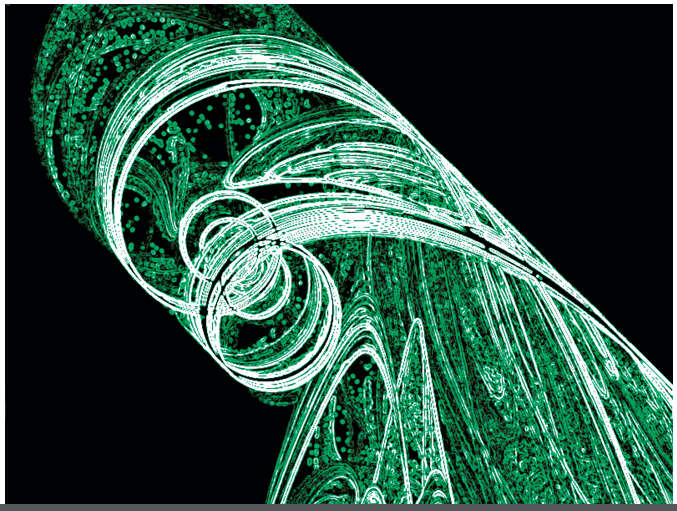
GESCHICHTE - ERINNERUNG - POLITIK 12

Anna Wolff-Powęska / Piotr Forecki (eds.)

World War II and Two Occupations

Dilemmas of Polish Memory



PETER LANG EDITION

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World War II and Two Occupations

This anthology presents the work of several authors from different academic disciplines. Film and literature experts, sociologists, historians and theatrologists analyse the Polish memory of the Nazi and Stalinist occupations, which are key components of Polish collective identity. Before the political turn of 1989, the memory of World War II was strictly controlled by the state. The elements of memory related to the Soviet occupation were eradicated, as well as any other elements that did not fit the official narrative about the war. Unblocking the hitherto limited public discourse resulted in the process of filling the blank pages of history and the development of different and frequently conflicting communities of memory.

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World War II and Two Occupations

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POSENER STUDIEN ZUR GESCHICHTS-, KULTUR- UND POLITIKWISSENSCHAFT

Herausgegeben von Anna Wolff-Powęska und Piotr Forecki

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Anna Wolff-Powęska & Piotr Forecki

Introduction

No matter how intensely they are dealt with, there are some issues in every nation's history that are extremely difficult to comprehend. The discovery of new facts may even raise more doubts and questions than answers. Evaluation of a historical process that is burdened with the most dramatic experiences, such as the Nazi German aggression against Poland on 1 September, the Soviet invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939 and the consequences of the two occupations that followed continue to cause numerous problems. With the passage of time, it is becoming clear that our understanding of these events is very limited.

The 1989/1990 democratic turn in Poland and in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe provided the conditions for profound social transformation. The state's loss of the monopoly on shaping public opinion was followed by privatisation and pluralisation of memory. The departure from people's democracy, however, did not result in a focus on the past, as one might expect, but in a surge of interest in the future. New conditions and simultaneous national, European (access to the EU in 2004) and global transformations determined the dynamic and diverse character of narrative strategies that have been used in relation to *sites of memory*.

Generational change, changes in language and increases in knowledge about the past transform the nature of memory. However, while in Germany (unlike Italy or Austria) the 1968 generation passed moral judgment on their parents and demanded an explanation of their hitherto silence, the situation in Poland and other country-victims of the Nazi occupation was reversed. The entire post-war reality, all areas of life, were dominated by a narrative of victimhood. National suffering and heroism were a subject that brought individual feelings and the communist party policy together. Despite cosmopolitan slogans, the authorities in fact promoted national ideals articulated in a nationalist language. The heroism of the Polish nation was a value that was employed to legitimate the new political system. However, both in the case of individual historical narratives and the narratives of social actors who control collective memory, images of historical events are often deconstructed or obfuscated.[1]

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1 Luisa Passerini refers to many case studies to confirm this theory. L. Passerini, 'Shareable Narratives? Intersubiektywność, historie życia i reinterpretowanie przeszłości', trans. A. Grzybkowska, in *(Kon)Teksty Pamięci,* Warszawa, 2014, pp. 191–203.

Democracy does not provide clear rules or an obligatory canon for the transmission of memory. Therefore, Polish society, whose memory was 'occupied' for several decades, immersed in domination conflicts over symbols and images of history with the zeal of neophytes. Not only did various powerful social actors attempt to impose their own narrative about the past; there was also a bottom-up process of supressing historical events that could contradict Polish collective identity. Along with the fall of the authoritarian system, axiological aspects became important for historical culture. Questioning everything that could not be questioned before 1989 resulted in the reinterpretation of events and processes, and caused the exchange of historical heroes in schoolbooks and public space. The new discourse was characterised by two features. First of all, after four decades of focus on the German occupation, the supressed memory of the Soviet occupation, Stalin's crimes, the loss of the eastern territories (*Kresy*) and sovereignty was revived and those who were forced into silence could finally have their say. Secondly, a presentation of Poland and Poles in the international arena as heroes and victims who had experienced two occupations became a significant element of the new discourse and an important component of the sense of historical continuity and development of a new collective identity. The attempts to promote this image on the world stage were a request for equal rights to memory for both the western and eastern parts of Europe. The Iron Curtain effectively blocked the transfer of knowledge about the two totalitarianisms that affected Poland. The desire to present a comprehensive picture of the Nazi and Soviet occupations in Poland and former Polish territories, which were incomparable to the German occupation of Western European countries, is thus justified.

In democratic countries, historical culture is a culture of disputes. Thus, narratives that debunked the idealised image of Polish heroism were legitimised. New academic institutions revived memories of events that used to be marginalised and revealed sensitive subjects such as the diverse attitudes of Poles towards the Jewish population, different forms of collaboration with the occupier and Polish policy towards German civilians after 1945. The new geopolitical situation in Central Europe contributed to the politicisation of the discourse on the two occupations. Obstacles in the historical dialogue with Putin's Russia, and Russia's refusal to acknowledge Soviet crimes against Poles (even on a theoretical level) are factors that impinge on Polish-Russian relations. Certain questions are becoming increasingly significant. Did the Red Army invade or liberate Poland in 1945? What should be done with hundreds of memorials dedicated to Soviet heroes that are scattered around Polish cities and towns?

The new historical narrative after 1945 coincided with the process of mediatisation of memory, the informational revolution and commercialisation of the

past. These factors contribute to trivialisation of history, which led to history becoming a subject of manipulation in the transformation period for the purposes of realising individual goals. Historiography was not always ready to defend the objective truth. Attempts to give the same weight to the national-socialist and communist totalitarianisms served the political interests of the time. Now, in the 21st century, is when the disputes over history as a fundament of collective identity are at their most intense since the end of World War II. Advocates of 'affirmative patriotism', which aims to legitimise the national community of pride, questioned 'critical patriotism', which is supported by those who believe that inglorious acts of Poles should also be included into collective memory. The latter are believed to be national traitors and creators of a 'community of shame'.

Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, a public opinion researcher, is definitely correct to claim that 'knowledge of the sources of national pride has a different social status than knowledge of the sources of shame. The opinion that Poles can be proud of particular people and events from the national past belongs to the collective, socially accepted knowledge (…). The opinion that one should be ashamed of some of one's ancestors' deeds, however, is mostly private knowledge.'[2]

As the new generation, who have no personal experience or emotional connection with the war and occupation, start adult life, new questions are asked and inspiration comes for new studies. The book that you now hold in your hands is the result of academic inquiry by representatives of different academic disciplines. They differ in many respects: research institutes, age, methodology, the source materials used, perspective of analysis, and – most of all – field of research. What they have in common is an interest in the memory of the war and the occupation: its condition, carriers and representations, the clichés, gaps and deformations that it includes and the forms in which it is instrumentally used. Some of the texts from this book have been already published, others were written specifically for this publication, thus they are now being premiered and gain their first readers.

There are three introductory texts in this book. The first is Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatowski's paper dedicated to World War II as a collective experience for Poles and to the role of this experience in Polish collective memory. Lech M. Nijakowski's paper on Polish public debates about genocide during World War II focuses on the content of Polish memory about these events and presents it with reference to the most recent public opinion surveys. Finally, Bartosz Korzeniewski's paper is an analysis of the politics of memory about World War II that was built by the

2 P. T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji,* Warsaw, 2008, p. 308.

authorities of the Polish People's Republic – in other words, about the official memory of the war that was binding at the time. These three texts provide necessary context for subsequent articles.

The next three papers, written by Paweł Rodak, Anna Wylegała and Kaja Kaźmierska, provide information about the war and the occupation from the perspective of individual experiences. However, while Rodak reconstructs the experiences of everyday life during the occupation on the basis of personal documents, i.e. diaries of the Polish intellectuals Zofia Nałkowska and Stanisław Rembek, Wylegała and Kaźmierska listen to the voices of ordinary people. Kaja Kaźmierska analyses the findings of an interview-based study that was conducted at the beginning of the 1990s and was dedicated to war and occupation as a biographical experience of the residents of the pre-war eastern borderlands (*Kresy*). Also on the basis of interviews, Anna Wylegała studies the memory of the Soviet occupation among the oldest Poles who experienced it.

Almost all of the other papers gathered in this book focus on the collective memory of the two occupations. Yet, the carriers of this memory, the channels of its transmission, and the scope and potential of its social influence are different. Zuzanna Bogumił and Joanna Wawrzyniak deal with the subject of museum representations of the war. Rather than neutral depositories of objects, they consider museums to be institutions that actively participate in the process of constructing collective memory. Katarzyna Woniak, in her in-depth analysis of Polish and German history schoolbooks, examines the presence of the subject of the occupation in the culture of memory. The author demonstrates that textbooks as media of memory are also far from being neutral.

As cinema and theatre have a significant role as media of memory, this book includes three papers that introduce the reader to the subject of World War II and the two occupations in Polish films and theatre plays. Tadeusz Lubelski's article is entirely dedicated to the representations of the Soviet occupation in Polish cinema after 1945, while Małgorzata Hendrykowska deals with war images in Polish cinematography after 1989 and Joanna Krakowska studies the subject of war and occupation in postwar Polish theatre. The book closes with Anna Zawadzka's paper that deconstructs the myth of *Żydokomuna*,[3] which was also the focus of a documentary written and directed by Zawadzka. Both in popular discourse and academic publications, this anti-Semitic cliché remains in use to describe events that occurred in Poland after 17 September 1939, making Polish Jews responsible for the course of the Soviet occupation.

3 'Judeo-Communism'; an anti-Semitic stereotype (translator's note).

This book signalises problems that are currently the subject of very heated debates in Poland. International situations that change at a dizzying pace, and the turbulent nature of contemporary reality means that many questions that are posed in this book remain unanswered. These questions, however, inspire reflection, which contributes to the development of European discourse about the past.

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Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski

World War II as Collective Experience for Polish Society

World War II is one of the main subjects of public debates about the past that have been held in Poland since the fall of communism and have very much involved intellectual elites and opinion-forming groups. It also occupies one of the central positions in the collective memory of societies whose members are not professional historians, but turn to history because it is an important point of reference to their identity and the practice of everyday life. In past decades, this problem was often a subject of interest for social scientists in Poland,[1] as well as in Central and Eastern Europe.[2] References to World War II can be found, first of all, in the results of research aiming to diagnose the collective memory of the Polish society.[3] Secondly, sociological works have been published that are devoted to the many-sided, in-depth analysis of social memory consisting of selected events and phenomena related to World War II, such as the Holocaust,[4] extermination camps,[5] conflicts on the borders of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus[6] or the process of

1 K. Kończal and J. Wawrzyniak, 'Polskie badania pamięcioznawcze: Tradycje, koncepcje, (nie)ciągłości', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, no. 4, 2011, pp. 23–28; E. Tarkowska, 'Collective Memory, Social Time and Culture: The Polish Tradition in Memory Studies', *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 3, 2013, pp. 282–290.

2 J. Wawrzyniak and M. Pakier, 'Memory Studies in Eastern Europe: Key Issues and Future Perspectives', *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 3, 2013, pp. 260–270.

3 T. Żukowski, 'Świadomość historyczna Polaków w połowie lat dziewięćdziesiątych', in J. Łukasiak-Mikłasz (ed.), *Ofiary czy współwinni. Nazizm i sowietyzm w świadomości historycznej*, Warsaw, 1997, pp. 65–76; B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły – pamięć – mit*, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 147–186; P.T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji*, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 220–308.

4 B. Engelking-Boni, *Zagłada i pamięć*, Warsaw, 1994; K. Kaźmierska, *Biografia i pamięć. Na przykładzie pokoleniowego doświadczenia ocalonych z Zagłady*, Cracow, 2008, pp. 95–209.

5 P. Filipkowski, *Historia mówiona i wojna. Doświadczenie obozu koncentracyjnego w perspektywie narracji biograficznych*, Wroclaw, 2010; M. Kucia, *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny*, Cracow, 2005, pp. 287–312.

6 K. Kaźmierska, *Doświadczenie wojenne Polaków a kształtowanie tożsamości etnicznej*, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 28–132; A. Wylegała, *Przesiedlenia a pamięć. Studium (nie)pamięci społecznej na przykładzie ukraińskiej Galicji i polskich*, Torun, 2014, pp. 269–401.

establishing social images of death camps[7] and the social status of war veterans.[8] Thirdly, opinion polls have been conducted about selected issues significant to the public debates, which are often controversial. These surveys are conducted on the anniversaries of the outbreak of the war[9] the anniversaries of its end[10] and on the occasions of important public debates about the Katyn massacre,[11] the Jedwabne pogrom,[12] the massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (Volhynian slaughter)[13] and the relations between Poles and other nations.[14]

In recent years, numerous academic studies and research reports have been conducted that significantly improve our knowledge of selected aspects of social memory of World War II. A survey aimed to create a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon was conducted in the 1970's by Anna Pawełczyńska from the Centre of the Public Opinion and Broadcasting Research of the Radio and Television Committee.[15] Although still interesting as a reference point for comparative

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7 Z. Wóycicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944–1950*, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 13–31.

8 J. Wawrzyniak, *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej 1949–1969*, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 19–48.

9 CBOS, *Siedemdziesiąt lat od wybuchu II wojny światowej*, survey report, ed. M. Strzeszewski, 2009, TNS OBOP, *Kolektywna pamięć i nie załatwione sprawy z II wojny światowej*, survey report, 2009.

10 CBOS *Czy Polska wygrała wojnę?,* survey report, ed. M. Strzeszewski, 2005; TNS OBOP, *Obraz II wojny światowej w pamięci Polaków*. survey report, 2000; TNS Polska, *Czy jesteśmy zwycięzcami? Polacy o przeszłości i o II wojnie światowej*, survey report, 2015. For the use of comparison between the results of the TNS 2015 survey and the 2009 Muzeum/Pentor survey the data presented in the paper refer only to the adult population, that is people aged 18 or older.

11 CBOS, *Opinia publiczna o zbrodni w* Katyniu, survey report, ed. P. Kwiatkowski, 1988, CBOS; *Pamięć o zbrodni katyńskiej i ocena jej znaczenia dla stosunków polsko-rosyjskich,* survey report, ed. K. Pankowski, 2008.

12 CBOS, *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem – przemiany społecznej świadomości*, survey report, ed. B. Wciórka, 2001; TNS OBOP, *Obraz II wojny światowej w pamięci Polaków*. survey report, 2000; TNS 2000; TNS OBOP, *Polacy o zbrodni w Jedwabnem*, survey report, 2002.

13 CBOS, *Rocznica zbrodni na Wołyniu – pamięć i pojednanie*, survey report, ed. M. Strzeszewski, 2003; CBOS, *Wołyń 1943*, survey report, ed. K. Makaruk, 2008; TNS OBOP, *Wołyń 1943–2003*, survey report, 2003.

14 CBOS, *Opinie o stosunkach polsko-niemieckich repatriacjach wojennych*, survey report, ed. B. Roguska, 2004; TNS OBOP, *Polska – Niemcy – Rosja*, survey report, 2006.

15 Polish: Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej i Studiów Programowych przy Komitecie do spraw Radia i Telewizji.

analysis, there are clear traces of the intervention of political censorship. The author exposed the 'consequences of Nazism',[16] ignoring the Polish-Ukrainian conflict and the experience of Soviet totalitarianism. A contemporary project aimed at a comprehensive and many-sided study of the contemporary memory of Poles about World War II was conducted in summer 2009 for the Museum of World War II (M2W/Pentor) that comprised of qualitative research and a survey representative of the entire population of adult residents of Poland.[17]

This paper discusses selected results of Polish sociological research on collective memory of the war, focusing on four subjects: (1) the scope of interest in World War II in contemporary society; (2) relayed war experiences in family communication; (3) war as an important experience for national identity; (4) the result of World War II from the Polish perspective and the impact of the events from the period 1939–1945 on the perception of international relations in Europe.

Are Poles interested in World War II?

The results of surveys indicate that despite the passage of time, the events of World War II continue to interest many Poles who are still experiencing the consequences of economic, political and social transformation and who, for the past decade, have paid the price of the global economic crises. In 2009:

- 16% of respondents declared 'considerable' or 'great' interest in the history of the discussed period,
- 36% reported their interest in the history of World War II as 'average'
- Almost half of the interviewees (48%) said that their interest in the history of World War II was 'low' and 32% said that it was 'very low',

16 A. Pawełczyńska, *Żywa historia – pamięć i ocena lat okupacji*. Warsaw, 1977, p. 5.

17 P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*. Warsaw, 2010, pp. 44–51.
M2W/Pentor: the project *Druga wojna światowa w pamięci współczesnego społeczeństwa polskiego* realised for the Museum of World War II by Pentor Research International. Stage 1: qualitative research, 12 focus interviews. Participants: men and women with secondary or higher education who declared interest in history. Three age groups: 18–25, 26–45 and 46–65. The interviews were conducted between 20 May and 10 June 2009 in 5 cities: Warsaw, Katowice, Bialystok, Przemyśl, Gdansk. Stage 2: quantitative research of a sample of 1200 adult Poles aged 18 or more conducted between 19 June and 04 July 2009. Random-route sampling, 200 starting addresses. The survey was based on Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing; average interview length: 50 minutes (the report is available online: http://www.muzeum1939.pl).

- 16% of respondents were not at all interested in the events of the period 1939–1945.

The level of interest in World War II varies depending on age and education. A high percentage of claims of 'considerable' or 'great' interest was observed among people with a higher level of education (30%), elderly people aged 70 and above (39%) and people aged 60–69 (21%).

Oral communication is still very important in shaping the memory of World War II. The stories of family members are particularly significant, especially accounts from those who directly experienced the war; their stories are more often accepted as accredited sources of insight and knowledge of the war (33%) than are accounts from people who had no personal wartime experiences (22%). The knowledge of events from the period 1939–1945 also comes from accounts of witnesses who do not belong to the family (27%). Some interviewees interested in the war read published memoirs (22%). However, similar to other countries in the same cultural area, the development of common knowledge about World War II is increasingly stimulated by the media – television,[18] press and radio. The interviewees also mentioned feature films – perhaps watched by many on television. Almost two-thirds of respondents interested at least to some degree in World War II declared using the abovementioned sources over the year preceding the survey.

In their search for information about World War II, Poles relatively often read articles in popular science publications (35%), academic texts (26%) and belles-lettres (23%). The role of the internet is comparatively limited, though the significance of this medium is gradually increasing. One should note that while the internet as a source of information was mentioned by less than one-fourth of the entire group of interviewees interested in the war, 45% people under 29 and 28% people aged 30–39 used internet in their search for information about the war.

The media has taken a significant role in establishing popular images of the war. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 2009, respondents were able to remember titles of TV series (69%) and feature films (54%) about World War II even more often than they were able to remember book titles (43%) or songs (37%). Considering the number of television broadcasts, it is not surprising that series produced during the communist period that included elements of propaganda were remembered the most – 34% of respondents mentioned *Czterej pancerni i*

18 S. Anderson, 'History TV and Popular Memory', in G.R. Edgerton and P.C. Rollins (eds.), *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, Lexington, 2001, p. 20; C. Vos, 'Breaking the Mirror: Dutch Television and the History of the Second World War', in G.R. Edgerton and Rollins, P.C. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 138–140.

pies (*Four Tankmen and a Dog*) and 26% – *Stawka większa niż życie* (*More Than Life at Stake*), while the titles of other TV productions were mentioned much more rarely.

The memory of specific film productions varies depending on generation. Newer productions are more often mentioned by young respondents and less frequently by the elderly. The most popular feature films were *Katyń* (17%), a 2007 movie directed by Andrzej Wajda about the NKVD murder of Polish POWs, officers and public servants; and *Pianista* (*The Pianist*, 8%) by Roman Polański which was released in 2002 and presents the wartime experiences of a young musician of Jewish origin. These two films were most frequently mentioned by people under 39. Andrzej Wajda's *Kanał* (*Canal*), about the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, is third on the list (6%) and was considered significant by people over 39, particularly born in between 1949 and 1959, while in younger age groups the film was rarely mentioned. One of the first Polish films made after World War II and mentioned by 4% of respondents, *Zakazane piosenki* (*Forbidden Songs*, 1946, directed by Leonard Buczkowski), was most often recalled by people aged 70 and over and was unfamiliar to 20- and 30-year-olds.

There are many more books than films or TV programmes about World War II, and respondents mentioned a significant number of book titles – almost two hundred.

The war period arouses intense emotions and vivid associations (Table 1) with:

- Traumatic experiences of ordinary people,
- Genocide, martyrdom, concentration camps and the extermination of Jews,
- Armed struggle, heroism and bravery of Poles.

The comparison of research results from 2009 and 2014 indicates that fundamental patterns of perceiving the war years are quite stable, albeit influenced to some extent by anniversary commemorations. In 2009, when public debates were held about the commemorations of the 70th anniversary of German and Soviet attack on Poland, respondents mentioned the outbreak of the war more often than they did in 2014.

Table 1: Polish associations in the scope of World War II

Percentage

Question: What first comes to your mind when you think of Polish history during World War II?	**2009**	**2014**
Genocide, victims, martyrdom	15	14
Concentration camps, extermination camps	11	14
Fight against the enemy, fights of the Polish Army	5	7
Traumatic mental experiences, humiliation, exclusion	15	7
Experience of hunger, poverty and scarcity, tough times	6	6
Beginning of the war, outbreak of the war, defensive war in September 1939	15	6
The Warsaw Uprising	10	6
Occupation, everyday life, wartime period	6	5
Memory of the German role in the war, prejudice against the Germans	4	5
Extermination of Jews	7	4
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200	TNS Polska N = 969
Open question, unsolicited answers, respondents could give more than one answer.		

War in family communication

With the passing of time and passing away of the generations who remembered the years 1939–1945, the intensity of spontaneous communicative memory decreases[19] and the direct, family communication about the war clearly abates (Table 2). According to the 2009 research, the subject of family history during World War II occurred in the conversations of every fifth Pole and 5 years later, every tenth. This means that the period of time during World War II is gradually vanishing from direct communication: in 2014 almost one-third of Poles (slightly more than in 2009) declared they did not have conversations about the wartime experiences of their loved ones, despite having had them in the past. The percentage of people who had never talked about this subject significantly increased in comparison with the survey from 5 years earlier. The latter group

19 J. Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, Stanford, 2006, pp. 1–30; id., *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge/New York, 2011, pp. 64–71.

was distinguished by considerable proportion of youngest respondents, aged 18 to 29: half of them had never had family conversations about World War II.

Table 2: Direct communication about wartime experiences of family members

Percentage

Question: Do you talk about the experiences of your family members during World War II?	**2009**	**2014**
Often (a few times a year or more often)	19	10
Once a year or less often	28	25
I don't have such conversations now, but I used to in the past	28	31
I don't have such conversations now, nor did I in the past	25	34
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200	TNS Polska N = 969

Despite the decreasing intensity of informal family communication, about half of respondents, both in 2009 and 2014, declared they had knowledge of their families' wartime experiences (Table 3). The comparison of data distribution, however, indicates gradual change. Over these five years, the proportion of people declaring little knowledge on this subject decreased, and the percentage of those who knew nothing about what had happened to their families during the war – increased. One may assume that family memory of the war weakens more significantly in social environments where communicative memory is poor. Family memory is correlated with age: a 2014 survey conducted by TNS indicates that 40% of young people (20–29) claimed to have 'little' knowledge of family wartime experiences and 29% knew nothing of this subject, while 23% of the oldest interviewees (60 and older) declared having 'little' knowledge and 8% lacked this knowledge altogether. Another factor is the level of interest in public life issues. Every third interviewee interested in politics and every second (55%) uninterested interviewee knew very little or nothing at all about what happened to his/her family during the war.

Table 3: Self-evaluation of the knowledge of family members' wartime experiences

Percentage

Question: How would you evaluate your knowledge of wartime experiences of your family members? We are interested in your closest family (siblings, parents, grandparents), as well as distant family.	**2009**	**2014**
Great and considerable	17	16
Average	31	32
Little	38	33
None/Hard to say	13	19
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200	TNS Polska N = 969

An important factor that stimulates collective memory on the mundane level is the presence of material carriers of memory about the war in the everyday space of existence of millions of people. Some of these carriers have official status as commemorative objects; what is known about them is popularised through systems of education and social communication.[20] Others are not officially recognised, but may be spontaneously recognised by small, local communities (e.g. neighbours living in one building, street or housing estate) as the traces of war. Private souvenirs, kept on average in every fifth Polish family, are also carriers of memory. They are most often photographs and official, military and personal documents.

Family communication about the war, as the 2009 research for the Museum of World War II indicates, includes deeply traumatic events such as: sense of threat, life in the shadow of ubiquitous death, genocide, the terror of humiliation, deportation and exile. Family conversations comprise of narratives of struggle and resistance from the perspective of civilians- innocent victims who the war dominates. Over half of the interviewees who had knowledge of their families' wartime experiences (45% of the entire survey population) encountered relayed accounts of a loved one's participation in the fight against the occupier, in regular armies or underground organisations. 27% of families have a memory of the loved ones who died or disappeared during the war. Deaths on regular battlefields or in partisan struggles, as well as in German prison and concentration camps, were mentioned most frequently. Memories of other losses and forms of repression are

20 R. Traba, 'Symbole pamięci: II wojna światowa w świadomości zbiorowej Polaków', in id., *Kraina tysiąca granic. Szkice o historii i pamięci*, Olsztyn, 2003, pp. 193–197.

also passed down in families. Those who are familiar with the wartime experiences of their families are often aware of German repression:

- Every third person has heard about a family member deported to Germany for forced labour;
- Every fifth has heard an account of a house or flat destroyed by the Germans during hostilities, about the looting of movable property or forced deportation associated with the necessity to change the place of residence;
- Every seventh knows about a family member who was sent to a German concentration camp or was thrown out of the apartment.

Memories of family members' wartime experiences also include themes of the Soviet occupation (6%), including arrests and deportation deep into the Soviet Union. The Russians are also remembered in some families as the ones who looted movable property, destroyed houses and flats during hostilities, forced deportations and deprived owners of property rights.

Research into family communication also reveals two aspects of wartime experience that are not strongly emphasised in the public discourse. The first is the role of women. While many men fought, women were responsible for the toils of everyday life – supporting their families, getting food and avoiding the dangers that abounded as a result of warfare and the occupier's repression and hostility. The second aspect is the regional differences of wartime experiences[21] and to what extent they influence the development of regional identities today. A central position in the narratives of people who experienced the war in the General Government territory (central Poland) is occupied by the memory of terror and resistance against the occupier. Thus, these are stories about arrests and martyrdom in concentration camps, pacifications of villages, deportations and roundups in cities. During accounts of everyday life, supply problems and food shortages were very often communicated. At the same time, many families have memories about resistance – the activity of partisans, clandestine schools and the Warsaw Uprising.

In the stories of residents of eastern Polish territories (what is today mostly Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania), an important position is occupied by the subject of the Soviet occupation: imposing the communist system, intense propaganda, deportations and arrests. Memories of national tensions – particularly ruthlessness and cruelty of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict – were also tragic. Every tenth

21 J. Kochanowski, 'Oblicza okupacji', *Polityka*, no. 3, 2010, pp. 61–63.

person who knew about a family member's wartime experiences heard about the harms done to their family by the Ukrainians.

Those who experienced the war in the territories incorporated into the Third Reich passed on to their children and grandchildren a memory of terror, including complete elimination of Polish institutions, a ban on using Polish language and deportations for forced labour. However, there was also a memory of relative stabilisation of everyday life. The price for this, however, was paid with the requirement to declare German nationality and fight for the German army. After the war, the territories were given the status of 'enemy territory', and were seized and looted by the Red Army.

Qualitative research conducted in 2003 showed that only few people mentioned family secrets related to private life when asked about taboo subjects from the past.[22] Most answers were about silence regarding the participation of friends and family members in historical events. In 2009 almost one-fifth of the interviewees said they knew people who did not talk about their wartime experiences, the reason for which is most frequently assumed to be trauma. Other, much more rarely encountered reasons were modesty (family members feeling uncomfortable or simply not enjoying talking about themselves), fear of persecution from the authorities, lack of willing listeners and the shame of past actions that might now be considered uncouth.

Forgetting can be a helpful tactic for soothing the trauma of the past; it can help alleviate pain, hatred of the perpetrators and the accompanying desire for revenge and retaliation. Yet, oblivion (defined here as elements missing from interpersonal communication and public discourse) is never absolute in contemporary world. Many facts from the past that are ignored in public debates remain latently stored in memory: they undergo a 'quarantine' that effects emotional neutralisation. New generations come and new communities emerge in the social space where they look for symbols of their identity. Thus, there are also new legitimisation needs. The storage is there – one may use it to gain material for constructing new form of collective memory.

Identity symbols

The memory of World War II in Poland is important for contemporary national identification. Much has been written about collective identity and how being

22 P.T. Kwiatkowski, op. cit., pp. 211–217.

aware of the common past is important for its development.[23] Only occasionally, however, does one observe that the processes of creating collective memory is often accompanied by forgetting,[24] as the shared sense of 'us' that is different from 'them' stimulates the mechanism of biased perception of 'our people.' Positive experiences are kept in memory and negative characters and behaviour are either forgotten or neutralised. The reasons for the occurrence of negative phenomena are looked for in external circumstances, while positive phenomena are explained by the noble character of the members of a community.[25] Manifestations of this mechanism were observable in the results of research on collective memory.[26] The results of the 2009 and 2014 surveys indicate that positive stereotypes dominate the perception of the behaviour of Poles during the war (Table 4). The interviewees were aware that in times of war, people wanted, above all, to survive, and often had to deal on the black market in order to do so. But, relatively often, they attributed positive behaviours to themselves that are valued today, such as involvement in the fight against the occupier, condemnation of collaboration, mutual solidarity and the helping of Jews. Interviewees believed collaboration, informing against others, indifference towards the Holocaust and the denouncing of Jews by Poles to be rare.

23 P. Zawadzki, 'Czas i tożsamość. Paradoks odnowienia problemu tożsamości', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, vol. XLVII, no. 3, 2003, pp. 9–10; Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe,* Warsaw, 2005, pp. 54–99.

24 P. Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studie*s, vol. 1, no. 1, 2008, p. 62

25 R.F. Baumeister and S. Hastings, 'How Groups Flatter and Deceive Themselves', in J.W. Pennebaker, D. Paez and B. Rime, (eds.), *Collective Memory of Political Events. Social Psychological Perspectives,* Mahwah, 1997, p. 283–29.

26 B. Szacka, *Przeszłość w świadomości inteligencji polskiej*, Warsaw, 1983, pp. 73–83; B. Szacka and A. Sawisz, *Czas przeszły i pamięć społeczna*, Warsaw, 1990, pp. 18–38; P.T. Kwiatkowski, op. cit., pp. 231–237.

Table 4: Contemporary perception of Polish conduct during World War II

Percentage

Question: In your opinion, did Poles during World War II:	2009		2014	
	Rarely	Often	Rarely	Often
Help each other	9	85	8	86
Mostly try to survive	7	87	6	86
Get involved in the fight against the occupier	7	87	8	84
Help Jews survive the war	12	82	11	82
Condemn and fight against informants and confidents	13	75	14	73
Refuse to collaborate with the occupier	13	75	18	66
Get rich trading on the black market	43	39	30	52
Inform Gestapo (German police)	64	18	59	23
Collaborate with the occupier	73	15	65	20
Show indifference towards the extermination of Jews	75	13	69	17
Denounce Jews to the occupier	76	11	73	14
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200		TNS Polska N = 969	
Note: The answer 'hard to say' is not included in the table				

Comparison of the two surveys indicates a few differences. In 2014, there was a considerable increase (14%) in people who believed that during the war some people got rich as a result of trading on the black market. Moreover, in 2014, the interviewees were more often inclined to admit that during World War II some Poles had behaved in a way we negatively value today than they were in 2009: denouncing others to the Gestapo, collaborating with the occupier or demonstrating indifference towards the Holocaust. Although positive assessments clearly dominate in both survey results, the process of differentiation of the socially shared image of Polish society during wartime that took place over these 5 years is noticeable. The tendency to heroise Polish society as a whole slightly decreased in 2014. The interviewees were more often aware that in extreme wartime conditions people reacted and behaved differently: heroism co-occurred with treason, resistance with collaboration and an important component of the everyday struggle for survival was the black market.

The results of the both surveys indicate that most interviewees know wartime figures and events that can be a source of pride today (Table 5). However, it must be noted that the percentage of negative answers was higher in 2014 than 5 years earlier, which seems to confirm the aforementioned theory that the tendency to perceive the war period critically developed between 2009 and 2014.

Table 5: Recognition of figures and facts from the period during World War II that can now be a source of pride

Percentage

Questions: In your opinion, during World War II, were there…	Year	Yes	No	Hard to say
… figures in the Polish society, of whom Poles can be proud?	2009	70	6	24
	2014	62	11	27
… facts or events, of which Poles can be proud?	2009	73	5	21
	2014	64	10	26
Source: M2W/Pentor 2009, N=1200; TNS Polska 2014, N = 969.				

The canon of war heroes is not firmly established and the interviewees' answers are considerably dispersed. Public figures connected with the communist movement, promoted in the communist period, are today either absent or critically evaluated. The most frequently mentioned names are symbols of positive values important for national identity:

- Władysław Sikorski, general, prime minister of the London-based government-in-exile
- Władysław Anders, general, commander of the Polish Army troops that were part of the Allied forces;
- Maximilian Kolbe, a friar who sacrificed his life to save another prisoner in Auschwitz;
- Persons involved in rescuing Jews, including Irena Sandler, who saved Jewish children during the war and was recognised as Righteous Among the Nations;
- Janusz Korczak – a writer and a doctor murdered in Treblinka, along with children from a Jewish orphanage for which he worked.

The canon of events considered a source of pride is clear. Top positions are occupied by the Warsaw Uprising of 1944; the struggle of Polish Armed Forces, which were a part of the Allied Forces in the western front; and the activity of underground organisations. At the same time, all the military actions exposed in the communist period and used to legitimise the communist government – such as the Polish Army fighting together with the Red Army and their march on Berlin and the left-wing underground activity – have passed into oblivion.

The analysis of names and facts listed by the interviewees indicates six types of tradition that emerge from wartime experiences of the society and are present in the Polish collective memory of World War II. The first is the tradition of armed struggle of the regular troops of Polish Armed Forces against the enemy. The important

figures mentioned by the interviewees were commanders (Władysław Sikorski and Władysław Anders were most often mentioned unsolicitedly) and soldiers. As for significant facts, respondents referred to the fights in September 1939 and activities of military units subordinated to the Polish government-in-exile. In contrast, the interviewees rarely mentioned the activities of the communist-formed People's Polish Army, which, when included in public discourse today, are often criticised.

The second type of tradition is connected with the underground and comprises of commanders and soldiers of the Home Army and their actions, particularly the Warsaw Uprising. Over the last decade (probably due to the 2004 and 2014 anniversary commemorations and the activity of the Warsaw Uprising Museum), the knowledge of the uprising has been significantly popularised. It has become a symbol of the entire Polish Underground State. Bravery, heroism, patriotism, sacrifice and heroic death are important values within this tradition of memory. There is still a debate on whether the Uprising was worth the tragic toll. The respondents also raised this question.

The third type of tradition, relatively less distinctive and less frequently mentioned by the respondents, is related to politics. The positive heroes are figures connected with the government-in-exile and the Underground State, but the only commonly known person-symbol is Władysław Sikorski. As for facts, the following were important: the betrayal of the Polish state by the Allies and the efficient policy towards the USSR, thanks to which hundreds of thousands of Poles – persecuted by the Soviet authorities after 1939 and deported to Siberia or distant Asian republics – were saved.

The fourth type of tradition emerges from the experiences and suffering of ordinary people; it can be found in many family stories and memories, and it influences Polish perception of the war. This figure of Polish memory is not present in public memory in commemorative signs, symbols or rituals. This motif does, however, appear in literary works, films and TV series.

The fifth type of tradition is related to the martyrdom of the Polish nation, symbolised by Maximilian Kolbe through concentration and death camps. The sixth refers to the Holocaust, clearly and permanently present in the Polish memory of the war. The central symbol is Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, and the most important Polish heroes are Irena Sendlerowa and others who were later recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations'. The hero-victims of the Holocaust are Janusz Korczak and the ghetto insurgents.

The knowledge of negative phenomena related to World II War in contemporary Polish society is limited. In both surveys most interviewees answered 'hard to say' to open questions about facts and persons who brought shame to Poland or denied their existence (Table 6). One of the factors that impacted the domination

of affirmative memory regarding this period is the abovementioned tendency (characteristic of collective and not limited to Polish memory) to remember only positive aspects of a community's past, and to forget negative phenomena. Another factor is the decade-long social education that publicised neutral or positive figures and phenomena and formed a positive stereotype of the Polish conduct. However, it should be noted that responses given in 2014 indicate a tendency towards a more critical perception of the war period in comparison to the 2009 results.

Table 6: Recognition of figures and facts from the period during World War II that can now be a source of shame

Percentage

Questions: In your opinion, during World War II, were there…	Year	Yes	No	Hard to say
… figures in the Polish society, who brought shame on the good name of Poles?	2009	27	25	48
	2014	31	30	39
… facts or events that brought shame on Poles?	2009	17	36	47
	2014	24	38	38
Source: M2W/Pentor 2009, N=1200; TNS Polska 2014, N = 969.				

In both surveys there were two types of responses to the question about negatively evaluated figures. First of all, the respondents referred to well-established social stereotypes: traitors, collaborators (the most frequently occurring category), informers, Volksdeutsche and people who committed crimes during a time of inefficient law-enforcement and the decline of social norms. They also mentioned concrete names, most often communist activists, but references to specific individuals were rare (below 2%). Negatively evaluated facts and events brought similar problems. In both surveys, the respondents referred to negatively evaluated[27] individual acts such as persecution of Jews, collaboration and signing the Volkslist.

Questions about the outcome of World War II from Poland's perspective

The evaluation of the outcome of World War II has for decades been a subject of very emotional debates. This paper focuses on two aspects of this evaluation: the attitude towards the end of World War II and the significance of the war for Poland's international relations.

27 S. Troebst, '1945. Ein (gesamt-) europäischer Erinnerungsort?', *Osteuropa*, no. 6, 2008.

1945 as a symbol of memory provokes debates in many countries, and the controversy over the date of the end of the war (8 or 9 May) can be considered a symbol of division that appeared during the war and for over half a century impacted the political order and economy in the entire world. In Poland, as well as in other countries of the Soviet Bloc, the alleged date of the end of World War II was heavily publicised by communist politicians and used to legitimise their political system.[28] This propaganda, in combination with personal memories, influenced the attitudes of a vast majority of the society. In 1987, during the last years of Polish People's Republic, almost half (46%) of the respondents still believed that official anniversary of the end of the war, the Victory Day, should be solemnly commemorated and considered one of the most important anniversaries in national history. After the fall of communism, the attitudes towards this day changes. In 2004 only 17% of Poles considered the end of the war a reason for official commemorations.[29] Further research confirms that the attitude of Poles towards World War II is characterised by dialectics of defeat and liberation.[30] Between 2005 and 2014 about two-thirds of the population considered Poland to be the victor of the war, but that majority was divided on what degree of victory it was: about half claimed it was clear victory and a similar percentage believed the victory was only partial. According to the results of 2005 and 2009 surveys, slightly over one-fifth was of the opposite opinion, and this group significantly increased between 2009 and 2014. The TNS survey from 2015 indicates constant percentage of the critical evaluations of the outcome of the war and considerable decrease in the percentage of responses that Poland is a country that won a clear victory in 1945 (Table 7). A relatively high percentage of the latter response is frequent among those who positively evaluate the Polish People's Republic, and the opposite answer is more frequent among respondents who identify themselves as right-wing, and who evaluate the communist period negatively and are interested in history and politics.

28 B. Korzeniewski, '8/9 maja 1945', in S. Bednarek and B. Korzeniewski, (eds.), *Polskie miejsca pamięci. Dzieje toposu wolności*, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 429–433.

29 P.T. Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 285.

30 A. Wolff- Powęska, *Memory as Burden and Liberation*, trans. M. Skowrońska, Frankfurt am Mein, 2015.

Table 7: Evaluation of the outcome of World War II

Percentage

Question: In your opinion, can Poland be considered a victor of World War II?	**2005**	**2009**	**2014**	**2015**
Yes, fully	27	31	30	21
Yes, but not fully	33	31	33	35
No, Poland can hardly be considered a victor of World War II	22	23	27	27
I don't know/hard to say	18	15	10	17
Source:	CBOS N = 1100	M2W/Pentor N=1200	TNS Polska N = 969	TNS Polska N = 1000

The interviewees who evaluated their country as being on the victors' side emphasised that the Polish state belonged to the victorious coalition, and after 1945 was liberated and regained independence. Moreover, justifying their opinion, they underlined the considerable Polish military contribution to the victory and the perseverance of soldiers' struggle and heroism (Table 8). On the other hand, the sense of defeat was usually related to the fact that after 1945 there was 'freedom that brought re-enslavement'.[31] Poland did not regain full independence; it became dependent on the Soviet Union and the communist system was introduced. There were reports of great material losses in addition to the loss of eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic. Another element of the negative evaluation of the war's outcome is the belief that Poland was militarily weak and had no power to change the course of events; the war was a clash of two totalitarian systems, and its outcome was decided by the great powers.

The comparison of results from 2009 and 2015 indicates an increase in the popularity of a narrative emphasising political consequences of the war and the fact that Poland did not regain full independence, and includes surges in unsolicited reference to Poland's status as a satellite state dependent on the Soviet Union, limitation of freedom and human losses the society suffered. At the same time, the popularity of a military narrative, exposing Poland's participation in the victorious coalition and the perseverance in struggle and heroism of Polish soldiers, has decreased.

31 B. Korzeniewski, op. cit., p. 427.

Table 8: Justification for the evaluation of the outcome of World War II

Percentage

Question: In your opinion, can Poland be considered a victor of World War II? Why do you believe so?	**2009**	**2015**
Poland did not regain full independence, but instead became dependent on the Soviet Union	17	21
Material losses suffered as a result of the war, loss of the eastern territories	15	16
Human losses, many people died during the war	7	10
We were among the victorious nations	17	8
Poland was militarily weak, it did not have influence on the course and result of the war	6	7
We regained independence, the war and occupation were over	10	7
Poland was the first to resist, it persevered in fight, it did not capitulate	6	4
Poland did not gain any real advantages from the participation in the war	7	3
Polish soldiers heroically fought in many fronts	5	3
Present situation of Poland, its position in Europe	3	3
Poland was betrayed by its allies, sold and used	2	3
Communism was introduced after the war	3	2
Poles had no influence on what happened to their country after the war	3	1
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1025	TNS Polska N = 826
Open question, spontaneous answers, respondents could provide more than one answer. The table includes only the answers of people who had an opinion of whether Poland can be considered a victor of World War II (the answer 'hard to say' was excluded). Spontaneous answers provided by at least 3% of respondents in at least one of the surveys were included.		

The debate about the outcome of World War II must also include international context, particularly that global interest in collective memory seems to be increasing.[32]

32 E. Langenbacher, 'Collective Memory as a Factor in Political Culture and International Relations', in E. Langenbacher and Y. Shain (eds.), *Power and the Past. Collective Memory and International Relations*, Washington D.C., 2010, pp. 33–35.

The responsibility for the outbreak of World War II is mostly ascribed to Germans. According to a 2009 survey (M2W/Pentor), almost 9 out of 10 respondents answered that Germany was, to a decisive extent, responsible for the outbreak of World War II. Only 8% of respondents, however, considered Germany's responsibility to be substantial. The interviewees often believed the Soviet Union was also to be blamed for the conflict, but in this case, the answer 'to a decisive extent' reached 43% and 'to considerable extent' – 36%. Another popular opinion was about decisive or considerable responsibility of the remaining signatories of the Tripartite Pact (Italy – 40%, Japan – 36%) and the Allies, particularly the Great Britain (28%) and France (24%). The leaders of these strong states, in the opinion of Poles, were too passive and submissive to Germany, and were therefore unable to prevent the outbreak of the conflict.

In the memory of suffering and victims of World War II (Table 9), Poles and Jews occupy a central position: the suffering of both nations was defined as 'great' or 'considerable' by the vast majority of respondents. The comparison of results from 2009 and 2015, however, shows that the number of Poles who believed so decreased, and the decline is slightly more considerable in reference to Jews. These results have allowed for the formulation of a theory that Poles have a sense of rivalry with Jews over who suffered more during the war.

Despite attributing responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict to the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, Poles also perceive citizens of these countries as victims of war suffering. Qualitative research conducted in 2009 for the Museum of World War II (M2W/Pentor) indicates that while talking about war victims, Poles separate ominous political and ideological systems from experiences and behaviour of ordinary people who, to no fault of their own, bore the consequences of political decisions. On the other hand, between 2009 and 2015 the percentage of responses that German and Russian suffering was 'considerable' or 'great' significantly decreased. It is difficult to clearly indicate the reasons for this change of attitude. One can only assume that the debate on German war victims, initiated in the last decade of the 20th century, is increasingly familiar to Poles, encouraging the idea of a growing conflict of memory in the Polish-German relations.[33] For instance, there is a belief that Germans try to present themselves as victims rather than perpetrators responsible for the outbreak of an international conflict. As for the image of Russians in 2015, Russian policy towards Ukraine might be an important factor, along with the increase of international tension and radical

33 Ibid., pp. 85–87.

deterioration of the relations between the Russian Federation and European Union countries (including Poland).

At the same time, Poles relatively rarely recognise the suffering of the Belarusian and Ukrainian nations, which is to some extent a result of the communist politics of memory. The suffering of the population of the Soviet Union was presented in a general manner, without acknowledging particular nationalities of the citizens of the USSR. It is also important to add that between 2009 and 2015 the knowledge of tragic wartime experiences of the two nations increased in Poland. The perception of the Ukrainian wartime history can also be influenced by the memory of brutal ethnic cleansing committed between February 1943 and February 1944 by Ukrainian nationalists against the Polish population on the territory that belonged to Poland prior to 1939.

It is also worth noting that among the nations recognised by Poles as those that had severely suffered during the war, were the Roma and the Japanese.

Table 9: Evaluation of the scope of suffering and victimhood experienced by Poles and other nations

Percentage

How do you evaluate the scope of suffering and victimhood experienced by…	**2009**	**2015**
	Answers: 'great' and 'considerable'	
Poles	93	88
Jews	92	82
Russians	70	53
Roma (Gypsies)	53	48
Ukrainians	39	47
Germans	64	45
Belarusians	31	38
The Japanese	42	37
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200	TNS Polska N = 1000

Past experiences impact the way Poles think of the contemporary world. One often hears that the wartime events have had a negative influence on the relations between Poles and other nations, particularly Germany and Russia. The negative impact of the World War II heritage on the Polish-Ukrainian relations were also frequently mentioned (Table 10), but between 2009 and 2015 the rate of such responses significantly decreased, which is difficult to interpret. Perhaps an increasing number of Poles believe that relations with their neighbours are not

only impacted by the war, which recedes further and further in the past, but also by the last three decades and contemporary circumstances.[34]

Responses acknowledging a positive impact of the war, with regards for instance to Poland's relations with its western allies (particularly England, the US and France), were expressed relatively rarely. The impact of war on the present Polish-Jewish relations brings considerable controversy. In 2009:

- 28% Poles expressed an opinion that the war had a positive influence on the present Polish-Jewish relations;
- 14% held the opposite opinion

This result, comparable to the results from the 2015 TNS survey, seems to result from two different historical narratives. The first, dominant and established for decades, presents Poles as one of the few nations (or even the only one) that, while being simultaneously persecuted, helped Holocaust victims with great sacrifice to themselves. The other, which developed after 1989, discusses Polish indifference towards the fate of Jews and Polish co-responsibility for the Holocaust.

Table 10: Evaluation of the impact of World War II on the present relations between Poles and other nations

Percentage

In your opinion, have the World War II events influenced present relations between Poles and…	**2009**			**2015**		
	–	+/–	+	–	+/–	+
Russians	60	26	8	42	35	11
Germans	64	23	7	33	37	18
Ukrainians	34	25	10	21	48	18
Jews	14	45	28	15	47	24
The English	4	51	34	6	51	30
Americans	3	56	30	6	50	31
The French	5	58	27	5	57	24
Source:	M2W/Pentor N=1200			TNS Polska N = 1000		
+ = positive +/– = neutral, no influence – = negative						

34 O. Schmidtke, 'Re-modelling the Boundaries in the new Europe: Historical Memories and Contemporary Identities in German-Polish Relations', in K. Eder and W. Spohn (eds.), *Collective Memory and European Identity. The Effects of Integration and Enlargement*, Aldershot Hunts/Burlington VT, 2005, pp. 69–85.

Summary

A review of the data obtained from sociological research of social memory indicates that despite the passage of time, the events that occurred between 1939 and 1945 are still relevant for a considerable part of contemporary Polish society, particularly the older generation. Although the informal, family communication still dominates, this communicative memory is clearly weakening together with the generation of people who experienced the war. The social memory of war is to an increasing extent transmitted by culture and mass media; the internet is growing in importance.

The complexity of Polish wartime experiences is preserved in collective memory. The Polish-German conflict and the Nazi crimes are the most important and most intensively remembered. Even the events, which for decades were excluded from public discourse in the Polish People's Republic, have not been forgotten. The fates of the victims of Stalinism, who were murdered, deported to Siberia, forced to take Soviet citizenship, forcibly incorporated into the German army or murdered in Volhynia – are still remembered.

Most Poles have heard accounts about their loved ones who fought against the occupier in regular army troops or underground organisations. However, a civilian perspective is also strongly present in the collective memory. In private conversations, still held today in many Polish homes, people recollect life in the shadow of death, in poverty and humiliation, and sometimes in the hardships of deportation and exile. This image of war does not, in any way, play down the memory of victims and the greatness of heroes – those who have become household names (and referred to in surveys) and those known only by a few.

