the dissident reacts to. If social indifference and resentment was one side of the coin, the other was 'contempt for psychology of captivity', the locus of yet another 'totalitarian temptation'. The contempt for the non-dissidents grew out of the condition of marginalization and constituted an understandable defense mechanism against the hostile environment, but at the same time, it was an element of the democratic opposition's collective identity that could bring potentially disastrous consequences. Firstly, the oppositional 'psychology of contempt' translated into a preference for highly centralized, disciplined and isolated structures of conspiracy, in which efficacy had a priority over internal pluralism. Secondly, that specific form of underground activism would reinforce the belief that those inside the structures of the underground have a deeper knowledge of the interests of the whole and greater 'taste for freedom', than those on the outside. Thirdly, if the society could not be considered a reliable ally, the opposition would turn

to the conquest of the state. Only after the state has been conquered, the society could be educated into civic freedom. Now, freedom imposed from above by an organized force which has contempt for the society was, according to Michnik, an instance of yet another totalitarian fantasy, a temptation the dissidents themselves should be aware of. In other words, if disintegration of the dissident counterculture in the sea of indifference was one thing to struggle against, the other was the leap from 'realm of marginalization' to the 'realm of freedom'. For Michnik, the strategy of seizure of the state should be rejected not only because of the geopolitical constellation – which, he believed, would not last forever – but principally because the history of the ideological clash under Second Republic demonstrated that a victory of marginal but disciplined oppositional groups would be a pyrrhic victory for democracy.

The strategy of 'new evolutionism', oriented at reconstructing independent civic life outside the structures of the state, can be read as an alternative to both the pre-1968 oppositional strategies of 'advisors to the Communist prince', and to the vanguardist-style conspiracy of the late 19th century revolutionaries. Paradoxically, 'new evolutionism' was a successful strategy, but not a very stable fundament on which collective identity of the democratic opposition could be built. Together with the expansion of the counter-cultural public sphere, the distinction between, on the one hand, the 'dissident' and the 'non-dissident', and on the other, 'pressure-from-without' and 'collaboration' with the state became blurred. This lack of stability created internal tensions within the democratic opposition, fostering radicalization of anti-Communist discourse as well as fear of engaging in any compromise that would imply taking responsibility for a share of power. While these internal tensions were already visible before 1980, the strategy showed its greatest limitations after the August Accords. On the one hand it was an undisputable victory of 'New Evolutionism'. By virtue of its mass character and duration, Solidarity ultimately destroyed the barriers of 'captivity', creating structures of participatory democracy, which transformed both the inhibitions of the Intelligentsia and the outbursts of proletarian anger into exercise of civic freedom and democracy. On the other hand, while the August Accords constituted a boundary between the State and the independent civic institutions, Solidarity rejected both seizure of the State and cooperation with the authorities – the only two scenarios the Party took seriously into account. The resulting stalemate was favorable only

for the hardliners, who after crushing the reformist fraction within the PZPR, began to prepare for the confrontational scenario.

Lucidity and blindness

At the verge of 1985, Michnik was certain that the 'totalitarian temptation' inscribed in the existential situation of the dissident was the only troublesome heritage for the future democratic order. The profound discredit of general Jaruzelski's command, 'the silence of the sea' with which the society resisted the efforts of the last Communist governments to stabilize the political and economic collapse, showed that the both structures of the state and the 'captive society' were no longer the *loci* of totalitarianism. While the Martial Law destroyed the last reservoirs of social legitimacy of PUWP, it also led to dispersion of the countercultural sphere. While some members of the democratic opposition rebuilt the network of the independent civic institutions, others remained underground. Also, within the ranks of the democratic opposition, the polarization increased between those who rejected any form of struggle for power, and the radical anti-Communists, who rejected a compromise with power, but not a conspiracy against the State. Michnik not only put himself firmly within the first camp, but also judged the alternative position as incompatible with the framework of a pluralist society.

As late as February 1988 (with preliminary talks about the legalization of Solidarity underway), interviewed by John Keane, he affirmed that the changes brought about by Solidarity's 'revolution of dignity' were 'absolutely irreversible'[137]. He reminded that while six years after the historical upheavals in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Communists erased all the traces of the revolution, in Poland AD 1988 Solidarity and the civic institutions built around it were alive and kicking. 'The people – he said – are relaxed, unafraid, and their backs are straight. We have educated our Communists, and this is the greatest achievement of Solidarity. But this is now history, and we need to talk about the future'[138]. In Michnik's opinion, what the future could bring was necessarily tied to the sea change happening in Gorbachev's Soviet Union. The 'silence of the sea',

[137] 'Towards a civil society' in *Letters from Freedom*, p. 101.
[138] Ibidem.

lack of demonstrations or other mayor clashes with the apparatus of coercion, had, thus, a short term rationale. More active form of resistance in the western peripheries could bring the same kind of backlash that occurred in Russia under Alexander II after Polish January Uprising in 1863, or in Khrushchev's Soviet Union after Hungarian Revolution of 1956. But the seizure of state power was not in the long term horizon of Solidarity neither. All there was at stake in the 'cold civil war' between the dissident counterculture and Jaruzelski, was the acknowledgment of 'crucial importance of Solidarity in a *society independent of the state*'[139]. In February 1988 Michnik was still in a position of rejecting Solidarities possible seizure of state power, since that would necessarily mean a brutal confrontation, and 'whoever uses violence to gain power uses violence to maintain power'. However, the 'demoralizing effect' of violence on the revolutionary, a fact attested by all the revolutions, was not the only reason of refusal to take power. Perhaps there was still something 'captive' about the society after all.

> Violence fractures social bonds. And, whenever society is atomized, its intrasocial networks shattered, it becomes vulnerable to totalitarianism. Hypothetically speaking, if Jaruzelski were to be replaced tomorrow by Wałęsa or Kuroń, nothing would change. The crucial problem is therefore to build a democratic society which renders totalitarianism impossible by altering the social mechanisms of power along the lines attempted by Solidarity[140].

This statement is a very ambiguous one and can be given two different readings. The first one would be consistent with our observations about the development of Michnik's thought on the locus of totalitarianism, as captured between the first and the second conversation. According to this interpretation, his position would amount to refusal of conspiracy and violence as means to overthrowing the state, but – the demise of social captivity being 'absolutely irreversible' – would not preclude the democratic participation in state power if conspiracy and violence could be avoided. But the statement can be given another reading, which complicates this picture. In the second interpretation, 'irreversibility' of the moral and psychological effect of the 'fifteen months of freedom' would become strongly qualified. Along these lines, Michnik would advocate 'altering the social mechanisms of power along the lines attempted by Solidarity' not so much due to pernicious effects of violence, but because he judged that society was 'uncaptive' enough live in the civic

[139] 'Towards a civil society', p.102.
[140] 'Towards a civil society', p.107.

sphere dissociated from state and its power, but still too 'captive' to participate in the decisions about the common good. This radicalized version of antipolitics would renounce not only undemocratic road to power – which would turn democratic aspiration into its opposite – but the *any* claim to power as such. If it is not longer about undemocratic means, there is no place for a *democratic* will to power neither. The state that prevents the reconstruction of civil society is totalitarian, but so are the intermediary organizations that want to participate in state power.

I would suggest that the latter interpretation is valid. Thus, what the path dependence of memory fails illuminate is Michnik' sudden and radical change of position regarding the permanence of totalitarian 'reason'. Thus in comparison with his 1988 belief about the irreversibility of changes brought about by Solidarity, the Polish realities of 1990 changed dramatically.

> We are encountering the resistance of the social fabric…Sometimes we feel like the sorcerer's apprentice, who released forces that he could not control. These aroused ambitions, these displays of belated courage, these intrigues and personal conflicts, these slanders, these accusations and embezzlements against any adversary, or of being secret agents or crypto-Communists – where do they come from?... Where does this taste for kicking those who are down come from, his ever-growing area of intolerance, this urge to imprison people of the ancient regime, this dream of vengeance, this chauvinism, this xenophobia, this egalitarian demagoguery proper to populism that conceals simple envy? Where does this return to the idea of the nationalist state come from? This explosion of hatred for everyone – for gypsies, for AIDS patients, for all who are different?... And we wonder, after all, whether we are not all children of totalitarian Communism…The death of Communist system does not mean the end of totalitarian habits. The carefully bread slave of Communism did not die with the endo fo the Communist party's reign[141].

Only recently, there were the people 'relaxed, unafraid and with their backs straight'. Now there was 'social fabric' brimful of 'violence, hatred and revenge'. The caution not to 'angelicize' the oppositionists at the expense of non-dissidents changed into dismissal of 'displays of belated courage'. Where once was 'the just demand of emancipation of work' now it transformed to 'egalitarian demagoguery proper to populism that conceals simple envy'. Protest against 'kicking those who are down'[142] became more important than the refusal to obliterate the difference between the 'beating' and the 'beaten'. Anti-Communism, economic demands, nationalism and homophobia were presented as many different sides of the same phenomenon – the 'totalitarian habits' of

[141] "After the revolution" in *Letters From Freedom*, p. 152.

[142] The article, first published in the French *Liberacion* in May 1990. At that time, Wojciech Jaruzelski was still the president, the coercion apparatus was still in the hands of the generals Czesław Kiszczak (Internal Affairs) and Florian Siwicki (The Army) and PZPR was spared the expropriation of its properties, not to mention the *nomenclatura* positions in the economy. While protest about the abuse of power and unlawful revenge is an undeniable duty of a critical intellectual, it is rather unclear in what sense the Communists were at the moment 'down'.