Research into family communication also reveals two aspects of wartime experience that are not strongly emphasised in the public discourse. The first of them is the role of women. While many men fought, women were responsible for the toils of everyday life – supporting their families, getting food and avoiding the dangers that abounded as a result of warfare and the occupier's repression. The other problem concerns regional variety of wartime experiences and how they influenced the development of regional identities. Past experiences also have an impact on how Poles think of the contemporary world. One can often hear an opinion that wartime experiences have negatively influenced present relations between Poles and other nations, especially Germany and Russia. The opinion of negative influence of the heritage of World War II on Polish-Ukrainian relations is also frequent. The question of the impact of the war on the Polish-Jewish relations brings clear controversy.

Memory of the war is important for national identity. Contemporary image of Polish conduct during the war is dominated by positive stereotypes, although there has been a decrease in recent years in the heroisation of the Polish nation

and an increase in the awareness of negative phenomena that occurred alongside attitudes and behaviour that are positively valued today.

The most important national experiences are believed to be: the continuity of the Polish state, martyrdom and sacrifice, active resistance to the Holocaust and heroic, persistent armed struggle waged by the underground organisations and regular units of the Polish Army on various fronts. The research also indicates that the struggle of the Polish People's Army, e.g. in the Battle of Berlin and left-wing underground movement, which were extensively discussed in the Polish People's Republic, have fallen into oblivion.

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Lech M. Nijakowski

Fighting for Victim Status: Polish Debates on Genocide and the Collective Memory of World War II

Since the end of the Cold War, the international politics of memory has undergone a dynamic transformation.[1] This transformation is not only related to shifts in global alliances and statuses of particular states; it is also connected with the intensification of social changes that are typical of late modernity. Political rituals of atonement have become an important element of national and foreign policy. Countries that used to deny crimes from the past have been forced to face their dark legacy.[2] The status of victims has particularly increased in importance. While in the past nations based their positive self-stereotype on victories and successes, defeat and tragedy are the widespread basis of collective identity today. There is no clear date for the beginning of this phenomenon. In Israel, for instance, the turning point came relatively early, mostly as a result of Eichmann's trial (1961–1962) and the Six-Day-War (1967),[3] although the process of casting Arabs in the role of neo-Nazis could be observed earlier.[4] In the United States, on the other hand, commemoration of victories still prevails: suffice it to mention the controversial debate about the commemoration of Vietnam veterans.[5]

Poles are a particular nation in this respect. Over 123 years, in the period of formation of modern nation states, Poles were deprived of sovereignty and lived in three occupying countries: Prussia (later Germany), Russia and Austria. Numerous unsuccessful uprisings, combined with politicised Catholicism and ideas

1 E. Langenbacher, 'Collective Memory as a Factor in Political Culture and International Relations', in E. Langenbacher and Y. Shain (eds.), *Power and the Past. Collective Memory and International Relations*, Washington, 2010, pp. 13–49.

2 E. Barkan, *The Guilt of Nation. Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, New York, London, 2000.

3 M. Haß, 'The Politics of Memory in Germany, Israel and the United States of America', *The Canadian Centre for German and European Studies*, no. 9, 2004.

4 I. Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, trans. C. Galai, Cambridge, 2005.

5 R. Wagner-Pacifici and B. Schwartz, 'The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a difficult past', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 97, no. 2, 1991, pp. 376–420.

of Romanticism, resulted in the emergence of a particular nationalist discourse, which heroised and sacralised victimhood. Although connecting Catholicism with Polish identity was observable earlier, e.g. when John II Casimir announced the Blessed Virgin Mary as 'the Queen of the Polish Crown', the 19th century was a time when the distinction between Polish and Catholic was rapidly being blurred in public discourse of the 19th century. The occupying countries were perceived from the perspective of their dominating religion: tsarist Russia as an Orthodox empire, and Prussia, later Germany, as Protestant states (although the proportion of Catholics was considerable). The religious differences became a basis for constructing ethnic boundaries.[6] This discourse remains valid. The Second Polish Republic, an entirely independent state, lasted only two decades, followed by total war and the terror of occupation by the Third Reich and the USSR. After the war, the Polish People's Republic (Polish: Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL) was a country dependent on Moscow, in which historical debates were censored and propaganda guidelines were followed. Communist elites in their search for nationalist legitimisation of power[7] helped to reproduce many nationalist myths. The development of free public space and new politics of memory began no earlier than in 1989. This process often abounded in conflicts around dark chapters of history that Poles were only beginning to investigate.

To analyse the debates on genocide in Poland, it is crucial to refer to World War II. The memory of this war remains living history: a subject of family communication and eyewitness debates. For 72% of Poles,[8] World War II is 'a living part of Poland's history, of which one should be constantly reminded.' Therefore, not only it is cultural memory, it is also communicative memory.[9] This paper deals with three streams of the debate. The first involves Polish-Jewish relations both during the war and directly afterwards. Poles who were witnesses and, in some cases, accessories to the Holocaust still struggle with this legacy and compete for the status of one of the most important victims of World War II and for the 'capital of suffering' related to it. The second stream of debate concerns the Polish accusation that the Russians (as a *pars pro toto* for the Soviets in this discourse) were guilty of the crime of genocide, particularly the murder of Polish officers and policemen (symbolised by the cemetery in Katyn). The third stream is related

6 Cf. J. Tazbir, *Łyżka dziegciu w ekumenicznym miodzie*, Warsaw, 2004.

7 M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warsaw, 2001.

8 CBOS, *Siedemdziesiąt lat od wybuchu II wojny światowej*, survey report, 2009.

9 J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination.* New York, 2011.

to the accusation that Ukrainians committed genocide against Poles during the war. The two latter streams of debate are significant in the context of the war in Ukraine and the intensifying propaganda efforts that present Russians as aggressors and Ukrainians as allies of Poland and victims of the aggression. Another stream of debate related to Polish-German relations will not be analysed in this paper, as the subject would require a separate article.[10] Moreover, Polish debates concerning the post-war actions by Poles against Germans (deportations, expulsions, imprisonment in camps, pogroms) rarely refer to genocide.[11]

Theoretical approach and methodology

In this paper, nation is viewed as an imagined community in Benedict Anderson's terms.[12] According to his definition, it is a political community imagined as inherently limited and sovereign. This, however, does not mean that people form nations in a completely free manner. According to Anthony D. Smith,[13] who writes about 'ethnies' in this context, they are rather limited by their cultural heritage. These limitations can be generally referred to as 'path dependence',[14] and consist of very different factors: purely symbolic elements (non-material heritage), specific institutions and modes of production, character of landscape or urban layouts. However, to exist, nations require the routine activities of its members, even if they are not deliberate decisions or careful calculations.

The idea of nation is produced and reproduced by public discourse. The significance of discursive mechanisms has been gradually increasing in modern history. Today they are of the utmost importance. Discourse is defined in this paper as social action that uses symbolic systems (not only language) to give meanings to events, people, states of events, processes, etc., in a particular situation. Discourse materialises in the form of texts, which include written words as well as images, radio and television programmes, internet hypertexts, writing on walls, works of

10 Cf. E. Langenbacher, 'Collective Memory and German-Polish Relations', in E. Langenbacher and Y. Shain (eds.), *Power and the Past. Collective Memory and International Relations*, Washington, 2010, pp. 13–49.

11 For more, see M. Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012; L.M. Nijakowski, *Rozkosz zemsty. Socjologia historyczna mobilizacji ludobójczej*, Warsaw, 2013.

12 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York/ London 2006.

13 A.D. Smith, *Ethnic origins of nations*, Oxford, 1986.

14 D.C. North, 'Economic Performance Through Time', *The American Economic Review*, vol. 84, no. 3, 1994, pp. 359–368.

art or even dance compositions. Discourse is usually associated with a symbolic order: structures and patterns that, in particular, reveal communicative events.[15]

Nationalist discourse has certain universal features. It emphasises national homogeneity and ignores internal differences. As a result, people who do not fit into the positive stereotype are often excluded from the national community. Various national identities are discursively constructed depending on audience, subject, occasion, anniversary, etc.: there is no single universal discourse in a society. Effective reproduction of a nation requires maintaining a belief among people – via various discursive strategies – that they are members of an objectively and eternally existing entity.[16] An important element of this strategy is imposing an official national language, which conceals regional differences.[17] Official commemorative events are not the only contexts in which nation is discursively reproduced. Everyday discursive practices, of which the members of an imagined community are not fully aware, have considerably greater importance. Michael Billig, who writes about banal nationalism,[18] provides numerous examples of these practices.

A strategy of constructing and reconstructing interethnic boundaries has a crucial role in the process of discursive reproduction of a nation. The formation of a boundary requires distinguishing between the national community ('we') and other communities ('them'). For this purpose, it is necessary to expose social and cultural differences, particularly when objective similarity between the groups is considerable. The actors, during interactions with others, more or less spontaneously choose the elements of their group's rich cultural heritage that allow them to present dissimilarities between their group and the others. Depending on the level of intergroup antagonism, the difference may concern national cuisine, holiday traditions, proficiency in a sport discipline, sense of humour, mode of production, artistic skills, etc. Frederic Barth analysed this mechanism in depth in the 1960s.[19]

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15 T.A. van Dijk, 'The Future of the Field: Discourse Analysis in the 1990s', *TEXT*, no. 10, 1990, pp. 133–156; R. Wodak, 'Introduction: Discourse Studies - Important Concepts and Terms', in R. Wodak and M. Krzyżanowski (eds.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Basingstoke, 2008, pp. 1–29.

16 R. Wodak, R. de Cillia, M. Reisigl and K. Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, trans. A. Hirsch and R. Mitten, Edinburgh, 2003.

17 Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. G. Raymond and M. Adamson, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991, pp. 43–65.

18 M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, 1995.

19 F. Barth, *Introduction*, in id. (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Long Grove, Illinois, 1998.

Nationalist discourse influences the content of the collective memory of a society.[20] Not only does it shape an image of the past that supports a belief in the 'eternal' existence of a nation, it also makes the citizens feel comfortable. From this perspective, a frequent act of 'psychologising the nation' (perceiving collective memory or national character as analogous to individual memory and character) is an ideological strategy that aims at subordinating diverse individual needs to a national homogenous entity.[21] Moreover, this discourse emphasises that one's national community is better than others. An important function of collective memory is to support positive identity. This social practice impinges on history as academic discipline. Until recently, a historian had to be a patriot in order to succeed in the academic field,[22] which resulted in him or her contributing to the reproduction of nationalist discourse.

This article is based on the results of many years of studies of Polish public discourse. It refers to the tradition of critical discourse analysis.[23] Due to space limitations and potential difficulty for a foreign reader to understand Polish media system, I will present discursive mechanisms and key topoi on the most general level. The paper also outlines and interprets the results of the research 'World War II in the memory of contemporary Polish society' conducted for the Museum of World War II in Gdansk by Pentor International SA (in this paper referred to in short as 'Pentor research'). This project included qualitative (12 focus group interviews in five cities: Warsaw, Katowice, Bialystok, Przemyśl and Gdansk) and quantitative research carried out between 19 June and 4 July 2009 on a representative sample of adult Poles aged 18 or over.[24] The data was complemented with reports of polls conducted by two centres for public opinion research: CBOS

20 Cf. J.K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret. On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, New York, 2007, pp. 27–30.

21 B. Hamber and R.A. Wilson, 'Symbolic Closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Societies', in E. Cairns and M.D. Roe (eds.), *The Role of Memory in the Ethnic Conflict*, New York, 2003, p. 145.

22 G.G. Iggers, 'Użycia i nadużycia historii: o odpowiedzialności historyka w przeszłości i obecnie', trans. A. Pantuchowicz, in E. Domańska (ed.), *Pamięć, etyka i historia. Anglo-amerykańska teoria historiografii lat dziewięćdziesiątych. Antologia przekładów*, Poznan, 2002, p. 111.

23 R. Wodak, 'Introduction: Discourse Studies…', op. cit.; N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London/New York, 2003.

24 Detailed discussion of the research results: P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010.

and OBOP.[25] Quantitative studies of collective memory have a long tradition in Polish sociology.

Debates on genocide

Genocide is a concept that emerged after World War I (originally as the 'crime of barbarity') and entered academic, legal and common language after World War II. The term is a neologism coined by Raphael Lemkin. It is a combination of the Greek word *genos* (meaning tribe, race or clan) and Latin *caedere* (to beat or to kill).[26] Today the term is commonly known and used – both provocatively and non-provocatively – to create very diverse messages, including problems that are far from mass murders (e.g. 'chicken holocaust' or 'animal genocide' as stated by Peter Singer).

It may seem that over 70 years of debate on genocide allowed scientists to develop a precise conceptual framework and a detailed list of cases that are commonly recognised as genocide and form a basis of analysis for social sciences. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Although on 9 December 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, their definition of genocide as a crime was the subject of heated debates between the superpowers and left much to be desired from a sociological point of view.[27] It is worth remembering that the Nazi criminals were not accused of genocide in Nurnberg. Moreover, as a result of the Cold War *Realpolitik*, no one was formally accused of this crime until the war in the former Yugoslavia, despite the clear acts of genocide that took place there.

Genocide has become a very special term. On the one hand it is a legal and academic term in the dynamically developing field of genocide studies, which not only aim at explaining and understanding the process of genocidal mobilisation, they also intend to create an efficient system of warning against approaching genocide.[28] On the other hand, the word is used as a political label and serves to stigmatise political enemies. History provides all too many examples of this diplomatic

25 In 2012 Pentor Research International SA and Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej, Ltd. merged to form TNS Polska.

26 R. Lemkin, 'Ludobójstwo', *Pro Memoria*, no. 26, 2007, p. 11.

27 P.R. Bartrop and S. Totten, 'The History of Genocide: An Overview', in S. Totten (ed.), *Teaching About Genocide: Issues, Approaches, and Resources*, Greenwich/Connecticut, 2004, pp. 36–39.

28 B. Harff, 'No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 1, 2003.

discursive strategy that exposes the extreme hypocrisy of international politics. A meaningful example is the cynical game around Red Khmers. The overlapping of diverse discourses, intensive emotions expressed by the actors involved and a lack of academic precision make it easy to cause scandal in public debates about genocide.

In my opinion, there are six general discursive strategies of concealing guilt and dealing with the trauma of the victims.[29] The first is denial and minimisation. The most radical version of this strategy is complete silence – obliteration of the traces of events in chronicles, stories and documents. However, as modernisation develops, this strategy is in practical terms unfeasible. A modern version of this strategy is deformation, that is, twisting facts, interpreting them in a radically different way, and calling alternative witnesses. A perfect example of this strategy is permanent denial of the Armenian Genocide (1915–1916) by the Turkish government, or the activities of Holocaust deniers. Another version of this strategy is minimisation of the scale of events. In such a case, the fact of a massacre, ethnic cleansing or genocide is generally recognised but its size and territorial scope is minimised.

The second strategy is exteriorisation/expulsion: different ways of shifting the responsibility of the crime to others. The easiest version is to claim that strangers committed the massacre. Exteriorisation can also involve blaming vague partisan, counterrevolutionary, subversive forces for the crime. The strategy can also implicate blaming the victims for provoking the crime or even murdering members of their own group to frame the other party in the conflict. A frequent version of this strategy is the symbolic expulsion of the members of the national community who committed crimes. For instance, one may say that Hitler was Austrian and the guards of extermination camps were not behaving like 'real Germans'. Exteriorisation and expulsion do not result in disappearance of a dramatic occurrence from collective memory; instead they drastically reinterpret it by covering up real events, processes and figures with their own narrative.

The third strategy is rationalisation, which comes in two versions. The first is to demonstrate that the perpetrators were forced by circumstances to commit the criminal act even though they would have never carried out a blameworthy act in 'human conditions'. The strategy involves emphasising the determining character of circumstances that broke the will of the perpetrators. A universal figure who served to justify German crimes during World War II, particularly the pacifications of villages and repressions in towns, was the partisan-bandit. Nowadays,

29 L.M. Nijakowski, 'Kiedy krwawa plama staje się białą. Polityka pamięci związana z masakrami w XX wieku', in A. Szpociński (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa jako czynnik integracji i źródło konfliktów*, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 167–191.

a terrorist is such a figure in many countries. The other version of this strategy is rationalisation combined with praise. Yes – the massacre was committed, but it was necessary, it prevented a greater evil, it was unavoidable in the prevailing circumstances. This version is less frequently represented but it is present in the public discourse.

The fourth strategy could metaphorically be described as 'the scourge of God.' An event can be interpreted (most often by the victims) as punishment for their sins. This strategy, based on pre-modern residues, is still present in public discourse and is neither rare nor pushed to the peripheries of the Western world. It is enough to refer to religious Jews who perceived the Holocaust – that is, a burnt offering as a sacrifice to God – from a religious perspective. According to them, God turned away from the Jews who did not obey his rules. This strategy is not adopted only by the victims: the perpetrators can also 'with a heavy heart' break the resistance of wicked enemies.

The fifth strategy is the demonisation of perpetrators, which is a particular kind of dehumanisation. Instead of comparing the 'stranger' to an animal and assigning him primitive emotions (as in the case of the Nazi propaganda or the Hutu regime in Rwanda in 1994), the strategy involves depicting the 'stranger' as a demonic figure that is ready to commit a crime so atrocious that even the thought of it paralyses ordinary people. Demonisation of the Nazis was and is a frequent strategy and portrayed SS men such as Mengele as serial killers that seize collective imagination, such as Hannibal Lecter.

Finally, the sixth and least obvious strategy involves identification with the perpetrator. It may have various dimensions. It is most frequently seen from a short-term perspective, referring to the behaviour of the victims of abduction and hostages (the Stockholm syndrome). This paper, however, will focus on a discursive strategy with deeper cultural roots: when the memory of victims has been transformed in such a way that the victims feel as though they were the members of the community of perpetrators or when they situate themselves outside the conflict, although they were murdered, discriminated against and forcibly assimilated for decades or even centuries. An example is the discourse generated by many circles of Native Americans in various countries of Central and South America.

Jews – the Constitutive Other

Polish society recognises the Poles and Jews as the primary victims of World War II. In the Pentor research, the suffering of both nations was evaluated by Poles as great or considerable (93.4% – Poles, 92.2% – Jews). The results can be interpreted as the appreciation of Jewish martyrology, but it seems more important that

according to the respondents Poles suffered as much as Jews, who are referred to as the main victim of war and genocide in international public discourse. In fact, despite the intense development of critical historiography after 1989, the history of Polish-Jewish relations continues to arouse intense emotions.

Invariably and in a very typical manner, Poles defend the image of their national community, wishing to maintain the belief that they belong to a nation of noble victims and heroes and only traitors could have committed crimes. This phenomenon is noticeable in mainstream media and internet forums. One of the examples is an argument among Polish politicians in objection to the phrase 'Polish concentration camps', which appears in Western media.[30] Recently, after the opening of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, an initiative emerged to erect a monument nearby that would commemorate Poles who saved Jews during the German occupation.[31] Many members of the Jewish minority regarded it as an attempt to weaken the symbolic power of the museum.

A wave of debates employing the main discursive strategies discussed above relate to anniversary commemorations or political events. Particularly important realms of memory (in Pierre Nora's terms)[32] were the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Jedwabne pogrom (participation of Poles in a massacre of Jews) and Kielce (a post-war pogrom of Jews).[33] Although there is also a critical discourse that emphasises that the conduct of some Poles during the war was blameworthy, it is often marginalised and excluded from public discourse.

However, there are also subjects in the public debate that destroy the clean-cut image of the Polish national community. In the context of World War II, there are two events of primary importance: *szmalcownictwo* and the pogroms of Jews. *Szmalcownictwo* refers to the blackmailing and denouncing of Jews who were in hiding to the German occupier, particularly after November 1941, when it was commonly known that Jews were mass murdered. Quite frequently, the *szmalcowniks* 'who were avoiding contact with both the resistance movement and the Germans did not need to be afraid of the punishing hand of the underground

30 Cf. 'The Kosciuszko Foundation's petition signed by Bronisław Komorowski President of Poland', http://pacnorthjersey.org/the-kosciuszko-foundations-petition-signed-by-bronislaw-komorowski-president-of-poland/#sthash.vueQVaiQ.dpuf (accessed 23 July 2015).

31 http://www.raff.org.pl/en (accessed 23 July 2015).

32 P. Nora, 'Introduction', in P. Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past. Vol. III*: *Symbols*, trans. A. Goldhammer, New York, 1998, pp. ix–xii.

33 Cf. J.T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Princeton, Oxford, 2006.

state' – some of them continued to hunt Jews even during the Warsaw Uprising, while also fighting against the Germans.[34] However, *szmalcowniks* are considered 'exceptions to the rule' – traitors of the Polish nation who are excluded from the community. Hardly anyone regards them as a part of the national history.

Wartime anti-Jewish pogroms were long a taboo subject – a greater taboo than the interwar pogroms. Jan T. Gross's book *Neighbors*[35] was the first to fill in this blank page in Polish history. The book about how the residents of Jedwabne, in co-operation with the Germans, murdered their Jewish neighbours was a real shock for Polish society and contradicted the representation of the memory of World War II in the public discourse. The broadcast of Agnieszka Arnold's documentary *Sąsiedzi* (*Neighbours*) on public television also played a significant role. A heated and emotional debate ignited over the facts revealed by Gross. While polarising Polish society, it also resulted in the dissemination of information about the crime. According to a CBOS survey[36] conducted at the beginning of April 2001, 83% of respondents had heard about the pogrom (17% had not). Another survey by CBOS,[37] in August of the same year, revealed that the number of people aware of the pogrom had increased to 90%. A survey by Pentor, conducted in 2009 – after the public debate about Jedwabne had quieted down – confirms these results. 70.7% of Poles said that they had heard about the crime committed in Jedwabne in 1941, 25.7% said that they had not and only 3.7 did not answer. It should be noted, however, that 40.9% of respondents aged 29 or younger said that they had never heard about the Jedwabne pogrom.

As the Pentor survey demonstrates, respondents did not have problems with identifying the victims of the crime. 55.9% of those who knew about the crime identified the victims as the Jews from Jedwabne and surroundings, 27.1% as Jews, Polish Jews, or Jewish families, and 19.1% mentioned Poles and Jews. Only 4.4% did not know. However, the question of key importance involved the perpetrators of the pogrom. The answers can be grouped as follows:

1. *The perpetrators were German, even if the occupiers used Polish traitors.* According to approx. 1/3 of those who heard about the crime (36.6%), the perpetrators

34 J. Grabowski, *'Ja tego Żyda znam!'. Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1943*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 55, 128.

35 J.T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton, 2001.

36 CBOS, *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem*, survey report, 2001.

37 CBOS, *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem – przemiany społecznej świadomości*, survey report, 2001.

were the Germans/the German occupiers, fascists or Nazis. 14.6% mentioned the Germans/the German occupiers with the complicity of Polish collaborators, Polish police, or *Volksdeutsche*, 5.7% stated the Germans/the German occupiers with the complicity of Poles.

2. *The perpetrators were Poles, even if the crime was dictated by a specific context of the occupation*. 18% mentioned Poles under the supervision, under the coercion or with the complicity of the Germans/the German occupiers. 8.1% answered: 'perhaps Poles' and 6.5% 'Poles – categorically and without any doubts'.
3. There were also answers that demonstrated *the respondents' complete ignorance*. 9.6% believed the perpetrators were Russians, 1.7% – Ukrainians, 0.4% – Jewish communists, 0.1% – Jews and Poles. Every tenth respondent who heard about the Jedwabne pogrom (10.1%) answered 'I don't know'.

A comparison of these results with those from 2001 demonstrates that the proportion of people who were not able to answer the question about the perpetrators of the pogrom significantly decreased: in 2001 it was 26% (April) and 30% (August) of the population (CBOS), by 2009 it had dropped to 10.1%. This decrease may be considered an effect of Polish society having been informed about the crime, as well as a result of social polarisation. At the same time, there was a significant increase in the fraction that recognised the complicity of the Poles who helped the Germans murder Jews, or were encouraged by them to commit the crime. As one can see, however, the emphasis is primarily placed on German guilt and, secondarily, on Polish guilt. This is an example of the strategy of exteriorisation/expulsion. Although some Poles resorted to the strategy of denial and minimised the scale of the crime (which anonymous internet forums demonstrate, for example), most debaters recognised the fact of the crime but they transferred the responsibility for it to the shoulders of the Germans and their collaborators. Generally, the Germans are treated as the universal perpetrators of all the evil acts that occurred in the occupied territories. This theory is strongly supported in the nations that experienced barbaric pacifications, i.e. mostly Slavic nations that were considered sub-humans by the Nazis.

A growing body of research demonstrates the 'political correctness' of the respondents in the subject of Polish-Jewish relations. In the Pentor survey, the respondents asked whether, in their opinion, the Holocaust is talked about too little or too much in Poland; the majority (52.8%) chose a diplomatic answer 'an appropriate amount'. Only 16.6% answered too much, and 19.2% said too little. 11.4% did not know how to answer. Among the respondents who gave the answer 'too much', there was a greater proportion of people with primary and vocational

education compared to people with secondary and higher education. The inverse relationship was observed in case of the answer 'too little'.

A declaration of pride in people who are symbols of Polish aid for Jews can be considered a kind of defensive strategy that may or may not be intentional. Generally, the question in the Pentor survey about whether there were people in Polish society during World War II of whom Poles today could be proud was answered positively by 70.4%. Among the listed persons, Irena Sendlerowa ranked highly, placed fourth (5.4%), after Władysław Sikorski (22.4%), Władysław Anders (15.3%) and Maximilian Kolbe (6.8%). One should add that Kolbe is widely recognised in Poland as a symbol of sacrifice for others and his promotion of anti-Semitic narratives is not remembered. Janusz Korczak was mentioned by 2.5%. Other figures who were significant for Polish-Jewish relations (e.g. Jan Karski) had minimal ratings. To the next question – why Poles can be proud of the chosen person – 5.7% (of the entire sample; the percentages refer to the entire sample unless otherwise specified) answered due to the assistance they gave to Jews. This answer came seventh and was more common than 'leading the nation/Poles/Poland/the state' (4.5%) or 'forming the army' (4.2%).

When asked directly whether Poles helped Jews to survive the war (Pentor survey), the respondents have no doubt about it: 81.5% answered 'quite often' or 'very often'. They are equally certain that Poles did not denounce Jews to the occupier: 75.8% answered 'very rarely' or 'quite rarely'. According to the respondents, Poles were also not indifferent about the extermination of Jews ('very rarely' or 'quite rarely' – 74.9%). Generally speaking, the respondents believe that the attitude and actions of Polish society towards Jews, although perhaps not exemplary, were correct. Only 27.2% respondents answered positively to the question whether there were people during World War II who brought shame to the good name of Poles. When asked about the persons who brought shame, only 1.3% mentioned thieves, looters, pretend partisans, *szmalcowniks*. Only 0.4% provided direct references to people who denounced or persecuted Jews and only 0.3% referred to chauvinism, national megalomania, contempt for other nations or discrimination against a minority when answering the question about why Poles brought shame to the nation during the war.

The answers to the question about national pride and shame clearly demonstrate that Polish society does not feel shame for Polish-Jewish relations during the war. On the contrary, Poles believe they passed this test, which can be proved by the fact that they risked their lives to help Jews. Even the pre-war anti-Semitism and racism seem unimportant from this perspective. However, the few Poles who adopt a critical attitude and list the reasons for shame often refer to the denouncement of Jews during the war.

Jews are a very important reference category for Polish national identity. Although for a long time small in number as a minority (according to the Polish census of 2011, only 7,353 people in Poland are Jewish – 0.019% of the Polish population), Jews occupy a central position in the sphere of collective, national imagination. A Jew is the constitutive other, with whom Poles constantly compare themselves and compete for their status as victim in World War II. A telling symbol of this process is the Polish appropriation of a specific site of memory – Auschwitz-Birkenau – that started shortly after the liberation of the camp[38] and manifested itself with redoubled strength after 1989.[39] The constitutive other is a universal topos of the Polish public discourse, which involves a very diverse category of others. That is why the Other in the public space is *Judaised*, which can be observed in the discourse of football fans, politicians or religious fundamentalists.

Russians – the eternal enemy

In the Pentor survey, the respondents were asked whether there were any family memories about contact between their family members and other nations during World War II and, if yes, what those memories were. Family memories preserved narratives about four nations in particular: Germans (48.7%), Russians (40.8%), Jews (32.3%) and Ukrainians (14.7%). None of other nations reached 10%. It turned out that three nations were cast in the role of enemies – the German, the Russian and the Ukrainian. It is surprising that Ukrainians occupy the first position in terms of very bad memories, Germans the second and Russians the third. Merging the answers 'very bad' and 'quite bad' into one category changes nothing in the hierarchy: Ukrainians (63.8%), Germans (62.6%), and Russians (57%).[40] I will begin the analysis with Russians. The stereotypical representations of otherness and the hostility of this nation have been reproduced in public discourse since 1989.

The murder of officers of the Polish Army and policemen (not only of Polish nationality), and prisoners of war, then buried in Katyn, Mednoye and Kharkov, became for Poles a significant symbol of Soviet crimes. 91.1% respondents of the Pentor survey had heard about this crime (6.7% had not, 2.3% did not know).

38 Z. Wóycicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944–1950*, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 105–172.

39 M. Kucia, *Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny. Historia, współczesność i świadomość społeczna KL Auschwitz w Polsce*, Cracow, 2005, pp. 52–58.

40 The results do not refer to the entire population but only to the families that have memories of relations with particular nations.

Such a significant number (even 85.2% of people with primary education) demonstrates that in the eyes of Poles, the Katyn massacre has long been one of the key symbols of World War II. According to the CBOS survey,[41] in October 1987 82% of Poles had heard about the Katyn massacre and in April 2008, it had risen to 93%. Every fifth person knew about a site commemorating the victims of the Katyn massacre in their town (19%) but the majority had not heard about it (63%; 'hard to say' – 18%). In 1999 in a CBOS survey,[42] 10% of respondents chose the Katyn massacre as the most significant event in Polish history of the 20th century. Therefore, one may conclude that this crime is an important symbol of national martyrology that defines the identity of Polish society.

Asked about the responsibility for the Katyn massacre (Pentor survey), Poles mentioned 'the Soviet Union' or 'the NKVD' (52.3%) or 'Russians', 'the Rus people', '*Moskal*', 'Soviets/Bolsheviks' (44.8%). Therefore, abstracting from the connotations of the above listed terms, it should be noted that most Poles rightly identified the USSR as responsible for the crime. 9%, however, continued to believe that 'the Germans', 'the Nazis' or 'the Third Reich' were to blame (according to the quoted CBOS survey, 5% of Poles believed that 'Nazi Germany' committed the crime). 4.9% answered 'the Russians and the Germans' (CBOS 1987 – 16%; 2008 – 3%), 2.5% – Ukrainians, 0.4% – Jews, 0.2% – Poles. Interestingly, 6.6% answered, 'I don't know whom to believe/ I don't know'.

The Katyn massacre is considered by many Poles to be genocide against the Polish nation, committed by NKVD officers or Russians. They demand this fact be recognised, the perpetrators face the consequences (punishment, at least symbolic) and the victims be paid damages. They do not realise, however, that the crime of genocide appeared in law together with the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and, according to Roman law, *lex retro non agit* (a law does not apply retroactively) and *nullum crimen sine lege* (there is no crime without a pre-existing penal law). Therefore, those who demand formal recognition of the Katyn massacre as genocide are in contradiction with expert legal discourse. However, one should add for the record that there are also opinions that a law can be applied retroactively when, as in this case, it is actually natural law. Such a view was presented by a right-wing politician, Karol Karski, a prominent member of Law and Justice party, in his academic paper.[43]

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41 CBOS, *Pamięć o zbrodni Katyńskiej i ocena jej znaczenia dla stosunków polsko-rosyjskich*, survey report, 2008.

42 CBOS, *Ludzie i wydarzenia w historii polski XX wieku*, survey report, 1999.

43 K. Karski, 'Mord Katyński jako zbrodnia ludobójstwa w świetle prawa międzynarodowego', *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 2011, no. 2, pp. 51–82.

Polish public discourse usually ignores the fact that Poles were not the only victims of the Katyn massacre: Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews also died (8% of the victims were Jews[44]). Unlike in the case of the Holocaust, for example, the sacrifices made for the community of perpetrators were honoured: the lives of Polish Soviet agents were saved.[45] To say that Katyn was not genocide is considered scandalous in the Polish discourse. The following quote is only one of numerous examples: 'Not coincidentally, two days after the last meeting with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Mr Bronisław Komorowski admitted in a television interview that the Katyn massacre was not genocide. Thus, he perfectly followed the Kremlin's consistent political line.'[46] Those who do not call the Katyn massacre genocide are thus considered traitors who support the standpoint of the hostile Russians.

Poles and Ukrainians – cycles of bloody revenge

The bloody Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the *Kresy* was an outbreak of ethnic and class tensions lasting for many centuries, amplified by the struggle over the borders of the new Poland and the nationality policy of the Second Polish Republic. The slogan 'Poles east of the San river!' already appeared around 1907. The first Polish soldiers and civilian refugees were murdered by Ukrainian nationalists in September 1939.[47] The invasion of the Wehrmacht and the occupier's policy antagonised Poles and Ukrainians even more. The actual ethnic cleansing was started by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in 1943 in Volhynia and until 1944, killed 75,000 to 100,000 victims. The action was intended to cleanse the controversial lands from Poles so as – by fait accompli – they would be recognised as a part of independent Ukraine after the war. Many Polish journalists and researchers define the acts of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army as genocide.[48] Ukrainian historiography refers to these events as a Polish-Ukrainian war, in which Ukrainians fought for independence

44 T. Snyder, *Skrwawione ziemie. Europa między Hitlerem a Stalinem*, trans. B. Pietrzyk, Warsaw, 2011, p. 162.

45 Ibid., pp. 158–159.

46 R. Kotomski, 'Cztery dni: Smoleńsk–Katyn–Mińsk', http://autorzygazetypolskiej.salon24.pl/301040,cztery-dni-smolensk-katyn-minsk (accesed 24 April 2011).

47 Cz. Partacz and K. Łada, 'Kto zaczął? Polacy i Ukraińcy na Lubelszczyźnie w latach 1941–1943', in G. Motyka and D. Libionka (eds.), *Antypolska akcja OUN-UPA 1943–1944. Fakty i interpretacje*, Warsaw, 2002, pp. 33–40.

48 W. Siemaszko and E. Siemaszko, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na ludności polskiej Wołynia 1939–1945*, vol. 1–2, Warsaw, 2000.

for their native lands[49]. Without doubt, however, most of the victims were Poles, particularly civilians. The conflict in Volhynia was asymmetrical. Yet, Poles killed Ukrainians not only in self-defence, but also in occasionally bloody reprisal.[50]

The conflict lasted – although, of course, on a smaller scale – until the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was overpowered in 1947 as a result of Operation Vistula,[51] which, however, also involved the forced resettlement of the Ukrainian and Lemko population. The operation received support from the Polish population, which the communist elites used to legitimise their power. Therefore, the Polish-Ukrainian conflict can be defined as an 'intractable conflict'[52] and societies involved in this type of conflict need to develop appropriate societal beliefs that enable them to cope successfully with the conflict situation. As a result of the stifling of the debate on this subject in the Polish People's Republic, many abnormal narratives and images perpetuated, impeding the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue and revision of the content of collective memory.

According to the Pentor survey, the majority of Poles (56.5%) know about the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Volhynia and East Galicia during World War II. 37.7% did not know about it, and 5.8% could not say whether they knew about it. According to the majority of those who had heard about the conflict, its victims were mostly Poles (61%). 38.3% mentioned Poles and Ukrainians, 6.9% - Ukrainians alone, 3.5% – Jews, 2.2% – Russians and only 2.5% could not answer.

As for the responsibility for the bloody conflict, the respondents listed the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Ukrainian nationalists or the Ukrainian army (43.2%) and Ukrainians (31.4%). They also recognised the responsibility of the superpowers who were interested in creating conflict between the dependent countries: Russians/Soviets/Stalin/the NKVD/the USSR were mentioned by 12.5% (Russians and Ukrainians by 4.3%), Germans by 5.6% (Germans and Ukrainians – 4.4%), Poles and Ukrainians ('mutual slaughter', etc.) by 11.9%. 2.2% of the respondents mentioned only the Polish side (Poles/the Polish state/the Home Army). 7.5% of those who knew about the conflict were not able to identify the perpetrator.

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49 B. Berdychowska, 'Wołyń – wspólna refleksja nad przeszłością, czy samotne rozpamiętywanie o krzywdzie?', *Biuletyn Ukrainoznawczy*, no. 9, 2003.

50 G. Motyka, 'Polska reakcja na działania UPA – skala i przebieg akcji odwetowych', in G. Motyka and D. Libionka (eds.), *Antypolska akcja OUN-UPA 1943–1944. Fakty i interpretacje*, Warsaw, 2002, pp. 81–85.

51 Polish: Akcja Wisła.

52 D. Bar-Tal, 'Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, no. 9, 1998, pp. 22–50.

Therefore, in the eyes of the Polish general public, the undisputable victims of this conflict were the Poles, and the perpetrators were the Ukrainians. This image, however, is not black and white, as a significant part of Polish society acknowledges that the victims could also be Ukrainian but they do not specify who their executor was – other Ukrainians (as we know, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army also murdered Ukrainians who supported Poles and the political opposition) or Poles (in retaliatory actions). The negative involvement of the Third Reich and the USSR is also recognised. Generally, however, according to the respondents, the conflict was asymmetrical and it was not a civil war of two equal enemies, as Ukrainian historiography presents it.

The results of the Pentor survey from 2009 seem to confirm the tendency to 'humanise' the image of the conflict or, in other words, to gradually recognise the Ukrainian victims. The opinion that the Ukrainian side also suffered has become so established that in 2009 it was expressed without solicitation, as an answer to an open question about the victims of the conflict. However, one should bear in mind that Poles do not adequately acknowledge the suffering and victimhood of the Ukrainian nation over the entire course of the war. Only 38.9% of Poles evaluated the suffering and victimhood of Ukrainians resulting from World War II as considerable or great. 17.7% believe that the suffering was minimal or non-existent. Thus, the Ukrainian victims of the Volhynia massacre seem to be perceived as 'Polish allies': spouses of mixed marriages who did not betray their partners, members of the Polish resistance movement, civilians, and political opponents of the Ukrainian nationalist organisations.

A discursive strategy used in narratives about the retaliatory actions of Polish partisans can be described as 'rationalisation-determinism'. Hardly anyone denies nowadays that Poles also killed Ukrainians, including innocent civilians. However, a belief that is observed in these narratives is that Poles were provoked to act by the bestiality of the Ukrainians. The Home Army and armed Polish citizens protected civilians who would otherwise have been murdered by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Polish attacks were motivated only by military aims, while the civilian casualties were a tragic mistake. This, however, is not true. What happened in the Polish *Kresy* during the war was a cruel Polish-Ukrainian conflict and ethnic cleansing. Both sides resorted to massacres, tortures and rapes that were intended to terrify the enemy, prevent it from further military action and force it to flee. Polish (also historical) discourse, however, underlines that the opponent was to blame and minimises or conceals one's own blameworthy acts.

In contrast to the anti-Russian discursive approach in most Polish media, the attitude to the Ukrainians was and remains rather positive. Discourse analysis indicates that the 'common enemy' in the form of Russians triggers narratives

that focus on common strategic interests and cultural community. This does not mean, however, that the attitude to Ukrainians is clearly positive. Sections of public opinion and some journalists demand that Ukrainians recognise the Volhynia massacre as genocide. These opinions have been expressed since 1989, particularly among the *Kresowiacy*: people who forcibly or voluntarily moved to the Polish People's Republic from the eastern territories that belonged to Poland before the war. A considerable number of them settled in the former German lands that Poland gained after the war. Although the Polish state undertook actions against Ukrainian memorials and plaques commemorating the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, they should be seen as a part of the politics of memory related to a symbolic threat from the Ukrainian minority in Poland.

The clear support for Ukraine from the Polish authorities in relation to the War in Donbass and the intensification of the anti-Russian discourse impede the argumentation of the supporters of recognising the Volhynian slaughter as genocide. Although their voices are not heard in the mainstream media, they have not disappeared. Bronisław Łagowski, for example, a professor emeritus who writes for the leftist *Przegląd* magazine, continuously returns to the Ukrainian crimes and believes that the debate was forcibly silenced: 'The silent – let no one publicise it! – retrospective reconciliation with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and their *Banderism* continues.'[53]

In the case of this conflict, the fact that Poles were the victims of a brutal crime is indisputable. From a sociological point of view, however, it was an ethnic cleansing rather than genocide. Nevertheless, it has become a perfect foundation upon which to build the Polish community of suffering.

Summary

The way that modern societies within national states reproduce and perceive themselves as objectively existing nations leads to a bias in memory that is impossible to remove. Critical attitudes to the past of one's own group do not dominate in any country, which has been demonstrated by opinion polls for a long time. TNS OBOP,[54] for instance, asked in 2006 'Should Poles be proud of their history more, less, or as much as other nations?' It turned out that the majority of Poles answered more (53%), 42% said as much as other nations, and 3% said less ('hard to say' – 2%). This tendency is even more apparent in case of a question concerning national suffering. Asked whether the Polish nation suffered in their history

53 *Przegląd*, 13–19 July 2015.

54 TNS OBOP, *Polacy wobec swojej historii*, survey report, 2006.

more, less or as much as other nations, the majority of Poles (62%) answered 'more than other nations'. 34% answered: 'as much as other nations' and 2% 'less than other nations' ('hard to say' – 2%). Such social attitudes should be challenged in a national debate that reveals the dark side of Polish national past: blameworthy conduct towards other nations as well as internal divisions and treason, such as denouncing other Poles to the Gestapo. Social responses to this debate are diverse and are sometimes stormy and emotional.

Without doubt, World War II was an apocalypse for Poles. The criminal policy of the Third Reich, the brutal Soviet occupation and the Polish-Ukrainian conflict brought untold suffering. This is impossible to deny. The problem, however, is beautification of the image of the Polish nation. Positive auto-stereotypes often impede a debate about the criminal and blameworthy conduct of compatriots during the war and immediately afterwards. The nationalist discourse presents Poles as innocent victims and Polish perpetrators of a crime (who are acknowledged with difficulty) are symbolically removed from the national community.

Debates on genocide are a good example of this phenomenon. The term is treated as an incredibly important symbol of the greatest suffering. Thus, it is eagerly demonstrated in Poland that Poles were victims of genocide, and the perpetrators, in addition to the Germans, were the Russians (Soviets) and Ukrainians. On the other hand, those who mention Polish participation in the Holocaust – which was very limited in comparison to many other occupied European countries – face very emotional reactions. According to many debaters, Poles were not the perpetrators, they weren't even the bystanders, but they were actively involved in helping Jews (which is believed to be demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the Righteous Among the Nations are Poles – it is an often topos of the Polish discourse). Competing for victimhood status and a position in the hierarchy of suffering persists and, by all appearances, it will have a crucial role in the discursive reproduction of Polish imagined community for a long time to come.

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Bartosz Korzeniewski

World War II in the Politics of Memory of the Polish People's Republic 1944–1970

World War II occupied a particularly important role in the politics of memory of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic from the very beginning of the creation of the state. The war was a traumatic experience for all Poles. The immensity of the destruction and loss it brought was unimaginable. Thus, one should not be surprised that, based on this authentic trauma, the communists who seized power with the assistance of the Soviet Union attempted to build a system of social representations that would increase the chances of acquiring popular support. A suitable interpretation of the war that had just ended carried great symbolic capital and the use of this capital offered a chance to consolidate power. The attitude to World War II was, in principle, the only area where the new power could hope to develop some form of agreement with the general public. In later periods, particularly after 1956, an official tradition of celebrating Polish struggles for independence was developed around the events of World War II. It served to give meaning to the efforts of the war generation and was deftly used by the state propaganda to create national legitimation of the communist power that would replace the previously used class legitimation.

The politics of memory related to World War II were completely in line with the propagandistic activities of the authorities. Their main objective was to find justification for using force to impose a completely foreign, imported political system. A skilfully concocted image of the past could play a key role in the process of gaining social legitimation by the communists. Low legitimation of the communist rule in Poland made it necessary for the new authorities to present their rule as a part of a longer tradition. In principle, this task demanded writing the entire narrative of Polish history anew. Such an attempt was made by the communists directly after their seizure of power. Barbara Szacka's analyses[1] demonstrated that this new vision of history was distinguished by introducing a radical, double dichotomisation. History was divided into the period before and after World War II (a radical turn was the victory of people's democracy in 1944) and into the 'right' and 'healthy' people's history versus the ideologically hostile 'noble' history. As a result of the overlapping of these dichotomies, positive value was attached only to people's history (history

1 B. Szacka, 'Pamięć zbiorowa i wojna', *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 2002, no. 2, pp. 11–28.

of the Polish labour movement, People's Army[2] partisan battles, the emergence of the Union of Polish Patriots,[3] the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation[4] or the emergence of the Provisional Government of National Unity)[5] and to selected and properly interpreted events from earlier history, which were a kind of prefiguration of the later victory of the masses (The Kostka Napierski Uprising [a peasant revolt], the Peasant Uprising of 1846, some aspects of the Kościuszko Uprising). The 'noble' history, which was negatively evaluated by the communist authorities, was related to the social classes that were privileged in the eyes of the communists: the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the 'unprogressive' intelligentsia. This part of history was subjected to extensive criticism, while people's history was positively evaluated. The latter covered all the attempts of the oppressed – peasants and labourers supported by a narrow group of 'progressive' intelligentsia – to have their say, which took the form of people's uprisings, peasant revolts, labour strikes, the struggle of the working class, etc. The entire history of Poland until World War II was presented with the emphasis on a narrow stream of 'pre-efforts', that is, sparse 'proper' (from the authorities' point of view) strivings in the ocean of retrogressive forces. The period after the radical changes brought about by World War II was considered to be a new chapter when the oppressed gained power – hence the necessity of a radical revision of history. What happened before 1944 was not entirely rejected; some events were interpreted as attempts to go in the right direction. The process of legitimation of power involved referring to the Polish national tradition but this tradition had been earlier radically revalued.

The authorities' strategy related to the politics of memory between 1944 and 1989 was far from consistent. The dynamic development of the politics of memory in this period involved a considerable range of methods and a relatively wide scale of changes that were introduced by those in power. However, the ideological and propaganda objectives related to shaping the historical consciousness of society stayed the same. A belief that seems dominant in literature is that the events of 1956 had the greatest influence on the modification of the official politics of memory.[6] Thus, when discussing the evolution of the politics of memory, one often uses a simple division into the actions of the authorities before and after 1956

2 Polish: Armia Ludowa, AL.

3 Polish: Związek Patriotów Polskich, ZPP.

4 Polish: Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN.

5 Polish: Tymczasowa Rada Jedności Narodowej, TRJN.

6 See e.g. A. Szpociński, 'Obraz przeszłości w słuchowiskach radiowych dla młodzieży szkolnej (lata 1982–1984)', in B. Szacka (ed.), *Polska dziecięca*, Warsaw, 2005, p. 235. Cf. A. Szpociński, 'Przeszłość i środki przekazu', in A. Szpociński, P.T. Kwiatkowski, *Przeszłość*

and emphasises the attempts to build a conciliatory image of Polish history that were initiated by the political thaw. However, considering the politics of memory about World War II and significant differences between the preliminary stage of the development of the politics of memory (until 1948) and the Stalinist period, one should introduce additional categories to this classification. At least three stages should be distinguished in the politics of memory about World War II:

- Preliminary mobilisation of propaganda resources while keeping methods hidden, which resulted from the necessity of gaining and consolidating political power (1944–1948). At this stage, the events of World War II played a key role.
- Attempts to radically remodel the historical consciousness of Poles in the Stalinist period (1948–195), when World War II almost completely disappeared from the canon of official memory.
- Gradual modification of the politics of memory after 1956, characterised by a tendency to extend the official canon of memory. At this stage, the events of World War II were used to build an official tradition of struggle.

1.

The key role of World War II in the politics of memory of communists was already clear in the first period of their seizure and consolidation of power. World War II became a basis for creating a mythology of victory. The victory won by the Polish soldier, arm in arm with the Red Army, combined with the victory of the new political system assumed the proportions of the greatest triumph in Poland's history. The importance attached by the communists to World War II can be observed by analysing changes made to the official calendar of public holidays. Anniversary celebrations and public holidays are one of the most important instruments of shaping the politics of memory. They play an extremely important role in mobilising society's historical consciousness by allowing state institutions to promote their interpretation of the past. Aware of this fact, communists acted quickly and efficiently in this field, using the events of World War II instrumentally. The prewar calendar of public holidays was quickly and radically revised. The celebration of 11 November (the anniversary of regaining independence in 1918) and 3 May (the anniversary of the declaration of the Constitution of 3 May, 1791) were banned in 1946. Before they had even been banned, three new commemoration days were introduced. Two of them were directly related to World War II – the

jako przedmiot przekazu, Warsaw, 2006; L.M. Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci*, Warsaw, 2007.; S. Bębenek, *Myślenie o przeszłości*, *Myślenie o przeszłości*, Warsaw, 1981.

National Day of Victory and Liberty, celebrated on 9 May and a state holiday since 9 May 1945, and the Armed Forces Day on 12 October – the anniversary of the Battle of Lenino in 1943 (it was not, however, a public holiday). The third commemoration day, the National Day of Poland's Revival, was an attempt to build a founding myth for the new political power. A public holiday since 22 July 1945, the day was a commemoration of the fictional date of launching the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation – an event to which the communists wanted to assign crucial importance in the process of taking political power.

It should be noted that commemorations of the end of World War II were introduced the day the war became history. Thus, the mobilisation of national memory after the tragedy of World War II was immediately used for political purposes. All the above-mentioned holidays were founded on the appropriation of widely accepted values for the purposes of the consolidation of symbolic power by the communists. As Elżbieta Hałas notes, particularly the National Day of Victory and Liberty was 'a functional symbolic intervention, which initially fostered the citizens' identification with the new state and which objectified and sublimed the collective experience of recovering from the war trauma.'[7]

The symbolic meaning of the National Day of Victory and Liberty was partly included in the name of the holiday. It was an attempt by the communist government to impose an interpretation of the end of World War II as a victory for Poland, to take the credit for this victory and to usurp the right to represent the whole nation. Moreover, the holiday immediately started to occupy an extremely important role in creating the myth of victory, one of the fundamental elements of the communists' historical narrative. An example of the skilful management of the politics of memory by those in power was the use of the hatred towards the Germans that dominated social consciousness after the war to reach their political objectives.

The Armed Forces Day referred to the memory of the Battle of Lenino on 12 October 1943, which was a baptism of fire for the Polish army divisions formed in the USSR under Soviet control and consisting of Poles released from Soviet camps as a result of the Polish-Soviet agreement. Commemoration of this day was intended to popularise the myth of the Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms. It served to help impose an interpretation of the Polish struggle during the war, according to which military formations subject to or strictly related to the Red Army (First and Second Polish Armies) and communist partisan forces (People's Army and People's Guard)[8]

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7 E. Hałas, 'Symbole publiczne a polska tożsamość. Zmiana i niejednoznaczność w kalendarzu świąt państwowych III Rzeczpospolitej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2001, issue 3–4, p. 58.