'carefully bred slaves of Communism'. Now, does not Michnik's argument resemble the 'contempt for psychology of slavery' of Pilsudzki? Was not the identification with Piłsudski from the first conversation a personal spectre of Michnik from the second conversation?

Perhaps Dick Pels' reminder is accurate. One cannot see everything from everywhere.

> There operates a law of reciprocal lucidity and blindness in social life which ordains that different standpoints produce different points of view, open up different realities in a different way, while being invariably shadowed by their own indigenous blind spot[143].

Michnik's most intriguing contribution to our understanding of the counterculture under Communism was precisely his penetrating mnemonic construction of the dissident identity, sensitive to the dangers involved in the existential condition of the conspirator, dangers his great ancestors in the tradition of Polish resistance did not escape. A pivotal point of this memory work regarded the performative relation between the marginalized position of the dissident and the social imaginary of the 'captive society'. The blind spot of the oppositionist would be not to recognize that the contempt for the non-dissidents and self-ascription of greater moral worth and deeper knowledge about the proper order of things corresponds to a displaced tension involved in his own condition of marginality, rather than to a given reality 'out there'. Michnik not only was aware of the possibly pernicious consequences, but also realized that any professed values – values of pluralism and democracy and human rights included – do not make the oppositionist immune to this kind of moral loftiness which is a vector of an existential condition of the dissident and not an offspring of an ideology. After all, Piłsudski was an 'organizer' and not a 'doctrinaire'. In this sense, where does his feeling of a 'sorcerer's apprentice' came from, and especially, the sudden urge to *control* the forces of democracy he had contributed so much to release? In my opinion, it was the consequence of the antipolitical solution to the problem, whose unintended consequence was an identification of the political and the authoritarian. And the paradox is that in 1989 it was the anti-political camp that found itself in the place of power. How does one justify holding power without really wanting it? Paradoxically, where the will to power is a symptom of a posttotalitarian mentality, the want of willingness becomes its legitimization.

[143] *Intellectual as Stranger*, p. 223.

CHAPTER 4: Hauntology and the Residual Past

The Eighteenth Brumaire opens with well known celebrated passage in which the base pays the tribute to the imaginary:

> The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language[144].

Claude Lafort, in his marvelous 'immanent critique' of Karl Marx, points out that the passage reveals the intimate connection between imaginary of the past and historical change. In modern capitalist societies, in which 'everything solid melts into air', the individuals constantly confronted with what is new, but react to the historicity of their condition by taking refuge in the representations of the past. The more they are faced with the uncertainties involved in the process of 'making their own history', the more they draw back from the horizon of the unprecedented into the representations of the past which harbor continuity[145]. Lefort's interpretation is important because it suggests that 'path-dependence' and 'presentism' are not alternative and irreconcilable approaches to politics of collective memory. In the first paradigm, the sense of identity engendered by collective memory imposes restraints on how the interests and goals are understood in the present. According to the second paradigm, it is the interests and goals in the present that shape the public representations of the past. Lefort's reading of Marx demonstrates that while the recourse to memory is how the social actors maintain their identity amidst radical historical change, at the same time the memory serves to misrecognize their own position on the 'new scene of history'. It is hard to tell whether Michnik's discourse on dissident memory was an important element of the collective identity of the Polish democratic opposition as a whole, but the fact is that it became the symbolic framework within which the first non-Communist government and its supporters defined the political situation. The transitional hauntology, in this context, served as a discursive reference for

[144] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), vol. 11, p. 185.
[145] Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society*: Bureaucracy, democracy, totalitarianism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 139-181.

the definition of the dominant political conflict the way it was understood by the dominant fraction of the Solidarity camp. At the same time, the circumstances become radically different. Before 1989, dissident memory was an element of the discourse of the 'power of the powerless'. During the transition the *hauntology* became the discourse of the 'powerless in power'.

In the aftermath of the constitution of Mazowiecki's government the balance of forces was an extremely complicated one. On the one hand, there was the problematic status of the Communists in the Solidarity government. The political pact between the democratic opposition and the 'reformer wing' of the party was dictated by the uncertainty about the reaction of the party hardliners and the *coertion* apparatus as well as caution with regards to the positive response to the solution made public by Michnik in his celebrated article 'Your President, Our Prime Minister'. At the same time, the pact was controversial both in terms of well entrenched inhibitions against undertaking steps that might lead to blurring the distinctions between the sides of the previous agreement, and in the light of the unanimous rejection of the Communist authorities expressed in the June elections. On the other hand, the situation within the camp of the democratic opposition was even more complex. What started as a half-legal group of advisers to Lech Wałęsa, in the course of the Round Table talks and the electoral campaign became the parliamentary representation of the society as against the state, disposing of its own daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and a network of eponymous local organizations created ad hoc for the purpose of the campaign. The entire expanding structure was in need of institutionalization. From the moment of its constitution until the electoral victory all the decisions taken within the Citizens Committee were not subjected to any formal procedure but depended largely on the personal influence of the advisors themselves. The tensions became apparent as soon as the electoral campaign started. The dissident groups excluded from the committee, KPN, Gwiazda group and the anarchists, called for the boycott of what they called the 'capitulation at the Round Table'. Inside the committee some of the members protested against the fact that the selection of the candidates did not abide to any mechanism that would ensure equal chances to different currents of the democratic opposition. After the elections, some of the representatives of the dissidents groups that made it into the parliament, were unwilling to give unconditional support to the political decisions of Mazowiecki and Bronisław Geremek, the leader of the oppositional bloc (Citizens

Parliamentary Club, OKP) in the *Sejm*. Especially questionable was whether *pacta sunt servanda* applies to the executors of the Martial Law, the 'enfranchised' managers of state enterprises, appointed through party clearance procedure (*nomenclatura*), and the state administration apparatus. Also, the relation between the central Citizens Committee and OKP on the one hand, and the local citizens committees on the other, was in need of institutionalization.

At the same time, it was not at all certain what was the relation of the Solidarity Citizens Committee to the Solidarity trade union. Partially, it was a consequence of the eight years of illegality, during which the activists of the 'old' union were engaged mostly in political resistance to the military dictatorship, loosing contact with its social base on shop-floor level. When the wave of strikes began in spring of 1988, the did not even knew who led them. On the other hand, the much younger generation of workers that in 1988 organized strikes called upon Solidarity in order to defend their economic condition. For the old activists structural economic reforms were inevitable. The young workers, on the other hand, protested against them, although it was not clear whether that protest was rather anti-capitalist or anti-Communist in character. The later inclined to hope that the factories would lend consent to the reforms if they were headed by the old Solidarity elite, however, that also became problematic because of the presence of the members of the former ruling group in Mazowiecki's government. Another set of problems emerged after the elections. Apparently, the emergence of the committees each one with its own press organ, promised a more or lest transparent division of labour between the 'political' and the 'unionist' functions. However, it was also true that the committees developed at the expanse of the union, intercepting some activists. For the local leaders it provided further trouble in the light of the fact that the union never recuperated its massive 10 million strong base after re-legalization. That was the rationale behind trade union's decision to reserve the 'Soldarity' logo exclusively to the union structures. With or without the name, however, the network remained and so did the problem.

The institutionalization of this division of labour was never pursued for other reasons as well. On the one hand, none of the representatives of the trade union made it to the government and Mazowiecki decided not to consult the union in the preparation of the blueprint for the economic reform. On the other hand, Lech Wałęsa, who 'retreated' to his chairman office in Gdańsk, had more

ambitious plans than simply taking care of the labour movement, given that his personal authority lent credibility to Solidarity camp as a whole. Actually, in the absence of any formal procedures regulating the social infrastructure as a whole, both his position of the union's chairman and his symbolic prestige made him the key figure.

Keeping all this fragile framework together was less and less viable as time went on, the collapse of Communism in Central Europe became more of a reality and the counteroffensive of once ruling apparatus less of a treat an as the conflict of interest between the government, introducing Balcerowicz's 'shock therapy' and the representatives of labor, became apparent. Soon the question was not so much how to maintain the unity, but how to define the principle of division. The power to define political divisions is the power to define the dominant principle of domination.

Post-totalitarian Divide

The *hauntology* served as a symbolic legitimization for the political strategy of the supporters of maintaining the unity of Solidarity camp within the framework of the Citizens' Committee. Adam Michnik[146] advocated creating a dual structure comprising an 'union' wing and a 'political' wing. Such a solution, argued the editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza, would be faithful to the spirit of 'Solidarity', which originally worked as both labour organization and a civic movement. At the same time, keeping faith to the 'letter', that is, eliminating the committees and leaving the trade union (headed by Wałęsa) as the only source of *political* support for Mazowiecki's government would grant it excessive weight on the government's decisions. 'A trade union which would decide everything cannot be a trade union'. At the same time a 'Solidarity' civic movement should remain a unified political subject and not a loose federation of political parties. Michnik sees in the calls for political pluralism a 'chaos of words and concepts' which is unavoidable but potentially threatening to the emergent democratic order. At the same time he claims that, in general, the concepts such as 'left', 'right', 'social democracy', 'Christian democracy' belongs to an outdated vocabulary of the Second Republic, whereas the phenomenon of 'Solidarity'

[146] Adam Michnik, 'Związek zawodowy już nie wystarczy', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 6.10.1989.

> is a specifically Polish synthesis of formerly competing orientations…a movement growing organically out of the Polish soil and Polish struggle against the totalitarian system. The set of Solidarity's principles comprises the Christian ethics and a declared proximity to the values of the Catholic Church; the national tradition of struggle for freedom, independence and tolerance; the persistent struggle for social justice and the emancipation of labour, for truth in the world of political conflicts and rationality in the world of economic decisions[147].