8 Polish: Gwardia Ludowa.

took most credit for fighting against the Germans while the merits of the organisations related to the Polish Underground State (Home Army)[9] were noticeably marginalised. This interpretation was maintained until the end of the political system despite the modification of the attitude to the Home Army after 1956.

These symbolic inventions used the most important values of national tradition, to which society was very attached: glory and heroism on the battlefield, freedom and rebirth of the fatherland to create a historical narrative of one political group while falsifying the recent past while memories of it were still being formed. This proved that the communists attached great importance to national legitimation, which they tried to gain by referring to the past and that they could pragmatically use a properly adapted image of the past to reach political goals.

Aware of the deep respect and attachment to tradition in Polish society, the communists led their propagandistic offensive in a deliberate and careful way. In the first period of the imposition of power, they tried to camouflage the real character and purposes of their actions, respecting, on a symbolic level, the attachment of Poles to the Catholic Church and to the tradition of the Polish struggle for independence. The main characteristics of the historical propaganda of the time were the attempts to combine old and new symbolism. The best example is that commemoration acts performed by the communists, particularly in the first two years, were often accompanied by religious rituals (which had an ambiguous undertone, considering that the highest communist authorities participated in them). The reason for these endeavours was an attempt to reduce the unwillingness to participate in the commemoration rituals. It should be noted that, until 1948, when the communists' main objective was the fight against the underground, the elimination of legal opposition and monopolisation of political power, they tried to win the favour of the general populace to some extent.

In this period, the strategy of the politics of memory adopted by the communists could be described as the attempts to appropriate the tradition of the Polish struggle for independence instead of only replacing it by establishing new traditions. This phenomenon seems to have resulted from their desire to be part of a longer national tradition. One of the examples was the attention paid by the communists to Westerplatte, a very important site of memory in Polish society, such as with their organisation of the Sea Festival[10] in Gdansk on 29 June and 1 July 1945. The propaganda related to this event was directed at reinforcing a belief among Poles about the patriotism of the new authorities and their desire

9 Polish: Armia Krajowa.

10 Polish: Święto Morza.

to continue pre-war maritime traditions. The authorities wanted the defence of Westerplatte to be an element of social memory that would legitimise the historical grounds of the communist power and consistently combined this event with the battles of the Polish 1st Armoured Brigade of the Defenders of Westerplatte (a military unit of the First Polish Army, formed under the command of General Zygmunt Berling in the USRR territory) for the 'liberation' of Pomerania in 1945.[11]

Despite noticeable signs of toning down the historical politics, the authorities remained very consistent in striving to achieve their propaganda objectives. The reasoning behind the historical propaganda was constantly subjected to realising current political needs in the struggle against the 'reaction'. The most important goals were to discredit the myth of the Polish struggle for independence and to use the value of independence in their narrative but modify its meaning. This problem is worth a closer look as the events of World War II were assigned a key role in these efforts.

A clear example is the official version of the process of seizing power by the communists. Włodzimierz Suleja aptly recapitulates it, referring to Gomułka's speech from 1946. 'Before September 1939, independence was equal to the rule of reactionary forces'. This situation changed after 'the destruction of reactionary state apparatus', which happened 'as a result of the September defeat'… Democratic forces represented by communists and their allies proved stronger than the opposition forces after the latter discredited itself 'in the eyes of the Polish nation because of the September defeat and the anti-Soviet policy of the government in exile'. The final element that allegedly brought the democratic camp to power, they claimed, was the fact that it was carried by the waves of 'the struggle for national liberation' while the opposition forces called only to be ready to fight rather than actually fight.[12]

Although the communists attempted to 'reinforce the belief that the restitution of the Polish state in its interwar shape was merely an attempt to restore the post-Sanation[13] political system',[14] they did not completely break continuity with the Second Polish Republic or blame all the pre-war politicians to the same degree. As

11 See K. Zajączkowski, *Westerplatte. Mechanizmy kształtowania się i funkcjonowania miejsca pamięci w latach 1945–1989*, pp. 227–228, Ph.D. thesis, www.sbc.org.pl/Content/96273/doktorat.

12 W. Suleja, 'Mit niepodległości w dobie PRL', in Z. Kwiecińska (ed.), *Polskie mity polityczne XIX i XX wieku. Kontynuacja*, Wroclaw, 1996, p. 76.

13 Sanacja (Sanation) was a Polish interwar political movement. The name symbolised 'sanation' (healing) of Polish moral and political life.

14 W. Suleja, op. cit., p. 77.

Suleja notes: 'Mikołajczyk was spared, Sikorski was excused, and all the blame – particularly for the shape of Polish-Soviet relations – was put on Raczkiewicz, Sonskowski, Anders and the Home Army command.'[15] The primary accusation levelled at them was their involvement with the London-based government and the 'Katyn scandal' and causing the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, 'not for the benefit of the country but to save their own clique.'[16] An interesting element of these official interpretations of history is the desire to use independence as a value to legitimise the new political system rather than disavow it, but only after modifying it according to the official ideology. The popularised image of the Second Polish Republic was thus influenced by the presence of the government in exile. Although deprived of international recognition at the time, the London-based government remained as evidence of the continuation of the pre-war state. As such, it was perceived as a significant obstacle on the way to the legitimation of the new political power. The necessity to discredit the government in exile entailed an interpretation of the Second Polish Republic as a wasted, squandered opportunity for independence. This opportunity was presented as possible only after World War II, and the only guarantors of its success were communists.

The new reading of history also included the interpretation of 1 September 1939 and 17 September 1939 as well as the question of sharing credit in the fight against the German occupier. The September defeat of 1939 was presented as evidence that the Second Polish Republic was incapable of independent existence and doomed to collapse. In their efforts to create a negative image of September 1939, the communists did not stop at using propaganda clichés produced by Nazi Germany, such as the myth of Polish light cavalry attacking German tanks during the September campaign (which did not happen). For the Nazis, the myth was intended to prove the backwardness of the Polish army and the stupidity of Poles, while the communist propaganda used the myth as a symbolic illustration of the underdevelopment and political short-sightedness of capitalist Poland. However, this fact did not prevent the authorities from using particular elements of the September Campaign, such as the Battle of Westerplatte, to achieve their instrumental, propaganda objectives.

A great problem was the interpretation of 17 September 1939: the day of the Soviet invasion of the eastern areas of the Second Republic. Communist propaganda, which was completely silent on the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact against Poland, viewed 17 September was a preliminary stage on the way to defeating

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.

Nazi Germany and fighting for better state borders for Poland that would ensure its secure existence based on the alliance with the Soviet Union.

The authorities used various methods and strategies in their politics of memory about World War II. A strategy of exclusion was used in relation to the Katyn massacre and the harm done to the Polish population in the east by the Soviet Union after 1939. These events, which were the most important elements of the memory of Soviet oppression cultivated by the Poles, were sentenced to complete oblivion in the official memory. A strategy of intense falsification was used regarding the tradition of the Polish underground struggle during the occupation, which was as important for Polish society as the Katyn massacre. The attempts to falsify the memory of the Warsaw Uprising were of key importance. The choice of strategy was determined by a combination of political and geopolitical factors as well as socio-demographic conditions. The former, geopolitical requirements – the alliance with the Soviet Union – were of key importance for the politics of memory. They caused the removal of certain events from the official version of history regardless of current political objectives and changes in the party hierarchy. Most importantly, when the alliance with the Soviet Union caused the decision to remove an event, the removal was usually permanent. The Katyn massacre is the best example of an event that was excluded from official memory until the system collapsed. Social and demographic factors were important because the exclusion of memory about the harm done by the Soviet Union in the eastern territories was facilitated by the post-war shift of Polish borders and displacement of people from the areas that became a part of the Soviet Union as well as the extermination of elites who could cultivate this tradition.

The tradition of the Polish underground state required another strategy because of the large number of people involved in the underground state and the great social significance of the memory about the Warsaw Uprising. For these reasons, the strategy of silence would not be effective and falsification was required. Generally, the events that were not completely excluded from public circulation were also subject to quite extensive modifications on different stages of historical propaganda. These modifications were caused by the authorities' desire to reach their current political goals; most often to gain social support in their attempts to legitimise the political system using historical arguments.

As a result of the propagandist image of World War II, Germans appeared to be the only enemy of Poles during the war. The Soviet repression of the Polish population in the territories seized after 17 September was concealed. In place of this amputated part of Polish memory, the authorities intensively propagated the idea of Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms. These efforts can be observed in the erection of monuments of gratitude commemorating the efforts of the Soviet

Army and its allies, the First and Second Polish Army that fought by its side. Built in all major Polish cities almost immediately after the front had passed, they were situated in main, exposed squares, and the unveiling ceremonies were used for propaganda purposes.

The authorities' propaganda efforts also focused on creating new heroes, who were expected to promote the official version of the history of World War II. Three of them should be mentioned here. Hanka Sawicka (b. Hanka Szapiro), a young Polish political activist of Jewish origin who was associated with the communist movement, was presented as the leader of the Association of Fighting Youth, a communist organisation functioning during the war. She was made a symbol of the youth fighting for independence, as well as her follower, Janek Krasicki, a young communist trained in the Soviet Union, an activist of the Soviet Komsomol, one of the group of Poles who were selected to be transported to Poland to train as saboteurs. After the war, Krasicki was made a patron of the Union of Socialist Youth – an organisation subordinate to Polish Workers' Party.

The greatest legend and cult surrounded Karol Świerczewski. Born in Congress Poland, he joined the Red Army and fought against the Polish Second Republic in the Polish-Soviet war of 1920. He also fought in the civil war in Spain and in the German-Soviet war. In 1943, Świerczewski organised the First Polish Army in the Soviet Union and commanded the Second Polish Army in the Lusatia Operation (his inefficiency in command, alcoholism and continuous conflicts with subordinates resulted in huge losses suffered by the troops he led). After the war, as a Polish general, Świerczewski became the Deputy Defence Minister of Poland. He died in 1947, shot in an ambush organised by the troops of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The legend created around his death was used by the authorities as a direct cause for Operation Vistula (a military action against the UPA and forced resettlement of selected groups – mostly Ukrainians and Lemkos – from the south-eastern provinces of post-war Poland.

Intensive activities were undertaken to commemorate the three heroes, particularly the naming of streets, institutions and schools (in the case of Świerczewski, even a town) in an attempt to create a pantheon of heroes who could act as a counterweight to the figures associated with World War II who were actually valued by society.

2.

The only attempt to introduce a radical version of historical propaganda to completely rebuild social consciousness according to the communist ideology was in the Stalinist period. The authorities focused their efforts on building a completely

new image of the national past, based on a fundamental dichotomy discussed by Barbara Szacka: 'people's' and 'lordly' history as well as 'old history' and 'the new beginning' after World War II. An important feature of the propagated image of the past was the black and white description of reality. For instance, the official canon of memory did not include ambivalent sites of memory, that is, historical events and figures involving both positive and negative evaluations.[17] Another significant characteristic of the official canon of memory was the promotion of sites of memory that were related to the revolutionary tradition of progress[18] and people associated with the internationalist tradition. Two public holidays were prioritised in the Stalinist period: Labour Day on 1 May, and 7 October, the anniversary of the October Revolution. What is more, this period was the only time in the politics of memory of communist Poland when imported rituals of memory that were foreign to the national tradition were introduced, such as the anniversary of Stalin's death.

The propaganda efforts made by the authorities did not bring success. Clearly, the attempts to introduce symbols that were foreign to Polish tradition and to promote sites of memory related to the labour movement and communist internationalism failed. Researchers are in complete agreement on this point.[19] The elementary reason for the inefficiency of the state propaganda was the complete rupture between the officially promoted image of the past and the image of the past that was cultivated in private memory. This rupture resulted from the employment of an ideologically homogenous model of interpreting Poland's history that was based on Marxist premises. As Stanisław Bębenek notes: 'As a result, the entire interpretation of our history was extremely simplified. More importantly, it was made without concern for traditional, national matters that were a part of common knowledge.'[20] An example demonstrating the extent of this simplification is the lack of World War II events in the official memory. Hardly anything was said about the September Campaign, or the Soviet Union's repression of the Polish population in the territories annexed by the Soviets after 17 September 1939. The history of the Polish Underground State and the Warsaw Uprising was

17 See A. Szpociński, *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski. Analiza słuchowisk historycznych dla szkół podstawowych* (*1951–1984*), Warsaw, 1989.

18 I refer here to the terminology introduced by S. Bębenek, who distinguishes two sets of symbols within the tradition of progress: the democratic and the revolutionary tradition. See S. Bębenek, *Myślenie o przeszłości*, op. cit., p. 74.

19 Cf. e.g. B. Szacka, *Przeszłość w świadomości inteligencji polskiej*, Warsaw, 1983 and S. Bębenek, op. cit.

20 Ibid., p. 70.

intensively falsified. Propaganda activities were accompanied by brutal repression of any known members of the Home Army, who were sentenced to long prison terms or death.

At the same time, the myths of victory and brotherhood-in-arms were intensively promoted by erecting monuments of gratitude to Soviet soldiers and undertaking numerous activities to commemorate the heroes of the official canon, particularly Karol Świerczewski. In this period, in 1953, a biographical film was produced that put Świerczewski on a pedestal: *Żołnierz Zwycięstwa* (*Soldier of Victory*), directed by Wanda Jakubowska.

Stanisław Bębenek observes extreme politicisation of the promoted images of the past in the years 1949–1955, particularly as regards World War II, which led to a complete discrepancy between official and unofficial memory. Consequently, as he writes about the period 1939–1944: 'for tradition, these years were a dead period.'[21] It soon turned out that the World War, which was a very important experience for most Poles, could not be ignored in the official memory in the long run. The influence on the historical consciousness of society could be lost completely. Therefore, changes in the politics of memory after 1956 mostly concerned the period of World War II.

3.

For several reasons, 1956 was a turning point in the official politics of memory. Political thaw after the uprising of Polish workers in June in Poznan and the changes in political establishment in October, which resulted in Władysław Gomułka taking power, were followed by significant revisions in the politics of memory. These corrections started a process of transforming earlier, aggressive historical propaganda into a softer version, which took into account the socially valued tradition of the Polish struggle for independence and which drew conclusions from the failure of the propaganda of the Stalinist period. To put it briefly, the changes of 1956 led to attempts to build a conciliatory image of the Polish past. For this purpose, the canon of officially promoted historical figures and events was gradually extended by adding those that were non-existent until then. They were mainly events related to World War II. Generally, this tendency lasted until the mid-1980s. Directly after 1956, people and events associated with the anti-communist resistance movement and the participation of Poles in the battles at the

21 Ibid., p. 119.

Western Front were added to the official canon of memory.[22] The result of these efforts was a gradual process of replacing purely ideological criteria of interpreting Polish history with more pragmatic methods of manipulation.

The most radical changes in the politics of memory initiated in 1956 concerned World War II. Marginalised in the Stalinist period, some of the World War II events that had earlier existed only in the unofficial memory were gradually included in the official canon. They were for instance the September Campaign, the struggle of the Home Army against the German occupier and the Warsaw Uprising. Obviously, they were subjected to particular interpretation. The use of World War II was not accidental. Figures and events related to the struggle against the German occupier were employed to create an official tradition of Polish struggle for independence. The task faced by the Polish authorities after 1956 was to bring the official tradition and the living, social tradition closer together. This was not an easy mission. As Bębenek emphasises: '[This task] required the authorities to build a tradition that would refer to symbols that were socially recognised and valued and to give it a meaning that would not be contradictory to the general line of interpretation of Polish interwar and war politics.'[23] This objective was accomplished by employing a method that was already in use between 1944 and 1948, but fully developed after 1956. This method was to use a new criterion to distinguish between the nation and the politicians: heroism and sacrifice of the population during the German occupation was praised while the political decisions of the London-based government and the Home Army were condemned. Extensive use of this distinction helped the authorities to bring to life the tradition of commemorating the Polish struggle during the occupation, which was ignored or falsified between 1948 and 1956. Bębenek observes: 'Thus, the new tradition was centred around the armed activities of World War II. They helped to unite those who fought in the war in different ranks and in the name of different political orientations and to refer to socially recognised and accepted symbols.'[24] The integrative aspect of the tradition of struggle seemed to determine its suitability and, consequently, its use by the authorities. 'The official recognition of the Polish tradition of struggle was a novelty in the post-war period. This tradition had an important role in the process of straightening the political paths and the integration of society.'[25] This integration was particularly important in the case of veteran organisations associated with the Polish Underground State and

22 Cf. A. Szpociński, *Obraz przeszłości w słuchowiskach radiowych dla młodzieży szkolnej* (*lata 1982–1984*), in B. Szacka, *Polska dziecięca*, op. cit. p. 235.

23 S. Bębenek, *Myślenie…,* op. cit., p. 120.

24 Ibid., p. 121.

25 Ibid., p. 123.

the Home Army. The clear demarcation line between the evaluation of the rank-and-file of the resistance movement and the leadership of the Home Army resulted from the strategy adopted by the communist government, which was based on a forced compromise between the necessity to be faithful to the orthodox version of history and the political need to search social support after the legitimation crisis illustrated by the events of 1956.

The construction of the official tradition of struggle can be analysed as one of the manifestations of promoting the ideology of 'military patriotism.'[26] Strongest between 1956 and 1970, this ideology was a modification of the official party and state doctrine, complete with elements of national ideology and military ethos, mostly by referring to World War II. This ideology was characterised by a strong anti-German attitude, promoting values related to armed forces and propagating the belief that armed struggle was the only way to regain independence, which clearly indicates the influence of romanticism and a pro-Soviet attitude. The ideology of military patriotism was based on a conviction that it was necessary to find a convenient form of giving meaning to the efforts of Poles who fought against Germans in the First and Second Polish Army and communist partisanship, as they had thus far been in the shadow of the legend of the armed forces fighting at the Western Front and in the Home Army.[27] In fact, however, military patriotism was an attempt to nationalise communist ideology, which was made by one of the most influential groups within the communist party, *Moczarowcy*, connected with Gen. Mieczysław Moczar. The main ideologist of this group was Col. Zbigniew Załuski, who developed his theories in several books that were popular at the time. The ideology of military patriotism, as a part of the politics of memory, was promoted via official commemorations of anniversaries and via popular culture, particularly national cinematography. Starting from the 1960s, particularly the second half of the 1960s, many films were produced that were a part of the ongoing military-veteran trend.[28] Their main subjects were true or fictional events related to the trail of fire of the First and Second Polish Armies that had been formed between 1844 and 1943 in the Soviet Union as a result of the cooperation between Polish communists and the Soviet authorities. The films also depicted partisan fights involving communist resistance groups in Poland during the German occupation (People's Army and People's Guard).

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26 Cf. Ł. Polniak., *Patriotyzm wojskowy w PRL w latach 1956–1970,* Warsaw, 2011.

27 Cf. ibid., pp. 29–32.

28 Ibid., p. 230. For more on this subject, see P. Zwierzchowski, *Kino nowej pamięci. Obraz II wojny światowej w kinie polskim lat 60.,* Bydgoszcz, 2013.

Jerzy Passendorfer's *Kierunek Berlin* (*Direction: Berlin*, 1968), *Ostatnie dni* (*The Last Days*, 1969) and *Zwycięstwo* (*Victory*, 1974) represent one direction within the discussed trend. They were among the greatest war film images in the history of the Polish People's Republic that depicted the fight of a company of the First Polish Army in the final capture of Berlin. The films presented this event from the perspective of an ordinary Polish soldier (played by Wojciech Siemion). Their fundamental propagandist objective was emphasising the significance of the historical victory – the capture of the German capital by Poles, arm in arm with the Red Army. This aim was already expressed in the historical commentary that preluded *Zwycięstwo*, in which the taking of Berlin was described as the first Polish victory after centuries of defeats. This heroic interpretation of this event responded to the need to build an official tradition of struggle.[29]

The military trend in Polish cinema also included such films as Jerzy Passendorfer's *Zamach* (*Assassination*) and Stanisław Różewicz's *Westerplatte*, which depicted the bravery and heroism of ordinary soldiers fighting in September 1939 and in the Home Army. The latter premiered on 1 September 1967 as an important element of the official commemorations of the outbreak of World War II. Less popular but equally interesting, there were also films that demonstrated the shift in state policy related to the war by showing the shared fate of the soldiers of First and Second Polish Army and the soldiers of the Home Army (*Potem nastąpi cisza* by Janusz Morgenstern and *Dzień oczyszczenia* by Jerzy Passendorfer) and by depicting the dilemmas of Poles who fought at the Western Front. They were a manifestation of the state reaching out to the veterans of the Home Army and Polish Armed Forces in the West.

Without doubt, the most popular film of the discussed military trend, which strongly influenced the historical consciousness of Poles, particularly the young generation, was the television series *Czterej pancerni i pies* (*Four Tank-men and a Dog*), directed by Konrad Nałęcki. Most likely, the power of its influence resulted from fact that it took the expressive and attractive form of an adventure movie presenting the story of a tank crew, members of the First Armoured Brigade of the Defenders of Westerplatte, who take part in the 'liberation' of Poland and, at the end, in the capture of Berlin. Most importantly, the adventures of the main characters documented the superiority of Poles in their fights against the Germans, which certainly flattered the Poles and provided an outlet for numerous Polish complexes. Using the extreme popularity of the series, the authorities organised an extensive propagandist action that promoted the image of the war that they desired.

29 Ł. Polniak, op. cit., p. 258.

Another manifestation of the development of the official tradition of struggle was the creation of numerous physical sites of memory. In the 1960s, the authorities launched a massive programme of creating commemoration sites related to Polish war martyrology and the battles against the Germans. One of the numerous examples is the so-called Citadel Park in Poznan – the former Winiary Fortress and the location of fierce battles waged as a part of the displacement of the German troops from Poznan by the Red Army in February 1945. The fort and surrounding area were turned into the 'Monument Park of Polish-Russian Friendship and Brotherhood' in 1962. Of all the commemorations in the Citadel Park, the anniversary of the end of World War II was attached the greatest importance. For many years, 9 May was the most convenient opportunity to sustain the myth of victory and of the Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms. For instance, in 1965, on the 20th anniversary of the end of World War II, a Museum of Armaments with an outdoor exhibition was opened. A year later, as a plaque informs, on the 21st anniversary of 'the day of victory over fascism on 9 May 1945', the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society launched an initiative to plant 100,000 trees to honour the Polish-Soviet friendship.[30] Another example is the Statue to the Defenders of Westerplatte on the peninsula. Its unveiling on 9 October 1969 was attended by over 50,000 people. Initially, the event was planned for 1 September, on the 30th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, but it was moved to be closer to Polish Armed Forces Day on 12 October. The choice was not accidental. Alongside the defence of Westerplatte, the statue was also planned to commemorate the armed actions of the First Armoured Brigade of the Defenders of Westerplatte, particularly their participation in the Battle of Danzig. Among numerous inscriptions on the monument, there are names of the battles fought by the First Polish Army (e.g. the Battles of Lenino and Studzianki) and an inscription 'glory to the liberators.' There are two figures at the top of the 25-metre statue: a Polish sailor and a Soviet soldier. The arrangement of space is an example of using the tradition of September 1939 to achieve the government's propagandist aims. Nonetheless, the commemorations significantly contributed to the popularisation of the legend of the defenders of Westerplatte.

An interesting example of a shift in the politics of memory regarding September 1939 in the period of creating the official tradition of struggle were the efforts of the aforementioned ideologist of military patriotism, Zbigniew Załuski, to debunk the myth of Polish light cavalry attacking German tanks. Załuski spent three years searching for the testimonies of direct witnesses of the mythical charge,

30 For more on the subject, see B. Korzeniewski, 'Upamiętnienie w przestrzeni miejskiej', *Kultura Współczesna*, no. 4, 2008, pp. 58–75.

without finding even one. Załuski, for instance, criticised Andrzej Wajda's film *Lotna*, which includes a scene of the cavalry charge on German tanks, for falsifying both the reality and the literary work on which the film was based. In the original short story *Lotna*, written by Wojciech Żukrowski, a veteran of September 1939, the cavalry attacks a German campsite. Załuski notes that 'When (Żukrowski) adapted *Lotna* for a screenplay 15 years later, suddenly the sleeping campsite transformed into a column of motorised artillery on the march and in… attacking tanks. And what tanks! Hands down, human eyes have never seen tanks so huge – not only in September, also during the entire war.'[31] Załuski generally attempted to rehabilitate the tradition of the September campaign. As he observes: 'Those who fought in September were not runaways from a nuthouse, they were not madmen, they were a million people who were expected to defend their fatherland and who believed they would.'[32] The central ideologist of military patriotism debunking the myth of light cavalry attacking tanks, which was used in communist propaganda shortly after the war to discredit the armed actions of the Second Polish Republic, and defending the tradition of the September Campaign demonstrates considerable modifications in the politics of memory related to World War II introduced in the 1960s.

To evaluate the World War II politics of memory, one needs to take into account the reason for their modification after 1956. The main reasons seem to be the awareness of the inefficiency of the dominant methods of historical propaganda, the shift from social class to nation as the source of the legitimation of political power[33] and Władysław Gomułka's election to the position of first secretary of the party in 1956. Gomułka's biographical and generational experiences (particularly his strong anti-German attitude) significantly influenced the change in the politics of memory in the 1960s. Cultural factors also considerably affected this change, as well as the growing time distance from the end of the war. Between 1944 and 1947, the living memory related to the war was gradually fading and institutional commemorative actions were gaining importance.[34]

Although the reason for the shift in the politics of memory of the authorities was an attempt to regain influence over the popular social images of the past, it

31 Z. Załuski, *Siedem polskich grzechów głównych*, Warsaw, 1968, pp. 45–46.

32 Ibid., p. 46.

33 Cf. M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warsaw, 2001.

34 I refer to the classification of R. Traba discussed in his paper, see R. Traba, 'Symbole pamięci: II wojna światowa w świadomości zbiorowej Polaków. Szkic do tematu', *Przegląd Zachodni*, 2000, no. 1, pp. 52–75.

is important to note that this was not necessarily a manifestation of the weakness of the communist government. The gradual softening of the politics of memory and the expansion of the canon of official memory was not equal to automatic acceptance, less still borrowing, of popular interpretation of historical events. The fundamentals of the official interpretation of historical events stayed in most part unchanged for the entire period of the Polish People's Republic. The interpretation of the Warsaw Uprising is an example. The basic line of interpretation of this event, which was outlined in Władysław Gomułka's speech in 1944, generally stayed the same until the end of the communist system, despite the necessity for the authorities to modify their policy towards the Home Army members.[35] This modification was the second most important shift in the politics of memory related to World War II (after 1956). Barbara Szacka seems to confirm this intuition, noting that the changes in the official image of World War II towards gradual recognition of the heroism of soldiers and ordinary members of the resistance movement could have resulted from the communist government's increasing sense of confidence rather than the necessity to yield under social pressure.[36] This phenomenon was particularly noticeable in the 1960s.

Therefore, the shift of the politics of memory towards expanding the canon of official memory could have resulted from pure pragmatism. The authorities never benefitted from a long-term discrepancy between the official and the private memory, as it resulted in a loss of control over a significant part of the social images of the past. If the fundamental goal was the transformation of social consciousness, this task could not be completed without concern for exercising major influence on historical consciousness of the populace.[37]

The modifications in the politics of memory could also be influenced by society's integrative needs. By Klaus Bachman's[38] criteria of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the politics of memory, based on its ability to provoke social integration, Polish politics of memory about World War II was definitely exclusive until 1956. This fact was determined by the political situation. The communists needed to impose their power on society and armed struggle against the resistance movement was one of the necessary steps to achieve this goal. A skilful manoeuvre performed by the communists was to use their own version of the history of World War II

35 Cf. J.Z. Sawicki, *Bitwa o prawdę. Historia zmagań o pamięć powstania warszawskiego 1944–1989*, Warsaw, 2005.

36 B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły…*, op. cit., p. 154.

37 S. Bębenek, op. cit., p. 20.

38 K. Bachman, *Długi cień III Rzeszy. Jak Niemcy zmieniali swój charakter narodowy,* Wroclaw, 2005.

to eliminate the large group of people involved in the resistance struggle against the German occupiers. This manoeuvre, leading to the introduction of the communist interpretation of World War II, resulted from the necessity of eliminating the competition for power in post-war Poland. Activity in the symbolic sphere was a necessary addition to physical violence. Starting from the 1956 turn, the politics of memory evolved into a more inclusive version. One of the main reasons for this was the need to integrate the surviving members of the resistance movement into society. As the researchers of the veteran movement in Polish People's Republic note, 1956 brought considerable invigoration in these circles that could not be ignored by the authorities. As a result, the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (Polish: Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację, ZBoWiD, an official Polish state-controlled veterans' association) started a dialogue with the Home Army circles.[39] Alongside the political thaw, this response was another reason for extensive modification in the official image of the war.

In conclusion, the pillars of the World War II politics of memory in the period discussed were: the myth of victory, including the interpretation of 9 May 1945 as a liberation; the centralistic image of World War II that favoured the perspective of the General Government and marginalised the experience of the residents of the areas incorporated into the Third Reich or the Soviet Union, and the theory that the only enemy against whom Poles fought were the Germans (while all the other experiences, particularly Soviet repressions in the east, could not be mentioned). Historical propaganda focused on the popularisation of two fundamental myths: the myth of victory and the myth of brotherhood in arms. They were often combined with the myth of the return of traditionally Polish lands to the motherland. The aim of these activities was to strengthen the legitimacy of power for the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. They attempted to achieve this by giving the same weight the victory over Germans won together with the Red Army, the westward shift of the Polish borders and the Oder-Neisse line, the communist takeover of power in 1944 and the construction of a new political system based on social justice and alliance with the Soviet Union. The opportunity to increase the legitimacy of power determined the directions of the World War II politics of memory, as well as its methods, strategies and the modifications it underwent.

39 See e.g. J. Wawrzyniak, 'Pamięć negocjowana czyli o sporach wokół postaci kombatanta w komunistycznej Polsce (1956–1968)', in A. Szpociński (ed.), *Wobec przeszłości. Pamięć przeszłości jako element kultury współczesnej*, Warsaw, 2005, pp. 92–114.

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Paweł Rodak

The Unusual Everyday Under the Occupation

'It feels so strange, so different', Zofia Nałkowska notes in her diary on Christmas Eve 1940. It has been a year since she returned to German-occupied Warsaw. For this year, the character of the writer's everyday notes has been changing. Over the next five years of occupation, until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, Nałkowska's diary will be filled with entries about what is everyday and mundane – a hitherto unimportant topic in her writing. At the beginning of 1939, Nałkowska, like many others, returns to Warsaw from her wanderings in the east and experiences a life that mostly revolves around concerns about the most basic needs. 'Mum and I bought a bushel of potatoes, we are also promised a tonne of coal. I don't earn anything and, as we know, I don't have money. I cook, I wash the dishes, I clean up'[1] (17 November 1939) – this is one of the typical entries of this diary. There used to be relatively little of such everyday, mundane entries before. Now they move to the forefront. The main subject becomes the problem of supply of the most elementary, indispensable goods and the related question of finding the necessary means of livelihood. The writer now considers things that she did not notice before to be worth noting: making a fire in the iron stove, darning stockings, cleaning, preparing daily meals. At the same time, she continues to be accompanied by a feeling of 'strangeness' with existence under occupation.

Stanisław Rembek's diary is similar in this respect. During the Hitlerite occupation, the author of *W polu* (*In Action*) and *Nagan*, novels published in the interwar period about the Polish-Soviet war of 1920, lives near Warsaw, in the vicinity of Grodzisk. As well as many others (for instance, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, who lives nearby in Stawisk) he commutes to Warsaw by EKD (Electric Commuter Rail). At the time Rembek keeps a diary, which Marek Nowakowski in the preface to its published edition calls fascinating due to 'the description of the everyday of these years that is full of little details'. 'This writer', Nowakowski continues, 'moving in the social circles characteristic of suburban settlements, had a special gift of noting small, mundane things. His neighbours and friends are railroad workers, farmers, municipal workers, teachers from local schools, a reserve officer, a woman judge, a lawyer, a former mayor, landlords, craftsmen, a restaurateur and many

1 Z. Nałkowska, *Dzienniki. Vol. 5: 1939–1944*, Warsaw, 1996, p. 164. Other quotes from this diary are marked only with the date of entry.

others. The dispassionate description of the occupation reality includes various human attitudes, from the selfish will to personally survive by not participating in the rising opposition, and a desire to resist and actively struggle against the Hitlerite invaders.'[2]

Of probably all the diaries kept by writers in occupied Warsaw (for instance, by Maria Dąbrowska, Karol Irzykowski, Andrzej Trzebiński), these two are the most saturated with descriptions of the everyday. However, one should not forget that the published diaries of known writers represent only a small percentage of the diaristic practice developed intensively during the occupation both on the Aryan side and in the ghetto. Thus, it is not surprising that diaries, daily notes and records, and chronicles (the two most important ones are Ludwik Landau's[3] and Emanuel Ringelblum's[4] chronicles) are a very important material for analyses of life in the occupied capital.

Everyday life in occupied Warsaw has been frequently described, most extensively in Tomasz Szarota's book *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni* (*Everyday Life in Occupied Warsaw*)[5] and in his work that referred to other European capitals.[6] Thanks to these books we are familiar with the menus and gastronomy, fashion and clothing, entertainment and cultural life under the occupation. Everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto, including the massive deportations and the uprising in response were the subject of an extensive study by Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak.[7] The plight of the Warsaw civilians during the Uprising in August and September was investigated by Joanna K. M. Hanson in her book *Civilian Population and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944*.[8] In addition to autobiographical materials, the first two publications also include photographs that play a very important role. Photographs can portray everyday life better than texts as they refer, on the one hand, to what is visible and material and, on the other, to what is elusive, random, 'unimportant': to what is the domain of the everyday. Taken by Poles and

2 M. Nowakowski, 'Przedmowa', in S. Rembek, *Dziennik okupacyjny*, Warsaw, 2000, p. 5. The quotes from Rembek's diary are marked only with the date of entry.
3 L. Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, Warsaw, 1962.
4 E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, Warsaw, 1983.
5 T. Szarota, *Oupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, Warsaw, 1988.
6 T. Szarota, *Życie codzienne w stolicach okupowanej Europy*, Warsaw, 1995.
7 B. Engelking and J. Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, Yale, 2009.
8 J.K.M. Hanson, *Civilian Population and the Warsaw Uprising of* 1944, Cambridge, 2004.

by Germans, discovered and published in thick albums, photographs are becoming increasingly important for our knowledge about life during the occupation.[9]

All the above-mentioned publications are manifestations of the current increase in interest in civil and everyday aspects of war as a contrast to the soldier-battle perspective that was until recently the dominant narrative. Norman Davis, for instance, in his monumental book *Europe at War 1939–1945: No Simple Victory*[10] devotes three times less space (70 pages) to the military actions on fronts than to the issues related to the civilian population (200 pages). He also notes that 'For every European who was involved in the fighting of the Second World War, there were at least ten civilians who were not directly involved but who nonetheless were forced to suffer the painful consequences of international conflict.'[11] Civilians were primarily afflicted by bombings, raids, mass executions, imprisonments, being sent to concentration camps and death camps, looting and rape, forced labour in Germany, inability to meet the basic housing, clothing and food needs. As a result, the number of war casualties is greater for civilians than soldiers. In his book, Norman Davis estimates the numbers at 16,625,000 (the civilian population) and 9,326,000 (the military). Let us also note that in the Warsaw Uprising about 15,000 soldiers died and about 150,000–200,00 civilians.

The number of casualties appeals to the imagination. Everyday life, however, is a bit like air. It seems transparent and obvious, unworthy of consideration and one notices it only when it has been interrupted. The everyday of the occupation is exactly an interrupted everyday, an everyday that is precipitated from the everyday mode, an 'extraordinary everyday', using Małgorzata Baranowska's term or 'untamed commonplace', as Jerzy Jedlicki calls it.[12] It is an unusual everyday in many senses of the word. Whatever used to be normal, obvious, relatively easy or happening in an almost involuntary, automatic manner, such as doing shopping or preparing meals, is no longer so. One can say that reality, in its most common and daily dimension, resists and thereby reveals its cultural nature. War and occupation throw the obvious and natural into doubt and disarray, from the problem of fulfilling basic human needs to the sense of permanence and continuity in life that

9 See e.g. D. Jackiewicz, *Warszawa 1940–1941 w fotografii dr. Hansa Joachima Gerke*, Warsaw, 1997; *Warszawa 1943–Warszawa 1944. Fotograf nieznany*, Warsaw, 2002; *Brok. Eugeniusz Lokajski. Fotoreporter*, Warsaw, 2007.

10 N. Davis, *Europe at War 1939–1945: No Simple Victory*, London, 2007.

11 Ibid., p. 285.

12 Małgorzata Baranowska's and Jerzy Jedlickicki's texts are published in the aforementioned album *Warszawa 1943–Warszawa 1944. Fotograf nieznany*, ed. Anka Grupińska, Warsaw, 2002.

is necessary for normal functioning. That is why the space of the occupation reality brings into contact what is most ordinary and most extraordinary and, at the same time, makes the ordinary bear the hallmarks of the extraordinary and the other way round. Life, with its repetitive, mundane activities related to housing, food, hygienic and sexual needs, will be also a life 'on the verge of existence', as Nałkowska writes in her diary (12 July 1942), a life in the circle of 'ultimate experiences of human fate, as if on the borders of experiences that fall to humans as species', as Jan Strzelecki recalls after years in his *Próby świadectwa* (*Attempted Testimony*).[13]

Therefore, it was so important during the occupation to find ways to become accustomed to the new experiences that gradually became something normal and came to be treated as components of everyday life. The realm of 'familiarised experiences' is an example of a broader phenomenon, described by Michał Głowiński in his essay about Nałkowska's diary as 'the formation of usual or normal structures within the occupation' (normality in abnormality)'. As a consequence, 'occupation becomes everyday, a banality' and what emerges is the 'occupation norm'. 'The norm', Głowiński determines, 'is the burdensome everyday that can be neither approved nor changed.'[14]

I want to focus on the changes in the everyday sphere during the occupation that mostly concern such elements as work, food and, in particular, communication – although there may be areas where the change is imperceptible. It is important to remember that the occupation changes the very structure of everyday experience, primarily temporal and spatial structures. These structures define the framework of everyday life that can be different for various groups of residents of the occupied city but no one can be outside this framework. Another change brought by the occupation concerns the relation between the open and the secret, the official and the underground, the legal and the illegal. The open, formal and legal frameworks of life introduced by the occupier not only mean the elimination of Polish society, they also sentence individual people to a slow death. This, in the first place, applies to work, gaining means of livelihood and ways of satisfying basic needs, starting with the acquisition of food.

'Just like every unemployed person', Nałkowska writes at the end of November 1939, 'I am ready to accept "any job" – the further from literature, the better' (23 November 1939). Three months later the writer thinks of literature again, as her 'long forgotten profession'. It happens when an opportunity occurs to sell her

13 J. Strzelecki, 'Próby świadectwa', in id., *Ślady tożsamości*, Warsaw, 1989, p. 165.

14 M. Głowiński, 'Tak jest dziwnie, tak jest inaczej', in id., *Narracje literackie i nieliterackie. Prace wybrane. Vol. II*, Cracow, 1997, p. 145.

old novels thanks to the resourcefulness of Wacek, a 'tobacco seller and paperboy' who ventures into the streets of occupied Warsaw 'with a suitcase heavy as a stone, loaded with *Frontiers* and *Bad Loves*,[15] and gets the appointed price from street vendors. Nałkowska's comment on the situation in her diary is very characteristic; she is basically touched by the earnings, which is 'the equivalent of three or four kilos of butter' (28 February 1940) and does not mention anything about the literary value of the books or their popularity among readers.

Running a tobacco shop together with her sister, a sculptress, turns out to be a confirmation of self-value for Nałkowska – it requires organisational skills and physical endurance as much as diligence in doing the bookkeeping. This job, although exhausting and far from literary activities, gives the writer satisfaction or even happiness. She never complains in her diary that 'the piles of papers, receipts, bills and price lists' take the place of manuscripts of new literary pieces or that 'never-ending calculations' (29 March 1941) completely overshadow creative work. It is other people – shop customers, her mother, fellow writers – who are surprised and deplore the fact that such an outstanding writer is forced to waste her talent by devoting her precious time to uncreative activities. Nałkowska, on the contrary, finds a way to save her identity, being herself in the everyday sale of cigarettes, in interactions with common people, whose voice matters so much to her and in which 'the writer can hear (…) essential truth, unravelled from the tangle of intellectual rhetoric'[16], in a word, in everything that happens on the most elementary, direct level of life and communication.

War is generally a time when the elementary, ordinary and mundane gains in value and importance. This process applies to, for example, physical labour, acquiring means of livelihood, particularly food, and the space of everyday contacts. It happens in a situation when it is impossible to legally continue intellectual or artistic work unless one collaborates with the occupier. The broadening sphere of underground cultural life partly provides an opportunity for journalistic, literary or artistic activity. However, even with the system of fees, scholarships, benefits and reliefs it does not offer a sufficient source of income. Hence, journalists and artists 'looked for earnings wherever they could, did not turn down physical outwork and trade, or rather black market trade, and providing various services. Thus, some – as Witold Giełżyński notes – took up window-making, others devoted

15 *Frontier* and *Bad Love* are titles of Zofia Nałkowska's novels (original Polish titles: *Granica* and *Niedobra miłość*). [Translator's note].

16 H. Kirchner, 'Wstęp', in Z. Nałkowska, *Dzienniki*, op. cit., p. 7.

themselves to brickwork, repairing ruined houses, many rode rickshaws, which replaced carriages and trucks, or took up peddling books.'[17]

Both the older and the younger generations looked for jobs. Andrzej Trebiński, for instance, a poet, a playwright, a journalist, a student of Polish studies at the underground university and an editor of the underground newspaper *Art and Nation*, during the war was a rickshaw driver and a sawyer, and then the head of the Distribution Office of the Confederation of the Nation, an underground resistance organisation. His friend Tadeusz Borowski, a writer, was a storekeeper and a night watchman in a company selling building materials. People were also employed on construction sites, in factories, hospitals, kindergartens, and social care institutions. A normal, regular, everyday phenomenon during the occupation was physical work by youths and even older children. For instance, young boys often traded cigarettes, buying them cheap and selling them on for a much higher price on the black market. Nałkowska sees many of these boys in the vicinity of her shop, commenting on this fact in her diary in the following way: 'With limitations in supplies, all this Panama [grand-scale fraud] emerges, which makes it difficult to get in shops what is so easily available in the street' (25 December 1939).

Unlike Nałkowska, Stanisław Rembek has no permanent occupation. He applies for benefits from a secret culture fund, like other writers. He gets a temporary job as a waiter in a restaurant where he is a regular, grows vegetables in his garden (which occupy an important position in the family menu), sometimes he trades paintings, sometimes vodka, cigarettes or piglets. He also sells family wedding rings and tries to sell a plot of land belonging to his wife. In addition, almost every day he goes shopping in search of flour, potatoes, bread, sugar and lard, but sometimes he manages to get 'only two kilos of salt' instead (21 March 1940). Therefore, his diary often includes entries that refer to a scarcity of food: 'Still hunger at home: dry bread and a very thin *zalewajka* [a kind of cheap soup] for dinner, as there are no potatoes' (13 March 1940).

Similar entries can be found in the diary of Nałkowska, who experiences the everyday consequences of the occupation: 'I'm freezing and, simply, very hungry' (11 October 1939), 'I've lost so much weight that I have become someone else' (18 October 1939), 'I've lost another four kilos' (6 December1940). On the one hand, the writer adapts herself to a new wartime life; on the other, she has a constant sense of eeriness and strangeness in comparison to what her sense of reality was before the war. 'No one predicted such a reality in the most fanciful of dreams. Everyone's living in a nightmare, wishing to wake up. Unbelievable bleakness

17 Cited in T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, op. cit., p. 121.

and poverty of life, ignorance of one's own fate, of other people's fates, gruesome stories from everywhere' – she notes in November 1939. For her, the occupation is mostly an interruption to the established world order but it is only possible to write about interruptions, as Michał Głowiński aptly notes, 'when one is aware of them, having distance that allows comparison.'[18] Therefore, the diary of young Trzebiński, who passes his *matura* (A-level) exam in the summer of 1940, does not present war as something strange, and everyday life during the war, although burdensome (repeated moves, permanent lack of money), hardly ever features. While efforts to get food and prepare meals are one of the main threads in Rembek's and Nałkowska's diaries, Trzebiński makes only one, laconic entry on this subject: 'I basically eat once a day. a lot and once. sometime about 2–3 pm. I lack dinner but breakfasts are no longer my addiction. I don't feel the internal need of breakfasts. I don't have time and I forget.'[19]

However, there are also very hearty meals or even lavish parties during the occupation, both at its very beginning and close to its end. Rembek, who is a regular at Dąbkowski's pub in Grodzisk, notes after one such visit, in February 1940: 'We chatted cheerfully over vodka, chops and stew that Olechowski bought us' (13 February 1940). Two and a half years later the writer attends a birthday party, which turns out to be a true feast: 'The reception was so excellent, it was as though there was no war in this world. I was exhausted by disease and forced to drink so I drank a little too much' (21 August 1942). As one can see, alcohol appears in both entries and it seems to be a rule rather than an exception. Every visit to Dąbkowski, every visit to friends or family or their visit to Rembek's is accompanied with generous amounts of alcohol. 'Of course one drank heavily' – Marek Nowakowski writes – 'hooch, rationed vodka, noble beverages from old stocks (*krupnik*, Baczewski liqueurs) lifted the spirits during the torment of the occupation days.'[20] As for hooch (*bimber*), it is worth mentioning that it often appeared in diaries, memories and stories as well as the most famous songs of the occupation. Stanisław Buryła, who studies this problem, notes that while alcohol appears relatively rarely in academic works devoted to war and occupation, it is 'omnipresent' in historical sources, diaristic records and literary texts *sensu stricto*.'[21]

In Rembek's diary, alcohol is an inseparable element of everyday meetings and conversations. As the time of the occupation is not short of them, there are many

18 M. Głowiński, op. cit., p. 144.

19 A. Trzebiński, *Pamiętnik*, ed. P. Rodak, Warsaw, 2001, p. 148 (1 November 1942).

20 M. Nowakowski, op. cit., p. 7–8.

21 S. Buryła, 'Wojna i alkohol. Zaproszenie do tematu', in S. Buryła and P. Rodak, *Wojna. Doświadczenie i zapis. Nowe źródła, problemy, metody badawcze*, Cracow, 2006, p. 207.

alcohol-related entries. Sometimes one has to drink many times a day: 'Besides, I kept meeting different people: Olechowski, Bojarski, Jaworski, and I had to drink with almost every one of them. I came back home with Kisiel completely sozzled' (3 February 1942). Another time a meeting with a friend starts with their search for vodka, which they 'finally find near Żuków for 40 zloty per litre' (8 December 1941). The consequences of these boozy meetings can be severe, particularly because alcohol, even the strongest types, is more available than food so it is often consumed without or even instead of food: 'I went to Grodzisk to get some money from Borkowski. He didn't give me a penny but offered me spirits. As my stomach was almost empty, the spirits I had very little of had such a strong effect on me that I do not remember when and how I got home' (19 January 1942). It is interesting that hooch never exerts such effects but is always referred to in a context of pleasant and enjoyable conversation: 'We chatted pleasantly over hooch until late' (10 January 1942), 'We spent a cheerful evening over hooch' (12 March 1942).

The diaries of Zofia Nałkowska and, in particular, Stanisław Rembek, reveal, in a very expressive way, another feature of the occupation reality related to the changes in the methods of communication. First of all, one should note the growing importance of direct contacts. During the occupation, people continually meet and interact. As Wacław Jarzębowski puts it, it looked like a 'forest anthill full of feverish bustle that is not organised according to any visible system, yet makes up an efficiently operating and compact organism thanks to the constant communication between everyone and the constant improvisation in combating the difficulties that arise.'[22] Intense, direct contacts basically relate to three spheres of life. The first is connected with acquiring means (loans, benefits, job search), trading, buying food and alcohol on the black market or with ration tokens. The second sphere is conspiratorial work and underground cultural life (from editing, distributing and reading underground press, through studying at underground universities, participating in underground literary evenings, discussion meetings, plays, performances and concerts, to diversionary activities and military actions against the occupier). The third is exchange and circulation of information.

There are three communication spaces that gain a special position during the war: streets, shops and private homes. The street is for trading, looking for necessary goods and products and doing business, which is particularly noticeable at the beginning of the occupation. At the end of October 1939 Nałkowska notes in her diary: 'Real trade takes place on the street. Not only fruit, potatoes, tomatoes.

22 W. Jastrzębowski, *Gospodarka niemiecka w Polsce 1939–1945*, Warsaw, 1946, p. 363, cited in T. Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, op. cit., p. 220.

Also clothing and garments, knitwear, accessories, candles, cigarettes, matches can be found only here. Once even sugar and flour. Hideous homemade cookies, sweets, chocolate. All stolen, or the leftovers of a robbery. (…) I meet a lot of people. All of them are constantly in the street – the ones who used to flash by invisibly in trams and taxis' (29 October 1939). Later on, shops are gradually regaining their function as places of trade and also of meetings and conversations while the street – particularly when the danger of bombing, round-ups and aggression by the occupier is increasing – is becoming a more and more unfriendly space. In her diary, Nałkowska manages to grasp the situation when the tobacco shop becomes a space of close relations, understanding, a community in times of the occupation that is established on the level of everyday life between people of different status and from different social groups: 'What a boundless world, these people coming from everywhere to get these cigarettes (…). I'm as cold and hungry as they are, I don't have coal or wood just as they don't, the understanding is complete, words so friendly, jokes at times first-class – like this anecdote about the Gypsy king. (…) What ease in getting close to them, what an excess of sayings, jokes, opinions, characters!' (20 December 1940, 2 March 1941).

The home and dwelling, which provide an elementary sense of security, are a space for friends, family and conspiracy meetings. Memoirs about the underground University of Warsaw often contain opinions of the uniqueness of the community in times of occupation between students and professors, additionally intensified by the fact that the classes took place in their own homes. During the occupation, the significance of the home as a private space rose. Although open to the needs of neighbours, family, friends or fellow conspirers, as well as permanently threatened by an unexpected Gestapo visit, it still provides the elementary sense of shelter and protection of one's individuality. Having a strong sense of community with the residents of occupied Warsaw, Nałkowska is conscious of and responsive to the disappearance of individual, personal sensitivity in a situation when 'everything that happens is 'across the board', everything is experienced collectively' (19 March 1943). Therefore, she strongly values her own, individual domestic activities – from cleaning and preparing meals, to reading and writing in her diary. 'I don't want to come under the common law, I don't want to feel what everyone else feels. (…) Gloomily and against all odds, I stand by my identity' – the diarist notes in March 1942.