While the conventional political taxonomies do not apply to describe Solidarity, its anti-Communist identity does not provide a good sense of orientation within the new realities.

> I presume that it is impossible to reconstruct the universe of the political divisions valid only a year ago. We entered a period in which new divisions typical for the post-totalitarian evolution shall be shaped. The democratic idea will clash with the nostalgia for autoritatianism; the European idea with the parochial nationalism, the open society with the closed society. This is why I maintain that a movement like Solidarity is needed in Poland[148].

In Michnik's proposition there is a strict correspondence between the political distinctions and the production of temporal difference within the discourse of *hauntology*. The daemons of the past – preference for authoritarian rule, 'unfrozen' nationalism, the 'closed society' (another word for totalitarianism) – should be combated by political means. At closer scrutiny, however, the means are seem to be not entirely coherent with the aims. 'Open society' in a Popperian sense of the word[149], defines a sort of minimal consensus as for the *form* of democratic community, leaving the *content* to the play of different perspectives. It differs from the 'closed' form in that questions such as modernization (Michnik's 'european idea') are not given an *a priori* meaning and are left open to contestation. In this sense it presupposes *internal* political divisions and antagonistic political identities representing different visions of the social order. It also implies that democracy does not allow 'view from nowhere', a standpoint above and superior to others. In Michnik's article, on the other hand, the Popperian idea is applied as an internal division within the field of power. The conventional vocabulary of political identities is dismissed as belonging to the past, that is symptomatically, together with the spectres. Instead, Michnik imagines Solidarity as a social movement representing a 'synthesis of formerly competing orientations', which would imply that the vision of modernization and social order it supports is not one possible version among many, but

[147] 'Związek zawodowy już nie wystarczy'.
[148] Ibidem.
[149] K. R. Popper, *The open society and its enemies*, (London: Routledge, 1966).

precisely a synthesis, an outcome of a better – superior – vision, able to grasp the total picture and reconcile the partial, partisan and parochial standpoints. In this sense, Michnik's position is contradictory. A political subject that presents itself as defending the idea of the open society cannot, at the same time, claim for itself the gift of utopian, that is 'non-localized', standpoint. The contradiction is resolved through the appeal to the spectres. The civic movement speaks from a particular position, but at the same time, the threatening alternative makes it the only available position, and hence – universal. The *hauntology* creates the discursive underpinning for the 'post-totalitarian divide' in which the political choice does *not* comprehend a plurality of equally legitimate subject-positions within the margins of a democratic consensus, but furnishes a fundamental dilemma between democracy and authoritarianism, open as opposed to closed society, Europeanized future as against 'tribalist' past. Collapsing the external boundary with the internal division creates an asymmetrical framework, in which one of the players has all the knowledge about rules of the democratic game, and hence, all the power.

The post-totalitarian divide found much salience amongst the defenders of the transitional status quo. It was a common place to argue that the left-right divide amounted to an 'echo of the old ideological storms' and did not serve well to classify the political phenomena, which should be assessed along the lines of totalitarianism as against liberalism, or authoritarianism as against democracy[150]. The commentators often invoked the intellectual authority of Leszek Kołakowski, who demonstrated that being a 'liberal-conservative socialist' was actually a legitimate political position, as opposed to the traditional rightist and leftist political identifications[151]. Kołakowski's 'paradox' showed the way towards the European future, in which the apparently pluralist political arrangement has been in practice abandoned in favor of 'politics of the centre', whereas emphasis on strong political identities was the domain of outdated radicalism. At the same time, the post-totalitarian communities on their road to the West, were said not to be in a position to afford arriving at the consensus via the (historically European) route of negotiating political identities, but instead should take a short-cut and imitate what would be their destiny anyway. There were even those for

[150] Ernest Skalski, 'Bieda Partie', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 07.04.1990.
[151] Wojciech Giełżyński, 'Nie mogę tego przemilczeć', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 13.07.1989.

whom a model to emulate could be found amongst democracies such as India, Japan or Mexico, governed by broad social movements with a modernizatory edge[152].

This version of the post-totalitarian divide was instrumental with Kołakowski much in the same vain the Popperian idea was disfigured. While Kołakowski's argument served to define a minimal democratic consensus – showing that all the rival political identities combine lucidity and blindness, and hence cannot aspire to 'total truth' about how social order should be organized – but in principle did not exclude political antagonism, it was appropriated as a particular, yet universal standpoint. Since the subject position of the 'liberal-conservative socialist' was already taken, the antagonist position could be either a 'Marxist-Communist' or 'chauvinist-rightist'. At the same time the post-totalitarian taxonomy was reinforced with the transitional *hauntology*: the divide was what came *after* mass political parties and – since both socialist and nationalist ideologies concluded in, respectively, Communism and Nazism – represented its negation; to restore political parties was to restore irreconcilable ideological clashes. A tacit assumption was that since Mazowiecki's government realizes an universally acceptable version of modernization, any political difference with respect to its policy would be necessarily artificial and overblown, which would in turn indicate the 'fundamentalist' intentions of the rival political subjects[153]. Some reminded that the political process already reminds Poland in 1918, when the proliferation of political parties led to political destabilization and ended with the military coup d'état in 1926[154].

In the discourse of the 'powerless in power' there was something more than a simple expression of knowledge-political interests. I would rather point to the contradiction between the dissident identity of the post-KOR group, predicated upon a specific set of positive and negative historical experiences of political resistance (as exemplified by Michnik's memory-work), and the place of power in which the identity now needed to be performed. The antipolitical edge of this identity corresponded to a double rejection of the will to intellectual power – that implicit in the role of the 'advisor to the Communist prince' (taken by the pre-1968 revisionists) and the one inscribed in the figure of the conspirator, in which the existential marginalization is coupled with self-image of

[152] Maciej Kozłowski, 'Rzeczpospolita bezpartyjna?', *Tygodnik Powszechny* 18.03.1990.
[153] Ibidem.
[154] Stefan Bratkowski, 'Propozycja: model amerykański', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 05.01.1990.

the spokesperson of the universal, long-term interests of the whole community. It was also founded on the difference between oppositional activism and the 'psychology of captivity' – resentment of the Intelligentsia toward the dissidence on the one hand, outbursts of 'blind' proletarian hatred against the oppressor. The three treads came together in the idea 'new evolutionism', combining the empowerment of the autonomy (*upodmiotowienie*) of the society as against the State and in the political strategy of 'pressure from without'. Now, the constitution of the Mazowiecki government turned this entire world upside down. First of all, the rationale behind the constitution of the non-Communist government with participation of the executors of the Martial Law was the threat of 'reaction' of the party base and the coercion apparatus. For sure, this was not the situation of 'pressure-from-within' – it was the opposition who was now sovereign – but it was not anymore the case of 'pressure-from-without' either. The second problem was that the road to power of the Citizens Committee was that of negotiation between the dissident and Communist elites, rather than between the State and a broad social movement based on the principles of participatory democracy. The dissident elites commanded the symbolic capital of Solidarity, but were detached from any kind of social base. The parliamentary group of Solidarity was elected in the first free elections since the end of the war, but the candidates were chosen by Lech Wałęsa's advisory body, the regional committees serving mainly as an electoral apparatus. The demand for 'social control over the process of economic reform' now gave way to the demand for 'social support for the transition to market economy', a sort of consent founded on trust in the infallibility of 'Wałęsa's team' rather than democratic participation in the decision-making. Frankly, given the revolutionary pace of the changes, it wouldn't be wise to argue that there was some another way (had the dissidents stayed 'at home' awaiting the collapse of the system, maybe the Communist leaders would have replaced Mieczysław Rakowski's reformers with a talented neo-liberal economist, who would have managed to restore capitalism with the help of the State alone – as it happened in China or Chile). In any case, however, finding themselves in the place of power, the dissidents had transgressed the taboos on which their collective identity was founded. And their reaction to this contradictory position was that of self-effacement. The discourse of the antipolitics in command had thus two faces. One of them was a technocratic, non-negotiable style of introducing mayor political changes. It steamed not

so much from a kind of 'avant-gardist' usurpation, but from denial of the political character of the decisions. The other was the transitional *hauntology*. The decision-takers in the government, the OKP and *Gazeta Wyborcza* were presenting themselves as not so much occupying the place of power, as defending it from others – the populist tendencies, the nationalists and the 'captive' society.

The problem with *hauntology* can be formulated as follows: Michnik's variant of antipolitics, 'new evolutionism' was predicated upon the idea that a broad, participatory model of the dissident counterculture not only creates condition for overcoming the barrier of fear of the non-dissidents, but also counteracts the development of a mindset specific for the disciplined revolutionary movements, burdened with contempt for the non-revolutionaries, a mindset that is incompatible with democratic order. What was not predictable back in the 1970s, was that 'the powerless' might one day find themselves in the place of power, and not in the character of experts of a broad self-governing social movement, but rather in the character of the dissident elites arriving at an agreement with their Communist counterparts. And if the avant-gardist model of dissent had its 'antinomy of transition', the antipolitics had its own. Denying the political character of the process of social change it enacted, it needed to resort to *hauntology* in order to legitimize its contradictory position of 'powerless in power'. The problem was that the performative act which conjures the spectre away, also conjures it up. The response to the post-totalitarian divide can be only a populist response.