In this context, it is worth having a closer look at three of the most important verbal forms of communication: speech, writing and print and their role in life in occupied Warsaw. It is evident that the role of speech and – in a sense – writing increases to the disadvantage of printed word. This is because the field of printed

word is the most controlled by the occupier while speech and writing allow much more freedom of speech.

Printed form applies to official ordinances and announcements, propaganda posters and *gadzinówka* (contemptuous term for the press issued by the occupier), with *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* (*The New Warsaw Courier*) at the top of the list. While print is obviously used (alongside the duplicating machines) by underground publishing houses (approximately 650 underground newspaper titles and 800 book titles were printed in Warsaw alone), its consumption was limited to private home space, while the official public space is the domain of printing as a tool of repression by the occupier. Yet, there were instances when underground actions in the public space also used the printed word. In his book *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni* (*Everyday Life in Occupied Warsaw*) Tomasz Szarota describes an announcement, mocking the occupier's legislation and allegedly signed by the Governor-General Hans Frank, distributed by the Polish underground in August 1943.[23]

Various practices related to writing have an important role in the actions against the occupier. In the public space they are mostly symbols, signs and slogans painted on walls, buildings, pavements, gates and lampposts. The most important is the *kotwica* – an anchor with the letters P and W (standing for *Polska Walcząca* [*Fighting Poland*]), the letter V, meaning victory and the turtle, a symbol of work sabotage ('work slowly') to be implemented by those who worked for the German occupier. The first Fighting Poland symbols appeared on Warsaw walls on 20 March 1942 and just two weeks later there were a few thousand, mostly thanks to the scouts from *Szare Szeregi* (*Grey Ranks*) and particularly to Tadeusz Zawadzki alias Zośka, who painted the majority of them, for which he was given another pseudonym, Kotwicki (Anchor). The 'V' and the turtle signs were related to actions that were taken simultaneously in many capitals of occupied Europe in the summer of 1941 (the former disappeared after it had been appropriated by the Germans, the latter was painted until the end of the occupation). They catch Rembek's eye during his trips to Warsaw. In October 1941, after another visit to the capital, the author notes: 'What struck me in Warsaw was a great number of turtles drawn with chalk on fences and house walls' (11 October 1941). A half year later he writes: 'On my way I saw everywhere on the walls the slogan *Polska Walcząca*, created in such a way that there was an anchor at the head, the upper part of which was the letter 'P' and the lower part was the letter 'W' (1 April 1942).

23 Ibid., p. 43–44.

Another very interesting and important manifestation of writing in city space is the use of walls as bulletin boards or advertising columns on account of a huge need for this kind of advertising, and a lack of space for it in the print space seized by the occupier. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the first weeks of the occupation, which Stefan Kisielewski recollected as follows: 'Plenty of notes were stuck to the walls of burnt houses, to wooden fences – crowds of tenacious readers gathered under them and studied intently the notifications about who was selling what or who was looking for whom.'[24] This activity, which was a manifestation of spontaneous self-organisation of the residents of the occupied city was very quickly found dangerous and banned by the occupier. On 3 January 1940 Ludwik Landau wrote in his chronicle: 'Today in Warsaw, an announcement by the German Presidium was published about the ban on the arbitrary putting up of posters. Indeed, walls, fences etc. are now covered with countless ads, sometimes printed but mostly handwritten. However, this primitive advertisement – its aesthetic is truly condemnable – is, on the one hand, equivalent to pauperisation and, on the other, a result of the shrinkage of the press to one, propagandist organ, reluctantly bought by the Warsaw populace. In these conditions, the announcement about posters causes yet another hindrance for the barely smouldering flame of economic life.'[25]

In the private spaces of the occupied city, in homes and apartments, but also cellars, shelters, hideouts and bunkers, the act of writing usually took the form of everyday notes in a diary, or had the character of a chronicle. They were made by hundreds and thousands of people in notebooks, on sheets and scraps of paper, and, in the absence of these standard writing media, sometimes also on food packaging, labels, forms, books, pieces of toilet paper. A book about the diaries of occupied Warsaw, particularly those kept on the Aryan side, is still waiting to be written. There is, however, a very interesting book by Jacek Leociak about the diaries and other types of 'accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto'. The author observes a 'phenomenon of writing: documenting facts, drawing up a register of terror, suffering and crimes, noting down current events, experiences and reflections', which is a 'significant characteristic of the Jewish experience of the ghetto'[26] but can also be observed all over occupied Warsaw.

Even if they are aimed at providing testimony about the occupier's crimes, the act of keeping diaries, recording observations and writing down experiences has an individual character. The practices of the spoken word, on the contrary,

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24 Cited in ibid., p. 21.

25 L. Landau, *Kronika lat wojny i okupacji*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 170.

26 J. Leociak, *Text in the face of destruction: accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto reconsidered,* Warsaw, 2004, p. 28.

always develop within a group, a collective, therefore their intensity during the occupation is related to their community-building quality. Direct conversation is a manifestation of community spirit, of a sense of being together that makes it easier to bear the hardships of the occupation. The diaries of Rembek and Nałkowska, as well as many others, testify to the fact that during the occupation people constantly talk to one another: chat, converse and discuss, at home, in the street, in shops and restaurants, at the workplace. Spoken word is used for everyday dealings and is necessary to provide the necessities, mostly food and firewood supplies. Oral practices such as conversations, chats and listening to stories are also ways to release the fears of life under occupation – hence oft-repeated jokes or predictions. However, their primary function, due to the context of the occupation, is information flow.

Information in the occupied city, particularly on its outskirts, where it is more difficult to get underground press, is mainly acquired orally. Friends and family visits are always a chance to get news. In the case of Rembek, his visits to Warsaw are good opportunities, because overheard stories, passed on from one to another, are somehow concentrated in the capital. 'On my way back I walked into Olek Yakovlev's corset store. I found out he is in captivity. Stacha Niedźwiedzka is still recovering from pneumonia but she's getting better and better. Heluta Wolska was at her place with a blonde from Gdansk and Sopot. She said there was a famine there. One only gets coupons for a kilo of horseflesh per week. Apart from this, there are only herrings. She met her German officer friend there, who came for a three-week vacation from Siegfried Line. Reportedly, he told her that uninterrupted artillery fire and aerial bombs make people there go mad' (20 February 1940).

Almost every day, Rembek goes to Grodzisk just to get news. Sometimes, in the cases of 'information fever', these visits become even more frequent: 'We were all so excited by the rumours of a naval battle off the Norwegian coast that I went to Grodzisk twice to ask around' (13 April 1940). Rumours, which are mentioned in the above quote, are probably the most common method of dissemination of information. Rembek's diary mentions hearing rumours exceptionally often, almost on every page. Sometimes their character is quite fantastical: 'A rumour that, in my opinion, is completely unbelievable has been spread that Libya is going to be a Polish colony' (1 January 1942). Rumours intensify at critical moments of the war. In April 1940 Rembek notes: 'Fantastical rumours are circulating about a change in Soviet policy' (28 April 1940). A year later, starting from the end of February 1940, 'again, everyone has been talking about the imminent outbreak of war with the Bolsheviks, which is believed will happen in two weeks'. 'I suppose' – Rembek comments – 'this is a new trick by the Bolshevik propaganda.' (28 February 1941). Shortly after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in June 1941, the rumours

are intensifying: 'A great mass of rumours and news. The saddest are that Warsaw is again being bombarded by the Bolsheviks. (…) The most contradictory news is about the situation on the front' (24 June 1941).

Thus, a very intense circulation of unconfirmed and unreliable information develops under the occupation, based on the spoken word. This situation can be defined as a state of permanent information uncertainty. As a result, information from different sources is constantly being compared, e.g. the official press and what 'they say' in town: 'In the evening I got the *Warschauer Zeitung* with triumphal news about the final defeat of the French and the English in Flanders. We went to sleep affected by this disaster. (…) In the morning, Marysieńka brought sensational news from Grodzisk, where she went to the market, about the breaking of the German front at Valenciennes and Sedan. There was not the slightest reference to that in the German press. (…) Yesterday's sensational rumours have not been confirmed' (30 May–1 June 1940).

The only certain information during the war is information based on eyewitness testimony, thus its value increases very much. People inform one another about what they saw and note it in their diaries. They also try to deduce the probable course of the war from what they see (e.g. military columns constantly marching east testify to the approaching German-Russian war). Rembek, for example, receives information based on eyewitness testimony about round-ups in Warsaw or the situation in the ghetto. Eyewitness testimony allows, or actually forces one to take note of what seems to be improbable, particularly the cruelty and bestiality of the occupier. 'On my way back', Rembek writes before the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, 'I met a long column of Jews, three abreast, with the appearance of intellectuals. One of the Nazi youths who was herding them ran tirelessly like a sheepdog from the front to the rear and back again, beating and poking them one by one. If I had not seen it, I would have never believed that such hatred exists' (17 July 1940).

The space of the occupied city, particularly at the end of the occupation, in 1943 and 1944, is permeated with human suffering to such an extent that it is possible to bear it only because not everything is witnessed. In the late 1942, when 'worse and worse horrors begin to happen', Rembek has a 'nervous breakdown' and no longer keeps his diary on a regular basis. A half year later, in spring 1943, influenced by the events in the ghetto – its liquidation and the insurgent fight – Zofia Nałkowska (who keeps her diary until the end of the occupation) notes: 'The reality is bearable because it is not available to experience in its entirety, it is not entirely visible. It reaches us in the fractions of events, in the snippets of accounts, in the echoes of gunfire – horrible and untouchable – in the clouds of smoke, in the fires, of which history says they 'turn everything to cinders' although no one understands these words. This reality, distant but close enough to feel, is bearable' (28 April 1943).

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Anna Wylegała

Between Biographical Experience and Social Construction of Memory: The Oldest Generation of Poles on the Soviet Occupation and the Soviets[1]

Introduction

The Soviet occupation and the Red Army hold a particular place in the Polish collective memory for several reasons. First of all, although the Soviet occupation from 1939 to 1941 was experienced only by a part of Polish society – roughly speaking, the part that found itself east of the Bug and the San rivers after 1939 – it is considered a significant event for the whole national community in the collective consciousness as well as in official discourse. The biographical experiences of the oldest generation of contemporary Poles are very different in this respect. Poles who had lived in the *Kresy*[2] before the war first experienced the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941, then the re-invasion of the Red Army in 1944, followed by the outwardly voluntary 'repatriation' to the current Polish state and finally they began a new life under Soviet command, often on the so-called 'Recovered Territories.'[3] The residents of Central Poland or Wielkopolska, on the other hand, encountered the Soviets only when the Red Army entered these regions in 1944 or 1945, while their dominant war experience was the five-year German occupation. These two types of biographical experience resulted in two types of biographical memory, which have been slowly fusing into one – employing motives, themes and elements of the experiences of both groups to create a collective narrative.

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1 Fragments of this paper have been already published. See A. Wylegała, 'Wyzwolenie czy 'wyzwolenie': biograficzne i społeczne wymiary pamięci przemarszu przez Polskę Armii Czerwonej. Przypadek Wielkopolski', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, no. 3, 2014, pp. 169–184; A. Wylegała, 'Polacy w Galicji podczas drugiej wojny światowej: doświadczenie i pamięć', *Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej*, no. 4, 2014, pp. 47–69.

2 *Kresy Wschodnie* (*Eastern Borderlands*), is a former territory of the eastern provinces of Poland which today lie in eastern Lithuania, western Ukraine and western Belarus.

3 About the brutality of the Red Army ruling on the Regained Territories, see e.g. M. Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Cracow, 2012.

Another reason why the memory of the Soviets and the Soviet occupation is special and different from, for example, the German occupation is the fact it had been frozen for the almost half-century of the communist rule. For obvious reasons, the official historiography in the communist period claimed that the Soviet occupation had never happened. Postwar Poland commemorated the victims of Nazism and the heroic struggle of the Polish nation against the German invader. People whose loved ones had died at the hands of the Germans could openly mourn them, relate their histories and count on governmental help in the form of pensions or veteran benefits. Memorials to the victims stood even in the smallest villages and German occupation could be found in school textbooks and programmes of national commemoration days; it shaped the Polish memory of the war for many decades.

The narrative about the Soviet occupation was completely different. Although this occupation determined the post-war lives of millions of Poles, it was virtually erased from the official discourse about the past. Poles who had been deported to Siberia between 1939 and 1941 and returned to the newly defined Poland in 1945 could not rely on governmental support, or even openly mourn those who had never come back or express their longing for their homelands left forever in the *Kresy*. The brutality of the Soviet occupation was sentenced to official oblivion. Obviously, this does not mean that social memory of it did not exist. Semi-public forms of commemoration of the Soviet victims, such as plaques in churches and graveyards, began to emerge in Poland particularly after the Stalinist era. However, in the case of the collective memory of the German and Soviet occupation, it is difficult to compare the degree of their institutionalisation and their ability to shape individual memory. The turning point started alongside the fall of communism in Poland, when blank spots in historiography were gradually filled and the Soviet occupation entered the official discourse of memory. In terms of commemoration, the 1990s can be safely referred to as a period of a 'memory rush': a very active process of catching up in this field. 'Memory rush' basically covered all areas: from school curricula to putting up memorials and plaques, to the commemoration of the Soviet occupation when naming public places (numerous roundabouts, squares and streets are named after the Siberian exiles), recording the names of the victims,[4]

4 The KARTA Center Foundation (Polish: Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA) is worth mentioning here as it was first to collect the names of the Polish citizens repressed by the Soviet authorities and managed to develop a database with over 300,000 names. The 'Index of the Repressed' project is currently led by the Institute of National Remembrance. See http://www.karta.org.pl/Archiwa_i_bazy_danych/Internetowe_Centrum__Indeksu_Represjonowanych_/47; http://www.indeksrepresjonowanych.pl/.

film, literature, numerous educational initiatives and the increasing activity on the web in recent years.[5]

This paper aims to present the memory of the Soviet occupation of the oldest generation of Poles: to what extent it consists of the individual biographical experiences of people living in different parts of Poland and to what extent it is determined by the official discourse or contact with another biographical memory. In other words, I will demonstrate the internal differentiation of memory and explain its source, and I will investigate the interrelationships between the social and the individual in the collective memory. I define collective memory widely, as a totality of the established ways of speaking, thinking and representing the past that are available to a certain group (in this case, the Polish populace) and that are manifested in commemorative practices, art and culture works as well as in the narratives and consciousness of particular members of this group. This definition is derived from the findings of Maurice Halbwachs, the founder of the notion of collective memory, as well as those of Aleida Assmann, Harald Welzer and Astrid Erll. For reasons of clarity, I will focus on one selected element of social memory: biographical narratives. I will analyse interviews with representatives of the oldest generation of Poles. Therefore, my question about the diversity of the collective memory will in fact concern the diversity of narrative patterns and their position in a biographical context and in social memory.

My source material will be the autobiographical accounts gathered in Archiwum Historii Mówionej (Oral History Archive), run by the Dom Spotkań z Historią (History Meeting House) and Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA (KARTA Centre Foundation) in Warsaw (www.audiohistoria.pl). These accounts were recorded in the form of autobiographical narrative interviews in two separate parts.[6] In the first, unstructured part, an interviewee was asked to present his or her autobiography. Only after was this part finished did the researcher ask questions. The analysed interviews were collected from various projects, mostly those in which I participated – working for the Foundation, I recorded about 150 interviews in different parts of Poland, with different categories of witnesses, and I took part in the analysis of many other interviews. The collection of accounts I analysed most carefully are the recordings

5 See e.g. the activity of the Kresy-Siberia Foundation and their virtual museum: http://kresy-siberia.org/muzeum/?lang=pl.

6 About the methodology of recording autobiographical narrative interviews, see K. Kaźmierska, 'Wywiad narracyjny – technika i pojęcie analityczne', in M. Czyżewski, A. Piotrowski and A. Rokuszewska-Pawełek (eds.), *Biografia a tożsamość narodowa*, Lodz, 1996, pp. 35–45; G. Rosenthal (ed.), *The Holocaust in Three Generations. Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime*, Opladen & Farmington Hills, 2010.

collected for the 'Kreuz-Krzyż' project,[7] which gathered over 60 interviews with the oldest residents of the German town that became a part of the Polish 'Recovered Territories' after 1945 and experienced a complete change of the population. In terms of their origin, the inhabitants of present-day Krzyż constitute a miniature of Poland: Poles from the *Kresy*, Wielkopolska and a vast number of people who moved to the 'Recovered Territories' from the so-called Old Poland,[8] i.e. Mazowsze, Podkarpacie or Małopolska. Another important collection of accounts was 'Polacy na Wschodzie',[9] including narratives of Poles recorded in the years 2006–2012 in the countries of the former Soviet Union who, for various reasons, had decided against 'repatriation' after 1945 and stayed in their home regions. This collection will not be the basis of my analysis – because the interviewees live outside Poland their accounts cannot be classified as a manifestation of the collective memory of Polish society. However, I will use them as a control group to compare with the main data collection, which will help to make a clear distinction between the collective and the individual elements of the narrative.

Occupation: the end of Polish statehood

The preliminary analysis has already demonstrated constantly recurring motifs in the narratives of people with very different backgrounds and life experience. After Harald Welzer and his colleagues,[10] I will call these motifs 'the topos of memory.' The first I wish to discuss is the motif of the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 as the end of Polish statehood. In a truncated and superficial form ('The Soviets attacked from the east and looted our Poland together with the Germans') it appears in all the interviews, regardless of the origin of the interviewees. However, those who in 1939 lived in the territories later occupied by the Germans usually only mention the fact of the Soviet occupation, while people who actually experienced it speak about it at length. For them, the occupation meant more than the physical presence of the Soviet soldiers. It also resulted in the loss of political autonomy of the nation-state. The vast majority of the authors of the analysed accounts were children or very young people in September 1939, thus their perception of

7 www.kreuz-krzyz.pl.

8 The territory of interwar Poland that remained Polish after the war.

9 www.polacynawschodzie.pl. The website presents only selected parts of some accounts. All the accounts can be listened to in the multimedia library of the History Meeting House in Warsaw.

10 See H. Welzer, S. Moller and K. Tschuggnall *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi. National Socialism and the Holocaust in German Memory Culture*, New York, 2005.

the loss of independence related to the changes in the matters closest to them at the time: school, peer relations, and family life. Many accounts raise the problem of the Sovietisation and Ukrainisation/Belarusianisation/Lithuanisation of the schools, which introduced the Russian language and the language of the Soviet republic in question, which was foreign to the most of Polish children – those who were not from mixed marriages. Not only was the Polish language removed from school, that is, the public sphere; it was also not welcome in private conversations.

> After the outbreak of the war, a friend used to pick me up and he always came early enough so as not to leave me time to pray before. He wanted to check whether I prayed in Polish or in Ukrainian. These persecutions were at every turn, at home and outside. For them it was obligatory, for me it was a nuisance. One was not allowed to organise Polish holidays, they had to be Ukrainian. During the war no one could speak Polish at school. Before the war it didn't matter, as I said. (Male, born in 1931 in a village in the Lviv province)

The interviewees also pointed out the changes in a school curriculum, the ideologisation of education and the general atmosphere of fear and mutual distrust – which even children could feel.

> Obviously, there was politicisation and terror. The teachers were simply afraid. And of course Stalin and Lenin were put first… Portraits hung everywhere. As for Poland, everything was liquidated. Full ideologisation and politicisation of school. (…) It was clear society was depressed. Everyone was afraid – you could see the fear. Denunciation was widespread. This was awful! Everywhere people gathered, they looked around to see whether someone was passing by, listening. Terror, terror and terror again … The adult populace had a terrible life! (Male, born in 1928 in Lviv)

Poles also painfully experienced the loss of their politically and socially privileged position. The power conceded to the foreign newcomers, who were mostly Russians, was stored in their memory as much less painful than the power conceded to the pre-war neighbours – Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians and Jews. According to the popular stereotype, the Jews were identified with communists,[11] while Ukrainians were blamed for their 'national treason': striving for one's own

11 About the correlation between the increase of anti-Semitic feelings in the *Kresy* during and after the Soviet occupation with the change of social and political status of the Jews (and not their alleged predomination in the Soviet organs of repression) see e.g. Y. Bauer, *The Death of the Shtetl*, New Heaven/London, 2009, p. 51; E. S. Rozenblat, '*Contact Zones* in Interethnic Relations – The Case of Western Belarus. 1939–1941', in E. Barkan, E. A. Cole and K. Struve (eds.), *Shared History, Divided Memory. Jews and Others in Soviet-Occupied Poland. 1939–1941*, Leipzig, 2007, pp. 201–221.

country, or even cultural autonomy within the Soviet Union was considered a sign of disloyalty to the Polish state.

> And the Russkis came, and before they came, a German patrol, they were riding a motorcycle and they came to our village, over there, where the Ukrainians lived. And the teacher was Ukrainian, and the joy that they would have their own Ukraine, cos they wanted very much to murder Poles and make Ukraine their own, the joy broke his heart, that there would be Ukraine, and he died [with satisfaction]. And then the Russki army arrived, and so it began, the Ukrainians are policemen now and Poles hold their peace cos there were fewer Poles, and they were the majority, and they were the only ones who ruled (Female, born in 1921 in the Lviv province).

The stories of the privileged position of the Ukrainians usually refer to the whole period of the war; with regard to the German occupation they even take a form of an accusation of collaboration and suggest a threat to Poles from the Ukrainians. It is important that the motif of the political oppressiveness of the Soviet occupation occurs only in the accounts of Poles who left the *Kresy* in 1945. The interviewees who still live in their motherland devote more space to the physical threat of repressions, deterioration of material conditions and, much more often than the 'repatriates', seem to be confused about defining political changes that occurred during the war. An extreme example of this type of narrative is the following statement:

> And so, the… the war kicked off, our Poles came, Poland was here and here they fought; at our place, there was, there was a pasture, they pastured, and the [Polish] army with horses [was] there, with everything, and there [were military] oaths, the oath [taken by Polish soldiers]. And so they started fighting. And later they all started to run away, and the Russkis were coming. And the Russkis came, where they went after that I don't know, where they arrived, and here these Russians came but it didn't take long and soon the Germans, and they were fleeing and after that the Germans were here. But at first Poles were fighting. […] And later, when they were fighting, they were fleeing, so they were fighting… who were they fighting against – the Germans? No. (Very likely against the Germans. And maybe the Russkis a bit?) And why did they run away there, to the Russkis? They fought against the Germans, ma'am. (Female, born 1930 in a little town in the Lviv province, which became a part of the Soviet Union after the war – today's Ukraine)

Statements such as these are most common among the interviewees living in the countryside or small villages and never in places where the Polish minority after the war had some forms of self-organisation: Polish schools or a Catholic church, as it was e.g. in Lviv, Grodno and Vilnius. This demonstrates the significance of the culture of memory on which individual experience is based. In the case of the interviews, it also shows how individual stories are rooted in socially constructed narrative patterns. Harald Welzer is right to define them, after experience, as a

second 'material of which biographies are made.'[12] Poles who after 1945 lived surrounded by Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians and Russians and who did not have support in their local community were left alone with their war experiences, which is reflected in the way they now speak about them. They do not use phrases such as 'first Soviet occupation' or 'second Soviet occupation', which naturally and unwittingly appear in the narratives of the former *Kresy* inhabitants who now live in Poland and who have had the opportunity to commemorate these events for the last 25 years; neither do they place their local experience in the context of the so called 'great history'. On the other hand, the contemporary popular Polish discourse about the years 1939–1941, which particularly focuses on the political context and martyrdom, fosters the intensification of the political aspect in the memories of the 'repatriates'. It is important, having so much support in the collective memory, that individual memories of the former *Kresy* inhabitants are often subject to schematisation and unification, unlike the memories of Poles who stayed in the Soviet Union after 1945.

Deportations, executions, rapes. Soviet responsibility for individual tragedies

Historians estimate the number of Polish citizens deported far away into the USSR in 1939–1941 at a few hundred thousand.[13] If people who experienced other forms of repression (imprisonment, shooting, confiscation of property, etc.) and their families are added to this number, it becomes clear that the experience of Soviet repressions has been a very important, if not the most important, life experience for Poles from the *Kresy*. Their biographies in the form of interviews demonstrate that this experience is constitutive of their memory and identity. Naturally, the most expressive, emotional and personal narratives of the toughest forms of repression – deportation and executions – can be found in the accounts of people who experienced them personally. One can distinguish a few recurring motifs in the memory of the deportees. The first one is the brutality of the deportation.

12 See H. Welzer, 'Materiał, z którego zbudowane są biografie', trans. M. Saryusz-Wolska, in M. Saryusz-Wolska (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka,* Warsaw, 2009, pp. 39–58.

13 The estimates vary from 350,000 to 800,000. See e.g. S. Ciesielski, W. Materski and A. Paczkowski, *Represje sowieckie wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich*, Warsaw, 2002; S. Ciesielski, G. Hryciuk and A. Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, Torun, 2003; P. Ahonen et al., *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath*, Oxford/New York, 2008.

Almost every account includes the memory of the Soviet soldiers (or the NKVD) who arrive at night, brutally pound on the door and use physical violence to force the Poles to pack up and leave their home in a very short time.

> The Russians [arrived], Russian soldiers, 'open the door', nothing you could do, you had to open. […] I wanted to run away through the window, now the Russkis were writing everything down, turned everything upside down, and me, as a kid, I was loitering and loitering around, and I left and they didn't notice cos they were writing things down. And here my ma is crying and I left outside, there was a terrible lot of snow, yes, a lot of snow, it was 10 February that day, snowing, freezing, snow, like it hadn't been before all that time. I knew it was wrong, I lay down into that snow, I was lying in this snow, I think maybe ma will come out, maybe ma will escape. Now the Russkis with a machine gun, they jostle her, 'call her!', want her to call me, you know, 'or we shoot', now I'm scared, my ma says: 'Wandzia, Wandzia!' [the child's name], and so I raised my head and they grabbed my collar when they saw me and dragged me into the flat. (Female, born 1928 in a village in the Novogrodek province)

Typically, people who experienced deportation always describe such scenes from a child's perspective: the narrative becomes simplified, devoid of explanation/argumentation of a more general, for example political, character; it is emotional and includes diminutive words/phrases for family members. In her book about the memory of Jewish children who were hiding in the Netherlands during the war, Diane L. Wolf, after Bachtin, calls this phenomenon a polyphony: a narrative of someone who has experienced a very traumatising event includes the voice of a child who expresses emotions from the past and the voice of an adult who offers a reflective account.[14] The fragment quoted above clearly demonstrates that the account was given from a child's perspective.

The deportation itself is remembered equally vividly. The most often recurring images are coldness, hunger, tough working conditions and loved ones and co-exiles who did not manage to survive.

> Typhus began and the ordeal began. Cos they packed us all in, lice and everything. And they started to get sick. And one barrack changed into a hospital. So many people died there! Me and my mum [were there] too. My brother and father somehow… It was my mum and me who had typhus. But we made it. And so the Poles quickly found some hill and some birches. And made a cemetery there. And started burying people there. And there were these crosses made of birch. And later there was a whole mountain of these crosses. Cos so many people died. There were no medicines cos everything was sent to the war. Just one nurse. She was there but what could she do by herself? And so, if you

14 D.L. Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank. Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2007, p. 26.

> survived, you survived. If you didn't, you were moved there… (Female, born 1934 in a village in the Stanisławów province)

However, those who managed to avoid the deportation also spoke a lot about the repressions. They remember them as a direct threat to life: their own or those of their loved ones. Each and every account includes a story about the fear of arrest or about someone who was deported or, at least, who miraculously escaped deportation.

> But the worst part was the arrest of people, for nothing. […] And some of our family was deported, too. It was in 1941, my brother had just been born. My uncle was a chief of police in Czortków. He escaped and somehow, through Zaleszczyki, got to England, he left his family, and he thought to himself: 'I'll run away to save my family, what can they do to my family?' Of course, we never thought it would be so bad. But the moment they arrived they started this deportation of whole families to Siberia. My aunt and her family were deported to Semipalatinsk. They took her and she had four children, the oldest was 18, she had just graduated from secondary school because back then you were 18 when you graduated from secondary school. And then there was her brother, two years younger than her, Zbyszek; Janka was a year older than me and the youngest was two years old; Danusia. And they deported them. (female, born 1930 in Czortków)

Poles from the *Kresy* were not the only ones carrying the negative memory of the harm done by the Soviets. Many people who first encountered the Soviets in 1944 or 1945, during the Red Army march through Poland, also retain bad memories about them. Violence is a very frequent motif in the narratives related to the Soviet liberation of Polish territories west of the Bug and the San. In these stories, the Soviets are primarily brutal soldiers; brutal towards civilians in general, capable of shooting a passer-by just to get their shoes. The interviewees still remember their fear of the Soviet excesses, hold-ups and provocations in the street. The further west, the more the memory of the 'liberation' seems darker; it is particularly evident in the case of Wielkopolska. Violence, as it seems, is often a result of the lack of ability to communicate. The residents of Wielkopolska did not speak Russian and the Soviets did not speak Polish. The Soviets also sometimes wrongly classified people from Wielkopolska, who share many cultural features with the Germans, as 'fascists'. As one of the interviewees said:

> They were more arrogant, but we had to [adapt] cos we didn't know their language or anything. Many a time we kept distance cos we were afraid. […] But I'll tell you one picture, there were two rooms with a kitchen on this farm [the interviewee's workplace], there was this maid's room. And there my father drank with them and so at the end this one got drunk and wanted to kill my father cos 'he's German' (Male, born 1928 in a village in the Poznan province).

Sexual violence occupies a particular place in the analysed narratives. All the interviewees know about rapes committed by the Soviet soldiers in the liberated

territories. This subject repeatedly occurs in informal conversations. However, no one speaks of rape as something that happened in their immediate surroundings. Only women known by sight were raped and never those who were close – family members or work colleagues – although I received information of such cases from other sources. This narrative strategy resembles a little the memory mechanism analysed by Aleida Assmann[15] – externalisation of guilt; the difference is that this time it is rather the externalisation of victims by making them more abstract and distant. It is, therefore, using Assmann's categories, externalisation *à rebour*. The taboo is even stricter in the case of children conceived as a result of Soviet rapes. Again, although I knew about such incidents, I never heard about them from any interviewee, despite my questions. Apart from the taboo related to the social rule of not speaking about the sexual sphere, another important reason for this silence is protection of the victims. Due to deindividuation, the victims of rapes (particularly children conceived as a result of them) are protected by the local community from recognition and thereby stigmatisation. The only personalised accounts of rape concerned situations when it fortunately did not happen – they were always dramatic narratives about resistance, subterfuges and ways to outwit the Soviets.

> If [there was] a woman, she had to put out or I shoot you, right? They were a bit… Whenever my husband left, I had B. and the eldest daughter, I locked us in a room, quietly, the door was locked, when my husband left for work, for the locomotive depot, silently we…, silently, so we could… Once they were banging on the door, Jesus, I say this door will break, but we said nothing, they were banging, banging on this door, the door somehow didn't break and from the outside, it was my husband, he brought these boards and across, because the boards were chopped this way, and the door have these boards that way, so he nailed these boards across so that they won't break if anything happens and so on. (Female, born 1918 in a village in the Poznan province)

What is interesting is that almost every interview about the Soviet rapes includes special narrative methods: euphemisms, allusions and understatements. Most frequently, the word 'rape' is avoided and replaced with some language ersatz ('They were aggressive and provoking and so on and, why, they were violent a bit', female born 1918). One of the female interviewees claimed that the Red Army soldiers had tried to kill her mother while one could clearly infer from the context of the interview that it had actually been an attempted rape.

The Soviet violence – sexual as well as any other – is particularly evident and significant in the narratives of people who were little children at the end of the

15 See A. Assmann, *Pięć strategii wypierania ze świadomości*, trans. A. Pełka, in M. Saryusz-Wolska, ibid.

war. As literature shows, children can more directly experience war events that are strongly imbued with violence and their memory of these events more often influence their emotional and intellectual development[16]. Images memorised by these interviewees resemble Armageddon: shots in the streets, the Red Army soldiers rushing into houses and turning everything upside down; pushing the women around and beating the men.

> [The Russians] wanted to shoot everyone dead. I grabbed my coat, I had to have a white and red badge on my coat. I say '[…], don't shoot, please, don't shoot!' He says something to me, this Russki, and I [say] to him… What did I say to him? 'Nicht verstehen'! I don't understand. And how he grabbed me! I say: 'Nein, Polen', that I'm Polish. Grandma says to him this is a Polish child. I don't know how it happened that grandma had documents […] and she showed him that it was all Poznan, Poznan, that we are native Poznanians. Father started talking to him, my father. I remember they hit him so, he was hit terribly with a butt but they didn't shoot them cos in the meantime this [plane] came up flying, on these caterpillar tracks. (Female, born 1938 in Poznan)

It is puzzling that the interviewees who were children when the Red Army were marching into Poland distinguished very clearly between the German violence (of which, naturally, they had earlier had plenty of experience) and the Soviet violence and in their memories the former is much more 'terrible' and much more strongly present. It seems that the reason was not so much the objective range and size of violence as the fact it was usually the first violence they had consciously experienced. The long German occupation, which people from this age group experienced as something that had always been there, and, in a sense, as an obvious element of reality, fused in their memory into one, long, burdensome, bad but familiar entirety. The Soviet invasion stands out of this familiar pattern. It was a new, untamed and unknown evil, which left its mark on the 'liberated' children. This group of interviewees remember torturous nightmares, sleeping problems and constant fear of the return of the Soviets after they finally marched further west. Barbara Szacka[17] offers another possible explanation. According to her, the Soviet occupation is currently remembered by Poles as more drastic and brutal, although most Poles admit that objectively their families suffered more at the hands of the Germans than at the hands of the Soviets. In her opinion, this phenomenon results from the

16 For more on this subject, see J. Michlic, 'The War Began for Me After the War: Jewish Children in Poland, 1945–1949', in J. Friedmann (ed.), *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, London/Oxford, 2011; D. Wolf, op. cit.

17 See B. Szacka, 'II wojna światowa w pamięci rodzinnej', in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński (eds.), *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010.

need to 'let off steam': since no one in Poland could speak about the cruelties of the Soviet occupation for almost half a century, since 1989 there has been an attempt to compensate. The wrongs done to Poles by the Germans are often considered, both individually and collectively, to have been experienced, mourned or even redressed enough, but those performed by the Soviets – not yet.

The topos of a 'barbarian' and a 'good Russki'

While the memory of the Soviets and the Soviet occupation is strongly emotionally charged, it is not uniformly negative. Amidst the dominant narrative of wrongs and violence, there are also positive, or at least humorous, threads. The most important one is the topos of Soviet barbarians, which comes in several variants. In the lightest version the interviewees openly laughed at the vulgarity and barbarism of the Soviet soldiers, greedily but clumsily looting the liberated (in 1939 and from 1944 to 1945) areas. Narratives of this group of interviewees abound in the stories – legendary today – about the ragged Red Army soldiers who sawed wall clocks into several parts in order to get a few wristwatches, or about their wives, going to the theatre in lacy underwear bought in Polish shops. Another very popular motif is poverty and the poor equipment of the soldiers who marched into Poland as liberators – be it 1939 or 1944.

> When the Russkis came to us, we didn't know which army it was, cos our Polish army, when they were here, they were neatly dressed, very clean. And these were like, a hat, in winter they had hats with such a top, like, how do you say it, like upwards, with such a peak, and they didn't have good shoes on their feet, when they came to us they had [their feet] wrapped in rags. (Female, born 1929 in Kałusz)

It is significant that the tone of these statements is absolutely the same, no matter if they concern the events of 1939 in the *Kresy* or those of 1945 in Wielkopolska. This emotional identity of memory is very evident in the narratives of people who first experienced the Soviet occupation in the *Kresy* and then settled in the 'Recovered Territories' as 'repatriates'. They sometimes had contact with the Soviets even three times: in the *Kresy* in the years 1939–1941, then in 1944–1945 and then once again, from the moment they moved westwards until the Soviet army left this area. Soviet excesses 'here' and 'there' either merge in their memory into one entity or comparisons:

> [In 1939 in Lviv] Russian women didn't wear a bra, knickers or a petticoat, these things didn't exist for them, they bought them. And in this petticoat, when summer came, a dance in the park, she danced in this petticoat. Watches, watches were not in fashion among them, they didn't know of them. The experts in the market sold empty bezels; they put a bezel under someone's ear and chattered his teeth to the other one [to make

> him think it worked]. He'd pay, he'd take it. An officer, I remember them setting an alarm clock for him, an alarm clock, to ring, they hung it on a string around his neck, he got on a tram, and the alarm clock is ringing as they set it. 'For f's sake, what *sabaka* [Russian: dog] is that', they had never seen such a thing before. The same was when I came here to K., I'm turning off Krótka street, cos I live in Krótka street, round the station, and right there, the next street, there is a chemist's, already demilitarised. And a Russki goes out the chemist's and says: 'do you have any moonshine?', and I say 'no, I don't'. And I say 'I have gold, do you have gold?' 'Yeah, I have gold, gold', He says. […] I had a pot at home, without the handle cos the handle was broken, it was painted golden, and he broke these handles and took them, had them in a tied sleeve. And I say you *durak* [fool], this is no gold, you *durak*. 'This is gold'. (Male, born 1924 in Lviv)

The interviewees talk about such incidents with laughter, sometimes indulgence, sometimes more with disdain towards people treated as representatives of a different, lower civilisation. The narratives of people from Wielkopolska particularly include outrage of the 'decent' residents of the region at the vandalism and unnecessary damage caused by the Soviets.

> The Russians were still here at the time and as it was Germanic they would go and destroy it, just because…My father remembers it, he once arrived in K. and he was walking by where there is a PKO bank now, there were flats there and this window up there and as he was passing by, right away, he says, something smashed on the pavement so hard, he looks around and it was a beautiful radio that a Russian threw out the window. 'Why did you destroy it?' my father says to him, [laughter], 'because it's Germanic'. Such was their attitude to these Germans [laughter], that everything German [should be destroyed]. (Female, born 1934 in a village in the Poznan province)

All the above-quoted statements share the way of presenting the Soviet-barbarians in a distorting mirror. A barbarian can be dangerous, and such an image definitely prevailed in the memory of the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 as well as of the encroachment of the Red Army into Poland in 1944. However, a holistic view of the analysed narratives demonstrates that the humorous stories ridiculing the Soviet-barbarians serve as a safety valve and neutralise the horror of the utterly real atrocities committed by the same kind-hearted 'Russki –duraki' [Russian-fools].[18] Interestingly, there are also cases, although much rarer, of the neutralisation of sexual violence by ridiculing it. Although they correspond with the topos of the 'poor barbarians', they demand much more courage, perhaps a lack of prudishness, perhaps also a conviction that 'at this age' one can talk about anything.

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18 Kaja Kaźmierska, for instance, mentions it in her analysis of the narratives about the *Kresy*. See K. Kaźmierska, *Doświadczenia wojenne Polaków a kształtowanie tożsamości etnicznej. Analiza narracji kresowych*, Warsaw, 1999.

> Later, when the Russkis were coming, the Germans ran away, they feared the Russkis, you know, and here so many Russians were driving in the streets, in Łazarz [a neighbourhood in Poznan], you know. They were driving and laughing, like… Shall I tell you? What do you say? (Of course.) And they were so happy that I was waving myself, Poles were carrying flowers, greeted them with flowers. And this one stopped this tractor, you know, what do you… (Tank.) Yes, this one wanted it… He says: 'I don't need flowers; I need a cunt!' Such a thing, and so we laughed our heads off at it. (Female, born 1919 in a village in the Poznan province).

The topos of a 'good Russki' is unquestionably positive. It is used by people who experienced the Soviet occupation in the *Kresy* in 1939–1941 as well as by the Poles 'liberated' by the Red Army after 1944 in the territories of the so-called old Poland; however, more often by the latter group. The residents of the *Kresy* retain individual memories of the Soviets who 'were not so bad'. They are usually the exception that proves the rule, which is very strongly emphasised by the interviewees, as if they were afraid to be accused that, after so many years, their opinion of the Soviet invaders is not negative enough. 'The good Russians' were usually people with whom the interviewees had closer contact, whom they had a chance to meet as ordinary people: tenants (e.g. officers' families, teachers), friends from school, co-workers. A woman born in 1915 in the territory of today's Belarus, who worked as a teacher during the war, lived for over ten months together with a young woman sent from Minsk to work in the local school. Filled with fear of 'the Soviet' at first, she soon found that 'the Soviet' was no less afraid of her:

> And they sent to me, a young Komsomolets came: Annuszka, Ann [laughter]. An odd meeting, very odd, how else? Well, one had become cautious. She arrived very poorly dressed. A headscarf tied under the chin, an old, thin coat, very cheap, it was already winter, November, in a summer dress. And, well, I felt sorry for this girl. […] I would pray every evening. So I'm praying under the duvet and I can see she's also pulling a duvet over herself. And I found out later that she prayed, too. She was Orthodox, but she was a believer and she hid from me and prayed, too. So that I wouldn't report to the Komsomol that she also prayed. After a year of work or so she confided in me.

There are also frequent stories of the Soviets who 'turn out to be human': deep down, they are against the Soviet system, they help Poles to avoid repression or at least they give up their ideological zeal when doing so could help another person. One of the interviewees, born in 1925 in Zhovkva (today Ukraine), talked about an NKVD agent living in her home who saved her family from deportation after the re-invasion of the Soviets in 1944 by removing their names from the deportation list. Another interviewee, born in 1924 in Podlasie, recalls that in 1941, a few hours before she was exported to Siberia, a Soviet soldier stationed

in the neighbouring village ran to her home to warn the family that they should pack, which gave them time to gather things that later in exile proved very useful.

Therefore, although the motif of a 'good Russki' is much less expressive and frequent than negative motifs, it is possible to characterise it quite precisely. First, a 'good Russki' is always an individualised figure: it is always a particular person, even if not remembered by name. Second, a 'Russki' is always familiar due to friendly, close contacts. In the case of the *Kresy* these contacts usually resulted from living, learning or working together – different patterns of coexistence that had formed over the two years of the Soviet occupation. On the other hand, the interviewees who first encountered the Soviets in the years 1944–1945 in the territories previously occupied by the Germans mostly describe economic relations with them.

After the first shock of the 'liberation', people started to form relations with the Soviets, particularly in Wielkopolska and in the 'Recovered Territories': they traded and paid each other for services. Sometimes Soviet officers took lodgings in the houses of Poles. In most cases it was burdensome; however, sometimes the unwanted tenant turned out to be a blessing as he protected his hosts from greater evil: Soviet marauders, soldier-brawlers and thieves. One of the interviewees (born in 1919 in a village in the Poznan province) recollects with a great fondness a soldier who, admittedly, quite unscrupulously invited himself into her flat but who later showed gratitude to his Polish hosts by bringing a few 'lost' German cows and who bravely defended the hosts against his drunken friends. The woman concludes her story as follows: 'Sometimes I think to myself about him, such a Russki, but so nice'. This short quote perfectly demonstrates the third quality of a 'good Russki' – he is the exception that proves the rule; an extraordinary phenomenon that positively stands out from the totality of barbarians. Such a phenomenon occurs either when there is a chance that the Russki's positive qualities are discovered by Poles due to closer contact, or when the Russki is an exceptional Soviet *per se* – for example, it is a woman:

> I still remember, how […] in [19]45, when the Russians came, and Russian women […], and I remember this, they brought us bread. Because it was poverty then, wasn't it, they brought us bread with this sugar, yellow as it used to be, and sprinkled with water, what a treat it was for children, it was… I remember, but these were Russian women then, women. And so they hosted us there. (Female, born 1936 in a village in the Poznan province)

The extraordinary status of the merciful Russian compared to other Soviets is very clear in the narrative of this interviewee. She highlights that her sex determined her friendly behaviour, sparing no criticism and resentment towards the 'ordinary', male Red Army soldiers. Thus, the image of a 'Russki' or Soviet' preserved in the Polish memory can be positive only as an exception to the rule, an aberration of the dominant topos of memory.

The last element of the positive image of the Soviets in the Polish collective memory is the image of liberators of 1944/1945. This is a complex issue, as the contemporary narrative about the liberation of Polish territories from German occupation is influenced not only by biographical experience, but also by the Polish culture of memory and the official interpretation of history. This is evident in the stories of people who survived the whole war on the German-occupied territory of today's Polish state. A great number of them talk about their utmost joy at the encroachment of the Red Army, about the relief that accompanied the end of the German occupation and the ensuing gratitude towards the Soviet soldiers. However, the majority of them add a comment to this narrative, apparently feeling that in the current political and ideological context, the treatment of the Soviets as liberators requires justification. More educated respondents sometimes talk about the discomfort that results from the fact that their feelings and emotions 70 years ago do not fit the official version of history today. In other accounts, the motif of the 'Soviet liberators' is either presented ironically (the interviewees retrospectively evaluate the long-term consequences of the liberation of Poland from the German occupation by the Soviets and not the Americans, for instance) or with embarrassment. In the latter case, the interviewees most often talk not about their own feelings and reactions, but those of their neighbours and friends. Using Aleida Assmann's terminology, they externalise behaviour that they consider wrong in retrospect. They also always highlight the 'naivety' of the first positive response to the Soviet invasion and how the Poles quickly lost their illusions about the good intentions of the Red Army.

> They welcome them as liberators. A car came round such a market and they welcomed them with flowers. This is how it was, a festivity. Because I was in K., and so I went to [my hometown] on the second or third day. And they said they had welcomed them with flowers. Well, but they found out only later who came, later. When they started taking, started raping already. (Male, born 1929 in the Poznan province)

Summary

The outlined ways of constructing narratives about the Soviets and the Soviet occupation lead to a question about the contexts and sources of this element of the collective memory. There seem to be three main groups of such sources or contexts. Despite the significance of the social dimension of memory, a biographical context is in my opinion the most important in the analysed case. I understand it as the experience as well as the whole biography of an interviewee, which has shaped his or her perception of the Soviet occupation and the later liberation of Poland, and influenced the way it is now recounted. Thus, it is not surprising that the sharpest comments about the Soviets are made by people who experienced

most wrongs from them – lost their loved ones, experienced arrest or imprisonment, were victimised and deported. Naturally, the carriers of this very vivid, negative memory are mostly Poles from the *Kresy* who experienced brutal Soviet occupation in years 1939–1941. The fact that they lost their home regions after the war, for which they blame the Soviets, combined with the objective difficulty of the occupation, makes them remember the Soviets as 'the worst ones' during the war.

However, people from the *Kresy* are not the only ones who bear a negative memory of the Soviets. Although most of the Poles who spent the war under German occupation do not use the word 'liberation' ironically, some of them remember the Soviets as worse than the Germans. These are always people whose families were not personally affected by the German occupation but experienced severe loss due to the Soviet activities. An interviewee born in Poznan (born 1918) stated very roundly that 'The Germans […] were no good, I've already told you, but the Russkis were worse. The Russkis were not human, they were monsters, they were those who would only walk and kill, so inhuman they were.' Her experience of the German occupation was very difficult, but it was the Red Army that killed her father during the Battle of Poznan.

Humorous stories about the 'kind-hearted Ivans', their awkwardness and dealings with them appear in the narratives of the interviewees whose families managed to survive the Soviet occupation in the *Kresy* and/or the liberation of 1944/1945 safely and without any trauma. The memory of people from 'Old Poland' is also determined by what happened to them during the German occupation. People who lost their loved ones, were deported or were forced to work in difficult conditions less frequently sneer at the Soviet awkwardness and barbarity. They neither express gratitude, nor use narrative methods that openly ridicule the Soviets. On the other hand, the interviewees who moved to the 'Recovered Territories' after the war most harshly judge the Soviet barbarity. First of all, their contact with the Red Army was the longest and most troublesome, and secondly, the damage done by the Soviets had more impact on the quality of their post-war life.

The second important factor determining contemporary narratives about the liberation is contact with another biographical memory. Many interviews demonstrate that after the war, despite silencing the problem of the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 and the events of 1944 according to the politics of memory of the Polish People's Republic, people talked about them with their loved ones as well as neighbours and friends. As David Lowenthal wrote,[19] a story repeatedly listened to becomes our own, and our own story repeatedly told becomes closer

19 See D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, London, 1985.

and more real to us. Another highly interesting case is the taking over of the topos of memory, which is typical of the narratives of the former *Kresy* residents. It is particularly evident in the case of the interviewees who married someone from the *Kresy* after the war. These interviews include many ways of speaking about the Soviets that are strikingly similar to the *Kresy* stories. The topos of barbarity is particularly strong: the memory of the Soviets that the interviewees personally met during the 'liberation' is worse than the memories of other residents of central Poland because 'the same' Soviets are responsible for the suffering and harm inflicted on the interviewees' loved ones.

The third issue that is worth attention is the influence of official memories on the contemporary collective memory. This issue is the most difficult to observe in particular cases but, also for this reason, is very interesting. It is worth noticing that they are memories (discourses) and not a memory (discourse). On the one hand, the influence of the powerful communist historical doctrine is still present, particularly on people who were socialised at the time. On the other hand, this discourse overlaps with a new one that questions the positive role of the Red Army and, in its most extreme versions, equalises its activity with the activity of the German occupier. While before 1989 people were cautious about public (or semi-public, such as an interview) expressions of their negative opinions about the Soviets, today we observe a mirror reflection of such behaviour. The awareness of the contemporary trends in the official memory may prevent the interviewees from saying good things about the Red Army. I believe this is less about fear-induced conformism or political correctness than a desire to maintain coherence with the discourse they generally consider to be their own.

The traces of both discourses – correct before or after 1989 – seem to be found in what has not been said rather than in what has. A good example is the aforementioned woman whose father was killed by the Soviets. Although the first, autobiographical part of the interview was quite broad, she did not mention her father in it. During our second meeting, her daughter, who was in the flat at the time, asked her whether she had already told me how her grandfather had died. Only then did the woman recount – unwillingly and quite briefly – the history of this event. The conversations I later had with her family revealed that her mother had concealed the circumstances of the murder after the war so her husband could be recognised as the fallen during the German occupation and the family could be entitled to social benefits. The interview was defined by her as an official situation involving contact with an outsider, hence demanding the former official discourse, which excluded Polish victims of the Soviets. This example demonstrates the strong boundaries some (oldest) interviewees set between the private and the public experience of history and memory, which have their

roots in the discrepancy between the social memory of 'ordinary people', using Piotr Kwiatkowski's terminology,[20] and the official memory. A somewhat similar mechanism is observable when the interviewees assume they should not speak positively about the Red Army encroachment because it fits the historical policy of the previous era, even if their personal experience of contact with the Soviets in 1945 is positive. Sometimes these people enter a dialogue with the discourse they consider 'in force', for instance preceding their stories with remarks such as: 'I know today one talks only bad about the Russians but…' This demonstrates the strong belief about the rightness/public acceptability of only one discourse, which is again different from the interviewee's experience.