The mechanism is well described by the political scientist Chantal Mouffe, who contributed to showing that modern populism is an *internal* problem (as opposed to external negation) of liberal democracy, a product generated by the 'post-political *Zeitgeist*' which came to form a sort of 'common sense' in the majority of Western societies after 1989, heralded by such slogans as the 'triumph of the Free World', 'the end of History', 'farewell to ideology' or politics 'beyond left and right'. According to Mouffe, the liberal thinkers and theoreticians of the 'second modernity', who redefined politics as either a sphere of play of individual preferences or a space of universal consensus to be arrived at by means of rational dialogue, drew wrong conclusions from the final demise of socialism's aspirations to political hegemony. Relegating the notion of politics as

collective articulation of democratic demands and conflict as its *modus operandi*, is not only a theoretical misunderstanding, but it has grave practical consequences as well. For Mouffe, the political is the dimension of antagonism, which she takes to be an existential given of all social life. First, the possibility of antagonism cannot be overcome, because the social order – the way a community is organized – is necessarily constituted by exclusion of alternative possibilities, exclusion which ultimately cannot be rationally grounded and belongs to the realm of contingent decision. Secondly, antagonism is inscribed in the differential logic of political identities, which imply a relation between 'us' and 'them'. That an identity needs a 'constitutive exterior' does *not* entail reifying the political difference in any particular way, for instance according to seemingly 'natural' categories such as class, religion or ethnicity. It is because different social antagonisms are not reducible to one another, that the space of the political is opened to political taxonomies competing for hegemony. Importantly, the discursive articulation of political difference can be organized in a variety of ways, and Carl Schmitt's way – the friend/enemy grouping – is a possible, albeit not necessary one. In contrast to Schmitt, Mouffe argues that the political is not incompatible with political pluralism. On the contrary, liberal democracy, in her view, is the only political form of society that makes coexistence of conflictual political identities possible. She refers to the we/they relation specific for liberal democracy as 'agonism'.

> While antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are 'adversaries' not enemies. This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. We could say that the task of democracy is to transform antagonism into agonism[155].

Precisely this task of liberal democracy is what the postpolitical vision obliterates. The moment in which it became common-sensical to believe that there is no alternative to liberal arrangements in politics and economy, that the ideological debates had died out and that the consensus is the final horizon of politics, was greeted at the same time as the 'end of history' and a beginning of a second, 'reflexive' modernity. In reality, where the difference between left and right was obliterated and the

[155] Mouffe, *On the Political*, p. 20.

triumph of the politics of the centre announced, political communities plunged into a crisis of legitimization, signaled by mass disenchantment with politics on the one hand, and the rise of populism on the other. According to Mouffe, the *charm* of the anti-establishment politics and xenophobic collective identifications is due to the fact that the post-political public sphere ceased to be organized around strong alternative political projects. The democratic consensus reduces the possibility of playing out the political difference within the legitimate parameters, but the outcome is not so much the dissolution of conflict, as its displacement.

> Contrary to what post-political theorists want us to believe, what we are currently witnessing is not the disappearance of the political in its adversarial dimension but something different. What is happening is that nowadays the political is played out in the moral register. I other words, it still consists in a we/they discrimination, but the we/they, instead of being defined with political categories, is now established in moral terms. In place of a struggle between 'right and left' we are faced with a struggle between 'right and wrong'[156].

On the one hand, the post-political public sphere, contrary to its self-image of a space of dialogue 'without frontiers', accessible to every rational person, is in fact predicated upon a political division, albeit the division is defined in non-political terms of rationality/irrationality. It is a discursive articulation of the we/they relation in which 'they' are not treated as adversaries – legitimate rivals – but as enemies of reason, dialogue, as an instance of the 'return of the archaic', and so forth. On the other hand, populism constitutes a response in which the we/they relation is constructed in opposition to the established order as a whole and appeals to the antidemocratic forms of contestation. What populism and post-politics have in common is political differences are played out in terms of moral exclusion which shatters the common symbolic space to much greater extent that the adversarial arrangement.

Chantal Mouffe writes mainly about the populist tide of the late 1990 in Western Europe. However, she tracks back the origins of the post-political *Zeithgeist* to the 'ideological bankruptcy' of the socialist project heralded from 1980. The fact that during the Transition the proponents of the 'post-totalitarian' divide interpreted the rise of Jan Marie Le Pen's National Front in France as the confirmation of the hauntological prognoses, demonstrates that post-politics and anti-politics share some things in common, although they should not be collapsed as identical phenomena. Before 1989

[156] *On the Political*, p. 5.

anti-politics was not incompatible with strong political identifications. Even the most cursory review of the samizdat publications proliferating in Poland after 1968 would demonstrate that much of the space was occupied by political debates. Both in theory and in practice the strategy of empowerment of social autonomy (*upodmiotowienie*) aimed at winning a shared symbolic space free from preponderance of state-certified ideology, but this common effort never entailed dispensing with serious political differences amongst different dissident groups, expressed in the affiliated journals through variegated oppositional life-styles. While the KOR group and its political practice – engaging both public figures and workers, campaigning for human rights in the West – was the most successful, there were others. Naturally, symbolic gestures – exemplified by Michnik's *The Church and the Left* and Bogdan Cywinski's *Rodowody Niepokornych* (*Genealogies of the Insubordinate)* – to bring 'laic left' and 'Catholic right' closer together were necessary to generate a sense of moral community, but this non-ideological virtue of downplaying the political difference was certainly born out of necessity. The ethos of Solidarity was not so much a 'synthesis of formerly rival orientations', as a common articulation of the will to autonomy against the 'constitutive exterior' of the totalitarian State. If at all, the political synthesis was achieved not on the *ideological* level of political projects, but on the *practical* level of dissident activism. For instance, the idea of establishing a network of independent civic institutions borrowed both from National Democrats (public demonstrations, self-educational circles) and the anarchist Edward Abramowski (cooperativism). In any case the ethos of Solidarity was 'capacious' enough to serve as a shared symbolic space without excluding at the same time adversarial politics.

It happened, however, otherwise. One of the reasons was undoubtedly the parallel rise of the Thatcherite TINA ('there is no alternative'). Riding on the high wave of the 'return to Europe' it was somewhat self-evident to translate anti-political ethos of activism-without-ideology into the post-political ideology of consensus. Like Western post-politics, the 'Europeanized' version of anti-politics had to develop a 'constitutive exterior' to safeguard its identity. Unlike in the West, in Poland the virtues of consensus were set against the background of 'totalitarian mentality' and 'daemons of nationalism' inscribed in the dissident memory. In this way, political conflict was played out on the grounds of 'normalizing a difficult past' and political adversaries cast as spectres.

Still, the eagerness to imitate the best Western standards do not explain everything. There was another reason which shows the interpretative limits of Chantal Mouffe's theory applied to the Polish case. In Mouffe's argument the political categories of 'right and left' – proper to the adversarial model – are counterpoised to the moral register of 'right and wrong' proper to post-politics. During the transition, in response to the post-totalitarian divide, the dominated fraction of the dissident elites defined themselves as rightist struggling against the hegemony of the Left. Nonetheless, the intention behind the appeal to the traditional political taxonomy was all the contrary to what Mouffe would expect. For in 1989, 'right and left' became another way of saying 'right or wrong'. It was a sly populism. It was sly, because it appeared as bringing back the political. It was populist, because the left/right divide was played out on moral grounds.

Sly Populism

Populism (in the sense used by Mouffe and others[157]) is a political discourse founded upon a dichotomy between a (differently understood) moral community and false elites, usurpers and threatening others that steal away the people's inalienable attributes (identity, sovereignty, rights), articulated not in a traditional political vocabulary, but with reference to oppositions such as the healthy against the corrupted, the national against the cosmopolitan, the hard working against the idle. It is a language of moral exclusion. The left-right divide, on the other hand, usually serves to describe equally legitimate adversaries, and hence, transforms 'antagonism into agonism'. This, however, works as long as both parties recognize themselves as such, as long as they identify themselves with the alternative political projects. If one of the parties defines itself as not as party but as spokesman of the universal, the other party might 'translate' the left/right divide into an opposition between those who openly admit their political identity and are eager to test it in a democratic game, and those who – for some obscure reasons – deny their identity, and hence are not 'true democrats'. The more 'they' deny that they speak from a particular position, and the more

[157] e.g. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

loudly 'we' admit it, the easier is to show that 'they' hide something from the rest of 'us' and hence are not genuinely democratic. One of the authors found it quite amusing to note that

> the right blooms joyfully and vociferously and the left is practically absent because there are few volunteers for a political suicide. You would think that it cuts both ways and that the right can not exist without the left because it would not make much sense... [But] it is not as absurd as you might think – since the right exists, it is implausible without there being a left, thus, if one does not notice any, it is because it cunningly denies its 'leftism' while plotting leftist-style…Ahead we have the parliamentary and perhaps presidential elections... The right might win them under condition that it would compete with the left alone. In this situation the left all the more can not claim its 'leftism', because if it did, that would actually support the right, and a left that that supports the right…- pardon me, but I really did not invent this[158].

For the self-proclaimed rightist fraction of the dissident elites, who found themselves on the dominated position within the Solidarity camp, to cling to the left-right divide was a perfect solution. On the one hand, they could present themselves as traditional democratic politicians and thus evade occupying the 'dark' side of the post-totalitarian divide, cast as populists bringing the 'daemons of the past' back to live if not incarnating it. On the other hand, they could play the laud accords of their sly populism by opposing their strong political identity allegedly more attune with the traditions and values of the nation as a whole, to the usurpers in power, who pretended to be something different than they really were.