The influence of the official memory of the liberation / 'liberation' in the Polish People's Republic can be also observed indirectly. For instance, the vast majority of the interviewees defend the memorials devoted to glory of the Soviet army. Asked whether a Soviet tank or a figure of a Soviet soldier with the red star should be removed from their hometown, they heatedly deny, arguing that 'all things considered, they liberated us from the Germans'. The question whether Poles should take care of the cemeteries in Poland where the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Wielkopolska rest provokes even more indignation.[21] This influence is also evident in the verbal content of the interviews, particularly in the case of the youngest interviewees, who went to school when the official narrative about the heroic liberation was the strongest. Quite frequently, they unthinkingly use the term 'liberation' without attaching any moral evaluation to it.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that negative topos are not only more frequently represented in the analysed narratives, they are also more emotional, more expressive, include more details and, at the same time, often accompany the positive topos. This results from the biographical experience of the interviewees as well as non-biographical factors that shape their memory, i.e. the social context of memory. The most important factor that determines Polish memory of the Soviets and the Soviet occupation today is, in my opinion, the fact that since 1989 this memory, on the level of collective, social imagination, has been in the phase of negative abreaction. While Polish-German relations have been reworked for the past twenty years and a new, positive image of Germans has emerged, the negative

20 See P.T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji,* Warsaw, 2008.

21 In the survey conducted in 2010 for the Museum of World War II, 63% of the Polish population declared willingness to take care of the Soviet military cemeteries. See L.M. Nijakowski, 'Pamięć o II wojnie światowej a relacje Polaków z innymi narodami', in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński (eds.), op. cit.

emotions about the Soviets, suppressed for 50 years, are still being released. Apart from the obvious influence of the biographical context, this is the reason for the very strong position of the negative threads in the stories about contact with the Soviets.

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Kaja Kaźmierska

Between Biographical and Collective Memory: The Experience of War in Narratives from the *Kresy*[1]

Introduction

In 2014, seventy-five years had passed since the outbreak of World War II, and in May 2015 the seventieth anniversary of its ending was commemorated. Important anniversaries related to this event always give cause for reflection and consideration of whether and how the war is present in collective memory. Publications on the subject usually start with similar observations. World War II is defined as the most traumatic event of the last century. It also 'remains a central element of historical memory for most of the societies that participated in it'[2] and remains central to the memory present in public discourse as well as biographical memory, which is rooted and communicated in private, particularly family discourse.[3] Naturally, the dynamics of memory have varied over time. A significant turning point was hectic dealing with the past as a result of democratic processes in the 1990s. It is interesting that while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could only then openly create a multifaceted image of the war and confront difficult subjects (e.g. Jewish relations in each nation), the countries of Western Europe also raised difficult issues in the last decades of the 20th century. In both cases, dealing with the memory of the war remains an unfinished process and its specificity in particular societies is a subject on its own.

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1 This paper is based on excerpts of my other articles published in Polish in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*: 'Konstruowanie narracji o doświadczeniu wojennej biografii. Na przykładzie analizy narracji kresowych', no. 4, 1995 and 'Biografia opowiadana, doświadczana i rekonstruowana w perspektywie narracji o wojnie. Analiza przypadku', no. 3, 2014.

2 P. Machcewicz, 'Wstęp', in P.T Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 7.

3 B. Szacka, *II wojna światowa w pamięci rodzinnej*, in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010.

Many scholars have analysed various aspects of collective memory; for example, in American,[4] German,[5] Polish,[6] or Israeli[7] society, but developing this subject is not the aim of this paper. One may have the impression that the subject of memory and memory studies[8] is dominated by reflection on the collective aspect of memory and the past, in which biographical memory is a dependent variable or, using the terminology of the field, one of the *modi memorandi* of the collective memory.[9] Yet, it is important to note that the phenomenon of dealing with collective memory was accompanied by a process of its democratisation. Those who had earlier been excluded from the process of creating history gained the right to share their memory. Thus, the witnesses of their times, who had long been marginalised by traditional history, were incorporated into the professional discourse,[10] and their voices – voices of the representatives of 'a truth truer than historical truth'[11] – were heard. The increasing profile of biographical memory, supported by the proliferation of oral history, places the witnesses of events and their biographical experiences in the spotlight.

Considering the above, it is important to note that the living witnesses of World War II are either 80-year-olds who experienced it as children, and whose memory of it is fragmentary, which is typical for this life stage, or the generation of then adolescents who are now elderly people more than 90 years of age. Therefore, in the forthcoming years we will be confronted with the obvious but always painful fact of the biological succession of generations and the evaporation of communicative memory, to use the term introduced by Jan Assmann. The carriers of communicative memory are witnesses of their own biographies and the facts within which these biographies were set. 'A typical instance [of communicative memory]

4 e.g. P. Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, London, 1999.

5 e.g. H. Welzer et al., *'Dziadek nie był nazistą'. Narodowy socjalizm i Holokaust w pamięci rodzinnej* in M. Saryusz-Wolska, (ed.) *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Cracow, 2009.

6 e.g. M. Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięć zagłady*, Warsaw, 2001.

7 e.g. J. E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven/London, 1993.

8 K. Kończal and J. Wawrzyniak, 'Polskie badania pamięcioznawcze: tradycje, koncepcje, (nie)ciągłości', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, no. 4, 2011.

9 J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination.* New York, 2011.

10 P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, p. 15.

11 P. Nora, 'Epoka upamiętniania', interview by J. Żakowski, in J. Żakowski, *Rewanż pamięci*, Warsaw, 2002.

would be generational memory that accrues within the group, originating and disappearing with time or, to be more precise, with its carriers. Once those who embodied it have died, it gives way to a new memory'.[12] These words do not refer to deposing memory in a generation defined in biological terms; they rather suggest that, being 'carriers of memory', the representatives of a generation are also the creators of memory: active interpreters of social processes and phenomena in which their biographies were entangled. However, it would also be hard to disagree with the statement: 'Not only does the distance increase with the fading of memories, its quality also changes.'[13]

In what is regarded as the most fully developed theoretical treatment of generations as a sociological phenomenon,[14] Karl Mannheim observes a common destiny of a generation, which emerges as a result of a specific bond between the members of a generation due to their participation in particular social and historical processes. Groups within the same generation that work through their common experiences in their specific ways constitute generational units. Therefore, communicative memory is influenced by and contributes to the constitution of a 'generation as an actuality', based on common destiny, and is stratified by a number of 'generational units', based on different forms of response to particular historical situations.[15] In this respect, the constant 'rotation' within the domain of biographical memory results from the biological succession of generations as well as internal diversity within one generation resulting from specific opportunity structures created by a configuration of events. Thus, the socially defined fact of biological (co)existence influences the specific character of a community of experiences and the interpretation of these experiences in each generation. Hence, although intergenerational transfer is one of the conditions of the social and cultural continuance of a community, the location of experiences in a specified time and space make them to some extent impossible to repeat by subsequent generations.[16] Communicative memory formed in an intergenerational dialogue includes stories that appear and reappear in various contexts: family gatherings, particular events, anniversaries, on a whim for no

12 J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, op. cit., p. 36.

13 R. Kosseleck, 'Nachwort', in Ch. Beradt, *Das Dritte Reich des Traums*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 117, cited in A. Assmann, 'Przestrzenie pamięci. Formy i przemiany pamięci kulturowej', in M. Saryusz-Wolska, (ed.) *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Cracow, 2009.

14 J. Pilcher, 'Mannheim's Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1994.

15 Ibid., p. 490.

16 Cf. K. Mannheim *Essays on Sociology of Knowledge*, New York, 1952, pp. 286–320.

particular reason. These social frameworks provide an additional dimension to the biographical story, making it to some extent untransferable but at the same time cyclically repeated on the occasion of anniversaries, holidays, and family celebrations.[17] Today it is difficult to decide whether the attempts to extend communicative memory using audio and video recordings of witness accounts will also extend the power that is inherent in personal contact with a witness and whether they will be able to eliminate the sense of loss and irreversibility expressed in the following statement, with which many of us would agree: 'My grandmother died when I was over forty – I still have an impression (not an impression, a certainty) that I didn't listen carefully enough to her stories (that always were incredibly digressive) while I had the chance'.[18] Perhaps in the following decades, on the next important anniversary related to World War II, we will be able to answer this question and determine whether the recent development of technology has contributed to a significant cultural change – that is, whether biographical memory can be intransient, whether an elixir of immortality will be created in this field. It seems that these questions are worth returning to in ten or twenty years to see if the transitory nature of direct interaction can be suspended and if the power of a recorded message that is devoid of the context of a direct contact can modify the relations between biographical and collective memory of World War II.

Focusing on the sense of common position and experiences shared by a 'generation as an actuality',[19] Mannheim did not highlight the important fact that memory, as a mostly discursive activity, becomes an exchange of narratives about the past. For this reason, memory that is built via intergenerational transmission combines the perspectives of at least a few previous generations– 'therefore the meeting of living memory and history covers at least a century'.[20] Therefore, biographical memory becomes a foundation of a shared, intergenerational discourse field, which is clearly demonstrated in the findings of a study on the Polish memory of the war that reveals considerable regional diversity in this memory.[21]

17 For more on this subject, see K. Kaźmierska, *Biography and Memory: The Generational Experience of the Shoah Survivors*, Boston, 2012.

18 J. Pilch, 'Drugi Dziennik', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 14, 2013, p. 43.

19 M. Corsten, 'The Time of Generations', *Time and Society*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, p. 283.

20 P. Ricoeur, 'Pamięć-zapomnienie-historia', in Michalski, K. (ed.) *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany*, Cracow, 1995.

21 L. M. Nijakowski, 'Regionalne zróżnicowanie pamięci o II wojnie światowej', in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010.

Moreover, the research project 'Biography and national identity',[22] conducted between 1992 and 1994, which gathered biographical narratives of war survivors, has also demonstrated a great variety in the experience of the occupation. A study carried out in 2009[23] confirmed that the biographical experiences of the witnesses shaped the collective memory of subsequent generations. This influence is even clearer on the level of individual experiences, which was reported in the research project 'Biographical experience and dealing with it among the post-war generation (born between 1945 and 1955) in the Polish People's Republic and East Germany', conducted between 2012 and 2014.[24] The empirical material in the form of autobiographical narrative interviews confirm that the memory of the war directly influenced the first post-war generation (born after 1945),[25] socialised by the family stories of their parents and grandparents. All the interviewees spontaneously start their autobiographical narratives from the war experiences of their parents and the influence of the war on the interviewee's own biography and the biography of their families. There were stories about underground activity in the Home Army, participation in the Warsaw Uprising, the experience of war in the *Kresy* region, about concentration camps, forced labour in Germany, etc. For people born in the years 1945–1955, the experiences of their parents resulted in complications in the family biographies that were personally experienced by the children: parents with a Home Army past who had troubles finding themselves

22 The project (original Polish name: 'Biografia a tożsamość narodowa') was conducted between 1992 and 1004 by the chair of Sociology of Culture at the University of Lodz and it was funded by the Scientific Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The analysed data included 60 transcriptions of autobiographical narrative interviews.

23 P. Kwiatkowski, 'Wprowadzenie. Doświadczenie II wojny światowej w badaniach socjologicznych', in T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka, and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Warsaw, 2010.

24 The project (the original Polish name: 'Doświadczenie biograficzne w PRL i NRD oraz jego przepracowanie w powojennym pokoleniu 1945–1955. Porównanie socjologiczne na podstawie analizy biograficznej') was conducted by the Sociology of Culture Department at the University of Magdeburg and Dom Spotkań z Historią (History Meeting House) between 2012 and 2014 and was funded by Polsko Niemiecka Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki (Polish-German Foundation for Science) (application 100201/ project 2012–03).

25 I leave out the specific and comprehensively analysed issue of intergenerational relations in Jewish and German families, in which the problem of sharing the experience of trauma or participation in the Nazi crimes was a central framework for intergenerational communication (See: e.g. Rosenthal 1998, Inowlocki 1993).

in the post-war reality, the label of being from the *Kresy*, late parenthood, stories of forced mobility or the ubiquitous poverty, particularly in the countryside.

Bearing the above in mind, I will now return to the research material gathered in the years 1992–1993 as a part of the aforementioned study on biography and national identity. In the field of sociological research, it was the first such comprehensive project after 1989 devoted to the biographical experience of war. Many people to whom we talked decided to share their wartime biography for the first time.[26] We gathered 60 narratives, many of which last for hours, that constituted extensive research material – about 1,500 pages of transcription. Half of them were interviews with people who stayed in the *Kresy Wschodnie* territories during the war.[27] The material demonstrated that aside from being an individual, unique experience, a person's war biography has also a social and historical dimension that, for instance, results from his or her belonging to the national community. National identity, however, or even the role that is attached to a nation in the war (enemy, victim, etc.) do not always guarantee that the biographical experience will be the same. One of the differentiating factors is where one lived during the war. Roughly speaking, in 1939 the Republic of Poland was divided into the German (General Government) and the Soviet occupation zone (east of the Bug river until June 1941) and part of the Polish territory was incorporated into the Third Reich. Therefore, the fates and wartime biographical experiences of Poles varied as they were related to different forms of repressions and threats, different ways and opportunities of rebelling against the occupier, and different definitions of everyday life during the occupation. Due to the research material, for the first time after 1989 it was possible to observe and analyse the sources of the aforementioned differences by examining narratives about the wartime experiences of the inhabitants of the *Kresy*, with

26 K. Kaźmierska, *Doświadczenia wojenne Polaków a kształtowanie tożsamości etnicznej. Analiza narracji kresowych,* Warsaw, 1999.

27 *Kresy Wschodnie* (Eastern Borderlands), is a former territory of the eastern provinces of Poland which today lie in eastern Lithuania, western Ukraine and western Belarus. Historically the territory was in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (16–18th century) and was in the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939) until World War II. As a consequence of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, on September 17, 1939, the *Kresy* territories were annexed by the Soviet Union and occupied. As the result of the Soviet occupation, a significant proportion of the ethnic Polish population of the *Kresy* was deported to other areas of the Soviet Union, mainly to Siberia and Kazakhstan, where thousands died of hunger and exhaustion caused by slavery and terrible living conditions (Gross, 1988). In 1945, Poland's eastern frontier was imposed by Soviet policy (Davies 1981, 509). According to international agreements, settlements along the eastern border of Poland were moved and Polish inhabitants of the *Kresy* had to leave their homeland.

particular focus on the Wilno region. The purpose of the sections of the research presented in this paper is to explain how a particular kind of experience, which until 1989 was excluded from the official collective memory of the war, generates a particular perception of reality and stimulates a particular kind of narrative about biographical experiences.

A preliminary analysis of the wartime biographies already demonstrated differences between the narratives from central Poland and the *Kresy*. The latter seemed 'richer', more vivid, often more developed; more was going on in the lives of the narrators and people around them. They also included significantly more images of other nationalities. These narratives were also more structurally homogenous. Regardless of individual biographical experiences, the narrators developed their stories around the same events, which constituted the general framework for every narrative.

Therefore, the source of differences between narratives from various regions of Poland should be analysed, as should the consequences of these differences for narrating wartime experiences. I will refer here to Gabriele Rosenthal's observations. In her analysis of the difference in the wartime experiences of German soldiers in World War I and II, Rosenthal notes that 'the narrability of WW II – that is, the structural possibility about generating narrations about the war experience during the period of National Socialism, and the accompanying readiness to narrate – is conditional upon the structure of the war experience, the biographical necessity for narration, and its social function for the Germans.'[28]

It is important to note that the comparison of the narratives from the *Kresy* and central Poland[29] is unsymmetrical. In fact, the real subject of my analysis is the specificity of the former. The biographies of the people who lived in central Poland during the war only provide a background, a reference point that helps to define the specific character of the narratives from the *Kresy*. This decision results from the belief that the image of the war and a 'typical' wartime biography of people from central Poland were always well established in collective memory. Only the German occupation, which is inscribed in the cultural, media and, in particular, ideological discourse, constituted the image of the war in the social consciousness.

28 G. Rosenthal, 'German Memories: Narrability and the Biographical and Social Functions of Remembering', *Oral History*, no. 3, 1991, p. 36.

29 I use the term 'central Poland' after the narrators who in this way distinguished between the territory of today's Poland and the *Kresy*.

1. Narrability

Narrability – the possibility of turning experience into narration – is determined by the nature of this experience. Severe traumas are an example of experiences that are difficult to communicate. In this regard, war is a particularly symptomatic event that generates many situations that cause suffering, including extreme circumstances such as concentration camps, deportations, imprisonment, tortures. Recollection of tragic moments often brings the suffering back. Therefore, the narrators often prefer not to face the past in order to avoid having to start anew biographical work on the experience of suffering, which is, in addition, intrinsically incommunicable. Bearing in mind that the experience of suffering is one of the significant factors limiting the narrability of wartime biographies, I also wish to follow Rosenthal in examining the factors that stimulate narrability and play a pivotal role in the comparison drawn in this paper.

The analysis of wartime and other narratives indicates that it is easier to communicate experiences that can be brought into a sequential order, for instance, by referring individual biographical experience to historical or social events that were happening at the time. Unless the narration can be organised around certain axes, the experiences are unstructured, they create an impression of chaos and the narrator has difficulties communicating them. Another factor that facilitates the structuring of experiences and makes it easier to communicate them is a break in the everyday routine. Individuals who are immersed in a routine, whose days are similar to one another, lose the sense of time, hence the possibility of structuring their experiences in chronological order. Their narrative was often reduced to a description of a typical day or typical activities, which, uninterrupted by any out-of-routine events, blended into one. Thus, a change of location is advantageous for the narrability as a significant point of reference that structures the narrative.[30]

The abovementioned observations may seem obvious as they are based on the common-sense findings of the factors that are advantageous for the process of narration. Although this might be true, it would be difficult to deny that these factors are structural aspects of an experience that condition its narrability. They also determined, to a large extent, the different nature of the narratives from the *Kresy* compared to the narratives from central Poland.

30 See G. Rosenthal, 'German Memories: Narrability and the Biographical and Social Functions of Remembering', op. cit.

1.1 Narrability of the accounts from the *Kresy*

> Generally, war is one great waiting [clearing throat] great boredom, great waiting; that's not true, actually, you know, cos things happen, they do happen, something explodes from time to time, something unheard-of happens, but in general, this is such a, such a terrible waiting. This awareness, you know, that the war will end, but how it will end, such a never-ending waiting…

The thought quoted above seems to confirm the aforementioned conditions for constructing a narrative. Particularly from the civilian perspective, life under an occupation – although different from normal life – quickly transforms into everyday routine. This phenomenon was often observed in the narratives from central Poland. Wartime biographies of the residents of villages and small towns provide a striking example. Although this should not be considered a rule, one may observe on the example of the accounts from central Poland that unless a person goes through unusual experiences (arrest, concentration camp, interrogation, active involvement in resistance movement) his or her biographical narrative is often limited and resembles a CV rather than an autobiographical story.

The residents of the *Kresy* presented their wartime biography in a different manner. Even if not overflowing with extraordinary events, the narratives were devoid of monotony or dullness. On the contrary, they were developed, vivid and full of detail. Considering the aforementioned factors that structure a story, one may conclude that the history of the *Kresy* was a factor that enhanced the narrability of the accounts from there. Wilno and its surroundings, however, are exceptions to this rule. The people in this area experienced very specific wartime fates. After the Soviet invasion in 1939 (the first Soviet occupation, during which there were also arrests), a month later the city was incorporated into Lithuania (the Lithuanian occupation). In June 1940, Lithuania became a Soviet republic. For the residents of Wilno, this fact was yet another Soviet occupation, which lasted until the outbreak of the German-Soviet war in June 1941. The three-year German occupation ended in July 1944, when the city was liberated by the Red Army (the third Soviet occupation).[31] Each of these occupations was characterised by specific types of events and threats and each change was always a turning point (*pieremiena*) in wartime biographies of the narrators. 'I mean, which occupation was it? First [was] Russian, [then] Lithuanian, Russian [again], German, Russian [again], the fifth. Pieremiena, as we named it in Wilno, pieremiena means change.'

31 N. Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland. Vol. 1: The Origins to 1795*, *Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present*, Oxford, 1981.

The author of this narrative structures her experience using an order of wartime events that is 'natural' for her biography, that is, the five occupations.

Thus, the history of the place of residence is advantageous for the process of narration, which is always organised around particular events. First of all, these events constitute orientation points that facilitate chronological organisation of experience. Even if narrators had difficulties with remembering dates or confused them, the order of events was identical in all the narratives, arranged according to the subsequent occupations. Secondly, these events are turning points in the sense defined by Anselm Strauss, that is, they indicate significant changes in the narrators' wartime biography as well as in the way of experiencing it (Strauss 1969). Some of them are related to individual wartime fates while others appear in almost all stories and have the power of structuring biographical experiences in a narrative.

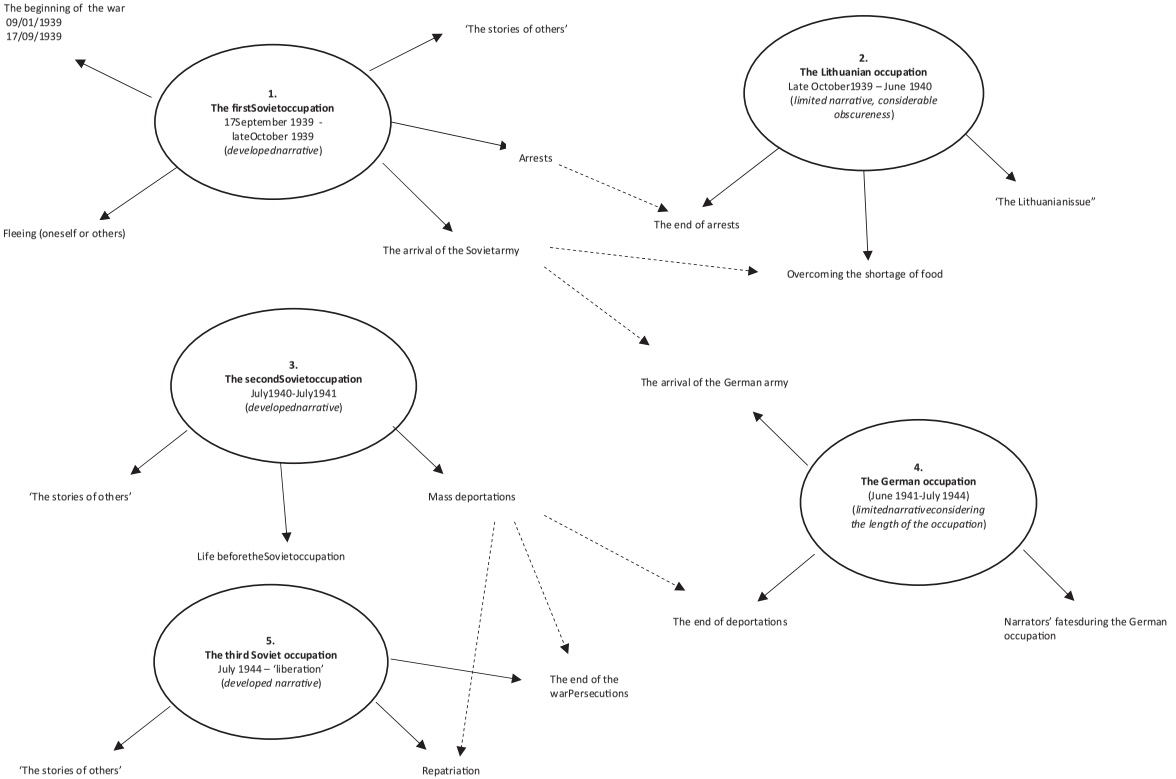
The diagram presents events that were brought up by the narrators when they were depicting their lives in particular phases of the war. Dotted arrows connecting some of the events indicate a relationship between them in the narrative. In other words, when recounting wartime biographical experiences related to particular events, narrators depict them by referring to earlier events and experiences.

In the next part of the paper I will return to the structure of events and relationships between them that are illustrated in the diagram. I will begin with the analysis of the role that some of them had in the narrative to highlight the form of presenting biographical experiences related to a particular event and the differences between the presentation of the same event in the narratives from the *Kresy* and central Poland.

1.1.1 The beginning of the war

The narratives from the *Kresy* related to the beginning of the war include two events. The first of them, 1 September, marks the historical moment of the outbreak of the war. This moment, however, was experienced as evoking awaiting, observing the situation, anxiety and mobilisation for action rather than a sense of threat. The accounts about the beginnings of the war include also moderate bombings (only of strategic points), the arrival of refugees from central Poland, helping soldiers, etc. Some narratives only include a few sentences about this period or leave it out; most often, stories about this time are in fact a preface to the actual narrative. Therefore, the period of 1–17 September is presented in the form of a short report about the first impressions arising from the observation of a new event, which, however, is somewhere far away and, as one of the narrators says 'And just these, let's say, two weeks faded in my memories in comparison with the terribly strong blow that was 17 September'. The time that preceded this date appears to shrink in the biographical

Chart 1. The most often narrated events for each occupation



experience of the narrators, making the Soviet invasion the true beginning of the war. The day of 17 September became the beginning of a concrete – because it was personally encountered – experience of the war. A description of this day (or the following days, when the Soviets arrived) is included in every narrative and is always related to the opening of a potential trajectory of suffering.[32] For some, the threat was very real from the beginning and was solely caused by the fact of the Soviet invasion. In such a case, the response was escape. For people who were not endangered (or thought they were not) due to their status, 17 September was the beginning of the collective trajectory of everyone under the Soviet occupation. In this case, the narrative includes a very clear herald of the trajectory from the perspective of subsequent biographical experiences.

A characteristic of these parts of the narrative is that the nature of the threat is precisely described, which results from the shared image of the enemy. The narrators (or their parents) know the identity of the invader and in their accounts about the war beginnings they refer to the source of this knowledge – public and private discourse about the Soviets. They depict the invader as a culturally foreign element that brings chaos and cannot be described in familiar categories. However, this indeterminacy and unpredictability of behaviour results in a clear definition of the situation of threat already in the first few days of the war.

17 September is never mentioned in the narratives of people who lived in central Poland during the war. This day is referred to only by the soldiers of the September Campaign, who were thrown by fate to the eastern territories, or people fleeing from the war who arrived in the eastern borderlands. In the narratives from central Poland, 1 September is the day that initiated actions and experiences that would later accompany the German occupation. On the contrary, in the narratives from the borderlands, 1 September marks the official, historical moment of the outbreak of the war, while 17 September was its actual beginning. In most cases, the Soviet invasion is the actual opening of a war biography.

To summarise, irrespective of its length, the part of the narrative devoted to the beginning of the war always has the same structure: 1 September marks the

32 Trajectories of suffering are one of the four biographical process structures distinguished by F. Schütze. 'Individuals experience the trajectories of suffering when they are not capable of actively shaping their own life anymore, since they can only react to overwhelming outer events; in the course of their suffering they become strange to themselves' (see F. Schutze, 'Trajektoria cierpienia jako przedmiot badań socjologii interpretatywnej', in K. Kaźmierska, (ed.). *Procesy biograficzne. Metoda biograficzna w socjologii*, Cracow, 2012). An example of a trajectory of suffering is an arrest, being in a concentration camp, the death of loved ones or severe illness.

outbreak of the war, the following two weeks are described as waiting and observation and 17 September is the real beginning of the war and a clearly-defined threat. Their clear awareness of what would follow after the situation was defined stimulated particular actions. The most important one was escape.

1.1.2 Flight

The outbreak of the war forced a wave of civilians to flee from the western and central areas of Poland to escape from the moving frontline. Thus, movement was directed eastward. The refugees hoped to get into uninvaded areas and, most of all, to avoid the frontline. Being an easy target for bombing planes, crowds of people were fleeing from the hostilities to the areas controlled by the Polish army, which were seen as possibly safe. However, the attempt to avoid the consequences of warfare had a very tragic outcome and cost many lives.

The exact nature of the threat from the Germans was unclear in the first days of the war. The residents of central Poland fled in order to move away from the unknown and wait, in the belief that the situation was temporary and the war would last no more than a few months. In contrast, people fleeing from the Soviet Army were accompanied from the beginning by the sense of defeat and hopelessness. The exact reason for their flight was clear and related to the specific threat to people of particular social statuses (that is, military, police, people occupying public office, wealthy gentry). The experiences of their grandparents or parents allowed the narrators to clearly define the situation as life threatening. Thus, their flight was not temporary, to wait until the frontline moves away. It was rather an attempt to avoid death by specific individuals rather than random victims of the hostilities. The narrators, then, faced a clear trajectory of suffering. They fled from the specific, unavoidable threat that was directed at specific individual biographies. For these narrators, the collective trajectory of war quickly became an individual trajectory. In other words, while the first days of the war in central Poland were described as a period of disorganisation of reality,[33] the narratives from the borderlines included a vision of destruction.

Other people's flights were also interpreted by the narrators in terms of a clear threat. Fleeing from the Soviet army was a necessary act to save one's life. The interpretation of the situation as immediately dangerous was supported by identifying oneself as a victim and placing trust in the familiar identity features ascribed to the occupier.

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33 A. Rokuszewska-Pawełek, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna*, Lodz, 2002.

1.1.3 Deportations

Another event that appeared in every narrative is a deportation to Siberia or Kazakhstan. Although only two narrators were deported, all the others described this phenomenon in more or less detail. The narrators recounted what they saw or heard from fellow citizens. Thus, they spoke of what happened around them, was thereby located within their biographical experience. They also described events that they did not see or experience but only heard from others. The depiction of the deportation is thus a short, complete story including what they had heard about the history of the victims.

Deportation was the fundamental danger during the Soviet occupation. Of course, there were other threats, such as arrests, which mostly involved people connected with the resistance movement[34], but deportation, as the narrators emphasise, could happen to anyone. Thus, not only does a description of a deportation and the fate of its victims mark a significant event, it also indicates the type of the trajectory of suffering in the biography of an individual. The narrators devote the most time to descriptions of deportations (they provide detailed accounts about the deportees) when they speak of the second phase of the Soviet occupation (June 1940–June 1941). This is related to the fact that the largest wave of deportations occurred in this period – to be precise, just before the outbreak of the German-Soviet war.

Returning to the diagram, one may add that deportation is a leitmotif of the parts of the narratives devoted to the Soviet occupation. Descriptions of it serve to depict the permanent threat and its relations to other biographical experiences that were determined by the sense of approaching or receding danger. The most significant of these relations is the link between another wave of deportations and the German-Soviet war, and between another invasion of the Soviet army in summer 1944 ('liberation') and another wave of terror. The combination of the first two events had a significant impact on the experience of the beginnings of the German occupation and its presentation in the narrative. In the latter case, the juxtaposition of experiences from earlier phases of the Soviet occupation with the end phase of the war becomes a fundamental point of reference for the decision to repatriate. Resettlement is experienced mostly as the avoidance of a threat at the price of leaving a place with which the narrators strongly identified.

In the narratives from central Poland, it is difficult to find a consistently repeated event that symbolised the dangers faced by the people in that area. The narrators speak about people being deported to work in Germany and how one tried

34 Generally, arrests were made in 1939 and between 1944 and 1945, after the re-invasion of the Soviet Army. The arrests ended in deaths or deportation to labour camps.

to avoid it, about roundups (*łapanki*), sometimes about concentration camps. Due to their frequency and unpredictability, roundups seem to have been a similar kind of threat but they certainly did not play the same role as deportation in the narratives from the *Kresy*.

1.1.4 The end of the war

The end of the war was not always precisely marked in the narratives from the *Kresy*, thus by this phrase I mean a specific nexus of circumstances and moods that accompanied this event. It is important to note that the end of the war interpreted in this way was a completely different kind of experience in comparison to how the residents of central Poland narrated it. The Teheran and Yalta conferences are mentioned in some of the narratives as significant events that preceded the moment of the end of the war and foreshadowed new Polish borders. For the residents of eastern borderlines, this was tantamount to the necessity to leave their homes if they wanted to remain on Polish territory. In contrast to the narratives from central Poland, the end of the war was rarely described as the flight of the Germans. It was rather linked to the return of the Russians, who were still considered enemies by the narrators. The fear and sense of threat returned, made real by mass arrests and deportations after Operation Ostra Brama (lit. Operation Gate of Dawn).[35] Thus, the end of the war was associated mostly with the return of the trajectory of suffering (the Soviet occupation) and the residents' necessity to leave their homes. In the narrators' experience, the end of the war closed one trajectory (of German occupation) but opened – or re-established – another one (Soviet occupation). Therefore, rather than relief coming from the end of a traumatic event, it was accompanied by a sense of defeat of the community to which the individuals belonged (because of the border shift) and the awareness of a continued threat. It should be emphasised that in central Poland the persecution of the Home Army soldiers and other resistance groups started a little later, while, in the eyes of the narrators, at this time in the *Kresy*, the NKVD began arresting, murdering and deporting resistance members. Chronologically speaking, when areas of central Poland were liberated in January 1945, many members of the Wilno branch of the Home Army had long since been arrested or deported and the rest, in hiding, were

35 Ostra Brama (lit. Operation Gate of Dawn) was a military operation that started in July as a part of the Operation Tempest – a series of anti-Nazi uprisings conducted by the Home Army (Armia Krajowa). The aim of the operation was to take control over German-occupied Polish territory by the Home Army forces before the arrival of the Red Army.

making attempts to leave the city (usually with illegal documents) with repatriation transports or with the Polish People's Army.

In consequence, the end of the war in the *Kresy* was experienced by the narrators as another *pieremiena* – a change of occupier. Therefore, the same event resulted in different biographical experiences.

1.1.5 The stories of others

The stories of others are narratives about relatives, friends or even strangers presented in the form of short tales about what happened to other people. They are present in almost every narrative and, characteristically, they concern events almost exclusively related to the Soviet, and not German occupation. Thus, when the narrators speak of the Germans and the German occupation, the stories of others are absent. This phenomenon can be defined as another characteristic of the narrative from the *Kresy*, the formal and interpretative framework of which is impacted by the experience of the Soviet occupation.

The stories of others have a similar construction, which comprises of the presentation of the protagonist (which often reaches back and emphasises specific elements of his or her biography that made the narrator choose the story), the description of what happened to him or her and the end of the story that presents his or her subsequent fate. The end of the story is rarely a part of the biographical narrative, but the narrator reconstructs it later on. However, these stories usually have a coherent structure.

What is the role of the stories of others in the narrative of a wartime biography? Although it varies and depends on the context, in most cases the stories complete the image of the war and one's participation in it. The completed image of the war usually serves as a source of interpretation for the narrative. The narrators use the stories of others to fill in the gaps of their own wartime experiences, hypothesising what could have happened to them by presenting what happened to others and framing their biography in this way. By telling the stories of others, the narrator closes the entire narrative form.[36] In order to adequately

36 Closing the form is one of the three narrative constraints. It forces the narrator to finish the depiction of an episode or experience to make that section of the narrative comprehensible for the listener (See F. Schütze, *Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of the Autobiographical Narratives: How to Analyse Autobiographical Narrative Interviews, Part I, INVITE – Biographical Counselling in Rehabilitative Vocational Training. Further Educational Curriculum*, EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme, 2008, available from www.biographicalcounselling.com/download/B2.1.pdf, accessed 4 March 2008). The stories of others can perform such a role for the entire narrative, in which

describe wartime experiences, the narrator also needs to define what they are not. Therefore, the biography needs general frames of experiencing war and potential dangers. Consequently, the full picture of the war comprises the experiences of individuals as well as of other people: life stories that could have potentially been theirs but happened to others.

Most stories of others were told to emphasise the kinds of possible danger related to the Soviet occupation. The majority of accounts concerned deportations. It is important to note that while the narrator was exposed to the threat, it did not become his personal experience. A similar function of the stories of others (which the analysis of all the narratives clearly indicates) is the characterisation of the occupier. In this case, the stories about people known to the narrator add credibility to the characteristics attributable to the occupier. The narrators do not explicitly say what the Soviets are like but the story makes their feelings clear.

Narrators also told the stories of others to use them to work on their own biographical experience:[37] in this case, on the relation between one's own trajectory and the trajectories of others. The experience of war already makes one enter a collective trajectory. Yet, most narrators did not experience an individual trajectory: the interviewees were aware of the possible dangers that they could have encountered but in most cases had not. Thus, the narrators talk about others who experienced individual trajectories, thereby demonstrating moral solidarity with the suffering community.

1.1.6 The influence of the narrability of the accounts from the Kresy *on their structure*

I have discussed only some of the events presented in the diagram. The remaining ones are related to the problem of the perception of the other and the presentation of self and they require separate analysis. This paper does not provide that analysis.

The outbreak of the war, flights and the end of the war also appear in the narratives from central Poland. It is therefore possible to compare the way of presenting experiences related to these events and their role in the narrative. Deportations are events that are specific for the narratives from the *Kresy* and, as I have already emphasised, they have no equivalent in the wartime biographies from central Poland. In other words, there is not one form of threat that would be discussed by all narrators without exception. The stories of others perform a special role in

an individual presents his or her wartime biography and places it in a context by saying what happened to others.

37 A. Strauss, *Continual Permutations of Action*, New York, 1993.

the narratives from the *Kresy*. They are not events in the strict sense of the word, that is, they are not an objectified form of a biographical occurrence around which an individual life story can be told. Therefore, they do not occupy a permanent place in the narrative. As presented in the diagram, they occur in various parts of the narrative, yet always relate to the Soviet occupation. Although intentionally introduced by the narrators, they eventually play the same role in the organisation of biographical experience as deportations. The stories of others cannot be considered a permanent element of the biographical accounts from central Poland, where they occur more rarely and their role in the narrative is less significant.

It is not difficult to draw a diagram depicting the events around which the narratives from the *Kresy* were organised. Regardless of their individual biographies, the narrators place their experience within a similar 'network' of events. In contrast, in the case of the narratives from central Poland (even those from the same region or concerning a similar wartime biography, e.g. partisanship), it is harder to find a common denominator for the narratives by structuring them similarly according to parallel events. The outbreak of the war and the subsequent flight in September 1939 are the only events commonly present in the accounts. Naturally, the narratives from central Poland have many other common features. I wish to emphasise, however, that the structural and formal coherence of the narratives from the *Kresy* regarding the presentation of wartime biographies results from the specific history of the region as well as the sense of collective fate, which is cultivated in various ways.

It can be easily observed that all the occurrences discussed in this paper are related to the experience of the Soviet occupation. Therefore, a theory can be suggested that the Soviet occupation generally frames the narratives from the *Kresy* and determines the image of the war presented by the interviewees. This theory can be confirmed by the comparison of the length of the occupations with the volume of narratives about them (see the diagram: dates and comments on the volume of narratives). The narrators devote by far the most time to describing their experience of the Soviet occupation, which lasted only one-third the time of the German occupation.

The experience of different occupations and, consequently, of the diversity and variability of events increases the narrability of wartime biographies, while the experience of the Soviet occupation determines the form of this narrability. Therefore, the way of presenting experiences is influenced by the experiences that preceded them. Comparison (in this case, resulting from a particular wartime biography) becomes one of the fundamental forms of structuring experience in the narratives from the *Kresy*. From the diagram one can see that the relations between different events influence the way these events are experienced and presented. Comparisons were made in the following cases:

1. Presentation of others. The narratives abound in images of others (Russians, Germans, Lithuanians) who appear together with each *pieremiena* and are always perceived in comparison with others. For instance, the arrival of Germans is seen from the perspective of the earlier observation of the Soviet army, and is thus experienced as relief due to the averted threat of deportation. Another aspect of this comparison is also a confrontation of culturally rooted images of others with the narrator's biographical experience.
2. The comparison of one's own experiences with possible forms of danger (e.g. the stories of others). As a result, individuals place their biography in a broader perspective of the lives of other people belonging to the community. Another form of this comparison is a confrontation of wartime experiences in the *Kresy* with those in central Poland. This confrontation occurs often and aims at legitimisation of the tragic experience of the Soviet occupation to the extent afforded to the German occupation in central Poland.
   It would be hard to find analogous comparisons in the narratives from central Poland. The narrators do not compare their wartime experience with the experience of people who spent the war in the *Kresy*. Presumably, individuals used the image of the war that was well established in Polish collective memory before 1989, thus they did not feel the need to interpret their wartime biography. In contrast, the narratives from the *Kresy* included a justification of the criteria that the narrator used to e.g. decide that the biographical experience of the Soviet occupation was worse than the German.
3. The comparison of the *Kresy* community, to which the narrators belonged, with the postwar reality of central Poland. This subject was introduced by another event in the narrators' biography, i.e. repatriation.[38] Leaving the area with which the individuals felt a strong bond and the necessity of living in a (politically and geographically) dissimilar world fostered the comparison of the past and the present.

2. The biographical necessity of narration

The simplicity of building a story due to the possibility of placing it in an easily identified stream of events does not correspond to willingness to construct extensive narratives. Persons who decide to recount their life story must have a

38 It is important to note that this term, which was commonly used in the post-war ideology, was considered by the narrators to be false, a symbolic denial of reality. It suggested that the residents of the *Kresy* returned to their motherland after the war, while in fact they had to leave as a result of the shift of borders.

motivation: their experience must be meaningful for them and for their listeners. Individuals want to talk about their life if the narrative helps to give meaning to their experiences by combining their past perspective with the present and the future: they want to demonstrate to themselves and to others that their life is a coherent, consistent and meaningful entirety with which and through which they construct their identity. These circumstances strengthen the willingness to recount and Rosenthal calls them the biographical necessity of narration.[39]

War is an event that disrupts the biography of a generation. The consequences of war are not only individual experiences that alter a person's life (sometimes causing severe mental strain), they are also various social processes such as mass migrations or changes in the political order. Therefore, war is the kind of significant event that must be dealt with by an individual in a particular way. Not only do people locate this event in their biography, they also feel the need to explain to themselves and others the consequences of war on their life. For this reason, the experience of war stimulates the biographical need to talk about it. The need is also strengthened by the awareness of transferring personal experiences to the younger generation. The need to share memories, which is a characteristic of old age, is additionally reinforced by the sense of having participated in one of the most fateful events of the 20th century. As witnesses of history, the narrators recount their wartime biographies so they can be a testimony heard by the subsequent generations.

The abovementioned factors compose the biographical necessity of narration about the war and stimulate most of the recounted life stories. They determine the fact that the members of the generation that survived the war usually are willing to share their memories. However, also in this respect, there is a difference between the narratives from the *Kresy* and from central Poland. As for the former, the biographical necessity of narration arises from the fact of having participated in a singular event. Due to the reasons listed above, the sole fact of having survived the war makes it meaningful to talk about one's experiences. Yet, in the case of the narratives from the *Kresy*, there was another reason for the interviewee's desire to narrate: the history of the place to which they felt tied. Thus, regardless of individual biographical experiences, the narrators felt the need to recount their life story also to share the image of the world to which they belonged and with which they strongly identify.

Thus, by constructing narratives about their experience of the war, their authors located them within a broader picture of the community to which they belonged. Talking about the war, the narrators from the *Kresy* always depicted

39 See G. Rosenthal, op. cit.

their local world and its influence on the process of identity formation. The interviewees attempted to revive the bygone world as a source of meaning for their identity and they wanted to present this kind of self-identification to the listener in their biographical narrative. Aside from the narrability of the experiences from the *Kresy*, the willingness to talk also resulted from the need to recount the history of one's community, which was excluded from the collective memory before 1989. The self-presentation in most narratives from the *Kresy* was made in a very similar manner. Perfectly self-aware, the authors nonetheless constantly confirmed their identity to those who could consider their way of self-identification to be problematic. The narrators noted that the residents of central Poland did not need to provide additional legitimisation for their self-identification. Indeed, their narratives did not include this motif even if the narrators' identity was confronted with the identities of other ethnic or national groups. In the case of the *Kresy*, the reason for the constant desire to legitimise self-identity lies in the exceptional character of the area, into which the history of their pre-war world was inscribed. The depiction of this world and the mechanisms of identification with it became one of the fundamental motivations behind the narration. This motivation is also expressed in the specific construction of the narrative, which usually begins and ends with a description of the narrator's attachment to the abandoned space and of the significance of his/her identification with this space. Therefore, the presentation of self was also inherent to the biographical necessity of narration. One of the aims of the narrative is to convince the listener of the importance of forming their present identity by turning to the past.

There is also a significant desire observable in the narratives from the *Kresy* to pass on the experiences of the older generation to the later ones. This phenomenon is a common factor that stimulates the biographical necessity of narration. However, in case of the *Kresy* residents, the need to share testimony with the younger generation seems to be particularly important. While interviewing, I strongly felt that our interaction was defined by the narrators as a relation between me – a representative of their children's generation – and them, elderly people who were witnesses of history and who can share their testimony with later generations.

Gathering one's own memories and the memories of others – filling the blank pages of history became an essential activity for many people from the *Kresy* after 1989. A great number of memoirs and diaries (that could not be published before 1989) demonstrate the effort to make up for lost time. The desire to save the memories from oblivion seems to have resulted from the need to expand upon the earlier one-sided image of the war as well as to make contact with the younger generation. The narrators were aware that the decades of silence and ideologisation of reality in the Polish People's Republic established a certain way

of perceiving the world that excluded their own. In this case, the biographical necessity of narration about the war is also a necessity of recounting the particular war experience in the *Kresy* and the loss of the private world that existed there.

It should also be emphasised that the abovementioned determinants of the particular biographical necessity of narration from the *Kresy* were related to the new possibilities of overt presentation of one's biography that arose after 1989. The willingness to talk about one's life depends on many factors. Some of them result from life experiences, others are related to identity. One of these factors is also a sense of being a member of a community with a duty to join the process of constructing collective memory. In the case of the *Kresy*, the collective sense of fate that had long been a part of the biography of people from there was felt as a need to give testimony. Therefore, the biographical necessity of narration was stimulated by a sense of mission, which also seemed to emerge as a result of the years of enforced silence.[40] These circumstances are also reflected in the social function of narrations.

3. The social function of narration

In her comparison of the wartime biographies of German soldiers in World War I and II, Gabriele Rosenthal observes that the way soldiers of the Third Reich constructed their narrative served to conceal their involvement in the Nazi system. For this purpose, they built developed and detailed stories about their participation in warfare. On the one hand, the stories consisted of a series of memories of a war veteran. On the other, they emphasised the moment of suffering, pain and danger. 'Through the narrative expansion of the theme of 'war', people are able to avoid the theme of 'national socialism', and to strengthen the idea that 'we also suffered a lot'."[41] This strategy was also supported by skipping the period 1933–1939 and what happened at the time to the narrators and those around them. If the violent acts (e.g. the persecution of Jews) that occurred at this time were included in the narrative at all, they were told as if they took place entirely during wartime. Thanks to this strategy, the narrators depoliticised the war, making it 'a war just like any other

40 It is important to note that this silence was imposed and unwanted. When the reason for concealing some elements of personal biography was eliminated, the necessity of narration was stimulated. Thus, individuals were permanently ready to present the real history of World War II, including their own experiences. If they were not, the narratives would have included gaps resulting from mechanisms of concealment, like German wartime biographies that omit the experiences that people do not want to talk about. (see G. Rosenthal, op. cit.).

41 G. Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 37.

war' in the history of mankind. This kind of narrative construction results from the fact that every author of a German wartime biography had to face the problem of guilt related to their individual life story as well as the history of the entire nation.

This way of dealing with a problem in a narrative – adopting a certain perspective of perceiving the war – is called the social function of narration by Gabriele Rosenthal. The presented image of the war and war-related experiences were a result of two fundamental strategies: concealing parts of reality by focusing on other themes (veteran stories) and emphasising one's own suffering in order to normalise the past ('it was a war just like any other war'). In other words, narrators presented their wartime biography as if it had nothing to do with the ideology of National Socialism. According to Rosenthal, adopting such a perspective is not coincidental – it is rather a characteristic feature of German narrations about World War II.[42]

Naturally, the authors of Polish wartime biographies do not need such strategies, as the war cast them in the role of victims rather than perpetrators.[43] It seems, however, that dealing with guilt by a certain group (a generation or a nation) is not the only social function of the narration. There are also narrative strategies that serve to present the experiences of an individual as a member of a certain group (a generation or a nation), who participates in an event (a war) that is defined by this group in a certain way. In other words, the narrator satisfies the biographical necessity of narration that embraces his or her experiences but also constructs the story as a member of a particular group, using the image of the war defined by this group. Thus, the narrator has at his or her disposal certain strategies of presentation, culturally established stereotypes and specific patterns of communication. In this sense, on the one hand, the social function of narration is the interpretation of the collective war image in individual biographies, which increases its credibility. On the other hand, it is also the individual use of these resources, which helps a person give meaning to his or her experiences and employ strategies of silencing or exposing certain themes that are established in collective memory.

The social function of the narratives from the *Kresy* lies in exposing experiences rather than concealing them. The willingness to narrate is linked to the biographical necessity of narration, as discussed above. I believe, however, that revealing stories about one's life and the bygone world means more than the need to share experiences. Most of all, the narrators identified their position in the wartime history of the

42 Ibid.

43 Of course, individual narratives include concealing certain experiences. This phenomenon, however, relates to individual biographies and it does not involve a search for collective justification.

nation, which until 1989 was excluded from collective memory. Thus, the narratives were intended to contribute to the process of incorporating the experiences of the *Kresy* residents into the socially accepted image of the war. One of the strategies to achieve this goal was working on the biographical experience of the Soviet occupation. As I have already mentioned, this occupation is one of the main themes around which the narratives were organised. Although the German occupation lasted almost three times longer, the narrators devoted the majority of their accounts to the Soviet occupation. This strategy seems to have resulted from the willingness to share experiences that had thus far been unknown to others, as well as the necessity of working on one's biographical experience. This effort took various forms, from historical comments, through background constructions (cf. e.g. the stories of others), theoretical self-commentaries to developed argumentative commentaries[44] that served to legitimise one's statements by establishing a relationship between the Soviet and German occupations. The last strategy of presenting personal experiences indicates that narrators were aware of the dominant social image of the war in the Polish People's Republic (and also used it to some extent). Thus, they knew that one could not arbitrarily claim that the experience of the Soviet occupation was tougher than the German but supported this theory with arguments.

The social function of the narration constructed by people from the *Kresy* lay also in the distinction made by the narrators between their own identity and the identity of Poles from other parts of the country. The sense of distinctness was expressed in the awareness of their different situation, which others did not understand, and the sense of self-worth that came with their constant confirmation of their self-identity. This problem is also related to the biographical necessity of working on the biographical experience of deportation.

Therefore, the narratives from the *Kresy* perform a social function for their authors as a specific group – a regional community that experienced the same war differently from people living in central Poland. The narrative is constructed in such a way as to present biographical experiences in particular interpretative frames. The recounting of experiences is thus accompanied by collective (i.e. specific for the group) constructing of the interpretation model. Consequently, biographical work is involved in the process of providing meaning to the categories of the symbolic universe (which is well-known to the narrators) for the use of others (people outside their community).