The day Communism collapsed and the 'end of history' appeared on the horizon, to be on the Left was not the best place to be. However, as David Ost recorded, the shift of the intellectual climate to the Right started already in the 1980[159]. Solidarity came under fire as a 'Leftist' movement, for a variety of reasons, not always mutually consistent. The historian of ideas Andrzej Walicki[160], at the time a persistent admirer of Friedrich Hayek, wrote that Solidarity as a mass movement put into practice a form of 'democratic totalitarianism'[161], by which he meant that it was egalitarian-revindicative as opposed to liberal-individualist, and that it struggled for the share of political command over economy instead of marketization. Piotr Wierzbicki , in contrast, while

[158] Jan Walc, 'W poszukiwaniu zaginionej lewicy', *Wokanda* 17.06.1991.
[159] David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 165-169.
[160] Andrzej Walicki, 'Myśli o sytuacji politycznej i moralno-psychologicznej w Polsce', *Aneks* (35) 1984.
[161] Probably as opposed to 'authoritarian totalitarianism' of the Communist government. That is not altogether consistent with Walicki's ideas from 1990s, when he defended the thesis that Poland ceased to be totalitarian in after the Thaw. See Andrzej Walicki, 'Totalitarianism and Detotalitarization: The Case of Poland' *The Review of Politics* 3 (58) 1996, pp. 505-529.

sharing economic liberalism of Walicki, attacked Solidarity for being too democratic, that is, excessively concerned with popular participation and distrustful of conservative virtues of strong, personal authority. In general, Wierzbicki attributed all the defeats of the postwar opposition to the ideological hegemony of the left. As in other Central European countries, the notion of 'civil society' was redefined as 'bourgeois society', the citizenship recast with reference to market economy rather than independent public sphere, and economic reform took precedence over political reform on the intellectual agenda. "In 1976 – Ost explained – it was the left that was proud of its traditions and the right that was embarrassed by its own label; ten years later, the situation was exactly the reverse"[162]. Regardless whether this critique was founded or not, everything seems to suggest that by 1989 the premises on which it was founded were entirely internalized by the architects of Solidarity's success of 1980. If it is true that the 'revolution of 1989' was made under the banner of Solidarity, the victory was the same time the 'defeat of Solidarity' as economically inclusive and participatory democratic project[163]. Not only the ideas of 'self-governing republic' ratified by Solidarity's first congress in 1981 were dropped during the Round Table discussions, but even those concessions to the workers that were promised in the Accords, were subsequently judged incompatible with the 'shock therapy' of Balcerowicz and withdrawn without any consultation with the trade union[164]. Mazowiecki's government was busy building 'capitalism without capitalists' and saw in workers the future incumbents of this non existing class, rather than 'actually existing' citizens with legitimate existential needs, which it tended to criticize rather than recognize. In this sense the political agenda realized by Mazowiecki and supported by OKP and Gazeta Wyborcza cannot be denominated as 'leftist' in any reasonable sense of the word, even though *hauntology* appealed to politically liberal sensibilities. The dominating fraction of the dissidents had every reason *not* to consider themselves as the Left.

Nevertheless, the ideas professed by the post-KOR group in 1989 were not what the 'rightist' intellectuals were after. On the contrary, according to the right, the Left was what it was

[162] *Solidarity…*, p.169.
[163] David Ost, *Klęska Solidarności* (Warszawa: Muza S.A., 2007) [en. *The Defeat of Solidarity*: *Anger and politics in Post-Communist Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005)].
[164] Tadeusz Kowalik, 'A Reply to Maurice Glasman'New Left Review 1 (206) 1994, pp. 133-144.

despite what it claimed to be. Indeed, the denial only served to prove the point that the professed ideas were a screening shield to deceit the confused public. For, according to the right, the spokespersons of the universally valid ethos of Solidarity had a secret to hide. That secret was their 'Leftist' past. From the 'right' perspective the residues of the 'wrong' past were stronger that the present convictions. The rightist politics of memory took the form of the discourse on the residues.

The emergence of the rival political taxonomy, with the discourse on the residues in its core, was noted by two journalists of *Polityka* weekly, the press organ of the liberal wing of the party before 1989, who – describing the internal struggles within the Solidarity camp – observed that

> in Poland there is a left who identifies itself as such, and there is the other left, who was dubbed this way. The first comprises the socialist PZPR and post-PZPR groups. The second comprises those from Solidarity accused of a burdensome party record and of the inclination toward compromise with the ex-party reformers. These are the ones that plot something with Jaruzelski and Kiszczak, and even if not, they are said to have been stung with the lefist ideology deep enough and forever. The noble leftists such as Jan Józef Lipski[165] are left to themselves, while the polititians of the same genealogy and worldview cast around the others a web of vicious, toxic connections, stronger than every difference. It is not taken into account that the Round Table politics and other solutions do not bear any leftist traits, but rather the contrary[166].

But it was neither the convictions, nor the effective political agenda that mattered. What mattered was the genealogy. For the right, it was not the society who was 'sovietized'. It was the elites. The Polish political scene, alarmed one of the authors, is dominated by two generations. First, there were the 'red', the former militants of the party youth organization ZMP, who debuted during the Polish Thaw as defenders of 'socialism with a human face' and latter became the part of the 'liberal fraction' of the late PZPR, sympathetic to the younger 'pinkish' generation, that is, the post-1968 dissident Intelligentsia who constituted the 'cadres' of the 'Round Table opposition'. What is the relation between the 'red' and the 'pink'?

> Both generations raised under real Socialism willy-nilly absorbed the communist spectre, the dialectial thinking and demagogic slogans about the welfare state. In this sense they are somewhat demoralized and demobilized in terms of dynamic and offensive action which the present hour demands.

The shared residue of ideological corruption is stronger than all the apparent differences. Although under Communism the 'pink' were oppressed by the 'red' this was not because of any fundamental ideological choices. It was an instance of intergenerational struggle for power, which is another way

[165] Andrzej Krzemiński, Wiesław Władyka, 'Pod tą pokrywką kipi', *Polityka* 10.03.1990.
[166] Jan Maria Jackowski, 'Nieobecni', *Ład* 14.01.1990.

to say 'inter-fractional struggle' between older and younger representatives of the same color, in the course of which the younger fraction incidentally found itself outside the apparatus. Despite all the differences both groups share a 'a fuzzy, but notable leftist deviation, almost genetic belief in the permanence of the geopolitical framework…, mental schemas full of clichés and dogmatism in thinking and reasoning'. Also the 'red' and the 'pink' needed each other. The 'red' had more experience and practice in government and perfectly commanded the tactic of staying afloat 'despite any political conjuncture, social costs and consequences', but it is less intelligent, tolerant and educated and more discredited than the 'pinkish'. The shared residual past, according to the author, sheds new light on the Round Table Accords. Just as the dominant fraction of the opposition was only apparently non-Communist, so the Accords were only apparently an outcome of negotiations. In reality, it was a 'pact' was secretly sealed behind the scenes, in the government villa in Magdalenka where the advisors to the both parties met. The 'red' agreed to pass the power into the hands of the 'pinkish' in exchange for impunity and command over economy. The 'shock therapy' of Balcerowicz is also not what it seems to be. Since ideological genealogy determines everything, the radicalism of the economic reform should not be measured by the impact it has on the living conditions of the society, but by the 'color' of the technocrats that introduce it. A 'full marketization' amounts to full elimination of the *nomenclatura*. 'Market reform' and '*nomenclatura'* are as incompatible as 'capitalism' and 'communism' itself. Mixing the two leaves the public confused, but this is what the 'red' and the 'pinkish' want – the confused public is easier to govern.

Leszek Moczulski, the leader of the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), an oppositional political party founded in the late 1970., argued that the alleged 'leftism' of the Solidarity elite is responsible for retardation of the national uprising against the Soviet occupier. This was the same strategy, Moczulski comments, the Communists used throughout their rule. For Moczulski history of Poland is the history of changing balance of forces between the resistance of the oppressed national community and the regime imposing itself through coercion and deceit, a positional war between two hostile and different in nature entities. The Martial Law was the last attempt to 'break the psychic and physical strength of the nation', but it failed to tame the irredentist

pressure. In the light of its failure the occupier could only imply the strategy of retarding the inevitable drive for independence, which appeared in 1988 in disguise of the protest against *economic* reform. The Communist chosen as their instrument the Solidarity assured of its weakness and dominated by the left. The left would not be the left if it was going against the economic demands of the workers. But since those were not strikes to quell, but a national uprising to suppress, it was in the left's nature to behave as it did, regardless the expressed motivation of its leaders. At the time, only PZPR knew Solidarity's intentions. Irredentist pressure of the nation increased, but the nation was not aware of the manipulation. At the Round Table, the Communists gave away more than they wanted, but the concessions served to remove the danger of social explosion. After the Round Table, however the concessions ended, because Solidarity, choosing general Jaruzelski for president, revealed that it succeed the PZPR in the role of the manipulative force. Indeed, in Moczulski's narrative, Solidarity has to faces: one is the emanation of the national irredentism; the other is the 'letist' face materialized in the Citizens' Committees. The 'right' Solidarity is stronger then the occupier – it has the power to vote its own president, oust the Communist from the government, introduce political pluralism and reform the economy in the nation's interest. And it would have achieved all those things if it was not for the wrong, that is the leftist Solidarity, a puppet in the hands of the enemy of the nation.

> The collapse of the political structures of the Communist system gave Solidarity an unique opportunity to introduce its own program of 'self-governing republic'. Unfortunately, the leftist leadership of the union and its political extensions…abstained. Abstaining the realization of the formerly declared program, Solidarity went on to retard the pace of change. Intercepting the bureaucratic structures and mechanisms of power, it quickly became assimilated and the trade union as such began to be used to quell the national pressure and the social demands [167].

Within this narrative framework, Solidarity is both the 'right' agent that exerts the 'pressure' on the enemy and the wrong (leftist) agent that represses it - 'self-limiting revolution' becomes a somewhat schizophrenic internal expression of what is going on outside - the latest chapter of the saga of Polish national uprisings. The intentions of leftist leadership of Solidarity to 'tame the national pressure' (Solidarity was exerting) were consistent with the intentions of the PZPR, even in what both sides failed to foresee. The leadership – which apparently underestimated its 'good' side – was

[167] Leszek Moczulski, 'PZPR odeszła, nomenklatura została', *Opinia* 11.03.1990.

surprised with how far the concessions went, just like the Communists. Secondly, just like the old manipulators, the new manipulators did not want the changes to go too far, because their intention was a reform of the system, not its destruction. 'Thirdly, the tendency towards taming the natioanl pressure was motivated by the undeniable needs of the government itself... The former governments constantly used to deplore the alledged anarchical inclinations of the Poles. The reason for taming the pressure in this case is simply functional'.

The leftist leadership of Solidarity accepted – although for Moczulski it is clear that it did not have to – a situation of dual government. Alongside the prime minister's government, there is a president Jaruzelski's 'government' – all the former PZPR officials – who 'control' the key agendas of the state. That this Moscow-approved Communist co-government 'plunged into passivity' is only an appearance. In reality, Mazowiecki's government does the job of 'taming national pressure' for it. It defends PZPR's property, its media, its financial accounts and its '*nomenclatura'* enterprises. The fact that only the 'leftist' Solidarity and the PZPR have the practical means to do politics attests to the fact that Poland remains under Soviet occupation. Finally, it is no use to explain that the Communist party was dissolved three months ago. In the end, the party, like the 'leftist' Solidarity, was also an instrument of the real occupier.

> The truth is that PZPR has never been an athentic political force, but just a mere instrument. Forty five years ago Stalin established in Poland its own intelligence service, endowing it with all the power. During years it developed and transformed, but never lost its specific character[168].

If the doer behind the deed constantly 'evolves and transforms itself', it can be practically anybody. It can take the body of the 'leftist' Solidarity, for instance. In can be its residue.

The discourse on the residual 'leftism' of the post-KOR dissidents was the backdrop against which the rightist intellectuals wanted to position themselves as defenders of democracy. The Christian-democratic weekly *Ład* (Order) denounced Michnik's proposal to transform Solidarity into a civic movement as the continuation of the 'old' practices. 'What Michnik proposes – wrote one of the authors – …is de facto a new mono-party. Pan-national civic movements created for the support

[168] 'PZPR odeszła…'.

of the authorities has been always established by the enemies of democracy'. In a similar vain, Stefan Niesiołowski, a 'rightist' veteran dissident, alarmed that Poland faces a dramatic choice.

> Either Poland remains a post-Communist hybrid, a country ruled by a mono-party, within which [everything] is decided by a group of a laic left and the allied Catholic left[169], being a kind of a new PAX[170]…or Poland becomes a normal democratic country.[171]

Everywhere else in Central Europe, Niesiołowski reported, the parliamentary democracy was being reconstructed and the rightist parties 'of Christian decadence' triumphed in the elections. Everywhere but in Poland. Poland, the most anti-Communist of them all (workers 'uprisings' included) and the most Catholic of them all (the 90 % of believers, the pope, vocations for the ministry) fails to follow in the footsteps of this historical trend. Hence, democracy is menaced. This is why 'the political struggle in Poland…boils down by and large to the struggle against the left, the struggle between the democratic forces and the advocates of a command-democracy of the same sort as the socialist democracy'. The stake of the struggle is to undermine the privileged position achieved by the left 'thanks to the support of the Communists', which the left was striving to consolidate. Otherwise, Niesiołowski warns, what awaits Poland is a 'mexicanisation', that is, a de facto dictatorship, albeit possible 'without terror and in principle without electoral forgery'. The left pretends to be something different than it really is, because it is in the nature of the left to spread confusion. The left appeals for 'tolerance' but in reality wants to show that the right is intolerant. Vilifying the right is how one gets to disclose a 'leftist'. Vilifying the right and the nation, which must be a one and the same thing since the left uses against both the same cunning instrument of 'denunciation of anti-Semitism and xenophobia'. Since it is the leftist *intellectuals* that employ this cunning language, the *right* intellectuals become the spokespersons of the ordinary people. Finally, Niesiołowski decodes the appeals to unity within the Solidarity camp as a typical communist discourse. It was the Communists, in his opinion that always stood against the political divisions and indeed, the history of Communism is the history of the 'struggle against deviations, a struggle for unity'. Besides

[169] Niesiołowski refers to the liberal-Catholic circle of Tadeusz Mazowiecki assotiated with the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and the monthly *Znak*.
[170] Satellite Catholic organization of PZPR, organized by Bolesław Piasecki, who under Second Republic was the leader of the fascist ONR.
[171] Stefan Niesiołowski, 'Reguły Gry', *Ład* 10.06.1990.

> The attempt at substituting the clear and universally agreed upon concept of Christian ethics – under a pretence that it would not be acceptable for every Pole – with the concept of 'ehtics of Solidarity', constitutes a menace to the traditions of European political culture[172].

The difference, according to Niesiołowski, is on the level of the acceptable authority. While the authority of the 'Christian ethics' is guarded by the (Catholic) church, its hierarchy and the Pope, the guardians of the 'Solidarity ethics' would be *Gazeta Wyborcza* or an 'allied' intellectual elite. Needless to say, the 'legions' of Adam Michnik were less numerous than those of the Pope.

[172] 'Reguły gry'.

Conclusions

Solidarity felt in to pieces like a house of cards. It happened before the puzzle comprised of a plethora of institutions – the Citizens' Committee, the local committees, the trade union, the media, the parliamentary representation, and the government, – could be arranged in a way satisfying for different groups of the victorious dissident counterculture. The right wing intellectuals – inside and outside Solidarity camp – did not have much influence on any of those decision centers. They had, however, a mighty ally. That ally was Lech Wałęsa. Within the framework of the institutions appearing under the banner of Solidarity, it chairman held a very particular position. On the one hand, Wałęsa renounced running for office or holding any government post. On the other hand, his position was a strategic one, because of the lack of precise democratic procedures regulating the relations between the different bodies comprising Solidarity's power structure. The Citizens Committee coordinated the electoral campaign organized by the regional committees and elected the parliamentary representatives from the regional lists. However, the Citizens Committee itself was an advisory body to Solidarity's chairman, whose members were chosen by way of cooptation and mutual agreement between the chairman and its advisors. Nominally, it was established by Solidarity's National Executive Commission (KKW) and it drew support from the symbolic authority of the 1983 Noble Prize winner. Before the 1989 elections and the establishment of the Solidarity government, the mutual agreement was taken for granted and no steps were made to give a more procedural form to the relations within the institutional network as a whole. After all, it was meant to be an oppositional structure with shared interests *vis-à-vis* the Communists and not a power structure deciding on the faith of the country. At the same time, the political process that led to the establishment of Mazowiecki's government revealed that consensus had its limits even when applied to the inner relations. It was Wałęsa who in August 1989 tipped the balance of forces in the parliament towards establishment of Solidarity government, forging an alliance with the former 'pro-regime' Democratic Party and United Peasant Party against general Kiszczak. That significant move was taken thanks to his *personal* advisers, the twin brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński, and

without consultation with the Citizens' Committee, where the similar proposal of Adam Michnik ('Your president, our prime minister') was judged irresponsible (by the future prime minister Mazowiecki, amongst others)[173].

The establishment of the first non-Communist government changed everything. It was a victory for the Solidarity camp as a whole, but at the same time it was a victory of a power structure whose inner relations were dangerously unstable. As David Ost commented in 1990,

> clearly, the problem was that no one knew what Solidarity was anymore. It was a trade union *and* the government *and* a group of some 260 parliamentarians. Presumably, Solidarity should support Solidarity. But that meant that the purpose of the trade union was to support the government – and that sounded to too many people like the old Stalinist conundrum again[174].

Those who voiced such reservations most vociferously were the marginalized right wing dissidents. For, in the end, the conflict broke out not between the political wing and the trade union wing, but between the dissident groups representing divergent political identities. And since there was no formal procedure to regulate the balance of forces in the case of conflict, when the conflict appeared, it was transformed into a clash of symbolic authority. Transforming Solidarity's power structure into a unified political representation of the democratic opposition, backed up by the trade union, worked to the advantage of the post-KOR dissidents dominant in the Citizens' Committee, OKP and the government. The right wing dissidents believed that revealing the differences within the victorious camp and institutionalizing it in the form of rival political parties would empower their position.

The politics of memory constituted the discursive framework for their political projects. Both parties employed narratives of transition in which the definition of the temporal difference – moving from totalitarianism to capitalism and democracy – overlapped with political taxonomies. The narratives were both embedded in the collective memory of their respective dissident subcultures and served to justify the respective visions of the power relations in the transitional present.

Hauntology situated the locus of totalitarian past in the habits of the *homo sovietivus* prone to become a victim of po pulists and nationalists and their authoritarian will-to-power. Against this discursive background, the post-totalitarian divide was defined as the 'dominant principle of

[173] *Pamięć po Komunizmie*, p.27.
[174] *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*, p. 221.

domination'. The post-totalitarian divide justified rallying the supporters of democracy, open society and the 'return to Europe' around the Solidarity's Citizens Committee, pitting the 'ethos of Solidarity' against its 'totalitarian' contestants.