44 F. Schütze, 'Biography Analysis on the Empirical Base of the Autobiographical Narratives…', op. cit.

Based on the comparison of soldiers' experiences in World War I and II, Rosenthal observed that different narratives are constructed by people who belong to the same nation but are of a different generation and who participate in the same event but perceive it differently. However, the material she analysed applied to two wars that differed with respect to not only warfare techniques but also ideological motivations. In the case discussed in this paper, there is one nation and one war but the way of presenting wartime experiences also varies to some extent. The image of war presented by the narrators from central Poland follows the stereotype that is commonly established in social consciousness. This stereotype, which is reinforced by biographical experiences, also reflects the ideologised model of the past promoted in the Polish People's Republic. Strong ideologisation of reality served to cover up certain aspects of the image of the war (the Soviet occupation). As it employed commonly accepted and indisputable values (the ethos of the struggle for independence, the fight against Nazism and national martyrology), this representation of the war was likely to root in collective memory, particularly since the problem was not the falsity of the promoted wartime biography of the nation but rather its fading out of awareness and the one-sided image of the Russians exclusively as allies and not occupiers. However undoubtedly significant, the individual biographical experiences of narrators from central Poland were presented using a commonly propagated, stereotypical image of the war. In contrast, the narrators from the *Kresy* perceived the war from their own perspective as well as the perspective established in the collective consciousness. In other words, in order to present their experiences, the narrators from the *Kresy* needed to explain the categories of their symbolic universe to anyone outside their community. For this purpose, on the one hand, they activated the collective memory of the destiny of their community and on the other, they felt they needed to use strategies to legitimise their way of experiencing the war (e.g. placing their biographies in the context of wartime experiences of people from central Poland).

The presented analysis of the narratives from the *Kresy* that were gathered after the transformations of 1989 demonstrates the particular value of these materials. Not only are they oral history resources and a rich material for sociological analysis but collecting them at that time enabled observation *in statu nascendi* of the process of dealing with the relations between collective and biographical memory of members of a particular social group. From today's perspective one may conclude that although the need to work on the memory of war remains a topical subject (there are still many problems we need to face in (re)constructing the image of Polish memory), a significant change has occurred with regard to the memory of the *Kresy*. The wartime history of the *Kresy* residents – particularly the experiences of deportation, arrests and the tragic fate of the victims of the Katyn

massacre – has become an element of collective memory, which has been shaped by historical education, the media and a variety of cultural texts.

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Zuzanna Bogumił & Joanna Wawrzyniak

War Trauma in the City Museums of Saint Petersburg, Warsaw and Dresden[1]

Introduction

According to the premises of *new museum studies*, museums are institutions that actively participate in the multifaceted process of creating collective memory. They do not present facts in a neutral manner; they tell stories. The message they convey is a result of 'negotiations' between expert and common knowledge as well as between the interests of diverse memory groups. Therefore, historical exhibitions tell more about contemporary society than about the past and they can also have a creative and reflexive role in the formation of social relations.[2] In recent years, museums have become increasingly popular; as the historian Randolph Starn noted, they 'actually deliver more history, more effectively, more of the time, to more people than historians do,'[3] thus the analysis of the messages delivered by museums is a valuable source of knowledge about social images and contemporary functions of the past.

Although historical museums use sources and iconography that are records of specific and unique past events, the entire message that they convey is read within the framework of narrative categories and schemes of a particular culture. Referring to Clifford Geertz's semiotic definition of culture, historical exhibitions are 'suspended in webs of significance he [man] himself has spun'. Therefore, the objective when analysing museum messages – as well as any cultural phenomenon – is

1 This paper is a translation of a text that was originally published in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* (*Culture and Society*), no. 4, 2004.

2 See S. Macdonald., 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in S. Macdonald (ed.), *The Politics of Display: Museums, science, culture*, London and New York, 1998, pp. 1–4; M. Ames., *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes; The Anthropology of museums,* UBC Press, Vancouver, 1992, p. 3; S. Crane, 'Introduction: Of Museums and Memory', in id. (ed.), *Museums and Memory*, Stanford, 2000, p. 3–4; and D. Sherman and I. Rogoff, 'Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis', in D. Sherman and I. Rogoff (eds.), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, Minneapolis, 1994, pp. IX–X.

3 R. Starn, 'A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies', *American Historical Review*, vol. 110, no. 1, 2005, p. 68.

'explication (…), construing social expressions'[4] that are a key to understanding this message. Historical exhibitions use collectively developed interpretive patterns that help to create a narrative that is acknowledged by a broad range of visitors. At the same time, museum interpretations are more than mere implementation of the ideas of a curator. They have their own history and they result, as we will demonstrate, from diverse discourses that determine their final form.

This discourse-dependence is quite specific in the case of city museums. Stories about the past of the city that they present are a result of a tension between local and national *frameworks of memory*; between local reasons for commemoration (municipal museums, by definition, should exhibit the history of the city) and the broader context (mostly national, but also European) in which these museums function.[5] David Fleming aptly noted that the phenomenon of nationalising history by city museums occurs not only in Western Europe (where it has been thoroughly discussed), it is also noticeable in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, where political transition led to renewed scrutiny of city histories.[6] The narratives about the destruction of Saint Petersburg, Warsaw and Dresden, which are the focus of this chapter, are a perfect example of this process.

The historical contexts in which these three cities were destroyed are not similar. The experiences of the catastrophes were different – the famine and cold in Saint Petersburg, the two tragic uprisings in Warsaw and the bombings in Dresden – but the history of their commemoration does have some common features that are reflected in exhibitions in the city museums. First of all, the experience of World War II has become an important determinant of local identity for the residents of these cities, where diverse memory groups focused on conveying their own version of history. Secondly, almost immediately after the war, these tragedies became symbols of national wartime experiences and they were the subjects of different and competing discourses about the past within the politics of memory. References to these events also served as tools of communist propaganda and after the fall of the Iron Curtain they were subjected to new interpretations and analyses.

Therefore, we have decided to examine city museum narratives about the destruction of Saint Petersburg, Warsaw and Dresden in the context of dominant social cultural patterns and debates on memory about the destruction. It should be emphasised, however, that this paper does not aim to reconstruct the dynamics of the

4 C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, 1973, p. 5.

5 M. Hebditch, 'Approaches to Portraying the City in European Museums', in G. Kavanagh and E. Frostick (eds.), *Making City Histories in Museums*, London, 2001, p. 108.

6 D. Fleming, 'Making City Histories', in G. Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums*, London/New York, 2005, pp. 132 and 133.

entire process of commemorating a certain event. Knowledge about historical events was only used as a context that contributed to better understanding of the museum narratives. Based on the literature, we have identified and named the elements of the discourses of memory that have, in our opinion, influenced the construction/reconstruction of exhibitions the most. At the same time, the main emphasis is put on the presentation of changes that were made after the fall of communism.

The paper highlights that the transformation of museum displays was more than a simple replacement of the communist narrative with a new narrative that stemmed from the different social and political contexts after 1989. We demonstrate that, instead, the analysed narratives are a result of the overlapping of elements of different discourses from before and after 1989–1991. This process is explained by Jeffrey K. Olick's ideas, according to which representations of the past not only refer to commemorated events and contemporary circumstances, they are also 'path dependent products of earlier commemorations.'[7] In other words, one can neither infer directly from an exhibition what happened in the past, nor come to a conclusion about the present form of collective memory, but one can learn a lot about the genealogy of the exhibition. The last section of the paper summarises the results of the analysis, demonstrating how discourses of memory influenced the way of presenting the subject of suffering, which is a central motif of all three stories about the destruction of the respective cities.

The paper is based on the sources gathered during the realisation of the project 'The Image of the Second World War in Dresden, Warsaw and Saint Petersburg.'[8] They include visuals (photographic documentation of the exposition), secondary sources (publications about the history of the museums, brochures, guidebooks) and data collected from interviews (mostly with curators of the expositions). 'Discourse of memory' is defined here as structured and fixed ways of interpreting historical events that function in the public sphere on a local and a nationwide level. We have reconstructed narrative schemes on the basis of an analysis of space and the content of the expositions (and secondary sources) and the influence of discourses was analysed on the basis of the literature. On an interpretative level,

7 J.K. Olick, 'Genre Memories and Memory Genres: A Dialogical Analysis of May 8, 1945. Commemorations in the Federal Republic of Germany', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 64, no. 3, 1999, p. 381.

8 The aim of the project was the reconstruction of the image of the enemy in city museums. The project was supported by the Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft Foundation and the Robert Bosch Foundation. For more information on the project, see: Z. Bogumił, J. Wawrzyniak, T. Buchen, C. Ganzer and M. Senina, *The Enemy on Display. The Second World War in Eastern European Museums*, New York/Oxford, 2015.

the paper refers to museum studies as well as memory studies, demonstrating how images of the past are preserved or transformed using specific examples of the discussed exhibitions.

A heroic narrative: Saint Petersburg

The exposition 'Leningrad during the Great Patriotic War' is located in the Rumyantsev Mansion, which is a branch of the State Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg. As we will demonstrate, both the location of the exhibition and the time at which it was made (the period of Brezhnev's politics of memory) strongly influenced its form and message. The exhibition is a consensus between two competing (local and state-wide) discourses and builds its message on their common elements. More importantly, the message remains up-to-date; the exhibition was therefore not changed after 1991 and was only enriched by new, messianic elements.

The first exhibition that presented the 'heroic struggle' of the defenders of the city was opened in 1941. It was later transformed into a new exhibition, 'The Heroic Defence of the City of Leningrad', which presented 'the true story' of the wartime fate of the city.[9] Local history intertwined with state history about the war between the Soviets and Nazi Germany. Shortly after the war, the exhibition was reorganised into the Museum of the Blockade, which received much attention from the residents of the city.[10] In the post-war period, the local authorities often underlined the unique wartime fate of Leningrad. Alexey Alexandrovich Kuznetsov, the First Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Party Committee, stated in his speech in 1946 that 'Leningrad overshadowed the fame of Troy.'[11] Consciously or not, by glorifying the significance of the wartime history of the city, he diminished the greatness of Stalin. In the late 1940s, when the conflict between the local authorities of Leningrad and Stalin reached its apogee and the purges of the members of the Communist Party in Leningrad began, the memory of the

9 N. Konradova and A. Ryleva, 'Geroi i zhertvy: Memorialy Velikoy Otechestvennoy', in I. Kalinin, (ed.), *Pamyat' o voyne 60 let spustya – Rossiya, Germaniya, Evropa*, Moscow, 2005, p. 245; A. Shishkin and N. Dobrotvorsky, *Gosudarstwennyj memorialnyj muzej oborony i blokady Leningrada,* Saint Petersburg, 2007, p. 3.

10 H. E. Salisbury, *900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad*, New York, 2003, pp. 571–583.

11 V. Kalendarova, 'Formiruya *pamyat*': blokada w leningradskikh gazetakh i dokumental'nom kino v poslevoyennyye desyatiletiya, in M. V. Loskutova, (ed.), *Pamyat o blokade: svidetelstva ochevidtsev i istoricheskoye soznaniye obshchestva — materialy i issledovaniya*, Saint Petersburg, 2006, p. 278.

blockade was also subject to repression.[12] The Museum of the Blockade was closed in 1949 and its employees were accused of anti-party and anti-Soviet agitation.[13]

The memory of the Leningrad Blockade was taboo over the following decade. In the late 1950s and in the early 1960s, when the myth of victory in the Great Patriotic War was rekindled, the political approach to the wartime history of the city changed. The history of the battle and the Siege of Leningrad grew in importance in this new discursive situation. The events were presented as an interesting micro-history that helped to clearly demonstrate the wartime experiences of all the citizens of the Soviet Union.[14] Due to the engagement and struggle of the soldiers and of the civilians, the blockade became a symbol of the highest values of Soviet society. It was also used as a significant element of the propagandist discourse of the 'fight for peace.'[15] In this period, the number of civilian losses during the blockade began to be discussed in public, as well as the everyday life in besieged Leningrad, such as hunger and cold. The first monuments that commemorated the blockade were also erected at the time and the question whether the exhibition presenting the history of the city should be reopened was discussed. As it was not possible to open a thematic museum devoted to the history of besieged Leningrad, the exhibition was eventually opened in the city museum in 1964 on the twentieth anniversary of the lifting of the blockade.

A visit to the museum at the time started on the third floor, where one could see the exhibits related to the Revolution of 1917, the civil war and the first five-year plan. Going down to the second floor, the visitor could learn about the annexation of the Baltic countries by the Soviet Union in 1939 (the narrative was illustrated by large photographs of smiling people demonstrating their happiness at the incorporation). The following room presented the history of Mussolini and Hitler coming to power. The next twelve rooms showed the wartime history of the city. They were preceded by a specifically arranged symbolic space. The room was gloomy and dark clouds painted on the ceiling as well as the melody of the 'Holy War' song and a propagandistic poster 'The Motherland is calling' introduced the visitor into the atmosphere of a wartime story. The exposition ended with the

12 H.E. Salisbury, op. cit., pp. 571–583.

13 V.I. Demidov and V.A. Kutuzov (eds.), *Leningradskoe Delo*, Leningrad, 1990; A. Shishkin and N. Dobrotvorsky, pp. 25–31; Salisbury, pp. 571–583.

14 D. M. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad 1941–1944*, Lawrence, 2002, p. 470.

15 T. Voronina, 'Schlachten um Leningrad: Erinnerungspolitik in Vereinen der Blockade-Überlebenden', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2013.

history of the post-war revival of the Soviet Union: the development of industry, cultural life and economic prosperity.[16]

As a result of the political transitions of the 1990s, the exhibition has been partially changed. The section on the Revolution has been replaced by an exhibition about the Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Polityka (the New Economic Policy) with an emphasis on the modernisation of the country in the period 1921–1929. The rooms presenting the annexation of the Baltic countries have been closed, as has the room showing Mussolini and Hitler coming to power. The symbolic space that preceded the twelve rooms of wartime history has been replaced by a reconstruction of the 19th century palace interior. The section on the post-war history of the city has also been removed, the exposition therefore now ends with 'the great Soviet victory over Fascist Germany in 1945.' However, the wartime history of Leningrad presented in the twelve main rooms has been only slightly changed. As the museum leaflet explains, the exhibition has not been changed because 'it is the most complete and comprehensive exhibition of its kind'.[17]

Today, just as in the 1960s, particular phases of the siege are presented chronologically in the exhibition rooms: the closing of the ring, the bombardments, the cold and hunger of winter 1941, The Road of Life, the normalisation of life in 1942, the scientific and cultural life of the city, the development of industry, Operation Spark followed by the breaking of the blockade, and the final victory over the Third Reich. Although presented separately, the narratives about the besieged city and about the military achievements of the Soviet Union complement and permeate each other.

Local discourse is most visible in a room that tells about the winter of 1941, the period of the siege that was the most tragic for the residents of the city. The atmosphere of the room, and the light and white and blue colour scheme, form a sensory image of the cold and hunger experienced by the residents of Leningrad. A 125-gram piece of bread exhibited in an illuminated display showcase is a central element of the room. It symbolises the wartime experience of the residents of the city. Thus, not only is the local discourse presented, also its most important components – the suffering and death of civilians – are displayed to the visitors. Other symbols of the blockade presented in this part of the exhibition, including a snow sledge, a little heating stove ('burzhuyka') and memorabilia belonging to people who survived the blockade ('Blokadniki'), also refer to the experiences of the witnesses and evoke memories.

16 On the basis of an interview with an employee of the State Museum of the City of St. Petersburg, July, Saint Petersburg.

17 From a museum leaflet entitled: '1941–1945: Leningrad during the Great Patriotic War.'

Although other examples of the influence of the local discourse on the narrative can also be found in the exhibition, the main message follows the 1960s principles of the politics of memory and highlights the contribution of all the citizens of the Soviet Union to the ultimate victory over fascism. The exhibition emphasises the moments in the history of the siege that involve presenting the assistance given to Leningrad by the entire Soviet Union and the joint struggle that ultimately resulted in victory over the enemy. For instance, the question of the 'Road of Life', i.e. the road that provided the only transport of food and other necessary goods to the city, has been highlighted. The contribution of particular regions of the Soviet Union to the improvement of the living conditions in the city is also presented. On the other hand, the parallel display of military actions around Leningrad and key operations of World War II demonstrates that the cooperation of all the military forces led to absolute victory: breaking the blockade and defeating Nazi Germany.

The most significant influence of the state discourse on the exhibition is the emphasis on heroism. Each room contains photographs and information about people awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union medal. They are all presented in a similar manner and they always appear in the company of other people of merit who took part in the same wartime events or received the same medal for their efforts. This presentation of heroes results from the perception of the role of individuals and the community in the USSR in the 1960s and it includes certain elements of the social and educational policy of this period. As Oleg Kharkhordin notes, in the 1960s war heroes became 'the secular equivalent of Christian *imitation Dei*' who should be role models to the Soviet people in everyday life.[18]

The only considerable change in the construction of the narrative of the exhibition after the collapse of the Soviet Union was the addition of a large photograph of the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God – a symbol to commemorate the blockade of Leningrad as well as all the victims of the German-Soviet war. Thus, the heroic struggle of the Soviets and the residents of Leningrad acquires a transcendental dimension, and the siege is perceived as a metaphysical struggle between good and evil. Similarly, the death of the victims is seen as a necessary sacrifice in the name of higher values rather than a tragic consequence of the war. Therefore, the photograph of the church located at the end of the exhibition strengthens the message of the museum narrative by embedding it in the Russian

18 O. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*, Berkeley, 1999, p. 357.

messianic myth, which is deeply rooted in Russian culture and which presents the Russian nation as destined for great deeds.[19]

As a result of embedding the history of the siege and the blockade of Leningrad in this cultural pattern, the exhibition continues to make many dimensions of the wartime experience taboo. With the onset of perestroika, however, problems such as cannibalism, pillaging and robbery were spoken of publicly and, as Lisa Kirschenbaum notes, even though the inclusion of these subjects in the public sphere has not undermined the image of the residents of Leningrad as a heroic community,[20] this information has not been included in the exhibition. These aspects of life in the sieged city have been excluded from the museum narrative out of fear that their presentation could impair the image of the immaculately pure, struggling community.

Therefore, the image is a result of a consensus between local and state-wide discourse, which became possible thanks to highlighting of common elements. The most important of these elements is the presentation of the community of struggle and mutual assistance. 'The myth of the united wartime community was regarded as a fundamental motivating factor in the quest for survival' and it continues to be present in the memory of the witnesses.[21] It is worth noting that in today's Russia, this image of an exceptional community is an important element of the image of the war. As Joachim Hösler notes, it is for this reason that people recount the wartime years as the best period of their lives.[22] In view of the increasing interest in the Orthodox religion in Russia, the new, messianic aspect that presents victorious heroes of the war as participants in the final triumph of Christ over death additionally strengthens the attractiveness of this museum narrative.

The sacrificial narrative: Warsaw

The Historical Museum of Warsaw was reopened in 1948 in reconstructed buildings on the market square. The institution was expected to pursue propagandistic

19 Y. Lotman and B. Uspensky, 'Otzvuki kontseptsii 'Moskva – Tretii Rim' v ideologii Petra Pervogo,' in B. Uspensky, *Izbrannye trudy*, Moscow, 1994.

20 L. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments*, New York, 2006, p. 235.

21 J. Clapperton, 'The Siege of Leningrad as Sacred Narrative: Conversations with Survivors', *Oral History*, no. 1, vol. 35, 2007, p. 6.

22 J. Hösler, 'Chto znachit 'prorabotka proshlogo'? Ob Istoriografii Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny v SSSR i Rossii', in I. Kalinin, (ed.), *Pamyat' o voyne 60 let spustya – Rossiya, Germaniya, Evropa*, Moscow, 2005, p. 161.

objectives and contribute to the legitimisation of the communist power. However, the exposition was also designed by Polish historians who had been educated in the interwar period. When planning the exhibition, they attempted to find a compromise between the ideological function of the museum that was imposed by the authorities and their own national approach to history that was shaped in interwar Poland. The first exhibition that presented the history of the city was opened to the public in 1955. Ten years later it was renovated and reopened under a new name, 'The Seven Centuries of Warsaw.'[23]

In the following decades, some parts of the exhibition were modernised. All these changes, however, did not significantly influence the message of the exhibition. Some modifications were also introduced after 1989 (an update of some descriptions, replacement of some exhibits). It was only in 2007, in the time when we were conducting our research, when a complex rearrangement of the part of the exhibition devoted to World War II, which we were analysing, started. Interestingly, when our research was over, another modernisation project began, the effects of which will not be known until 2016, i.e. after the English version of this paper is published.[24] The analysis covers a significant, but not final, rearrangement of the exhibition that coincided with an important moment of transformation in the public discourse. As it will be demonstrated, however, in the time when the analysis was being conducted, the exhibition continued to use narrative schemes and categories developed in communist Poland. What made this narrative about the war different from the earlier one and what definitely resulted from the transformation of interpretation after 1989 was a strong emphasis on Catholic religious symbols and embedding of the entire narrative in the national discourse.

Although the general composition and structure of the exhibition remained unchanged, the content and the interior of some rooms were significantly transformed. The curators decided to visually modernise the exposition, and it now attempts to affect the emotions of visitors using lighting, film, music and the general layout. The introduced changes demonstrate that the authors of the display were strongly influenced by the Warsaw Rising Museum, which opened in 2004 and is considered a precursor of new museum techniques in Poland. Not only does it define visual standards for other historical museums, it also imposes certain

23 J. Durko, (ed.), *Muzeum Historyczne m. st. Warszawy*, Warsaw, 1973; B. Meller, 'History, ideology and politics in the Historical Museum of Warsaw', *Museum International*, vol. 187, 1995, pp. 22–27; A. Sołtan, 'Muzeum Historyczne m.st. Warszawy i jego wkład w rozwój varsavianistyki', in A. Rottermund et al. (eds.), *200 lat muzealnictwa warszawskiego. Dzieje i perspektywy*, Warsaw, 2006, pp. 79–102.

24 http://muzeumwarszawy.pl/wizyta-na-budowie/ (accessed: 20 June 2015).

rules for interpreting the war period.[25] As a result, the city museum, similarly to the Warsaw Rising Museum, focuses on presenting Polish national rebellion: the conspiratorial activity of the Polish Underground State and, most of all, the involvement of the Home Army in the 1944 uprising. The emphasis on this topic, combined with the Christian motif of sacrifice, is a fundamental change introduced into the exhibition in comparison to the earlier, communist version.

It is worth noting that the state discourse from the beginning had a strong influence on the presentation of the Warsaw Uprising. Until the political thaw of 1954–1956, the communist politics of memory presented it as a tragedy that had resulted from the treason of the Home Army and the leaders of the Polish Underground State, who were accused of sympathising with fascism, collaborating with Hitler and deliberately ceding the city to the enemy. At the same time, the communists underlined their own, positive role in the process of rebuilding the city from destruction caused by the 'fascists'. As a consequence, the museum employed a strategy of silencing this event. It was only in 1956 when, in searching for national legitimisation of power,[26] the authorities started to use the legend of the Home Army for their own purposes. New, positive and heroic interpretations of the uprising were allowed in the public sphere.[27] As a result, in 1969 the management of the city museum decided to add the information about the Warsaw Uprising to the existing exposition about the wartime history of Warsaw.[28]

This exhibition became an important site of memory for the uprising in the topography of Warsaw at the time. It is probable that, with the exception of churches and cemeteries, it was the only public space that commemorated the events of 1944. The residents of the city contributed various keepsakes related to the uprising. However, the museum narrative about the occupation of Warsaw remained strongly under the influence of the discourse of power that was a compilation of anti-German propaganda and elements of class ideology. As a result, the core of

25 I. Kurz, 'Przepisywanie pamięci. Przypadek Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego', *Kultura Współczesna,* vol. 53, no. 3, 2007, pp. 150–162; A. Ostolski, 'Przestrzeń muzeum a polityka traumy', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 67–87; M. Żychlińska, 'Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego jako wehikuł polskiej pamięci zbiorowej', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo,* vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 89–114.

26 M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warsaw, 2001.

27 J.Z. Sawicki, *Bitwa o prawdę. Historia zmagań o pamięć powstania warszawskiego, 1944–1989*, Warsaw, 2005; J. Wawrzyniak *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej*, Warsaw, 2009.

28 B. Meller, op. cit., pp. 22–27.

the narrative focused on the heroic struggle of the anonymous resistance movement with the 'cruel Nazis'. This version of the exhibition was unchanged until the end of the Polish People's Republic.

One of the most considerable changes introduced in 1989 (before the rearrangement in 2007) was replacement of some of the texts that accompany exhibits: they diminished the role of the communist partisanship in favour of the Home Army and the Polish Underground State. The term 'fascists' was replaced by the term 'Germans', which emphasised the national rather than class character of the enemy. The Red Army was no longer a 'liberator' but became an 'occupier'. When introducing all these changes, however, the curators did not modify the chronological and thematic structure of the exposition. The rooms devoted to 'terror', 'resistance movement', and 'everyday life' (which, nota bene, did not actually present everyday life but civilian struggle, such as sabotage and clandestine classes) retained their names. The 'fascist vs. resistance movement' dichotomy used in the times of the Polish People's Republic was replaced by a juxtaposition of Poles and Germans. At the same time, the relations between the occupiers and the residents of the city took two main forms: the struggle and the martyrdom of Poles, which have been the central motifs of Polish national mythology since the 19th century. Warsaw residents presented in the exhibition suffer and fight for national values, while the Germans are not only a threat to the city and its dwellers, but also to the existence of the state and the nation. The earlier, 'communist' categories were fully 'nationalised' but they remained dichotomous and heroic.[29]

The narrative after 2007 continued to be presented in analogous categories. It was, however, enriched with new elements. They are most visible in the last part of the exhibition, where the struggle and suffering of Poles find a martyrological culmination. The penultimate room of the exposition, which displays the history of the Warsaw Uprising, presents this event as the time of domination of two contradictory feelings: 'joy' and 'despair'. Two slide shows are displayed on two opposite walls of the exhibition rooms: the 'joy' is presented in the struggle of the Home Army soldiers and represents the idea of fighting for freedom and independence while the 'despair' can be seen in deaths of people and destruction of buildings. The projection is dominated by Catholic symbolism: the photographs present shrines, crosses and people who are praying. Hundreds of faces of young insurgents look at the visitors from the photographs. Their eyes seem

29 For more details, see Z. Bogumił and J. Wawrzyniak, 'Das Bild des Deutschen. Die Darstellugen der NS-Besatzung in ausgewählten Warschauer Museen', in D. Bingen, P. O. Loew and D. Popp (eds.), *Visuelle Erinnerungskulturen und Geschichtskonstruktionen in Deutschland und Polen seit 1939*, trans. P. O. Loew, Warsaw, 2009, pp. 189–204.

to follow the visitor and do not allow anyone to be indifferent to their fate. The entire display is influenced by the Polish romantic myth, with its origins in the 19th century struggles for Poland's independence, as it emphasises that dying for freedom is meaningful and that the duty of the next generations is to remember the martyrs. Thus, the purpose of the exhibition is to make the visitors realise that they also belong to the community of sacrifice. As a result, new generations can identify with the dead.[30]

The spiritual community of the living and the dead become even more apparent in the last room of the exposition, entitled 'The Destruction of the City'. Centrally located, in the middle of the floor, there is an outline of Warsaw, reminding the viewer of a cemetery with electric lights that symbolise grave candles. Photographs of city ruins and the evacuation of civilians are displayed on the walls. The most important symbol, again, is the cross, representing innocence, duty, suffering, sacrifice, redemption and victory. Even the music played in this room – Krzysztof Penderecki's *Polish Requiem* – directly refers to the idea of Christian martyrdom. Thus, the religious metaphor enriches the national narrative: the Warsaw Uprising was a necessary sacrifice made in the name of free Poland. Its failure is, at the same time, a moral victory for the nation.

Focusing on the history of the martyred struggle of Poles, the exhibition omits numerous topics and interpretations that are in opposition to this narrative. Despite the recent public debate about Polish-Jewish relations,[31] the experience of Warsaw Jews was visibly reduced in the exhibition. The history of the Jewish residents of the city, one third of the entire population, was presented in a room dedicated to the Polish Underground State. A separate, closed space was built on one side of the room, which imitated the Warsaw Ghetto, separated from the space of the capital. The outer side of the wall, reminiscent of the famous wall that divided the Jewish and the 'Aryan' sides of the city, presents terse information about the history of the ghetto and the Jewish Uprising in 1943. Looking in through narrow slots, one can see photographs depicting the tragic conditions in the ghetto and its later destruction. Thus, the viewers look at the history and the tragedy of the ghetto from the outside, as non-Jewish residents of the city. They cannot change their perspective and learn the history 'from the inside'. Moreover, this way of spatial presentation considerably diminishes the role of the Jewish resistance movement

30 M. Janion, *Do Europy – tak, ale z naszymi umarłymi*, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 22–25.

31 P. Forecki, *Reconstructing Memory: The Holocaust in Polish Public* Debates, trans. M. Skowrońska, Frankfurt am Main, 2013; J-Y. Potel, *Koniec niewinności. Polska wobec swojej żydowskiej przeszłości,* Cracow, 2010; M.C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse, 1997.

(while a separate room was devoted to the Uprising of 1944, the Uprising of 1943 is only a part of the briefly presented history of the Warsaw Ghetto). In this way, the past of the Warsaw Jews has been presented as the history of 'the Other' rather than as 'our' history. The suffering and deaths of Poles are heroic and dignified while the suffering of Jews (depicted by the photographs of sick people in rags) arouses compassion rather than respect. What is more, the museum account does not raise any sensitive issues related to Polish-Jewish relations during the war.

Better than any other element of the war history of the Polish capital, the display of the history of Warsaw Jews demonstrates that the exhibition could not break free from presenting the war as a history of national glory instead of showing it as a period of pointless human tragedy. Despite the introduced changes, during our research the exhibition remained in the trap of the dichotomous perception of the war in the categories of heroic and non-heroic, aesthetic and non-aesthetic, dignified and undignified death. Moreover, as we have demonstrated, many of them were already preserved and reinforced by the politics of commemoration of the war in communist Poland.

The narrative of guilt: Dresden

The exhibition 'Democracies and Dictatorships' in the Dresden city museum, located in the historical Landhaus, is a part of the exposition that tells about the 800-year history of Dresden and was opened on this anniversary. Instead of presenting the history of the city as a continuous story, the museum shows particular periods of this history as separate exhibitions, so that the visitors can choose the parts that interest them without having to see the entire exposition. The exhibition 'Democracies and Dictatorships' presents the history of the city from World War II until the reunification of Germany in 1990. It is important to add that until the fall of the Berlin Wall the museum did not present the history of World War II. Instead, the visitors could see an exhibition dedicated to the German Democratic Republic, which, however, was closed after the system collapsed. The museum 'cordoned off the exhibit pertaining to the GDR with heavy, black drapes. The curator declared, 'The old history was false. Now we have to write a new history!'[32] Over ten years had to pass until this new history was written because the exhibition was opened in 2006 and work on it lasted over three years. The objective of the new narrative of the past

32 E.A. Ten Dyke, 'Memory, History, and Remembrance Work in Dresden', in D. Berdahl and M. Lampland (eds.), *Altering States: Ethnographies of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, Ann Arbor, 2000, p. 150.

is to present the history of the city in a way that is in step with the contemporary, post-reunification vision of the future of Germany.

The title alone, 'Democracies and Dictatorships', suggests that the historical debates that took place in Germany in the 1990s left an imprint on the museum narrative. They concentrated on two fundamental problems: dealing with the Nazi past and the communist experience of East Germany. As we will demonstrate, the exhibition not only draws from these discourses, it also attempts to fight against some of the interpretations of the bombing of Dresden that were created by the propaganda of the Third Reich and West and East Germany[33]. While deconstructing the premises of one discourse, however, the narrative supports key elements of another discourse that is equally problematic and controversial.

The process of mythicizing the moment of the destruction of the city by the Allies and providing it with symbolic power began in the first weeks after the bombing. During the Cold War, East German propaganda willingly presented the bombing as an example of 'the work of the capitalist West.'[34] After the reunification of Germany, the symbolic power of the Dresden ruins did not decrease and Helmut Kohl – an advocate of building German identity on positive moments of history – gladly referred to the 'myth of old Dresden' and supported the initiative to rebuild the city. In this way, he wanted to demonstrate that the new German nation is one 'that has successfully overcome its past.'[35] The rebuilt Dresden was expected to be material confirmation of this fact.

However, it should also be mentioned that the air raid has remained an event that not only is readily used by different state discourses, it is also an important element of the identity of the residents of Dresden.[36] Moreover, some interpretations present it as a specific kind of ahistorical event that is related to the history of World War II as an example of a liminal experience, comparable to Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Leningrad. This comparison is presented in a memorial erected in 1964 at the Heidefriedhof cemetery, where the remains of air raid victims rest. The memorial consists of pillars, arranged in a circle, with inscriptions listing seven cities and towns destroyed by the Germans and seven concentration and

33 These presumptions were confirmed by the curator of the exhibitions, Roland Schwarz, during our conversation in Dresden in July 2007.

34 G.M. Jackman., 'Introduction', *German Life and Letters*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2004, p. 345.

35 S. Vees-Gulani, 'From Frankfurt's Goethehaus to Dresden's Frauenkirche: Architecture, German Identity, and Historical Memory after 1945', *The Germanic Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2005, p. 157.

36 E.A. Ten Dyke, op. cit., p. 28.

extermination camps. Accompanied by names such as Rotterdam, Leningrad or Auschwitz, there is also a column bearing the name of Dresden.

The discursive situation that has been briefly characterised here, which provides background for the memory of the bombing of Dresden, is an important reference point to understand the museum narrative. The exhibition presents the consequences of the air raid in a separate, specially arranged room – *Dresden als Symbol* – that is located in the middle of the exhibition space, between the parts that are dedicated to two dictatorships: the Nazi and the East German. Thus, the destruction of the city becomes a central part of the narrative, which confirms that this event was the most important moment in the contemporary history of the city. This spatial organisation gives a special status to the bombing. Nonetheless, this event is additionally very strongly contextualised by the narrative and the arrangement of other parts of the exhibition.

According to the exhibition narrative, the destruction of Dresden did not begin on 13 February 1945 (when the first bombs were dropped on the city) but on 5 March 1933, when the residents of Dresden chose the NSDAP in a democratic election. The events that followed the election are presented as a slow, agonising process for the city, which resulted from the takeover of power by the Nazi party. The bombing is merely a culmination point of this process. The core of the narrative is thus embedded in the discourse of German guilt and the entire exhibition aims at coming to terms with the Nazi past (*die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*) in the local context of Dresden.[37] A multimedia map that is also a part of the exhibition and presents election results from 1933 demonstrates that the majority of the residents voted for the Nazis – they were therefore actively involved in the new ideology.

Another symbolic confirmation of the support of the Nazis by the residents of Dresden and the 'banality of evil' that was increasing in the city is a Christmas glass ball with a swastika and a 'Heil Hitler' inscription, which is displayed in one of the showcases. The guilt of the residents is thus evident and common, yet anonymous. Even if the visitor sees photographs of the dwellers involved in the new ideology, they are deprived of names. The exhibition shows them as guilty of persecution of Jews, of attempts to destroy baroque Dresden by constructing new, Nazi buildings, by organising labour camps and fighting against communists. It does not, however, accuse anyone in particular. Although it displays local history, it actually does not identify people. This discrepancy is even more apparent in

37 J. Jabłkowska and L. Żyliński, 'Rozrachunek z narodowosocjalistyczną przeszłością a tożsamość niemiecka', in J. Jabłkowska and L. Żyliński (eds.), *O kondycji Niemiec: Tożsamość niemiecka w debatach intelektualistów po 1945 roku,* Poznan, 2008, pp. 29–31.

the presentation of those who opposed the National Socialism or who became its victims: their names and surnames are usually provided and are accompanied by a brief biography.

The only exhibit that provides an insight into ordinary people's perception of wartime reality is an album with photographs taken by a Wehrmacht soldier, Kurt Krause. Some of the photographs were taken on the Eastern Front. The selection of pictures is conservative: the chosen photographs are not full of violence; many of them are so-called genre photographs. Nevertheless, in the context of disputes that were sparked off by the exhibitions dedicated to the crimes of Wehrmacht,[38] the album is certainly not a neutral carrier of information. Rather, it is evidence of the active complicity of the residents of Dresden in the cruelties of war. It should be noted, however, that the story of Kurt Krause is disconnected from the main narrative of the exhibition. It is not about a war waged 'by us in our land' but about a war that took place elsewhere. In some way, the message of these photographs is weakened. Viewers neither feel an empathic bond with the victims in the photographs, nor are they provided with insight into the sphere of their feelings. The perception of the crime is therefore more gentle. In Roland Barthes' terms, these photographs have more *studium* than *punctum*; they are historical pictures that provide information about what happened rather than striking and touching the viewers, catching their eyes and refusing to let them be indifferent to what they have just seen.[39]

Compared with the presentation of Dresden Jews, the presentation of the residents of Dresden involved in Nazism is even more symptomatic. The fates of Jews from Dresden are shown in a section of the exhibition entitled 'Destruction'. Particular stages of their discrimination, persecution and extermination are chronologically presented in the form of 47 dates that are placed on an eight-metre wall (starting from 31 March 1933 and ending with 16 February 1945) and that reveal the meticulousness and criminality of the anti-Semitic policy in Dresden and all over Germany. They also show that the bombing of 13 February saved the last Dresden Jews from deportation to extermination camps. Excerpts from Victor Klemperer's diary also depict the life of Jews and their gradual exclusion from society. The selected fragments are very telling, enabling the readers to feel the atmosphere of Dresden at the time. However, they present a very one-sided image – the one that is seen from the perspective of the victims, while the arguments and feelings of those who were responsible for their exclusion are not revealed.

38 B. Korzeniewski, 'Wystawy historyczne jako nośnik historyczny na przykładzie wystawy o zbrodniach Wehrmachtu', *Kultura Współczesna*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 68–84.

39 R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography,* New York, 1981.

As a consequence, the Dresden Jews, rather than the Nazi followers, are the main protagonists of this museum narrative.

The exhibition's strong emphasis on the fate of Jews is another effect of the debates in the 1990s that were dominated by the subject of the Holocaust and led to marginalisation of other victims of the Nazi system, such as communists, the Roma and homosexuals. This problem is also noticeable in the museum narrative. Although propagandistic leaflets of the Communist Party of Germany and a copying machine were placed in the showcases, these objects say very little about the persecution of communists and socialists in Dresden after the Nazi seizure of power. Thus, the comprehensive presentation of the history of the Jews not only results from the general process of inclusion of micro-histories of marginalised groups, it is also an effect of the significant role of the Holocaust in the official German memory. As Aleida Assmann notes, this event is a 'normative framework into which all the other memories have to be integrated.'[40]

The most problematic element of the exhibition, however, is the presentation of the air raid, which was clearly impacted by the discourse of German suffering. While it developed simultaneously in West and East Germany after the end of the war, the release of Günter Grass's short stories *Crabwalk* in 2002 and Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg* in the same year started the actual process of open and public narrative about German suffering. As a consequence, contemporary German memory hides inside two components that seemingly contradict each other: the memory of one's crimes and the memory of one's suffering.[41] The museum narrative is entangled in the relations between these elements, which the presentation of the bombing demonstrates.

As it has been already stated, the exhibition, up to the part dedicated to the bombing, is strongly embedded in the discourse of guilt and it consistently follows its premises. This is particularly apparent in the narrative about the destruction of the city, which starts in 1933 instead of 1945. When visitors enter the room that presents the consequences of the bombing, they encounter exhibition texts that aim at continuing the fight against national myths growing around this event. They do not, however, provide a clear assessment of what happened. The room entitled *Dresden als Symbol* only tells what happened to the memory of the bombing after

40 H. Schmitz, 'Introduction: The Return of German Wartime Suffering in Contemporary German Memory Culture, Literature and Film', in H. Schmitz (ed.), *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, Amsterdam/New York, 2007, p. 15; A. Assmann, 'On the (In)Compatibility of Guilt and Suffering in German Memory', *German Life and Letters*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2006, pp. 187–200.

41 W. Pięciak, 'Drezno. Akt oskarżenia', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 February 2003.

World War II without an explanation of the national socialism politics that preceded the air raids.

The presentation of photographs of the ruins of Dresden in the context of other destroyed cities, such as Rotterdam, Warsaw or Leningrad, makes the situation even more difficult. The photographs are presented in the form of a slideshow projected onto the central wall of the room. The projection starts with a photograph of Guernica, which was bombed in 1937 by the Luftwaffe. One may conclude that the exhibition aims to destroy the myth of unprecedented tragedy by showing that Nazi Germany was the first to use carpet-bombing. Nevertheless, the presentation of Dresden next to other destroyed cities generates an interpretative problem. While Dresden is presented simply as a victim, it may be interpreted as an example of an innocent victim. What is more, the same method of presenting the fate of Dresden in the context of other destroyed city-symbols was used in East German propaganda at the Heidefriedhof cemetery. As a result, the exhibition refers to the language of exposition used in discourse for innocent victims.

The inability to work through the image of Dresden as an 'innocent city' may be explained by the fact that while reunited Germany identifies with West German history and its attitude to the past, and it considers East Germany a system of enslavement and propaganda, the contemporary way of perceiving the bombing remains influenced by the interpretations developed in East Germany.[42] Additionally, the difficulty of deconstructing the myth is increased by the contradiction between official and private/local memory and the self-perception of Germans as both executioners and victims.

Summary

The messages of the analysed exhibitions result from contemporary discourses of memory as well as their dynamics and the relations between them. As a consequence, as we have demonstrated, all three exhibitions continue to use interpretation patterns that were developed during the Cold War. These patterns proved so strong that even when the exhibitions lost their propagandist functions after 1989, they continued to use political terms to explain tragic events. As a result, the museum narratives cannot break away from national history and focus on

42 G. Margalit, 'Dresden and Hamburg – Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the two Germanies', in H. Schmitz (ed.), *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, Amsterdam/New York, 2007, p. 131.

local events, and the uniqueness of the lives of the people who experienced a catastrophe in their city is therefore not their core.

This situation considerably impacts the way of presenting the suffering of the city and its dwellers before and during the destruction. By generalising the suffering of the residents of Dresden, Warsaw or Saint Petersburg, the museum narratives deprive it of its uniqueness as it becomes united with the suffering of the entire nation. Of course, the purpose of these narratives is to demonstrate that the suffering of the residents of the city was just as unrepeatable as the experience of the entire nation. However, this narrative device includes problems related to the presentation of the tragedy of the city and its residents.

The exhibitions in Warsaw and Saint Petersburg both refer to the image of an innocent victim that was attacked by an enemy, and they present the process of the destruction of the city as a period of boundless suffering and heroic struggle. Neither of them presents problematic questions. In the case of the exhibition in Saint Petersburg, such questions could be, for example, the problem of cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich in first years of World War II, the lack of a strategic concept for defending the country and the city against the attack that resulted in the tragic death toll of winter 1941, and the ambiguous role of the NKVD during the blockade. The exhibition in Warsaw ignores the controversies related to the decision to start the Warsaw Uprising, which led to the final destruction of the city and the murder of many civilians. It also omits the sensitive subject of Polish collaboration with the Germans during the Holocaust. Thus, both exhibitions use the strategy of repressing and silencing controversial topics.

At the same time, they both give deeper meaning to human suffering and death. By referring to the romantic national myth, the Warsaw exhibition gives the death of insurgents and residents of the city a character of martyrdom. The exhibition in Saint Petersburg presents the human casualties as necessary for victory in the war. Thus, in both cases there is an emphasis on great suffering. This suffering, however, is not presented as resulting from the everyday, mundane experience of war. The exhibitions do not show many tragic moments experienced by the residents of the cities. There is no information about cannibalism and the trade in human flesh in besieged Leningrad and there is little about starving to death or murdering Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. Suffering, thus, is presented as special, because it was endured in the name of higher values – the future freedom of the nation. That is why death is presented as beautiful and suffering as sublimating. The meaningless and vile deaths and debasing and dehumanising suffering experienced by the residents of these cities at the moment of the catastrophe did not fit the narrative, so they were concealed.

In the case of the Dresden exhibition, a narrative about suffering, particularly sublimating suffering, is not possible. Strongly emphasising the guilt of the residents

of Dresden, the exhibition has difficulties with providing their death with a meaning. That is why it uses a strategy of replacement instead of a direct narrative about suffering. On the one hand, it raises the subject of suffering by focusing on the experiences of a special category of residents, the Jews; on the other, it tells about the suffering of all the residents of Dresden by displaying photographs of destroyed buildings next to the photographs of ruins of Warsaw or Leningrad, suggesting that these cities experienced similar fates.

A serious objection that may be raised against historical narratives in museums is the fact that the analysed exhibitions are strongly embedded in political discourses and fail to present many aspects of the wartime experience. We realise, however, that it is much easier to criticise than to create a good exhibition. Nevertheless, critical reflection on historical museums is necessary, particularly nowadays, when we observe an unprecedented process of reviving memory and rewriting contemporary history, including the history of World War II. As Hermann Lübbe notes, we witness the process of 'musealisation' of our reality and our present is much more linked to the past than ever was the case before.[43] As we do not know where this process will lead, museum narratives should be constructed more carefully than ever before.

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43 H. Lübbe, 'Zeit-Verhältnisse. Über die veränderte Gegenwart von Zukunft und Vergangenheit', in W. Zacharias (ed.), *Zeitphänomen Musealisierung. Das Verschwinden der Gegenwart und die Konstruktion der Erinnerung*, Essen, 1990.

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Katarzyna Woniak

The German Occupation of Poland in German and Polish History Schoolbooks

History schoolbooks can be seen as reflecting the paradigms of a state's politics of memory. At the beginning of 2014, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research published a short report on the treatment of the Holocaust in schoolbooks all over the world. The document revealed that there is no single cosmopolitan culture of memory but a variety of narratives about the Holocaust. Therefore, in the context of World War II, it is also important to analyse the status of the German occupation in school education. Considering how the German repression policy varied as it extended across Europe, it would be hard to expect a consistent and universal presentation of this problem in schoolbooks, particularly in the countries that directly experienced the cruelty of the occupation. An analysis of history textbooks focused on this subject makes it possible to estimate the presence of the subject of the occupation in the culture of memory.

The German occupation of Poland has a different position in Polish and German historical consciousness. The dissimilarity starts with the term. In Germany the word 'occupation' is primarily reserved for the period of 1945–1949, when Germany was divided into occupational zones, and the history of German-occupied countries in World War II is only one of the many dimensions of the war. In contrast, although the German occupation is not among the central problems of Polish historiography, it has a significant role in the Polish collective memory due to its influence on the perception of Germany.

The paper compares the scale, form and content of presenting the German occupation in selected Polish and German history schoolbooks. It focuses on analysing the presentation of historical facts and the degree of detail and contextualisation. Moreover, it aims to find out to what extent the occupation is presented from a national perspective and whether the descriptions took account of interpretations outside the Polish context. The analysis covers Polish history schoolbooks for secondary schools and German history textbooks for Sekundarstufe II (grades 10–13, parallel to secondary school in Polish educational system). Depending on the federal state, the period of World War II is discussed in Grade 12 or 13 (in the system before the 2004 reform).[1] The paper presents the analysis of

1 In Germany, each state decides its own curriculum and textbooks.

30 schoolbooks published in the last three decades, with particular focus on those currently in use. For the Polish textbooks, the analysis focused on the standard level of education. In each part of the analysis, German schoolbooks are discussed first and Polish books second. The last part summarises both narratives.

Schoolbooks are increasingly often the subject of historical research.[2] There are also analyses of history textbooks in the Polish-German context.[3] Ewa Nasalska's extensive work should be mentioned, which analyses historical messages in the education systems of both countries in years 1949–1999 and focuses on the presentation of the history of Polish-German relations.[4] The author emphasises that the subject of the Nazi crimes against Poles takes up little space in German textbooks, which often even ignore the Polish victims.[5] Another important study was conducted by Jörgen-Dieter Gauger, whose analysis of the core curriculum and schoolbooks from years 1990–2006 in all federal states is still relevant for new textbooks.[6] His diagnosis confirms the domination of the subject of the Holocaust at the expense of other aspects of the war.[7] The author concluded that German schoolbooks devote little space to Poland and the aspects of its history that are presented are treated selectively and superficially.[8] Hanna Grzempa in her study 'The Image of Poland and the Poles in German History Textbooks' also draws negative conclusions. In her opinion, the 'history of Poland appears only in subplots, randomly inserted into the main narrative about the history of Germany.'[9]

Three years ago, in his 30-page-long study 'Holocaust in the current history textbooks' for the Humboldt University, Thomas Sandkühler took a critical

2 See W. Schreiber (ed.), *Analyse von Schulbüchern als Grundlage empirischer Geschichtsdidaktik*, Stuttgart, 2013.

3 See e.g. Z. Mazur, *Obraz Niemiec w polskich podręcznikach szkolnych do nauczania historii 1945–1989*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznan, 1995; M. Pawelec, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie we współczesnych polskich podręcznikach historii (analiza treści i sposobu prezentacji)*, Gliwice, 2000, http://www.haus.pl/pl/pdf/pub1/07.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015); D. Wojtaszyn, 'Obraz Niemiec i Niemców w polskich podręcznikach do historii', in A. Gall et al. (ed.), *Interakcje. Leksykon komunikowania polsko-niemieckiego*, 2015, http://inspiracje-demo.lightcode.eu/articles/show/30 (accessed 5 March 2015).

4 E. Nasalska, *Polsko-niemieckie dyskursy edukacyjne: lat 1949–1999*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 94–97.

5 Ibid., p. 197.

6 J.-D. Gauger, *Deutsche und Polen im Unterricht*, Schwalbach, 2008.

7 Ibid., p. 70.

8 Ibid., p. 173.

9 H. Grzempa, 'Obraz Polski i Polaków w niemieckich podręcznikach do historii', in A. Gall et al. (ed.), op. cit.

approach to German textbooks.[10] In his opinion, they contain major factual errors as well as errors regarding relations between different topics. The descriptions of the Holocaust and selected aspects concerning crimes against the population in the occupied areas are imprecise and sometimes even nonsensical.[11]

Before I move towards the position of the German occupation in Polish textbooks I would like to focus on German and Polish core curricula. The fundamental question is whether occupation is presented in the form of a separate narrative. In Berlin, the part of the curriculum entitled 'The Failure of the First German Democracy: the Nazi Despotism' does not discuss occupation as a form of power and terror but covers such categories as ideology and power, resistance movements, the Holocaust and World War II.[12] A Bavarian curriculum does not make occupation a separate subject, either. The main topics are national community (Germ. *Volksgemeinschaft*) and the Holocaust, which is clear in the title of the thematic unit: 'Hitler's willing brethren[13]? The Germans and the Holocaust.'[14] Thus, the wartime period was limited to two thematic units, without taking account of the experiences of other groups or the mechanisms of terror against the civilian population.

The core curricula for secondary history education in Poland look completely different. The core curriculum of 2014 provides two separate thematic units for the occupation system during World War II. According to the first, students are expected to learn about the situation in Europe under the German occupation with emphasis on the Holocaust. The other unit is devoted to the situation in Poland under German and Soviet occupation. The following subjects are raised: September 1939, the Polish government-in-exile, the Polish Underground State and the Home Army, the establishment of communist rule and the Warsaw Uprising. The emphasis was also put on 'observing similarities and differences in the

10 T. Sandkühler, *Der Holocaust im aktuellen Geschichtslehrbuch der Sekundarstufen I und II. Kontextualisierung, fachliche Qualität, Erinnerung*, Berlin, 2012, http://69.50.213.17/~gdgesch/tl_files/geschichtsdidaktik/Dateien/Sandkuehler_Holocaust%20im%20aktuellen%20Geschichtslehrbuch.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015).

11 Ibid., p. 12 and p. 16.

12 *Vorläufiger Rahmenlehrplan für den Unterricht in der gymnasialen Oberstufe im Land Brandenburg*, http://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/unterricht/rahmenlehrplaene_und_curriculare_materialien/gymnasiale_oberstufe/curricula/2011/Geschichte-VRLP_GOST_2011_Brandenburg.pdf, p. 22. (accessed 5 March 2015).

13 Orig. *Volksgenossen*.

14 Geschichte 11/12, http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26818 (accessed 16 July 2014).

policy of both occupiers towards the Polish nation.'[15] Thus, the fact of the double occupation of Poland is established in the consciousness of the students, which is not the case for their German counterparts. All the other Polish schoolbooks, without exception, follow the abovementioned pattern.

The analysis of selected schoolbooks focuses on the following aspects: (a) occupation as a separate category of analysis, (b) occupation in a broader context, (c) the (trans) national perspective of analysis and (d) sources of information about the occupation and photographs depicting it.

a. Occupation as a separate category of analysis

If it appears at all, the subject of the occupation takes up little space in German textbooks. It is usually limited to 5–10 sentences, briefly presenting the crimes of *Einsatzgruppen*, economic exploitation, deportations to work, displacements and forms of resistance. In the schoolbooks from the 1980s and 1990s, the occupation is discussed in the form of a subchapter. A West German textbook published by Buchner from 1986 even includes subchapters devoted directly to Poland. The description begins with a map of the division of Poland according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, with a caption describing it as the fourth partition of Poland. A description follows that the roots of the occupation were based on the Nazi ideology that entailed displacement of the Polish population to the General Government. The forced labour of Poles in Germany and the liquidation of the Polish intelligentsia are also mentioned, as well as the following aspects of the occupation: placing Poles in concentration camps, closing schools and universities and economic exploitation of occupied Poland. There are also references to the Polish government-in-exile and the Home Army, although the Warsaw Uprising was not included in the description at all.[16] It is worth mentioning that one of the cited sources is entitled: 'German Occupation Policy from a Polish Perspective' and is an excerpt from Wacław Długoborski's article.[17] Although many changes were introduced to later editions of the same textbook, the occupation was left as a separate chapter of the war. Greater emphasis was placed, for instance, on the

15 A regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 May 2014, amending the regulation on core curricula for pre-school education and general education in particular types of schools (Gazette, entry 803), http://men.gov.pl/pl/zycie-szkoly/ksztalcenie-ogolne/podstawa-programowa (accessed 5 March 2015), p. 56.

16 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte. Weimarer Republik – Nationalsozialismus*, Bamberg, 1986, pp. 216–217.

17 Ibid.

Soviet Union's extermination policy towards Poles. It is important to note that one of the subchapters stressed the differences between the German occupation policy in Western and Eastern Europe.[18]

In a textbook published by Moritz in 1996, German occupation policy towards Poland is discussed in considerable detail. First, there is information about the division of the country, also referred to as the fourth partition. Then the situation in the General Government is discussed, namely the brutal policy of Governor-General Hans Frank, the murders of Polish elites, forced labour, the destruction of Polish industry, the liquidation of higher education, the looting of works of art and the discrimination against the civilian population. The schoolbook also informs students about the Polish government-in-exile, the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising.[19]

A 1997 textbook by Schroedel, a publishing house from Hannover, devotes an entire 6-page chapter to the history of Poland during World War II. Of all the textbooks studied, it includes the most extensive discussion about the occupation of Poland. The emphasis was placed on the public executions of civilians and the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising.[20] A later edition of the textbook, from 2005, also provides a closer look at the occupation and even explains its structure in the context of Poland as well as describing the mechanisms of the total war.[21] The textbook focuses on the displacement of the population, deportation to forced labour camps, economic exploitation by confiscating food and crimes against civilians. The 2010 edition speaks of the scale of Polish human losses during the war, emphasising that every fourth Pole lost his or her life.[22]

Schoolbooks that are currently in use have a completely different structure than those from the 1980s and 1990s. Some of them do not even include a separate chapter devoted to World War II. The period 1939–1945 is discussed only in the context of the extermination of Jews and German society's response to these crimes. There are also textbooks in which there is a separate chapter about World War II but it is limited to elementary events and has the character of a summary.

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18 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte. Deutschland zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie – Weltpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bamberg, 1996, p. 109.

19 *Epochen und Strukturen – Grundzüge einer Universalgeschichte für die Oberstufe. Bd. 2 Vom Absolutismus bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 388.

20 *Geschichte S II. Deutschland im Umbruch. Geschichte Deutschlands 1933–1990*, Hannover, 1997, p. 57.

21 *Geschichte. Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert – Zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, Braunschweig, 2005, p. 66.

22 *Zeit für Geschichte. Herausforderungen der Moderne 11*, Braunschweig, 2010, p. 364.

There is not a word about the occupation as a system of power and terror or about its consequences for the occupied population.[23]

In a schoolbook published by Cornelsen in 2010, the occupation is not even mentioned. The narrative about the period 1939–1945 is mostly limited to the Holocaust. Only the chapter 'Other victims of Nazi racism' lists various groups persecuted by the Germans, and mentions Poles among them.[24] The narrative of another textbook, published by Klett, is also focused on the Holocaust and *Volksgemeinschaft* – the German people's community. Both problems were exhaustively presented. However, a systematic approach to World War II is missing, which ideally should include both fronts, the Eastern and the Western.[25] A history schoolbook published in 2010 by Buchner is another example of ignoring the war: it does not even mention what happened in Poland between 1939–1945. The entire narrative is limited to the Holocaust and the German national community.[26]

The description of the German occupation in Polish textbooks is constructed in a completely different manner. All the analysed history schoolbooks include a separate chapter devoted to the occupation – usually both the German and the Soviet. The discussion of both occupation systems in one chapter provides an opportunity to compare them and, additionally, reinforces students' knowledge of the two totalitarianisms in the Polish territories during the war. Depending on a textbook, the chapter devoted to the occupation contains from over a dozen to a few dozen pages and its location in a book varies. For instance, in a textbook from 1998 it appears after a chapter about the Underground State and before a chapter devoted to the Holocaust[27], similarly in textbooks from 2003 and 2012, in which the occupation of Poland and Europe is discussed separately.[28] In a few other textbooks, the occupation is discussed after the presentation of military actions and occupation all over Europe.[29]

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23 *Geschichte in der Gegenwart. Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch für Geschichte und Gemeinschaftskunde/Sozialkunde in der gymnasialen Oberstufe*, Cologne, 2012, pp. 229–239.

24 *Forum Geschichte 11*, Bayern, Cornelsen and Berlin, 2010, p. 216.

25 *Geschichte und Geschehen, Bayern 11*, Stuttgart and Leipzig, 2009.

26 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte 11: Neue Ausgabe*, Bamberg, 2010, p. 3.

27 A. Garlicki, *Historia 1939–1997/98. Polska i świat. Podręcznik dla liceów ogólnokształcących*, Warsaw, 1998, p. 3.

28 G. Szelągowska, *Ludzie, społeczeństwa, cywilizacje. Historia XIX i XX w. Część III. Podręcznik dla liceum profilowanego i technikum*, Warsaw, 2003, pp. 6–7 and R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, *Po prostu Historia. Szkoły ponadgimnazjalne*, Warsaw, 2012, p. 4.

29 E.g. B. Burda et al., *Historia Najnowsza. Podręcznik dla szkół ponadgimnazjalnych. Zakres podstawowy*, Gdynia, 2013, p. 3.

b. Occupation in a broader context

The beginning of the occupation was marked by German aggression against Poland. Although all the analysed German textbooks provide this fact, they differ in the descriptions of the situation after the *Blitzkrieg* was over.

The occupation is presented in the context of crimes committed by *Einsatzgruppen* but their descriptions show considerable qualitative differences. One of the textbooks presents the activity of *Einsatzgruppen* only in the context of the war with the Soviet Union.[30] Another limits it to the period between June 1941 and April 1942, completely ignoring mass crimes against the Polish population.[31] Yet, a Berlin edition of the same textbook, from 2013, includes the information that *Einsatzgruppen*, together with Wehrmacht soldiers, killed Polish, and later Russian civilians in order to quickly quell partisan attacks.[32] Another textbook only mentions *Einsatzgruppen* crimes against the Jewish population, and ignores those committed against Polish civilians.[33] Older schoolbooks emphasise that the *Einsatzgruppen* aggression was directed at Polish elites and Jews.[34] The textbooks devote detailed attention to the occupation in the context of the persecution and extermination of Jews. They include information about the conditions and slave labour in the ghettos in the General Government, and the resistance movement. Depending on the textbook, students learn more or less thoroughly about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Holocaust appears in all the analysed schoolbooks. It is not, however, the subject of this analysis.

The crimes of the German police apparatus are also analysed. While the textbooks occasionally inform about the roundups of civilians and the members of Polish elites who were killed or placed in concentration camps, they do not mention the acts of terror of the so-called 'special courts' (*Sondergericht*) or the role of the Gestapo. The presentation of the occupation in a textbook published by Horizonte focuses on the system of concentration camps and police crimes. The authors concentrate on an explanation of the structure of the apparatus of terror. However, the extent of the acts of terror in occupied Poland is missing.[35] A later

30 Ibid., p. 116.
31 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte 11. Neue Ausgabe*, op. cit., p. 236.
32 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte. Ausgabe Berlin. Band 2: Von der Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen bis zur deutschen Wiedervereinigung*, Bamberg 2013, p. 131.
33 *Forum Geschichte 11*, op. cit., p. 209.
34 *Wege durch die Geschichte. Grundkurs Geschichte 13. Gymnasium Bayern*, Berlin, 1994, p. 41.
35 *Horizonte II. Geschichte für die Oberstufe*, Braunschweig, 2003, pp. 338–339.

edition of the same textbook also lacks a more detailed description of the occupation. The information is limited to the following sentences: 'The National Socialist occupation policy was characterised by a specific tendency towards racist criteria. The occupation regime in Eastern Europe was much more brutal than in the West, since according to Nazi ideology the Slavic population was considered the least significant race.'[36] This paragraph demonstrates the general and superficial character of how the German occupation of Poland and East-Central Europe is presented, and the absence of structural distinction between the Nazi persecutions.

Another context of the occupation is forced labour, to which the analysed schoolbooks devote a separate chapter. Their descriptions do not include national categories. One of the schoolbooks only lists 1.7 million workers from Poland but it does not discuss the racist and violent exploitation of Poles.[37] Of all the analysed publications, the most comprehensive characterisation of forced labour is included in a textbook from Berlin published by Buchner in 2013. Students learn from the Fritz Sauckel report of 14 April 1943 quoted in this book about the conditions endured by forced labourers, as seen from the occupier's perspective. There is also a table presenting the large-scale labour deployment of foreigners during the war. Sadly, the description does not include the problem of the racist hierarchy of labourers and does not point out the difference in the occupier's attitude to particular national groups. The narrative lacks even a single reference to the nationality of the workers, while Russians and Poles should be mentioned as the largest group.[38]

Aside from forced labour, the narrative about the German occupation of Poland also includes the deportations of Polish civilians. As all the analysed textbooks aptly emphasise, they were a consequence of racist ideology, also referred to as race war (*Rassenkrieg*).[39] The deportations of the Polish population are discussed in the context of the *Heim ins Reich* policy, which aimed at settling ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) living outside Germany in homes from which Poles were evicted. The descriptions of the deportations include information about roundups, starving of the expelled, placing them in concentration camps or murdering them without first moving them elsewhere. A textbook published by Cornelsen in 1996 presents the deportation policy towards Poles together

36 *Horizonte III. Geschichte für die Oberstufe. Von der Weimarer Republik bis zum Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Braunschweig, 2007, p. 95.

37 *Anno 4*, Berlin, 1997, p. 114.

38 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte. Ausgabe Berlin. Band 2*, op. cit., pp. 134–135.

39 *Geschichte und Geschehen II. Oberstufe. Ausgabe A/B*, Stuttgart, 1995, p. 347.

with mass expulsions organised by the USSR and does not distinguish between the nationalities of the expelled.[40]

The resistance movements in the occupied areas are a separate category. Some schoolbooks, however, limit the subject to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.[41] Older textbooks include information about the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising but lack information about the total destruction of Warsaw. The Czech town Lidice and the French village Oradour are the only listed places where Nazis exacted bloody revenge.[42] A textbook published by Schroedel in 1997 is the only one to include an excerpt about the destruction of Warsaw as a punishment for the uprising.[43] Another textbook, published in 2003, mentions the Home Army in a subchapter entitled 'Resistance movements in the occupied territories' but there is no mention of the Warsaw Uprising. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is the only example of armed resistance.[44]

The consequences of the German occupation in Poland during World War II are not presented as a separate subject in the textbooks. There is, however, some data about the aftermath of the war in certain countries. The schoolbooks include more or less detailed information about human losses. The Buchner publication from 2010, in which the period 1939–1945 occupies a significant amount of space, includes information about thousands of Polish victims.[45] The book published by Schroedel in 2003, which devotes a separate subsection to the German occupation of Poland, emphasises the character of the German crimes, informing the reader: 'On 1 September 1939 (…) a five-year period of occupation and suffering started for the Polish population. Poland suffered longer and more intensely than any other country under the German occupation.'[46]

Polish schoolbooks offer developed sections about occupation-related subjects, and not only because they have a separate chapter devoted to the occupation. The most important aspects of the occupation are listed in the core curricula and include

40 *Gesichtsbuch 4. Die Menschen und ihre Geschichte in Darstellungen und Dokumenten. Von 1918 bis 1995*, Berlin, 1996, p. 206.

41 *Anno 4*, op. cit., p. 119.

42 E.g. *Epochen und Strukturen – Grundzüge einer Universalgeschichte für die Oberstufe, Bd. 2*, op. cit., p. 398.

43 For more on the subject, see J. Kołacki, *Bolesne punkty historii. Wypędzenia i wypędzeni w polskim piśmiennictwie naukowym w latach 1945–2005*, Poznan, 2012.

44 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte. Ausgabe Berlin. Band 2*, op. cit., p. 150.

45 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte 11. Neue Ausgabe*, op. cit., p. 237.

46 *Geschichte. Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert – Zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, op. cit., p. 66.

the defensive war, the government-in-exile, the Underground State and the Warsaw Uprising. They are present in each analysed textbook as the main foundation of the narratives and, in many cases, separate chapters are devoted to them. This is one of the main differences between Polish and German textbooks – the latter only briefly mention these themes. For this reason, these topics will not be a subject of comprehensive analysis. Closer attention will be paid to other contexts of the occupation, particularly those that are presented differently in Polish and German textbooks.

The chapters devoted to the occupation put great emphasis on the administrative division of Poland under the two occupations. They include maps that show the territorial changes and mark the borders of particular districts of divided Poland. The narrative about the German occupation clearly distinguishes between the nationality policy in the incorporated and the occupied lands. The description of the occupation focuses, however, on the characterisation of the General Government. This territory is often referred to with a term derived from historical sources: 'a shelter for Poles.'[47] Some textbooks begin the presentation of the territorial division of Poland with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact from 23 August 1939,[48] which gives the reader the (correct) impression that this event initiated the double occupation of Poland.

Polish history schoolbooks are also characterised by a broader reflection on particular organs of administration. A textbook from 2013 provides a clear explanation: 'A rule was adopted to offer the key administrative positions to the Germans, leaving the menial ones in the hands of Poles.'[49] Aside from the characterisation and biography of the General Governor Hans Frank, there are also mentions of the so-called Polish Blue Police that underline that 'they only dealt with minor and public order offences.'[50] Of the German units that committed acts of terror, the textbooks list only the Gestapo and the SS while *Einsatzgruppen* are rarely mentioned.

In contrast to the German textbooks, the Polish ones discuss more thoroughly the subject of the expulsions of the Polish population. The deportations are discussed in parallel with the narrative about territorial changes and are presented as closely linked to the ideology of *Lebensraum*.[51] The first expulsions, from coastal

47 A. Garlicki, *Historia 1939–1997/98. Polska i świat. Podręcznik dla liceów ogólnokształcących*, op. cit., p. 36.

48 B. Burda et al., op. cit., p. 179.

49 Ibid., p. 181.

50 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., Warsaw, 2003, p. 294.

51 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, *Ku współczesności. Dzieje najnowsze 1918–2006. Podręcznik do historii dla klasy I szkół ponadgimnazjalnych – zakres podstawowy*, Warsaw, 2012, p. 122.

areas, are dated to October 1939 in textbooks. This reference is followed by an extensive discussion of the German plans to expel the entire Polish population from the territories incorporated into the General Government.[52] The analysed Polish schoolbooks do not ignore the problem of the *Volksdeutsche* and the *Deutsche Volksliste* (*German People's List*), which was completely absent in the German textbooks. A textbook from 1997 includes a sentence about the reception of the *Deutsche Volksliste*: 'a registration was recognised by society as treason.'[53] Several years later, a textbook by a different publisher expanded information on the *Deutsche Volksliste*, adding that Poles were registered against their will.[54] More contemporary textbooks include also a history of Polish expulsions according to the *Generalplan Ost* (*Master Plan East*), with the examples of the Zamość region, which was completely absent from the German schoolbooks.[55] There is also information about 4,000 children from the Zamość region, who were deported and Germanised in German families and orphanages.[56]

An important position in Polish textbooks is occupied by the German criminal policy in the first period of the war. For instance, a schoolbook from 1993 informs that 'the fundamental aim of the Nazi policy towards the Polish nation was its biological extermination.'[57] The entire narrative about the occupation is permeated by information about violence against Poles: the arrests of the intelligentsia, the Palmiry massacre, Auschwitz, *AB-Aktion*. A textbook published a little later, in 1998, discusses the persecutions of the Polish intelligentsia, e.g. the *Sonderaktion Krakau*. Each of the analysed textbooks provides a detailed description of the establishment of Auschwitz concentration camp, emphasising that in its first phase it mostly held Polish prisoners, of which only few German schoolbooks inform. Similarly, while the Polish textbook from 2003 begins a paragraph dedicated to the persecution of Poles with a description of the mass murder in Bydgoszcz in 1939, German textbooks do not mention this event.[58] In the context of violence against the Polish population, the author uses the term 'pacification' but she does not, unfortunately, explain the

52 A. Garlicki, op. cit., Warsaw, 1998, p. 36.
53 Ibid., p. 37.
54 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 293.
55 R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, op. cit., p. 212.
56 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., Warsaw, 2012, p. 122.
57 T. Siergiejczyk, *Historia. Dzieje najnowsze 1939–1945. Podręcznik dla szkół średnich klasy IV liceum ogólnokształcącego oraz dla klasy III technikum i liceum zawodowego*, Warsaw, 1993, p. 130.
58 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 294.

meaning of the word.[59] A textbook by the same publisher from 2012 also provides information about the Wawer massacre and mass arrests of the Polish population, resulting in deportations to Germany for forced labour or concentration camps.[60] Another textbook completes this information, providing an important explanation of the implementation by Germany of the doctrine of collective responsibility: not only the perpetrators were punished for their crime, but also their family members, neighbours and random passers-by.[61] By introducing this aspect, the authors drew readers' attention to the problem of constant fear and uncertainty about the future that characterised the period of the occupation.

The authors of the analysed Polish textbooks devote relatively little space to forced labour. The textbook from 1993 contains only three sentences on this subject, informing about roundups and deportation of Poles to Germany for forced labour.[62] The author of another textbook writes that the work 'was slave labour in every sense of the word' and provides the number of Poles deported to Germany to work (2.3 million).[63] The problem of forced labour in the occupied and incorporated territories, however, as with historiography, is rarely approached, which usually connects forced labour with deportations to Germany.

The Germanisation policy is discussed as a separate subject in Polish textbooks. German repressions in the cultural sphere were at the core of the efforts to deprive Poles of their national identity. All the analysed textbooks emphasise this fact and provide examples: the removal of Polish symbols, a ban on celebrating national holidays, looting of Polish works of art and confiscation of radios.[64] A diagram entitled 'good to know' in a textbook published by Stentor in 2012 offers a broader reflection on the looting of art by the occupiers, as well as Polish efforts to hide endangered cultural works.[65] A schoolbook published by Operon also discusses education under the German occupation in detail.[66] Other textbooks also mention the problem of confiscation of the property of Polish public and private institutions and Germanisation of Polish names.[67] This form of terror was referred to as

59 Ibid., p. 294.
60 R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, op. cit., pp. 209–210.
61 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 138.
62 T. Siergiejczyk, op. cit., p. 133.
63 A. Garlicki, op. cit., p. 39.
64 T. Siergiejczyk, op. cit., pp. 132–133.
65 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 123.
66 B. Burda et al., op. cit., pp. 184–185.
67 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 294.

'spiritual and intellectual destruction' by the authors of a textbook from 2012.[68] A comprehensive presentation of the occupier's interference in the sphere of culture and education is important, as it highlights the mental terror, in addition to the physical exploitation, that accompanied Poles at every turn. Thus, the occupation as a system of power and terror has been expanded to include the symbolic suppression of the fundaments of Polish identity.

Textbooks published in recent years complete the narrative about German repressions against the Polish nation with information about economic exploitation, which the German textbooks also lack. These sections include mentions of the mandatory supplies of Polish agricultural products to the occupier; a failure to meet these obligations could even be punished by death. There are also references to food rationing and severe sanctions for illegal trade. It is important to present the forms of economic oppression, which, as the authors of one of the textbooks indicate, 'aimed at increasing poverty and famine in the Polish population and, in consequence, the mortality rate.'[69] Additionally, this section guides the students in understanding everyday life during the occupation and the necessity of adopting various strategies for survival.

The situation of the Church is completely ignored in the German textbooks. Polish publications devote separate paragraphs to the German policy of persecuting the faithful and destroying the heritage of the Catholic and Evangelic Church, and explain this by referring to the Church as a mainstay of Polish identity.[70] A textbook from 2003 also informs about the charitable organisation Central Welfare Council (Polish: Rada Główna Opiekuńcza) and draws the attention of the learner to the social situation of the occupied population.[71]

Polish schoolbooks devote far less space to the Holocaust than the German ones. In older textbooks there are only two pages about the extermination of Jews, which is composed into a section devoted to the acts of violence against the Polish population. The problem of the concentration and extermination camps is discussed mainly with reference to Polish prisoners.[72] The plight of the Jewish population is also described from a Polish perspective – the focus is on the help provided by Poles to Jews, on the punishments for hiding Jews and on the Jewish resistance movement. The textbook also mentions negative aspects of the Polish-Jewish relations, providing information about *szmalcowniks* – people who got rich by denouncing Jews

68 R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, op. cit., p. 211.
69 Ibid., p. 211.
70 T. Siergiejczyk, op. cit., p. 131.
71 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 293.
72 T. Siergiejczyk, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

who were hiding.[73] Interestingly, none of the narratives include the term 'Holocaust', which only entered the Polish language in the mid-1990s. A textbook published in 1998 uses this term to name a separate chapter devoted to the extermination of Jews. Thus, one can observe a thematic shift and transfer of the subject of the Holocaust to outside the section devoted to the occupation.[74] The influence of academic and media debates about the Jedwabne pogrom of July 1941 is clear in the case of a textbook published in 2003. In the section devoted to the Holocaust, the author also writes about the Polish persecutions of Jews, adding that 'in many cases, the Germans took advantage of the local population's anti-Semitism.'[75] The authors of another textbook, published in 2012, approach the problem of the Jedwabne pogrom differently: 'On 10 July 1941, the Germans, with the participation of Polish locals, murdered several hundred Jews. (…) One should remember that while the Germans inspired and organised the pogroms, the participation of Poles is a shameful chapter in Polish history.'[76] This example shows that important issues debated by professional historians penetrate into school education.

c. The (trans)national perspective of analysis

The German textbooks currently in use are dominated by a national perspective of analysis that focuses on German society under the Nazi dictatorship. The structure of the chapters within the unit devoted to the wartime period confirms this. The unit opens with a description of the Nazi ideology and propaganda and the complete subordination of social, political and cultural life to the Nazi power. Information about Hitler's foreign policy and events of the war follow, while the central part – several pages – is devoted to the history of the extermination of Jews. The next chapters focus only on German issues: the resistance movements, the bombing of German towns and deportations of Germans from eastern provinces. The contexts of the German occupation in Poland discussed throughout this article are also presented from a German perspective.

Supplementary materials often demonstrate attempts to present a transnational approach to the occupation. A textbook published by Buchner in 2010 contains a photograph of a Polish postage stamp issued in 1948 on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.[77] Some textbooks propose excerpts

73 Ibid., p. 134.
74 A. Garlicki, op. cit., p. 3.
75 Ibid., p. 3.
76 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 142.
77 *Buchners Kolleg Geschichte 11, Neue Ausgabe*, op. cit., p. 236.

of the works of Polish historians as source texts, which is also an attempt to look at the history of World War II from the perspective of neighbouring countries.

Like the German textbooks, Polish textbooks – both the older ones and those currently in use – mainly adopt a national perspective. There are many examples of this. For instance, the Polish perspective dominates the narrative about the concentration camps in older textbooks. While a schoolbook from 2003 presents the concentration and extermination camps mostly in the context of the Jewish population, a textbook from 1993,[78] in contrast, often supplements the narrative with Polish contexts, such as the figures of Janusz Korczak, Witold Pilecki or Jan Karski,[79] and civilians who helped the Jewish population. The older textbook also mentions that many Poles were honoured as the Righteous Among the Nations.[80]

d. Written sources and photographs of the occupation

The analysed German textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s contain relatively few photographs, and the ones that are present are most often from concentration camps or ghettos. The textbooks published by Schroedel in 1997 and 2005 complement the description of the German occupation in Poland with photographs depicting the occupier's violence towards the population. One of them, entitled: 'German soldiers killing Polish civilians' shows a mass execution of Poles standing along a fence.[81] Another one illustrates a village destroyed by the SS.[82]

The newest schoolbooks, which reduce the description of the period 1939–1945 to the Holocaust and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, include photographs that mostly illustrate only these two subjects. There are no photographs depicting a destroyed Polish town or violence against civilians.[83] The majority of the supplementary materials refer to the Holocaust. The photographs show the Lodz Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Source texts also mostly concern the extermination of Jews. One of the textbooks quotes Emanuel Ringelblum's diary but without any reference to the author's biography.[84] Another one includes numerous source texts and excerpts from

78 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 297.
79 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 139.
80 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 142.
81 *Geschichte. Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert – Zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, op. cit., p. 69.
82 Ibid., p. 67.
83 Cf. *Forum Geschichte 11,* op. cit.
84 Anno 4, op. cit., p. 117.

the publications of renowned German historians, but none of them refers to Polish civilians.[85]

However, there are also schoolbooks with source texts that mainly concentrate on the German occupation. A textbook published by Cornelsen in 1996 provides an excerpt from Czesław Madajczyk's book from 1988 about the deportation of Poles from Warsaw, particularly as a result of the Warsaw Uprising.[86] A textbook from 1997 quotes Andrzej Szczypiorski's description of the Wawer massacre: murders of Polish civilians committed by the German occupier in December 1939. The quote is followed by an excerpt from a speech given on 28 April 1995 by Władysław Bartoszewski in the German Bundestag, which reveals the scope of the Polish human losses.[87] The next edition of the same textbook, from 2005, replaces these texts with excerpts from a historical document: a regulation about the treatment of Poles that was issued by Himmler on 15 May 1940. After reading these source texts, students are expected to answer a question at the end of the chapter about the consequences of the German occupation policy for the Polish population.[88] Interestingly, the 2010 edition of the same textbook returned to Szczypiorski's and Bartoszewski's texts and added a photograph of a public German massacre of Polish civilians.[89]

Like the old German textbooks, the Polish ones have few source texts. A schoolbook from 1993 quotes excerpts from the official speeches of the occupiers without providing an annotation of the source. Moreover, the publication is devoid of photographs. The only forms of visualisation are maps and portraits of the most important figures.[90] A chapter devoted to the occupation in the analysed textbook from 1998 does not include any form of visualisation except a map of the division of the Polish state.[91] Recent textbooks contain a lot more illustrations and annotated source texts. Illustrations are quite varied, from propaganda images to photographs of the victims. A textbook from 2003 includes photographs

85 E.g. *Forum Geschichte 11*, op. cit.
86 *Gesichtsbuch 4. Die Menschen und ihre Geschichte in Darstellungen und Dokumenten. Von 1918 bis 1995*, op. cit., pp. 223–224.
87 *Geschichte S II. Deutschland im Umbruch. Geschichte Deutschlands 1933–1990*, op. cit., p. 60.
88 *Geschichte. Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert – Zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, op. cit., p. 72.
89 *Zeit für Geschichte. Herausforderungen der Moderne 11*, op. cit., p. 366.
90 T. Siergiejczyk, op. cit.
91 A. Garlicki, op. cit., p. 36–45.

of the prisoners of concentration camps and the population of the ghetto.[92] A schoolbook from 2012 exploits visual aids to even a greater extent: photographs and other supplementary materials almost outweigh the text. Numerous photographs in the book depict the direct violence against Poles, e.g. executions. Widely known icons of the Auschwitz concentration camp, such as the entrance gate and the crematory, are also included.[93] In one of the analysed textbooks there is even an operating scheme of the crematory in Auschwitz with an explanation of how the individual parts worked.[94] Polish and German textbooks do not differ with their use of this kind of photograph. There are even illustrations that appear both in Polish and German history schoolbooks, for instance, a photograph of a boy with his arms raised, from Jürgen Stroop's report on the Warsaw Ghetto.[95] Polish textbooks also include photographs depicting spaces of everyday life under the occupation, e.g. a photograph of a tram in Cracow with a plate stating that it was only for Germans. This iconographic material provides students with information on the discrimination against the Polish population in all areas of life.[96]

As for source texts, recently published Polish textbooks include them in various forms. The most often quoted texts are statements by General Governor Frank about the German policy towards Poles.[97] A textbook published by Stentor proposes interesting exercises with supplementary materials. Each chapter includes three different posts from a historical forum. The student's task is to follow particular lines of argumentation and to adopt their own stance on a particular problem, such as 'The defence war or Polish September – was there any chance of victory?'[98] The same textbook also recommends project work on selected topics, e.g.: 'Find out as much as you can about the partisan struggle in your region during the occupation. Remember the civilians who supported the partisans.'[99] In this way, students have an opportunity to learn the history of their place of residence under the occupation and to understand that the occupation involved every area of Poland.

92 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 292 and p. 297.
93 R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, op. cit., p. 210–211.
94 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 141.
95 B. Burda et al., op. cit., p. 165.
96 A. Brzozowski and G. Szczepański, op. cit., p. 138.
97 Ibid., p. 160.
98 Ibid., p. 125.
99 Ibid., p. 125.

Summary

The primary purpose of this paper was to analyse the qualitative and quantitative presentation of the German occupation of Poland during World War II in selected German and Polish history textbooks for secondary schools. The gathered material allows one to conclude that there are significant differences between German schoolbooks published in the 1980s and today. One can see a clear shift in emphasis in dealing with the period 1939–1945. While an overall image of World War II with a focus on the German policy towards the occupied states dominated the textbooks published in the 1980s and 1990s, this perspective is almost completely absent from current schoolbooks. There has been a significant change since 2000. History schoolbooks, regardless of the publisher and federal state, have presented the period 1939–1945 mostly from the perspective of the Holocaust and the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The history of World War II has been limited to these dominating categories. Information about the acts of terror against Polish civilians appears sporadically and is often devoid of context or characterisation of the dynamics of change.

The focus of Polish history schoolbooks is completely different. As the Polish nation suffered physical and mental terror at the hands of the occupiers for over five years, it is clear why the German and Soviet occupation dominate the narrative of World War II. For the last two decades, there have also been differences in the descriptions of the occupation. One of them involves the terms used. For instance, in the descriptions of particular actions of the period of the occupation, a textbook published in 1993 uses only the word 'Hitlerite' rather than 'Nazi' or 'German', which is a clear continuation of the communist discourse. There is a clear difference in the edition five years later. The author does not even once use the word 'Hitlerite' but only 'German.'[100] The 2003 edition follows this pattern[101]: there are also 'Germans'[102] and their crimes are described as 'German' rather than 'Hitlerite'. The term 'Nazi', which dominates the German textbook narrative, completely disappeared after this semantic shift.

The similarities and differences in presenting the German occupation in German and Polish history textbooks for secondary schools in the last two decades do not deviate from the similarities and differences in the culture of memory of both nations. Considering the ubiquitously promoted Europeanisation of memory, one should note that as long as history schoolbooks are written from a national

100 A. Garlicki, op. cit., p. 36–45.
101 G. Szelągowska, op. cit., p. 293–295.
102 R. Dolecki, K. Gutkowski and J. Smoleński, op. cit., p. 208–212.

perspective, their role in the process will be counterproductive. One of the ways to escape this impasse is to allow the use of transnational textbooks. A Polish-German history schoolbook, which is currently a work in progress, will be a step forward in the Polish-German relations. There is a chance it will overcome the aforementioned shortcomings in the presentation of the subject of the German occupation of Polish lands during World War II, as the combination of German and Polish narrative is the best way to teach about this painful chapter of common history.

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Tadeusz Lubelski

The Representation of the Soviet Occupation in Polish Film

A survey about the memory of World War II conducted in Poland on the 20th anniversary of regaining full independence reveals optimistic results. According to it, our current memory has been shaped in free Poland; the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact is widely known, as are the real culprits of the Katyn massacre.[1] One may conclude that the few decades of education in the People's Republic of Poland (Polish: PRL) have fallen into oblivion. However, the long-term influence of culture is never devoid of consequences. Assuredly, the PRL propaganda was neither as radical nor as lengthy as the Soviet; it also met stronger resistance in the form of home education. However, the many years of its domination in the public discourse must have left a trace. With good reason, the two most popular and most frequently broadcast Polish TV series are *Czterej pancerni i pies* (*Four Tank-men and a Dog*, 1965–1969) and *Stawka większa niż życie* (*More Than Life at Stake*, 1967–1968): the image of contemporary history they present, shaped during the period of Gomułka's government, still resonates.

This paper focuses on the film as a part of the wide process of initially spreading untruth, followed by truth. The object of my attention is the image of the Soviet occupation presented in Polish feature films and documentaries produced over the 72 years between 1941 and 2013. I primarily take into consideration the periods of actual Soviet occupation, which covered an area of 201,000 square km, and where 13 million people lived before the war.[2] The southern part of these areas, including Lviv, were occupied over two periods: 1939–1941 (the so-called 'first Soviets') and 1944–1945 (the so-called 'second Soviets'), and the smaller, northern part with Vilnius was occupied over three separate periods. Most problems presented in the films that are discussed here also apply to the period between the two occupations, namely between 1941 and 1944, when these lands were occupied by the Germans (and Eastern Galicia and Lviv were incorporated into the General

1 Cf. P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp,* in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L.M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Gdańsk-Warsaw, 2010, p. 9.

2 Cf. M. Derwich (ed.), *Polska XX wieku: 1914–2003,* Wroclaw 2004, p. 88; *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1938,* GUS, Warsaw 1938, p. 13.

Government). The fates of the Poles who were at that time in the USSR (mainly as a result of deportations), were the direct consequence of the previous occupation.

1941–1955. Two contradictory representations: domestic and migratory

Chronologically, the first of these representations was a 9-minute documentary, produced in late 1941 by the Film Bureau of the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish Government-in-exile[3], *Poland's New Front*. The film was almost entirely limited to editing newsreel materials, so its producer, Eugeniusz Cękalski, is therefore listed in the credits as the editor. The first part of this material presented the signing of a military agreement by Polish Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski and the Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ivan Mayski, in London in July 1941. The second part of the documentary showed film clips depicting the formation of the Polish army (according to the commentary, 'Thousands of Poles across entire area of the USSR have been released. They are rushing from the furthest borderlands of the Soviet Union to join the army forming under the command of General Anders'). The third part depicted the official visit of Prime Minister Sikorski to Moscow – welcomed in early December at the airport by Minister Molotov, then hosted by Stalin in the Kremlin and finally, visiting the forming Polish troops near Orenburg.

Although the film mostly consisted of newsreel materials, it also included a series of drawings, which were presented at the beginning and made in the USSR by the outstanding painter and graphic artist Feliks Topolski, who was invited by Ambassador Stanisław Kot. These drawings turned out to be impossible to accept for the military censorship of the Polish Military Forces due to their 'depicting the gaunt figures of Polish soldiers too realistically.'[4] As a result, this short film, which from the beginning encountered problems with censorship (the original title, *Poland's New Brother*, was not approved), could not be screened. It is possible that its first public broadcast was in this century, thanks to the television channel Kino Polska.[5]

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3 Polish: Biuro Filmowe Ministerstwa Informacji i Dokumentacji Rządu Polskiego w Londynie.

4 S. Ozimek, *Film polski w latach II wojny światowej 1939–1945,* in J. Toeplitz, *Historia Filmu Polskiego.* Vol. 3: 1939–1956, Warsaw, 1974, pp. 47–48.

5 These were the conjectures of Jerzy Eisler, who introduced the film, broadcast as a part of the series *Poprawka do historii*.

In the period immediately after the war, a reliable film representation of everyday life during the Soviet occupation could only be made abroad. It happened once, thanks to the fact that Michał Waszyński – a famous director before the war and, later, the chief of the Czołówka Film Studio in Ander's army – began filming a feature called *Wielka Droga* (*The Great Way*, 1946, screenplay by Konrad Tom) during the hostilities.[6] The film included documentary materials that had been recorded since 1939 but the rest was filmed after the war, in the spring of 1946. Most of it was made in the Rome studio Cinecittà, which at the time was transformed into a refugee camp.[7] It was eventually made by the Ośrodek Kultury i Prasy II Korpusu Polskiego (Culture and Press Centre of the Polish II Corps).

Wielka droga referred to the well-known plot of a couple whose relationship is precluded by the circumstances of war. The couple, Irena and Adam from Lviv, were played by two amateurs: the sculptor Albin Ossowski and Renata Bogdańska (leading singer in Henryk Wars's band) who had just gotten married to General Anders. The film is set in a military hospital after the Battle of Monte Cassino. Nurse Jadzia (Jadwiga Andrzejewska) is taking care of a wounded soldier who lost his eyesight in the battle. The doctor assures her, however, that the condition is treatable; it depends on the mental state of the patient. Thus, the nurse – in her efforts to find out how to comfort him – looks at his notes and, in this way, discovers the story of his love, which the viewer then witnesses over the course of the film. The story begins a few days before the outbreak of the war, on 25 August 1939 in Lviv. Irena makes her debut in the opera; Adam, sitting in the loge, witnesses her success. It seems that the two will have a long and happy future together. Meanwhile, however, the war breaks out. First we see the German bombing of Lviv and then, from the records found in the wounded soldier's diary, we find out the most popular term used to describe the Soviet aggression: '17 September. Another stab in the back. Red flood from the east. But we must not succumb.' A scene in which the couple meet in a café in Lviv presents the new reality to the viewer. 'Cake?' – the waiter (played by Konrad Tom himself) is surprised. 'Unfortunately, there is no cake. You may have coffee, but only ersatz coffee, without milk or sugar. I can offer bread with marmalade. What can we do? Nothing can be saved from this locust.'

The lovers then part again and we observe their parallel fates: Irena is deported deep into Russia in a cattle wagon, while Adam joins Anders' army and follows its war trail. They reunite after the Battle of Monte Cassino. Adam recovers his eyesight

6 For more about the activity of the Czołówka Film Studio in Anders' army, see T. Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego 1895–2014*, Cracow, 2015, pp. 145–148.

7 S. Blumenfeld, *Człowiek, który chciał być księciem,* trans. Maria Żurowska, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 86–88.

and nurse Jadzia has to step back. The film ends with Irena's and Adam's wedding in Rome and an announcement of their return to a free Poland. The filmmakers undoubtedly realised that the titular 'great way' to free Poland would not be easy. However, they probably did not imagine that the first screening of their film for a national audience would take place no earlier than 1990.

In the first post-war decade, there was only one Polish film that presented an extremely contradictory, deceitful image of reality. It was *Domek z kart* (*House of Cards*, 1953), directed by Erwin Axer, an adaptation of a famous performance staged the same year at the Współczesny Theatre in Warsaw. The performance was based on a play of the same title by Emil Zegadłowicz, written in rage and despair in 1939 and found post mortem in the writer's notes. The main character, Bruno Sztorc (Tadeusz Białoszczyński), is a painter and journalist with communist views who is arrested and deported to the Bereza Kartuska prison for publishing, shortly before the war, an ominous article entitled *House of Cards* that demanded placing power in the hands of workers and peasants. The final scene of the film is set in a border police station in southeast Poland. A calendar on the desk shows the same date as in the notebook from *Wielka droga*: 17 September. A local policeman counts government cars crossing the border. The transport of prisoner Sztorc to the station coincides with an inspection by Prime Minister Sławoj-Składkowski, who is presented as a grotesque figure. The prisoner responds with anger to an offer of forgiveness from the Prime Minister: 'Your forgiveness would be an offence to me. Nothing will be left of all the things you have done!' The final scene showing the invading Red Army looks like the only possible liberation. A short, cordial greeting – 'Comrade!' – that the Soviet officer (played by the handsome Jerzy Pietraszkiewicz) calls to Sztorc heralds the advent of new, equitable relationships between people.

Objectively, however, one should admit that this deceitful scene is an exception in Polish cinema of the time. Clearly, discourse of the Polish People's Republic made it impossible to present the real fates of Poles under the Soviet occupation. Yet, this subject was simply dodged to avoid provoking a public backlash. In the two-part historical epos *Żołnierz zwycięstwa* (*The Soldier of Victory*, 1953, by Wanda Jakubowska), the scene devoted to the formation of the Polish army in the USSR was limited to about a minute (at the beginning of the second part called *Zwycięstwo – Victory*). The first and only documentary scene devoted to the tragedy of September 1939 was included in the film *Warszawa. Dokumenty walki, zniszczenia, odbudowy* (*Warsaw: Documents of the Struggle, Destruction and Reconstruction*, 1952) by Ludwik Perski; the events simultaneously taking place in the eastern part of Poland were not mentioned at all.

Film academies sometimes showed the first film made by Czołówka Film Production Company, Aleksander Ford's short documentary *Przysięgamy ziemi polskiej* (*Our Oath to the Polish Soil*), with a climactic scene of the military oath taken by the soldiers of Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division on the anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald, on 15 July 1943. The film output of Czołówka, however, proved to be exceedingly modest. It filmed only three episodes of the wartime newsreel entitled *Polska Walcząca* (*Fighting Poland*) – the same as the newsreel of the Warsaw Uprising, produced in a much shorter time and in immeasurably more difficult conditions. The first episode was made in December 1943 and was called *Idziem do ciebie, ziemio…* (*We Come to You, O Land …*), the second one in January 1944, the third one in Lublin in November 1944. From the very beginning, Czołówka was treated with distrust by the Soviet authorities and it lacked the necessary equipment. The filming of the Battle of Lenino in October 1943, which was the so-called baptism of fire of the Kościuszko Division, was a particularly dramatic event. The Polish army suffered great losses in this battle: about 3,000 Poles died, which represented around one quarter of the whole division. The camera operator Stanisław Wohl tried to portray this dramatic event, which resulted in a conflict with director Ford, who sought to create a monumental and optimistic film. Soviet commanders also questioned Wohl's manner of filming the battle, but for a different reason. They only approved of the convention of filming the battle from the perspective of their own soldiers, thus the method that Wohl introduced, risking his life to do so, of showing them *en face*, as if from the enemy's perspective, was unacceptable to them. Therefore, Soviet military superiors demanded the battle was staged once again so it could be presented on-screen in the 'correct' version. As a result, as Alina Madej proved in her documented study, the whole material seems unconvincing. This problem also refers to later works filmed by Czołówka.[8]

1956–1989: Between brotherhood in arms and apocalypse

The falsification of the history imposed by the post-war authorities lasted, with varying degrees of intensity, for the whole period of Polish People's Republic. However, the initial silence about the occupation fates of a great section of the Polish populace could not last forever. In the 1960s and 1970s, the history of the Polish Army formed in the area of the Soviet Union was used increasingly often for propaganda purposes. 'The Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms' became a

8 This problem is discussed in Chapter II of Alina Madej's book *Kino Władza Publiczność. Kinematografia polska w latach 1944–1949,* Bielsko-Biała, 2002, pp. 35–55.

second founding myth (after The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation) of the new state of workers and peasants. This myth became a narrative pretext to find another way of presenting the wartime fate of Poles in the USSR, which can be named, in Piotr Zwierzchowski's terms, a cinema of 'legalised memory.'[9] This, however, was not the only way of raising this subject by film. The other one referred to private memory and included stories of Poles in the Soviet Union that sometimes had an apocalyptic character. The authorities attempted to oust the latter at all costs; if, against all odds, it emerged, it was only in the form of allusions, associations, and careful hints.

If there had been an opportunity at the time to include private memory in films, the two authors of the first screenplays about soldiers coming home from the east with the Polish army, Józef Hen and Janusz Morgenstern (soldiers of a similar age who spent most of the war in the east), would have had incredibly interesting stories to tell. Hen tangibly learned that private history was banned. His first autobiographical novel, *Nikt nie woła* (*Nobody's Calling*), about his war experiences in Uzbekistan – from the unsuccessful attempt to get to Anders' Army in spring 1942 in Yangiyo'l, to his departure from Samarkand in spring 1944 – was banned from 1957 (when it was presented to Czytelnik Publishers) until 1990. Therefore, for the purpose of a screenplay filmed by Kazimierz Kutz, the author moved the plot from Samarkand to the western territories of Poland (pre-war Germany) after the war. As a result, only insiders could figure out that the experiences of Bożek and Lena in post-war Zielno in fact took place during the war in central Asia.[10]

The experiences of Hen and Morgenstern were only used in the films made for the 20th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic and the anniversary of the end of World War II. The first of these films, *Nieznany* (*The Unknown*, 1964), directed by Witold Lesiewicz and written by Hen, was also the first film made in the Polish People's Republic that depicted a Soviet labour camp and the escape of two Polish prisoners of war to the army forming at the Oka river in 1943. One of the men, Bogdan, barefoot and obsessively dreaming of gaining a pair of shoes (played by Leszek Hardegen) very much resembles Bożek from the novel *Nikt nie woła*, but the artificially poetic image of the camp, which does not show what the prisoners do, and where a Soviet doctor willingly gives sick leave to the soldiers, and who

9 P. Zwierzchowski, *Kino nowej pamięci. Obraz II wojny światowej w kinie polskim lat 60.,* Bydgoszcz, 2013, pp. 177–178 and the chapter '*Twoja wojna, moja wojna, jedna wojna*: filmowe obrazy polsko-radzieckiego braterstwa broni', pp. 259–283.

10 For more on this subject see T. Lubelski, 'Z Samarkandy do Bystrzycy, czyli o perypetiach filmu *Nikt nie woła*', in: E. Nurczyńska-Fidelska and B. Stolarska (eds.), '*Szkoła polska*' *– powroty,* Lodz, 1998, pp. 81–97.

is delighted that the 'gallant Pole' kisses her hand, has little in common with our current knowledge of the Soviet labour camps. Apart from its euphemistically concocted reality, another weak side of the film was its mosaic character: the perfunctorily staged Battle of Lenino is less memorable than the amusing scene shot in Zamość and showing the unsuccessful romantic overtures of a proletarian lieutenant towards the attractive widow of a pre-war officer.

Janusz Morgenstern's *Potem nastąpi cisza* (*The Silence Will Fall*, 1965), written by the director together with Zbigniew Safjan, was a much more polished film in terms of dramaturgy, acting and editing. The plot is retrospective and emerges in the form of recollections of the three leading characters on the eve of a decisive battle that took place at the beginning of May 1945 in the vicinity of Dresden and was fought by the Polish Second Army. There were suggestions that the depicted battle was a repeat of the tragically lost Battle of Budziszyn (21–26 April) but the Polish Second Army's defeat was a taboo at the time and could not be openly discussed. The personal intentions of the director, who experienced the events depicted in the film, can be traced under the surface of a complex plot. Arrested in the summer of 1944 in Przeworsk, Morgenstern – a victim of a blackmail ('he was given a choice: immediate deportation to Siberia or join the army')[11] was conscripted into the Second Army and followed much of its trail of fire. Therefore, the atmosphere of the last months of the war – unease and suspicion within the army and intimidation of the civilians – was presented with paralysing authenticity. However, this authenticity gets stuck in too many understatements to consider the representation of the fates of Poles in the south-eastern areas to be credible. Only from the dialogues can we find out that Lieutenant Kolski came back from Siberia, where his parents had died. The commander of the division and a communist, Świętowski (Tadeusz Łomnicki) also came from Siberia but neither Kolski's nor his past is given in retrospect.

The most effective variant of 'the cinema of the new memory'[12] was the TV series *Czterej pancerni i pies* (*Four Tank-men and a Dog*, 21 episodes, 1965–1969) directed by Konrad Nałęcki and written by Janusz Przymanowski. The story of the friendship and the war adventures of a crew of tank-men and their trail of fire from the river Oka to Berlin perfectly smuggled the image of Polish-Soviet brotherhood in arms under the cover of the ludic form. The series was more than

11 M. Hendrykowski, *Morgenstern,* Poznan, 2012, p. 13.

12 Piotr Zwierzchowski's term to name a method of depicting the war that was characteristic of the 1960s – not as a liminal experience but as a foundation myth of the Polish People's Republic. The exceptionality of the Polish experience of the war was also highlighted. See P. Zwierzchowski, *Kino nowej pamięci*, op. cit., pp. 9–10, 15.

restrained in the subject of the life of Poles under the Soviet occupation. Only the beginning of the first episode, *Załoga* (*The Crew*), was set in a place of Polish exile, the Ussuri Taiga, where the main character Janek is staying in an old cottage belonging to a Russian hunter. However, there was no mention of why he is there. The plot is quickly moved to Sielce, where the Polish 1st Armoured Brigade of the Defenders of Westerplatte was being formed.