The narrative of 'acceleration', on the other hand, represented the transition as the latest chapter of the national uprising, in which the moral community of the nation – founded on the principles anti-Communism, Catholic ethics and pro-capitalism – was struggling against the Soviet occupier for independence, parliamentary democracy and capitalism. The narrative of 'acceleration' defined the locus of 'totalitarian past' as the persistent presence of the Communists in the administrative structures of the state, political scene and economy. Against this backdrop the the left/right divide served to counterpoise the spokespersons of the national aspirations against the agents of the totalitarian past who strove to block the nation's development towards the better future.

It was the rival narratives of transition and the political taxonomies they implied that made the split, in the end, so virulent. In both cases the antagonism was articulated in terms of moral exclusion rather than in terms of political difference between equally legitimate adversaries. The dominant fraction of the intellectuals defined the we/they relation opposing the forces of consensus – achieved through a dialogical synthesis of rival ethical and political credos supporting a version of modernization acceptable to every rational citizen – to the enemies of modernization, irrational representatives of the past that everybody wants to leave behind. The post-totalitarian divide, anti-political in genealogy and post-political in Chantal Mouffe's terms, could only bring a proper populist response.

Those who within the anti-political framework found themselves on the side of the past, the excluded side, responded in a way that I have called 'sly populism'. The rightist intellectuals presented themselves as defenders of the European political traditions, bringing back the 'civilized' conventions of democratic politics as against what they dubbed as the 'post-Communist hybrid'. But at the same time, the discourse of 'acceleration' defined a we/they relation in which the right was genuine in terms of the 'sincerity' of intentions and the 'organically' bound to the national sense of justice and morality, while the 'left' was fake – it pretended to be something different than it really was – and alienated from the moral community. What made the left fake and morally excluded, in

the narrative of the right, was the residual past of its members, whose moral gravity was stronger than the professed convictions.

A more 'velvet' split was even more impossible because of the collective memories of the respective oppositional subcultures. The political identity of the dominant fraction of the Solidarity elites was embedded in a specific understanding of Polish tradition of dissent, which laid emphasis on anti-authoritarian themes and was suspicious towards any sort of conspiratorial, insurrectionist calls coming from the underground. The contradictory position of the powerless in power, in which these dissidents found themselves, resulted in a discourse of political self-effacement. While residing in the place of power, they understood their role in terms of defending the place of power from the obscure designs of others. The 'others' of this narrative was the oppositional subculture which understood itself as heirs to the political traditions of the Second Republic (suspicious to the other party). The rightist subculture constructed its political identity *vis-à-vis* the other party by distinguishing their anti-Communism as uncompromised by any revisionist record, and hence more 'pure'. The fact that they found themselves marginalized from the political process in which the Communist lost their power, only exasperated the political will-to-distinction and resulted in contestation of the Round Table Accords and the political arrangement which emerged in the aftermath of the June elections.

Taken together, the narratives of transition, the political taxonomies which they implied, and their embeddedness in the collective memories of both subcultures, were the decisive factors which explain why the emerging field of dissident politics was shaped not according to the 'adversarial logic' in which political actors recognize themselves as legitimate opponents, but saw the polarization of positions according to the logic of political antagonism oriented at moral exclusion of the adversary.

* * *

While all these reasons show why a more 'velvet' split between the dissident intellectuals was not possible, to the story of the clash would not be possible without explaining the role of Lech Wałęsa, not only because of his authorship of the term 'war on the top'. On the one hand, if it wasn't for Solidarity's chairman, the right wing dissidents would not command enough symbolic authority to

make themselves heard. On the other hand, the alliance between Wałęsa and the right was not inevitable. After all, Mazowiecki and Geremek, Michnik and Kuroń were 'his' advisers whose position he defended many times between 1980 and 1989. While part of the reason laid in Wałęsa's personal ambitions, it is also true that reducing the role of the trade union and its chairman to the vehicle of support of whatever steps Mazowiecki's government takes[175], was exactly the opposite of taking this ambitions into account.

In may 1990, Jarosław Kaczyński managed to gather the most numerous group of the discontents around the program of 'acceleration'. The newly founded Central Alliance party (Porozumienie Centrum, PC) announced that the time was ripe for change and called presidential elections in which Wałęsa would be their candidate. Advised by Kaczyński, Lech Wałęsa took a number of radical measures, which accelerated the clash. He withdrew the permission for *Gazeta Wyborcza* to appear under the Solidarity logo and tried to dismiss Adam Michnik from the post of the editor-in-chief. Meanwhile the *Solidarity Weekly*, edited by Jarosław Kaczyński and fiercely attacking the government, was still the official trade-union newspaper. He then dismissed Henryk Wujec, the secretary of the Citizens Committee, who was opposing Kaczyński's plan of transforming the local committees into an infrastructure of political support for the new-born political parties. Zdzisław Najder, chairman of the Citizens' Committee appointed by Wałęsa in February 1990, co-opted a numerous group of the supporters of 'acceleration' to the outrage of the hitherto members, who deemed this radical steps 'dictatorial'. Wałęsa's decisions however, were not dictatorial in the sense of infringing democratic procedures, for there were no democratic procedures to infringe. They were brutish and nasty, as were his words about the 'eggheads' from Warsaw that misused his trust and those pitting his Polishness against the Jewishness of his opponents in the presidential campaign later that year. What motivated Wałęsa to tip the balance of forces within the field of dissident politics towards the 'war at the top'? In his own words:

[175] *The Spring Will Be Ours*, p. 515.

I am for democracy which gives individuals a chance for spontaneous activity within the limits of the law. I am for permanent political anxiety, for permanent discharging of public tensions. For me, parliamentary democracy is a peaceful war of all against all[176].

The war in the main strata is needed to bring the booty to the society, so that the society does not have to struggle. A war for including everybody and every program. For none of as, me neither, has ready solutions every problem.

If there is peace on the top, there is war at the bottom. This is why, ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you to fight. The present arrangement, the support for the government, the conviction that it is as good as it gets, and all you can do is support, is neither good for the government nor safe for the society[177].

In Wałęsa's intention the 'war at the top' – articulation of political differences between the post-Solidarity elites – was to prevent the 'war at the bottom', that is, the non-democratic articulation of popular anger motivated by economic hardship and discontent with the politics of consensus, which could have hampered the process of transition as a whole.' You could not expect economic outcomes and this is why broad social participation in the government, was necessary so that – through participation – it could get accepted'.[178] Wałęsa's intentions were consistent with Chantal Mouffe's argument about the importance of the space of articulation of social antagonisms for the well-being of liberal democracy, as well as with David Ost's theory that economic anger is a structurally inevitable feature of capitalist societies and that political liberalism does not depend on *whether* but *how* the economic anger is articulated[179]. Ost's well documented and passionate account describes how the same intellectual advisers to the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union in 1980, who hand thought the workers 'not to burn the committees, but to establish their own', in 1989 ignored if not stigmatized social suffering of the disadvantaged, straightening the path for the coming of the 'market populists' who redirected their grief towards surrogate objects – the communists, the 'laic left', the ethic others – which had nothing to do with the source of the hardships. While I regard Ost's argument as fairly accurate, it is an overstatement to say that the 'turn to the right' of Polish labour was an effect of the 'treason of the intellectuals'. While it is true that the figure of 'irrationalism of the masses' conceals the failure of the intellectuals to empower the workers against the social exclusion inscribed in the neoliberal economic restructuring, one must

[176] "Pokojowa wojna wszystkich ze wszystkimi", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11.05.1990.
[177] "Awantura o Lecha" *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14.05.1990.
[178] "Prezydentem nie chce zostać…, …będę musiał zostać", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20.06.1990.
[179] David Ost, *Klęska Solidarności*..

take into account that the market populism had also its sly dimension, which consisted precisely in flawing the 'left/right' divide from the vantage point of which a more egalitarian political project could have been articulated.

The 'war on the top' reached its climax on Sunday, June 24, 1990, during seven hours-long meeting of the Citizens Committee[180]. The 'accelerators' demanded the accounts to be settled with those who 'for forty five had trampled the dignity of the nation'. The Round Table accords, in their view opened the road to hegemony of the 'laic left and a group of catholic left' who mounted a conspiracy to curtail political pluralism in general and the presence of the right in the public life in particular, by way of 'well known' propagandistic methods of 'vilifying' the nation (and its right) as xenophobic, nationalist and anti-Semitic. The 'left' they said, was afraid of political pluralism because it knew that the nation had suffered enough during four decades of 'leftist' rule. The political parties were too weak to face the system (and e left) on their own, but now they had Lech Wałęsa, the 'true Polish patriot' and not some 'European'. The accelerators alarmed that Poland faced the danger of an outburst of frustration motivated by the economic hardship and they were perfectly certain that 'satisfying the popular sense of justice' by way of anti-Communist purge would provide a solution to the problem. They were not the populists. On the contrary, they were the only hope against its encroachment. The dissidents who originally had the upper hand in the Citizens Committee accused Lech Wałęsa that appointing a new chairman was a dictatorial measure, and remained him that before internal democracy had been destroyed, they were free to invite whoever they wanted. They found it a matter of civic consciousness to warn that 'here in this hall Polish democracy has become endangered' and that whoever claimed otherwise was simply concealing the truth. In their view, only the 'political philosophy' of Mazowiecki's government could claim its roots in the 'traditions ant the ethos of Solidarity' and whoever characterized it as leftist or crypto-communist was simply a 'swine'.

While it is true that Wałęsa took sides in the 'war on the top' along the lines of his political ambitions, it is also true that the sides were not of his choosing. In the end, sly populism, which Wałęsa came to support, was the tribute that vice rendered virtue of liberal democracy. Had he not

[180] "Co zostało z Komitetu", *Gazeta Wyborcza* 25.06.1990 and 26.06.1990.

taken sides, perhaps it would transform itself into a populism *tout court*. Wałęsa set the ground for political antagonism – by lending symbolic authority to one of the sides – but he was not responsible for the fact that the antagonism could not have been transformed into adversarial politics.

* * *

Does the story of the disintegration of the dissident counterculture allow a broader reading? Does it tell something about the state of collective memory in Eastern and Central Europe? There seems to be a correspondence between the Polish case and Gil Eyal findings about 'two wills to memory' operating within the margins of the former Czechoslovak Republic, one championed by group of leading Slovak historians, the other by Czech dissidents, diverging in terms of understanding of how collective memory works and what purpose does it serve. In the Slovak version, memory was considered as the guarantor of collective identity, a mechanism that maintains self-sameness of a community through time. In the Czech version, memory was understood with reference to a collective trauma which disturbed the normal functioning of the community and had to be overcome to restore 'normalcy'.

The Slovak historians' 'will to memory' was predicated upon a representation of the nation whose identity is under threat continuously assaulted by external enemies – be it Hungarians, be it the advocates of Czechoslovakianism – and needs to defend itself through recollection of its historical, moral and territorial integrity, recovering the traces of national existence, excavating the truth and debunking the lies that falsify the national past. This will to memory, Eyal argues,

> tends to generate its own sense and distinctive rhetoric of a "crisis" of memory: it typically depicts an *external* assault on collective memory by competing narratives composed by the enemies of the nation, who thus attempt to undermine its identity, integrity and territorial claim, indeed its very existence[181].

The other version of 'will to memory' was elaborated within the Czech countercultural milieu, as an act of resistance against communist power, which they depicted as a power to erase and forget, along the lines of Milan Kundera's celebrated dictum that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". Commemoration of the people and events erased from the

[181] Gil Eyal, "Identity and Trauma: Two forms of the will to memory", *History & Memory* 1 (16) 2004, p. 10.

official version of history in public gatherings and *samizdat* publications was considered by the dissidents as a gesture of what Vaclav called "living within the truth". Importantly, Eyal comments, that is not all the story, for the moment that the dissidents face the general indifference of the wider public to their heroic efforts, they reacted in a properly Freudian fashion, interpreting the public indifference as a 'sort of amnesia pact between the regime and its subjects' and

> They began to champion memory not simply as a tool of resistance against the regime, but also as a means of effecting an internal transformation in the hearts and minds of ordinary communist citizens, and thereby undoing the moral corruption of communism[182].

Eyal gives the example of the attention given in *samizdat* to the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans in the aftermath of the II World War which – in his opinion – demonstrates the will of the dissident historians to point out that the unacknowledged complicity of Czech citizens prepared 'the moral climate for Communism', encouraged looting, undermined respect for private property and led to show trials of the 1950s. Writing about the expulsion was supposed to 'break the amnesia pact between the regime and the nation, a pact upon which communism rested', overcome the trauma that linked the complicity in the expulsion with the complicity in subjugation to Communism.

According to Eyal, both 'wills to memory' developed under Communism persisted after its fall in 1989 and the breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and while both groups held also political power, they become far more consequential. In the Slovak case, unsurprisingly, the will to memory became the fundament of nationalism. In the Czech case,

> not only has the memory campaign of the dissidents not subsided after the fall of Communism but they invested memory with even weightier hopes and fears. Now that the Communist regime was no more, and society needed to be built anew, the main obstacle was no longer communist power but its unconscious effects, the subjects it left behind still tainted by their moral complicity. Memory and confession were called upon to cure society—healing through truth—and to protect it from repetition, from the return of totalitarianism in any guise[183].

Finally Eyal suggests that the difference between the two 'wills to memory' correspondent to the different ways in which Czech and Slovak intellectual perceived their social role after the fall of Communism. In the Slovak case there is a performative connection between endowing collective memory with the function of preservation of national identity and the claim of the historians to

[182] Eyal, p. 20.
[183] Eyal, p. 23.

preferential embed embeddedness in the community of the nation, whose inner self they merely articulate. Czech dissidents, in contrast, positioned themselves vis-à-vis the civil society in a pastoral relation of those 'living in truth' as against the trauma of moral complicity whose unconscious effects they are called to counteract.

There are various similarities and one substantial difference between the Polish and the Czech/Slovak case. The right-wing dissidents understood both the purpose of collective memory and their own role with regards to not unlike the Slovak historians, even though the 'constitutive exterior' of the national identity was represented along anti-Communist rather than ethnic lines. In accordance with their own militant anti-Communism they saw their role as spokespersons of the morally pure community rising against the Communist enemy perceived as an external force, disconnected – during the four long decades of 'occupation' – from national existence. Also, the Polish powerless, not unlike their Czech counterparts – to whom, notably, they were personally related – build their dissident identity along the lines of truth versus complicity, or freedom versus moral 'captivity'. *Hauntology*, in this context, may be interpreted as a variant of the pastoral model of intellectual spokespersonship according to which it a matter of civic responsibility to point to the social *loci* of totalitarianism to be overcome. Now, the difference (that makes a difference) is that in the Polish case the 'two wills to memory' operated within the same 'community of memory'. And it is a difference that makes a difference, since – what goes somewhat understated in Eyal's argument[184] – the two modalities are mutually incompatible. Warning against the return of the daemons of the past, a matter of civic virtue in the pastoral model, in the 'embeddedness' model becomes an instance of vicious narrative which sheds suspicion on its author and his moral credentials, to be confirmed in the light of his residual past. Conversely, what in the embeddedness model amounts to a legitimate expression of national community's moral sense of justice, from the pastoral standpoint brings the ghosts of the past back to live. Perhaps risking and overstatement, one might conclude that – given the incompatibly of their 'wills to memory' – Polish dissident counterculture would be better off if offered an opportunity of a 'velvet divorce'. Alas, what Bertold

[184] But cf. Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Post-Communist Elites* (Minneapolis: University of Minesota Press, 2003), pp. 150-192.

Brecht proposed to the East German Communists in the aftermath of 1953 uprising – 'to dissolve the people and elect another' – belongs to the realm of poetry.

* * *

Finally, the historian is tempted, and even compelled to ask: was the self-destruction of the dissident counterculture inevitable, or, better to say, at which point it became inevitable? Was there a way to avoid it? Was there a moment when it was still avoidable? José Ortega y Gasset commented once that Friedrich von Schlegel was correct to define the historian a 'prophet in reverse'. While the historian is not in the position to squeeze the historical process into rigid teleological frames, still, she is able to assess at what point some of the many historical possibilities had become excluded. A good prophet is also a good historian. She foresees the impossible.

For what is worth, if I was to point to the moment when the threshold of the impossible had been crossed, I would say that it happened a few days after the conclusion of he Round Table talks, when the Citizens Committee gathered to discuss the proposal of the National Executive Committee of Solidarity regarding the forthcoming elections[185]. At the end of the long debate the proposal – giving all power to decide who will find himself on the Solidarity's list to the advising body – was finally passed, but in the course of the discussion there were several voices against it. Alexander Hall – the leader of RMP who did not participate in the elections but became responsible for the relations with political parties in Mazowiecki's government – commented that while Solidarity's merits entitle the movement to decide on the list on its own, the 'political map' has changed radically since 1981 and that for the sake of the future political pluralism the chance to participate in the elections should be given to non-Solidarity political organizations, via a form of pre-elections, in which everyone could propose its candidates. Adam Strzembosz, the first president of the Supreme Court after 1989, supported Hall, proposing the establishment of an open 'political committee', which would prevent the democratic opposition from plunging into internal struggles and gave possibility to participate in the elections to those political groups which could not afford running the campaign. The idea about the creating a political committee, albeit on the condition of acceptance of the Round Table agreements, was welcomed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who also proposed establishing formal

[185] "Wybory pod firmą 'S'", *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 12.04.1989.

democratic procedures to avoid any appearance of manipulation. 'While it would be bad to give away some of the mandates – he was quoted to say – it will be much worse if we win them in a shameful manner. We can come out of this campaign in discord, broken'. However, the argument that tipped the balance to the advantage of the opponents of broader participation was that only a carefully selected list of Solidarity candidates will allow for proceeding with the strategy of evolutionary change, a strategy incompatible with the radical voices calling for the outright overthrowing of the system. Lech Wałęsa had the last word:

> This manipulation is necessary so that in the future nobody can manipulate us. This manipulation is necessary to bring the society back to life. I have no other choice. Shall we wait for the workers to wake up? ...I beg you agree for others will make a mess out of it…
>
> I will not run for office. There is a possibility that we will not be able to resolve the economic problems and than all the blame will fall on you, our senators. You will loose, but I will remain clean. There must be somebody in reserve to save you and the country.

66 advisors voted for Wałęsa's proposal, 19 backed up Alexander Hall, and 13 abstained. As it turned out, those who wanted to go the 'evolutionary way' effectively overthrew the Communist regime, for all the pains it took the powerless to acknowledge it. The radicals, on the other hand, could not acknowledge that the revolution took place without them. The revolutionary process could not have been completed. It was not completed. It had to be accelerated.

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