At the same time, there were attempts to break the prevailing silence in documentary cinema. Admittedly, *Spojrzenie na Wrzesień* (*A Glance at September*, 1970) by Maciej Sieński, still promoted the theory of evil interwar authorities whose unwillingness to create a coalition with the Soviet Union caused the September defeat. The documentary also depicted the final alliance with the eastern neighbour as a restoration of the world order, strengthening this impression by playing *From Beyond Mountains and Rivers* (the leading song of the Polish People's Army) in the background. However, it was the very first time that, in newsreel pictures, the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the 17 September aggression were shown. The commentary did not deviate from the communist phraseology but earlier documentaries, such as Jerzy Bossak and Wacław Kaźmierczak's *Wrzesień / Tak było…/* (*September / The Way It Was…*, 1961) did not even mention the two facts.[13]

The Lenino Battle as the baptism of fire of the Kościuszko Division was presented in the spirit of the propaganda of success, which was characteristic for Gierek's Decade[14] in the 33-minute documentary by Leonard Ordo entitled *Idziem do ciebie, ziemio…* (*We Come to You, O Land…*, 1973). Produced by the Czołówka studio on the 30th anniversary of the battle, the film intentionally referred with its title to Aleksander Ford's war newsreel and quoted it profusely. Colonel Włodzimierz Sikorski highlighted the ideological separation of the new army forming in Sielce from the London government-in-exile and Anders' Army. The accounts of a group of commanders and two rank-and-file officers emphasised the military success of the Battle of Lenino. Berling once admitted: 'The division fulfilled its task honourably but paid a very high price for it' but there were no details concerning this price.

More comprehensive material was included in Andrzej Jerzy Piotrowski's *Zasieki* (*Entanglement*, 1973, premiered 1983) – the first and only feature film with a plot centred on the Battle of Lenino. The title entanglements – taken literally – referred to

13 For more on the subject, see T. Lubelski, 'Obraz Września w filmie dokumentalnym', in *Biuletyn Polonistyczny*, 1990, no. 3–4 (*Pamięć Września*), pp. 61–80.

14 This phrase, referring to the period of Edward Gierek's government, was used by Jerzy Eisler in his introduction to the film (broadcast as a part of the series *Poprawka do historii*), a few years ago on Kino Polska Channel.

fulfilling a combat task. In the first scene, a night before the battle, a Soviet lieutenant (Andrzej Kopiczyński) calls for three volunteers to perform the difficult task of forcing their way to the titular wire entanglement that was put in place by the enemy, and cut them in order to facilitate the attack. In the final scene, two of the three soldiers – Paweł, a communist (Damian Damięcki) and Andrzej (Olgierd Łukaszewicz) with an anti-Soviet attitude, who had been earlier left by Anders' Army in hospital with typhoid, cut the wires. There is also another, parallel narrative framework in the form of flashbacks of the life of the abovementioned three characters as well as two others – a sergeant (Janusz Bylczyński) and private Serafin (Wirgiliusz Gryń). The fact that the retrospect concerns key points in contemporary history (the furthest memory goes back to September 1939) makes Piotrowski's work the richest film testimony of the life of Poles under the Soviet occupation, which also provides the title of the film with an additional, metaphorical meaning.

Although this testimony was subjected to the propaganda rituals of the epoch, it still did not stand up to the rigors of the 1970s and was banned. *Zasieki* was not allowed to be screened until 1983 but when it finally arrived in the cinema, it did not catch anyone's attention. One may think today that the plot of *Zasieki* is full of polished obviousness, but at the time it was made, each of the main storylines contained an element that violated the censorship standards. The Soviet lieutenant may have seemed like a person taken directly from a primitive propaganda bulletin (he scolded his soldiers using Russian commands although this was the 'Polish Army') but in his conversation with Andrzej he also implied that he had been released from a gulag two years earlier ('Where I was until June 1941, I won't tell you'). Moreover, the Soviet labour camps that were presented in flashbacks (in the case of Andrzej, a quarry and the sergeant, a forest clearing) does not have the features of poetical conventionality, as opposed to Lesiewicz's *Nieznany.* The film was also the first to depict the Soviet intervention of 17 September; the scene may seem innocent but it has dramatic elements and the commander of the Soviet division says a common expression at the time: 'The Red Army, to protect the Ukrainian and Belarusian brothers…'.

A broader panorama of the Polish fate in the east between 1941 and 1943, in which the Battle of Lenino was a dramatic climax, was included in the two-part film by Jerzy Hoffman entitled *Do krwi ostatniej* (*To the Last Drop of Blood*, 1978). In terms of dramatics, the film is better than *Zasieki*; however, it is also more careful and does not include any camp scenes in flashback. It uses the old Walter Scott narrative structure, which was also willingly adopted by Soviet Cinema. There are two parallel plots: the public life of historical figures and the private life of fictional figures with different backgrounds (in this case, three Poles from Lviv). This composition makes the film appealing, particularly since the plotlines

about the private lives follow popular patterns, such as love of a burgher (Marek Lewandowski) for a proletarian (Anna Dymna) or a father (Jerzy Trela) finding his once-abandoned son. However, stereotypes dominate in both plots: Stalin's entourage consists of enlightened and far-sighted politicians, General Sikorski is noble but unstable; General Anders tries to act from a position of strength but this strategy may prove ineffective in the case of Russians. Fictional characters follow the same principle: all the honest soldiers will sooner or later join Berling's Army.

The first part of *Do krwi ostatniej*, from the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement to the departure of Anders' Army from the USSR, presents the story of an unsuccessful pact. The second part, from the forming of a new division in Sielce to the Battle of Lenino, is the one that presents the right direction, according to Wanda Wasilewska's words, who said in the film about her compatriots joining the new army: 'These people suffered a lot and it resides inside them. But in order to look into the future, one needs to overcome the past'. In contrast to the 'history of an error', as the story about Anders' Army was depicted, the fates of the Kościuszko Division were presented as victorious after all. But the 'after all' turned out to be crucial. The tactic of waging war without any concern for the number of victims that was imposed by Stalin is depicted as bloody slaughter. Thus, after a few weeks in cinemas, the film was off the screen as 'anti-Soviet.'

Independently from the films explicitly presenting the Soviet occupation, there were also works that referred to it by implication. In Andrzej Żuławski's *Trzecia część nocy* (*The Third Part of the Night*), the word 'Lviv' was never spoken although, due to the biography of Mirosław Żuławski, the director's father and the screenwriter, one inferred that the action took place in this city during the occupation. His son's film gave an account of the occupation experience of the father's generation (it even showed the procedure of feeding lice to develop a typhus vaccine at the Institute for Study of Typhus and Virology of Rudolf Weigl) but presented them in the form of an apocalyptic vision and suggested that the Nazis were the only occupiers present.[15]

Therefore, only the viewer's prior knowledge could help him or her locate the watched events in real historical circumstances. The same situation applies to the films of Tadeusz Konwicki, who was known to refer to his experiences in the Vilnius region, where he used to live until 1945, after fighting as an anti-Bolshevik

15 However, the biographic memory of the director extended this experience to the entire occupation: 'My sister died in our hands of cold and hunger. Half the family died in Auschwitz, the other half in Siberia. My first film, *Trzecia część nocy,* was a tribute to them.'; '*Jesteśmy mięsem dla tygrysa.* T. Lubelski interviews A. Żuławski', *Kino*, 1992, no. 7, p. 6.

partisan. Thus, the experience of the characters in *Ostatni dzień lata* (*The Last Day of Summer*, 1958) and *Zaduszki* (*All Souls Day*, 1961) drew the viewer's attention to that region. This is particularly clear in Konwicki's most overtly autobiographical film, *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko* (*How Far, How Near* 1971). The most dramatic event in the life of the main character happened 'on the last wartime Christmas Eve' in the Vilnius region. Before he enters a strange house, where he is expected to pass judgment on a traitor, the protagonist (Andrzej Łapicki) bids farewell to a Home Army courier, Musia (Maja Komorowska) and expresses his wish to see her after the war. Musia's laconic last words are: 'It will be fine'. 'It will be fine', the protagonist adds his bitter commentary, 'although you'll spend your youth in prison, although you'll grow old too early, although you'll remember the worst years as the best.' This short sentence, said somewhat stealthily and miraculously approved by censorship, probably provided more information about the post-war consequences of the Soviet occupation than regular historical works that were made at the time.

The last feature film on this subject produced in the Polish People's Republic was Henryk Kluba's *Gwiazda Piołun* (*The Star Wormwood*, 1988), inspired, as well as its literary predecessor (Władysław Terlecki's novel from 1968, of the same title) by the last days of life of Witkacy,[16] who committed suicide together with his lover on 18 September 1939, directly after the Soviet invasion of Poland. The director had the original idea of introducing a motif of memories from 1917 Russia that accompany the protagonist (Tadeusz Huk) and increase his fear of what is approaching. An event that directly preceded his decision to commit suicide was when a group of Ukrainian peasants cornered the main character and his partner in their shelter, in a border village. The following day, the protagonist's words overlap with the sounds of the entering Soviets – thus, the Soviet invasion becomes a synonym of death.

Film representation of the Katyn massacre

The cinematic depiction of the Katyn massacre is the most tragic event within the subject under discussion and the one that was distorted for the longest time, which has cast a shadow on Polish-Russian relations even to this day. The first film about Katyn – an 8-minute documentary *Im Wald von Katyn* (*In the Katyn Forest*, available in the internet) – was produced following Germany's request to the International Red Cross committee, which was formed in April 1943, to investigate the newly discovered crime scene. The committee concluded without

16 A pseudonim of the Polish artist Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.

any doubts that the Poles whose bodies were discovered in mass graves in the Katyn forest had been shot in the back of the head in spring 1940. A fragment of the documentary was used in Andrzej Wajda's *Katyń* (*Katyn*, 2007) – a Nazi officer shows it to the wife of a Polish general in Cracow to get her to sign a German protest. The documentary was a typical piece of propaganda of the period when Hitler and Goebbels needed strong arguments against Stalinism to weaken the unity of the Allies. At first, shocked by the German news, Poles were not certain of their authenticity. However, the increasing number of arguments emerging made most Poles consider the Soviet massacre to be a fact[17]. The request made by the London-based Polish government-in-exile to clearly determine the culprits of the Katyn massacre became a pretext for the Soviet government to sever diplomatic relations with the Polish government on 25 April.

A few months later, in early 1944, when the Red Army regained the territories around Smolensk, a new film testimony was produced in the form of a Soviet documentary called *Tragiedija w katinskom lesu* (*Tragedy in the Katyn Forest*, 1944). The Soviet authorities used the film as a propaganda tool that was expected to prove a version of events allegedly created by Stalin himself. According to this version, in the summer of 1941 Polish prisoners working in now Russian forests were arrested and then shot by the Germans.[18] This false version, 'proved' by the report of the so-called Burdenko Commission, became the only official version in the Eastern Bloc until the end of the 1980s. The Soviet documentary is the second film about Katyn that features in Andrzej Wajda's film. Although no one in Poland believed this version, probably including the state dignitaries, it was prohibited to deny it. Therefore, when the general's wife protested against the projection of the film in the old square, she again exposed herself to severe danger, this time from Milicja Obywatelska (state police in the People's Republic of Poland). While the two documentaries presented two contradictory versions of the same event, neither of them was accepted by Poles.

Many decades had to pass until the Katyn massacre was no longer an absolute taboo. The first attempt to allude to Katyn in Polish film was made by Jerzy Hoffman in the aforementioned film *Do krwi ostatniej*, but only in a form of two references in dialogue. It was not possible to present the truth until 1989. Since then, a series of documentaries about the Katyn massacre have been produced. The most important and perhaps cinematically the best was the first film, made

17 Cf. A. Przewoźnik and J. Adamska, *Katyń. Zbrodnia Prawda Pamięć,* Warsaw, 2010, p. 219.

18 Cf. F. Kadell, *Kłamstwo katyńskie. Historia pewnej manipulacji*, trans. Jerzy Pasieka, Wroclaw, 2008, p. 110.

in the spring of 1990, when the mass graves in Kharkiv and Tver had not yet been discovered. The 53-minute documentary *Las Katyński* (*Katyn Forest*), filmed by Marcel Łoziński, starts with a train journey to Katyn made by the victim's families in the summer of 1989. Thanks to the procedure that Marcel Łoziński always uses in his documentary practice – introducing another person to ask questions in his name – the film brings new perspective to the subject. Wanda Zadrożna, a daughter of one of the murdered, makes contact with local witnesses of the events from the past. It is she who does the work of a historian. She does not work with archives, which are always limited, but with the living memory of the witnesses. Thanks to her conversations with women and men who lived near Katyn, Russians and Ukranians, we find out that Poles were not the only victims of Soviet crimes in Katyn forest. Initially, women questioned by Wanda Zadrożna do not want to speak to her. The ice breaks in a conversation with an old peasant woman, who admits that, at the time, one could constantly hear shots at night. The most poignant scene is the long conversation with an old man who witnessed tragic events in the Smolensk area for decades and, out of fear, gave false testimony in the past. He is still afraid now but at one point he overcomes the fear in front of Jacek Petrycki's camera and starts speaking honestly: 'Everyone who lived here knows that the Bolsheviks did it. The reptile shot them all. Odd that it didn't shoot us, the witnesses. By accident, it must have regretted it later, the fool. These things have been happening here for a long time. They used to shoot in Katyn forest all the time. People from many parts of the world are buried here: Gypsies, Russians, Poles, Latvians, everyone, no one is missing.' What other interviewees say provides a painful confirmation: in the late 1930s, in the same forest, the NKVD mass murdered their compatriots.[19] Thus, this part of the film opens a perspective of forgiveness but not oblivion, as remembering is an essential element of collective identity.

The most important film for the dissemination of knowledge about this crime, however, is Andrzej Wajda's *Katyń*, the first feature film devoted to it. In the late 1990s, the outstanding writer Jan Józef Szczepański suggested to the director that the story should be built around the lie about Katyn instead of the crime itself. This way, the viewers will ask what they need to do to uncover the truth and work together on the process of mourning. Hence, an idea emerged while working on

19 According to the findings of the Memorial society, on the orders of Nikolai Yezhov of July 1937 to liquidate 'anti-Soviet elements', Chekist troikas (three-men court: representatives of the communist party, the prosecution and the NKVD) issued about 700,000 death sentences between summer 1937 and the summer of 1938. A. Przewoźnik, J. Adamska, op. cit., p. 536.

the screenplay with Andrzej Mularczyk that women should be the guides in the process of discovering the truth. Thus, the two leading female characters appear in the first scene of the film, which takes place on 17 September on the Polish-Russian border. One of them, Anna (Maja Ostaszewska) is the wife of a captain (Artur Żmijewski), who decided keep a diary, in which, day by day, he notes important episodes over the course of his imprisonment. The other woman is a general's wife (Danuta Stenka), who is ready to accept the truth from the beginning. The fates of the two women are intertwined. The general's wife makes Jerzy (Andrzej Chyra), who comes to Cracow in his Kościuszko Division uniform, realise that his duty is to give testimony. Having learned he cannot speak the truth, Jerzy commits suicide. At the news of his death, an associate of Dr Jan Robel working for the Institute of Forensic Medicine gives the captain's diary to his family. In this way, through the words in the diary that suggest its author's tragic end, the logic of the story leads to the revelation of the truth in the finale.

It should also be noted that the representation of the historical event presented in the film corresponds with our contemporary knowledge of it. The main characters are credible and typical, such as the professor's wife (Maja Komorowska), whose two closest male family members die at the hands of the two aggressors – her husband is killed by the Nazis and her son by the Soviets. The motif of delivering the captain Andrzej's diary to his wife is also credible; the notes are based on the camp diary of Major Adam Solski. The saving of the captain's wife and daughter and the deportation of her sister-in-law is also a believable storyline. In March 1940, the Soviet authorities, almost simultaneously with the decision to murder Polish prisoners of war, ordered the deportation of their families, and the bravery of a 'good Russian', such as the film character Captain Popov (Sergei Garmash), was necessary to prevent such a criminal act. Finally, the scene of the murder of Polish officers was reconstructed according to contemporary knowledge. The prisoners were moved from Kozielsk to Gniezdowo and proceeded further in trucks called *czorne worony* (black crows). Some of them were murdered in the cellar of an NKVD rest house, from which the bodies were transported to Katyn Forest; the rest were shot directly at the graves in the forest.[20]

Both methods of murder were reconstructed by Wajda in his film. According to the plot structure, this was the last scene of *Katyń*. However, the film does not encourage hatred but rather – following the example of Marcel Łoziński's documentary – mutual understanding. Although this understanding has again become difficult for different reasons, one can hope that any new film will not diminish

20 Cf. Ibid., pp. 134–149.

it in future by depicting the tragic air crash near Smolensk as another link to the crime from 70 years ago.

The representation of the Soviet occupation after 1989

After the political transition, the situation radically changed. Over one season in 1989/1990, the smooth images of kind Russians were replaced with a much more authentic, gloomy and scary picture – at the beginning often grotesquely exaggerated but usually with an optimistic thread thanks to an episodic character who is willing to help.

Such an image of Soviet labour camps was presented in the first feature film on this subject produced after the political transition – *Cynga* (*Scurvy*, 1991) by Leszek Wosiewicz. The film was based on a memoir of the same name (published in 1989) written by Jerzy Drewnowski (1918–1996), who became a commandant of the underground organisation Polish People's Action for Independence (PLAN) shortly after the outbreak of the war, and in spring 1940, after being arrested by the NKVD during his attempt to get to Lviv, he was sentenced to death, pardoned and imprisoned for 4 years in a northern labour camp. While his memories are realistic and the protagonist is always a conscious participant in the events, Wosiewicz chose to create a nightmarishly grotesque atmosphere, which was also present in his earlier work, *Kornblumenblau* (1988), which analysed totalitarianism using the example of an Auschwitz prisoner. However, in the case of *Cynga*, this approach proved much less successful. The main character of the film, Andrzej (Tomasz Łysiak, Waldemar Łysiak's son and soon to also become a writer), suffers from amnesia as a result of the titular disease and becomes a kind of a passive puppet, moved by the course of events. Consequently, instead of an analysis or at least a subjective description of the reality of Soviet labour camps, the viewer is presented with an image of an absurd nightmare, filled with figures of monsters and lunatics; the only helper, who saves the protagonist's life, is a Polish psychiatrist (Władysław Kowalski), who is also a prisoner of the camp.

A film that was produced the same year – Janusz Zaorski's *Panny i wdowy* (*Maidens and Widows*, 1991; also a TV mini-series), was no better. Based on a screenplay written by Maria Nurowska, who at the time started writing a saga novel of the same title, the movie focussed on over a hundred years (from the January Uprising until contemporary times) of the life of Poles from one family of the gentry. The director followed the stereotypes and improbabilities included in the screenplay. The image of a Soviet labour camp appears in the plotline about Ewelina (Maria Gładkowska), one of the several generations of the Lechicki family who is deported to the north when the NKVD attacks the manor after the war (hence, also after the

occupation). The camp is not portrayed realistically and the figure of the inhuman camp commandant (Kazimierz Kaczor) can serve as a negative example of national stereotypes. However, the scene of a Christmas Eve in the camp is memorable.

The most original image of the occupation was presented by Robert Gliński in his film *Wszystko co najważniejsze…* (*All That Really Matters*, 1992), with Dżamila Ankiewicz-Nowosiejska's screenplay based on the memoirs of Ola Watowa (published in 1984). The director felt obliged to be faithful to the facts, seeing that he used authentic personal details of the protagonist couple, telling the real story of the imprisonment of Aleksander Wat and his family by the NKVD in wartime Lviv and the further deportation to Kazakhstan of his wife Ola and son Andrzej.[21] He also presented a universal story of the 20th century intellectual and his entanglement in communism and of the power of love that allowed the couple (Ewa Skibińska and Krzysztof Globisz) survive the toughest experiences. The film eschewed national stereotypes and showed deportation to the Soviet labour camp as a spiritual experience due to the shared tragic fate of people of different nationalities and social backgrounds.

While the part about the deportation was beautifully made, the earlier scenes from Lviv seem much less convincing. Setting the famous scene – 'demonic' as Aleksander Wat called it – of carefully prepared NKVD provocation in a Lviv club, when a group of poets was arrested (among others, Broniewski, Peiper and Wat)[22] required precision and understanding of the context. The film scene, however, looked artificial. The mysterious author of the provocation, Władysław Daszewski, was not, for some reason, presented as an authentic figure (but replaced with a character named Tadeusz, played by Bogusław Linda), and it felt as though the filmmakers wasted the chance to take on the dramatic problem of the life of the Polish artistic community in occupied Lviv.

Fragments of memories about wartime childhood in the taiga[23] where he was deported with his family (until the Sikorski-Mayski Pact was signed and the family could move to the south),[24] are included in Andrzej Kondratiuk's *Słoneczny zegar*

21 Cf. Gliński R., 'Wierność sobie'. Interview by Z. Benedyktowicz, R. Ciarka and J. Gazda, *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 1993, no. 1, p. 100.

22 This scene was described in detail by A. Wat, *My Century – the Odyssey of a Polish intellectual,* vol. I, London, 1977, pp. 307–311; then his account was completed by his wife: O. Watowa, *Wszystko co najważniejsze…,* Warsaw, 1990, pp. 31–35.

23 A subarctic forest dominated by conifers (translator's note).

24 The real course of the events was revealed by the director in his interview with Jacek Nowakowski, attached as an appendix to: J. Nowakowski, *Filmowa twórczość Andrzeja Kondratiuka,* Poznan, 1999, pp. 111–138.

(*Sundial*, 1997), the last part of his autobiographic film cycle: fluttering red banners of Lenin and sailing toy boats in the river – 'Sail, little boat, sail to Poland'. An unexpected meaning of this motif is revealed when adult Andrzej shows to a friend treasures he got in a bazaar from a vendor from the former USSR, with a little Lenin statue paperweight among them. 'Well, comrade Lenin – he says ironically – on the ruins of the greatest socio-economic formation we are building a proven system: capitalism.' This irony, however, is laced with melancholy, as if the aging protagonist felt sorry for his erstwhile illusions.

A popular TV series broadcast the same year (1997) was *Boża podszewka* (*God's Lining*, 15 episodes in season 1), based on Teresa Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz's autobiographic book of the same title. The series, following the book, depicts the life of the Jurewicz family (from the Vilnius area) who live in the *Kresy*, on the Juryszki estate (based on Rakuciniszki, the writer's family's estate) in the years 1900–1944. The leading character of the first few episodes is the mother, Maria (Danuta Stenka); gradually, the centre of the plot moves towards the daughter, Maryśka (Agnieszka Krukówna). Maryśka and her husband Kazimierz (Janusz Michałowski) move to Vilnius, where the war finds them in September 1939 (episode 10). The last four episodes are set during the occupation. They depict the terror of the Soviet occupier (Maryśka waiting at the Łukiszki prison gate where her husband was sent in episode 11) but also the ambiguous character of national conflicts in the *Kresy* (e.g. the plotline about 'contract killing' of the two Russians temporarily living in Juryszki – episode 13).

Another production about the *Kresy*, *Syberiada polska* (2012, by Janusz Zaorski), based on Zbigniew Domino's autobiographical novel, also employs the poetics of a televisual form. This film included the most comprehensive story about the lives of Polish families from south-eastern (interwar) border territories of Poland, who were deported to Siberia during the Soviet occupation. Their experience is depicted using the example of a carpenter, Jan Dolina (Adam Woronowicz), his wife Antonina (Urszula Grabowska) and their two sons Staś and Tadzio. The carefree pre-war paradise depicted in the first scene is contrasted with the outbreak of the war, the invasion of the Red Army on 17 September – hypocritically announced by the invaders as a 'liberation' – and a night intrusion by the Soviets to the family's home on 10 February 1940 ('You've got 15 minutes to pack!'), as a result of which they are deported, together with many other Polish and Jewish families, to Kalucze hamlet in Siberia, where it is difficult to survive and where the mother dies. The Sikorski-Mayski pact is not in the least a turning point. The Dolina family are still subject to far-reaching harassment by the NKVD because of their refusal to accept a Soviet passport. In the end, the father joins the Polish

army. The sons will not board a repatriation train until the war is over. The Russian characters are varied; even the greatest enemy, a cruel commandant of the hamlet, Captain Savin, is depicted with traces of understanding. He takes revenge on Poles for the death of his father, killed by Polish lancers during the 1920 war. The film, however, does not take up the interesting subject of Polish deportees' infatuation with communism. It was not a coincidence that the author of the book, Zbigniew Domino (who probably identified with the Staszek character) became a military prosecutor in the 1950s.[25]

Among recent films about the occupation, Agnieszka Holland's *W ciemności* (*In Darkness*, 2011), based on a true story of a Lviv sewage worker (and a thief) Leopold Socha. During the Nazi occupation, for 14 months (between 1 June 1943 and the end of July 1944, when the Russians invaded Lviv), he hid a group of over ten Jews in the canals (including the intellectual, polonised Chiger family of four). Initially he was paid by Ignacy Chiger, but when the Jews hidden by him ran out of money, Socha risked his life selflessly until the end. This extraordinary story was presented in Agnieszka Holland's film with particularly persuasive artistic expression. The movie has three parallel storylines that mutually support one another. The first one is a story about a converted sinner; about a conversion of a paltry – as it seems – character into a righteous benefactor, authenticated by Robert Więckiewicz's acting. The second story is about the lives of a group of people in extremely tough conditions: in canals, where in normal times it would be difficult to stay for an hour (years later, Krystyna Chiger recalled these 14 months as a happy period of her life that gave her a sense of security).[26] The third story is about hell on earth: the first Polish representation of multicultural Lviv under the Nazi occupation (actors playing commoners learned the Lviv jargon, Bałak): the liquidation of the ghetto, the Janowska concentration camp, executions in the forest and in the streets and – next to all these – normal life, children receiving their First Holy Communion.

Of the many documentaries devoted to the subject, I will briefly discuss the most important of them. I should start with the journalist Jerzy Redlich's film *Cios w plecy* (*Stab in the Back* 1997), which added something new to the field of audiovisual presentation of the USSR's aggression against Poland on 17 September 1939. The director developed the historical background to the invasion, which justifies the theory that in the USSR a whole generation lived by the desire to take revenge on 'Polish lords'. Film materials showing the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov

25 Tomasz Jopkiewicz noted it in his review, 'Syberiada polska', *Kino,* 2013, no. 4, pp. 76–77.

26 K. Chiger, *Pamiętam zapach chleba, pamiętam zapach szamba.* Interview by Paweł Smoleński, *Gazeta Wyborcza. Duży Format*, 3 November 2011, p. 20.

Pact on 23 August are completed with interesting statements by Hans von Herwath, who worked at the German Embassy in Moscow at the time.

In the same period, Józef Gębski filmed a series of documents about the activity of the Home Army in the *Kresy*. The films were shot at the real locations of the events, which would have been impossible in earlier decades. *Wokół Ostrej Bramy* (*Around the Gate of Dawn*, 1996) related the history of the Home Army's activity in the Vilnius region, depicting some shocking episodes. One of them was about the Soviet 'ally', insidiously dealing with the 300-person division of Lieutenant Burzyński (ps. Kmicic) at Narocz Lake. The commanders invited by the Soviets for a meeting were shot and the rest of the division was arrested. *Niemen rzeka niezgody* (*Niemen – the River of Discord*) told the history of the Home Army battles in the Nowogródek region. Both commentators, the Warsaw historian Kazimierz Krajewski and a historian from Nowogródek Zygmunt Boradyn, emphasised the peasant-like character of the Home Army partisan warfare in this area: the members of the forest divisions were mostly local peasants. *We Lwowie 1939–1945* (*In Lviv*, 1998) highlighted the particularly tragic character of the history of the Lviv resistance movement. The moving commentary by Professor Jerzy Węgierski (1915–2012), a participant in the events and also an expert on the subject, added value to the documentary.

Stanisław Janicki tried for many years to shed some light on the mystery of the wartime death of the extremely popular actor and filmmaker Eugeniusz Bodo, of which many mutually exclusive legends were being told. Solving the mystery was finally possible in the mid 1990s, when the actor's niece, Wiera Rudź, who had been trying to acquire this knowledge for years, received an official document from the Russian Red Cross, reprinted later in a memoir of a Russian musicologist and a fellow prisoner at Butyrki, Profesor Alfred Mirek, entitled *Więzienne requiem*.[27] It turned out that Bodo, who lived in Lviv during the occupation and performed in the band Tea-Jazz led by Henryk Wars, was arrested by the NKVD on 26 June 1941 as a 'socially dangerous element.' He was then sentenced to five years and put in Butyrki prison in Moscow. In late September 1943, now terminally ill, Bodo was moved to the Kotlas labour camp (in Arkhangelsk Oblast), where he died on 7 October 1943. Janicki's documentary, *Eugeniusz Bodo. Za winy niepopełnione* (*Eugeniusz Bodo: For Sins Uncommitted*, 1997), the title of which was inspired by the last pre-war film directed by Bodo, reconstructs all these events.

27 A. Mirek, 'Tiuriemnyj rekwiem. Zapiski zakluczionnogo', *Izdatielstwo 'Prawa Czełowieka',* Moscow, 1997; the history of Bodo's imprisonment and death, p. 133–144.

Grzegorz Linkowski is a documentarist who consistently seeks ways of drawing Ukraine and Poland closer. An example of his attempts can be seen in his newest film *Niewygodny* (*Inconvenient*, 2009), which uses a narrative technique of an investigation into the title character, led by a Greek-Catholic priest from Lublin, Stefan Batruch. The character under investigation is Metropolitan Archbishop of Lviv Andrey Sheptytsky (b. Roman Szeptycki, 1865–1944), a Polish aristocrat, the spiritual leader of Ukraine and an advocate of reconciliation between the two nations. In another documentary, *Wybaczyć wszelkie zło* (*Forgive All the Evil*, 2013) the same director confronts two narratives. One of them is a story of a Polish pilgrimage to Ukraine on the 70th anniversary of the massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (*Volhynian slaughter*); another relates a meeting of two historians from both sides of the border who study the conflict and comment on the discovered pictures of a secret meeting of the Home Army (AK) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in May 1945.

Certainly, however, filmmakers have not spoken their final words on the subject. Wojciech Smarzowski, the author of *Dom zły* (*The Dark House,* 2009) and *Róża* (*Rose*, 2011), has written and is now directing the first feature film about the Volhynian slaughter. Therefore, the subject remains open.

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Małgorzata Hendrykowska

War Films After 1989. A Dialogue Among Three Generations

The experience of World War II and the German and Soviet occupations is an extremely important component of the historical memory of several generations of Poles. It has been an impulse for academic research and artistic ventures and a source of inspiration for contemporary culture, and even popular culture. After 1989, interest in the German and Soviet occupations did not actually increase, but rather changed direction. The reason for this change was very simple. Postwar Polish cinematography, particularly war film, was until the political transition inextricably linked with politics. Dependence on ideology and current historical policy, of which the audience was not always aware, affected the collective memory and the image of years of war and occupation.

Since 1945, Polish cinematography has produced over two hundred feature films and documentaries about the war. Decade after decade, the war film genre was in constant flux. It evolved by distancing itself from dramatic war events and necessarily changed with the passing away of eyewitnesses and general changes in cinematic style. It was also significantly influenced by political and social changes in the country such as the tightening or easing of censorship. In retrospect, the films produced before 1989 under the watchful eye of censors and politicians are not only an important record of the evolution of artistic forms and changes in the approach to the subject of war, they are also a source of non-film knowledge, inadvertently revealing the twists and turns of Polish history and politics.

Numerous film projects that emerged around the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II (2014) demonstrate that war and occupation is still a living memory for new generations of Polish artists and viewers. What is more, there is a chance to read these events again now without restrictions and political obligations. The opportunity to take up subjects that until 1989 were blocked by censors, combined with the awareness that the idea of war in Europe cannot be a distant event that happened somewhere, sometime, to the past generations (suffice it to recall the war in the former Yugoslavia and the current struggle in Ukraine), ensure that the subject of World War II – the struggle, the occupation

and the suffering of civilians – still arouse emotions. Despite the passage of time, it is still a catalyst for new ideas.[1]

The experience of World War II is a common subject in Polish cinematography: from the first documentaries that were intended as evidence of the events (*Majdanek cmentarzysko Europy* by Aleksander Ford, 1944)[2] to the latest productions and projects aiming to re-evaluate the prevailing historical knowledge and create alternative histories, and sometimes including formal experiments and the language of pop culture and sensation. This is important to realise, because film, as well as family stories, have been shaping the collective images of the war over several generations. As sociological research on the memory of World War II has demonstrated, in 1970 55% of the interviewees remembered the war from their own experience, in 1987 the figure was 37.7% and in 2009, only 6.6%.[3] Thus, the boundary between communicative memory (the knowledge of facts is transmitted from living or recently deceased witnesses and personal experiences are passed on from one generation to another) and cultural memory (events that can no longer be observed by the living are brought to our mind by culture and institutionalised communication) is blurring.[4]

According to the research conducted in the late 2000s, the primary sources of information about World War II are television, radio, newspapers (64.4%) and film (61%), while popular science publications (books, magazines) ranked only third.[5]

Before 1989, the subject of the war and the German occupation (the Soviet occupation hardly existed in official cultural messages) was often treated instrumentally by faking history and using the subject of war to create false myths and stereotypes. However, this subject was occasionally approached differently – as an opportunity to say something more about Poland, Poles and history, often covertly (*Kanal* by Andrzej Wajda [1957] or *Eroica* by Andrzej Munk [1958] are good

1 For more on the subject, see M. Hendrykowska, *Film polski wobec wojny i okupacji. Tematy, motywy, pytania*, Poznan, 2011.

2 The film includes the documentary records of 24 and 25 July 1944, less than twenty hours after the camp liberation.

3 B. Szacka, 'II wojna światowa w pamięci rodzinnej', in P.T. Kwiatkowski, L. M. Nijakowski, B. Szacka and A. Szpociński, *Między codziennością a wielką historią. Druga wojna światowa w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego*, Gdańsk/Warsaw, 2010, p. 119.

4 Ibid., p. 132. For more on the subject of communicative, cultural and collective memory, see P.T. Kwiatkowski, 'Wprowadzenie. Doświadczenie II wojny światowej w badaniach socjologicznych', in ibid., pp. 28–29 et seq.

5 A. Szpociński, 'II wojna w komunikacji społecznej', in P.T. Kwiatkowski, et. al., op. cit., p. 66.

examples). Thus, film often became a source of non-film knowledge, although viewers were not always willing to accept images that deviated from common stereotypes and mythical memory.[6]

In this respect, 1989 marks a clear watershed, particularly in the political sphere. It was the first time one could officially and openly speak of the Soviet (and not only of the German) totalitarianism: of its victims and its psychological consequences for Polish society as a whole. A number of films were released, such as: *Katyn* (2007) by Andrzej Wajda, about the murder of over 20,000 Polish officers in the Soviet Union,[7] *Cynga* (1992) by Leszek Wosiewicz about life in a Soviet forced labour camp, *Wszystko co najważniejsze* (*All That Really Matters,* 1992) by Robert Gliński about the deportation of Poles to Kazakhstan during the war and their fate,[8] *Generał Nil* (*General Nil,* 2009) by Ryszard Bugajski about the legendary leader of Kedyw, Home Army general August Emil Fieldorf, pseudonym 'Nil', murdered by communists in Mokotów Prison, Warsaw, in the winter of 1953. It became possible to screen films that had been once banned by censorship, e.g. *Długa noc* (*The Long Night*, 1967) by Janusz Nasfeter.

After the political transition, films about the war were still made by the older generation of artists, for whom the war was a personal experience of their childhood or youth, e.g. Andrzej Wajda (born 1926), Jan Łomnicki (born 1929), and Krzysztof Zanussi (born 1939). However, war subjects are now also being taken up by directors born during the war or in the following decade, for whom it was not a personal experience but a vivid memory of their loved ones (e.g. Leszek Wosiewicz, born 1947; Janusz Kijowski, born 1948; Ryszard Bugajski, born.194; Feliks Falk, born 1941; Robert Gliński; born 1952; Jan Jakub Kolski; born 1956).

As a result of another generational change, young artists have recently been approaching the subject of war in film (e.g. Anna Jadowska, born 1973; Paweł Chochlew, born 1979 or Jan Komasa, born 1981). Subjects and motives brought

6 For more on this subject see M. Hendrykowska, *Le seconda guerra mondiale nel cinema polacco. Traduzione Francesco Groggia,* Roma-Poznan, 2009.

7 The Katyn massacre was a taboo subject until 1989. It was a part of the private history and communicative memory passed on in Polish families from one generation to another. Another taboo subject of the official propaganda was an obvious historical fact that shortly after the German invasion of Poland, on 17 September, Soviet troops, on Stalin's orders, invaded the eastern regions of Poland.

8 The film was based on the memories of Ola Watowa, a wife of the Polish poet sympathising with communists. Escaping from the Germans to the east, the Wats found themselves under the Soviet occupation. Aleksander Wat was arrested and his wife and their little son were deported to Kazakhstan.

up by three generations of directors are worth a closer look, as the memory of war and occupation was an incomparable experience for them.

After 1989, the three generations of directors share a wider perspective, devoid of mythologised clichés. The more cinema distanced itself from the war events, the more courageously it destroyed the traditional visions of war and occupation, freeing itself from myths and stereotypes, and moved away from contemplating national tragedy to a deeper reflection. Without the fear of intervention by censors, it could finally show a non-heroic demeanour that was a result of the wartime crisis of values. The aforementioned film by Janusz Nasfteter, *Długa noc* (*The Long Night*), was banned just because it did not follow the official version of the Polish-Jewish relations during the war, according to which Poles mostly helped the Jews. Instead, the director intended to reveal the wartime degradation of human values due to fear, poverty and living in constant threat of occupation. Since 1989, the world of war and occupation in film has not been limited to black and white, and potential victims have also been affected by degeneration and evil. Andrzej Wajda boldly raised this subject in a few of his films (*Korczak,* 1990, *Pierścionek z orłem w koronie,* 1993, *Wielki tydzień,* 1995).

Franciszek Kłos, the leading character of a television film by Andrzej Wajda, *Wyrok na Franciszka Kłosa* (*The Condemnation of Franciszek Kłos*, 2000) is the quintessence of a 'bad Pole', a morally degenerate renegade. This Blue Policeman from a small town in the General Government eagerly collaborates with the German occupational powers. Subservient to the Germans and aggressive to the Poles, Kłos cold-bloodedly kills a Polish family hiding a Jew. He murders a child without batting an eye. When an unexpected chance arises to redeem himself, at least partially, Kłos reloads his gun and starts shooting at Poles. The screenplay by Andrzej Wajda and Zygmunt Melanowicz was based on a novel of the same title by Stanisław Rembek, first published in 1947. The story is based on authentic events that occurred in Grodzisk Mazowiecki during the war. Stanisław Lenartowicz was already considering making this film in the 1970s, Wajda a little later. Both were unsuccessful. Censorship strongly objected, which, in a certain sense, is not surprising. There is only one explanation of Kłos's behaviour: complete moral degeneration and animal fear of German strength and possibly also of the amateur collaborators who sentenced him to death. Wajda does not look for an explanation of Franciszek Kłos's motives. Kłos is not an ordinary collaborator but a cruel, degenerate and sadistic murderer, the personification of evil. This part of our war and occupation history, although marginal, must not be erased from memory, Wajda seems to say.

After the turning point of 1989, heroism and war sacrifice were also treated differently. Polish film, apart from the examples of legendary heroism (*Korczak*, 1990, by Andrzej Wajda, *Życie za życie* by Krzysztof Zanussi) increasingly often focuses

on the examples of 'quiet heroism' that went unnoticed, remained unknown or were simply watered down in the general national war tragedy. One of the examples of this tendency is *Jeszcze tylko ten las* (*Just Beyond This Forest*, 1991) by Jan Łomnicki (representing the older generation of directors), which deals with the war, the Holocaust, heroic gestures, greatness and the nobility of humanity. A Polish washerwoman who used to work for a Jewish family before the war decides to take a daughter of her former employer out of the ghetto and to the countryside. She does not like Jews but her attitude to her charge is tender and caring. On their way to the village where the girl is expected to survive the war, the woman and her young companion meet *szmalcowniks* (people blackmailing Jews who were hiding) as well as incredibly noble-minded people. Finally, when the village is *just beyond this forest*, they come up against a German patrol. Good Aryan papers are of no use – a photo taken from the ghetto exposes the girl. The woman who brought her along is allowed to go but she refuses, deciding to die together with the child. In fact, this act is the same sacrificial and martyred gesture as was the heroic and voluntary death of Janusz Korczak: the heroism of suicidal sentencing oneself to death; of staying with someone until the very end so as not to leave this person lonely at their final hour.

The directors of the generation born during the war or in the first post-war decade combined the subject of war and occupation with a contemporary context much more often than their counterparts from the older generation. In this context, Feliks Falk's *Joanna* (2010) is an interesting example. A lonely young woman who has not heard from her husband since his conscription finds a little Jewish girl in a church. She knows that the child's mother has just been caught in a German raid. Partly on impulse, partly by chance, Joanna decides to take and harbour the girl in her apartment. She takes care of the child and struggles against adversity by hiding her from the Germans. Joanna engages in intimate contact with a German officer to protect the little girl, and a single meeting with him in the street when she finds out about her husband's death in an *oflag* is seen as treason by the Polish resistance. Joanna is decoyed to an empty flat; she is beaten, her head is shaved and she is humiliated. Her own mother turns away from her. Such is the price of this noble and invisible gesture of kindness and sacrifice. Falk's film is less focused on the drama and fate of the Jewish girl and more on the infinite loneliness of a woman who decided to perform a heroic act of courage and supreme sacrifice. However, like many contemporary films that are set in the occupied Poland, this film is not only about the war. Joanna is falsely accused of treason and unjustly sentenced to infamy. In a contemporary context, the film can and should be interpreted much more broadly, as a story about an unfounded accusation, an unjustified right to pass ultimate judgements and exclude a person from social life. Therefore, the story of Joanna offers a more universal message

about a verdict of a self-appointed judge-usurper who does not want to or cannot distinguish appearances from the truth.

The directors born after the war approach the subject of concentration camps differently. In their version, it is devoid of martyrdom and didactic threads and socio-political contexts. *Kornblumenbau* (1989) by Leszek Wosiewicz (born 1947) is the first film in the history of Polish cinematography in which a concentration camp is read metaphorically and is used to analyse human reactions in extreme situations. The main character, Tadeusz Wyczyński, enters adulthood in a concentration camp. His ability to play various musical instruments allows him to survive and even move to the best camp bloc for artists. His talent serves to entertain the German camp staff and their families but it also gives rhythm to the backbreaking work of the prisoners. On his way home, after the camp has been bombed by Allied aircraft, Tadek, with his accordion, gets on a train wagon with Soviet soldiers. He no longer plays Beethoven but the Russian song *Kalinka*, which will win him their goodwill. While highlighting the will to survive at any cost, Wosiewicz's anti-heroic film does not interpret human nature as pure biological instincts. Art, for instance, plays an important role in the life of the main character of *Kornblumenblau*. Wosiewicz has highlighted in many interviews that he would not like *Kornblumenblau* to be read as a story about Auschwitz but rather about people who managed to rise up in the totalitarian system hierarchy and who succeeded as much as it was possible in these circumstances. The film also fits into the universal considerations about art and ethics and the problems encountered by artists and their work in totalitarian systems. In his later movie *Cynga*, classified by the director as a comedy, Wosiewicz presents the existence in a Soviet forced labour camp in an equally unconventional manner.

The further from the experience of the war, the more rarely the subject of occupation and Polish-Jewish relations exposed the problem of physical cruelty, suffering and death, which were so often presented in earlier films. The war film after 1989 is increasingly often a starting point for moral considerations and moves towards the problem of attitudes and behaviour during the occupation.

A complex chain of events in the psychological drama *Daleko od okna* (*Keep Away from the Window*, 2000) by Jan Jakub Kolski, in which a Jewish woman hidden by a childless married couple gets pregnant with the man who is hiding her and, after the war, unsuccessfully attempts to get her baby back, casting a shadow over the entire life of all the characters in this drama[9]. The film is devoid of the figures

9 Cezary Harasimowicz's screenplay was an adaptation of Hanna Krall's short story *The Woman from Hamburg*.

of stereotypical martyrdom. Although the woman hidden in the closet is saved, the question arises whether guilt towards another person can ever be expiated.

Pokłosie (*Aftermath*, 2012) by Władysław Pasikowski (born 1959) is a film about remembering or, one should rather say, about pushing memory into collective oblivion. While setting his film in contemporary Poland, Pasikowski, in his search for an explanation for the intolerant behaviour of the local community, returns to the problem of the Polish-Jewish relations during World War II. A contemporary conflict leads to the revealing of a dark secret: a crime committed during the occupation.

The Polish war film has always willingly used the theme of war seen through the eyes of a child: *Ulica Graniczna* (*Border Street*, 1949) by Aleksander Ford (born 1908); *Świadectwo urodzenia* (*Birth Certificate,* 1962) by Stanisław Różewicz (born 1924); *Moja wojna, moja miłość* (*My War, My Love,* 1975) by Janusz Nasfeter (born 1920); *Zielone lata* (*Salad Days,* 1980) by Stanisław Jędryka (born 1933); *… droga daleka przed nami…* (*A Long Way to Go,* 1980) by Władysław Ślesicki (born 1927); *Wedle wyroków Twoich* (*According to the Decrees of Providence,* 1984) by Jerzy Hoffman (born 1932). Each of these films presents a child protagonist who becomes involved in all the possible cruelties of war with no chance of avoiding them. Dealing with the subject of childhood in the times of war, Polish directors born after 1945 focus mostly on internal experiences: Jan Jakub Kolski, for example, who touches on the mechanisms of repressing war cruelty in his *Wenecja* (*Venice,* 2010; based on three short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski).

Upon the outbreak of the war, close and distant relatives of 11-year-old Marek gather in a remote country mansion. The boy did not have time before the war to realise his greatest dream – a journey to Venice. When a spring suddenly bubbles up in the cellar and floods the whole room, the boy builds a true 'town on the water' with a system of footbridges and platforms imitating a real lagoon. From then on, the 'lagoon' built in the cellar becomes a real haven not only for him, but also for the rest of the family, who will be able to shelter there from the reality of the occupation. It seems for some time that the war will not affect this world but it will only pass by; however, death, treason and execution directly affect the boy. Yet, the phantasmagorical Venice in the cellar will always be the haven for Marek and his family. Right in the middle of the storm of the war, imagination becomes the only rescue, for the adults and the children alike. The last scene of the film clearly shows that the escape from the war into the world of illusion and fantasy was unsuccessful but it was worth a try.

The turn of 1989 let the memories of people be restored after decades of pushing them into oblivion – official oblivion, to be precise. Katyn is a perfect example of 'incorporating what used to be only a part of the family memory into the cultural memory (…) Not only has the meandering of politics made Katyn a part of cultural

memory and a symbol of crime against Poles on USSR territory; it has also made it occupy one of the most important positions in Polish cultural memory.' As Barbara Szacka adds, it was also important that the victims were members of the intelligentsia, 'disposing of great social and cultural capital, which fostered consolidating family memory and facilitated introducing its content into public circulation.'[10]

Katyn (2000), by Andrzej Wajda, which tells the story of the murder of over 20,000 Polish officers in the USSR (some of the names of the prisoners, the people shot, the execution sites and the executioners are still unknown), was probably the most anticipated film after 1989. The Katyn massacre had, until the political turn, been the taboo subject in official messages, in addition to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the Soviet invasion of 17 September 1939. Andrzej Wajda – the son of a murdered Polish officer, a prisoner in Starobielsk – does not seek to explain the whole truth of these events. He does not create historical reconstruction. Neither does he formulate theories, nor attempt to convince the viewer that the death of the Polish officers was heroic and sacrificial. What is more, the film transfers the weight of heroism, suffering and victimhood from the imprisoned and murdered officers to their families: their mothers, wives and sisters. 'The real subject for the film about Katyn', Andrzej Wajda said, 'is the mystery and lie, which for years made this crime a taboo subject, an 'ultimate test of loyalty to the USSR'. Even if today the truth is widely known and the documents provided by the Russian authorities include the order to liquidate the camps signed by Stalin, the only subject for a film about this crime cannot be the victims, but their families (…) I see my film about Katyn as a story about families parted forever, about great illusions and the brutal truth. In a word, a film about individual suffering instead of the ubiquitous politics'. The heroes of this movie, Wajda adds, 'are not the ones who die but the women who wait, live by their hope day after day, and suffer every minute from the uncertainty and awaiting of the return. This awaiting is the subject of this story. Faithful and unwavering in their certainty that it is enough to open the door to see the awaited man – husband and father on the threshold!'[11] *Katyn* is a film about the bravery of surviving the uncertainty and, later, the awareness of the nightmarish and covert truth. Thanks to Wajda's film, many Europeans (and others around the world) have heard about this war crime for the first time.

Generał Nil (2009) by Ryszard Bugajski (born 1943) concerns a postwar episode in the biography of General August Emil Fieldorf (1895–1953), the leader of Kedyw (a Home Army organisation) who commanded the major military actions

10 B. Szacka, *II wojna światowa w pamięci rodzinnej*, op. cit., pp. 131–132.

11 http://www.wajda.pl/pl/filmy/katyn.html, accessed 10 December 2015.

in occupied Warsaw, for instance the assassination of the SS general in Warsaw, Franz Kutschera. With numerous references to the times of the occupation, the film is set after the war. The film opens with the return of General 'Nil' from exile in the USSR, incognito and with a false name after his arrest by NKVD in 1945, and follows him to the day of his execution by hanging in Mokotów prison in Warsaw, on 24 February 1953. Bugajski's film shows Fieldorf as a warm family man, but most of all, as someone indomitable, incapable of compromise and conciliation with the new authorities. It is also a film that presents the essence of the Soviet ideology and political system via the example of the fate of General Fieldorf.

The reconstruction of the war experience by the youngest generation of directors is an incredibly interesting phenomenon that is often perceived as controversial. The newest films about the experience of war totalitarianism have two common denominators. One of them is 'filling in the gaps' after the abolition of political censorship and revising the prevailing interpretation. This tendency is observed mainly in documentaries. For several years, documentaries have also been valued for their use of new digital technology and crossing the traditional boundaries of archive materials, which opens new possibilities for education. Another tendency is the search for sensationalism, excitement, pageantry and adventure, which is reflected, for instance, in the very popular, many-episode (6 seasons and almost 80 episodes) television series *Czas honoru* (*Days of Honour*, 2008–2013), focusing on the activity of a group of Polish soldiers, trained in the UK and parachuted into occupied Poland in 1941 or the 13-episode *Tajemnica twierdzy szyfrów* (*Mystery of the Stronghold of Codes*), directed by Adek Drabiński (2007), about American and Soviet intelligence searching for a deciphering device.

The prolific output of the three generations of Polish documentarians includes for example: *…i zdrada* (*…and Betrayal*, 1991) by Marek Drążewski (born 1947) about the origin of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, or *Cios w plecy* (*Backstab*, 1997) about the Soviet attack on Poland on 17 September 1939, which provides a completely new perspective on September 1939. Subjects such as the Warsaw Uprising and underground activity in Poland were also put into a new perspective, e.g. in an over hour-long documentary *Powstanie Warszawskie 1944* (*The Warsaw Uprising of 1944*) by Krzysztof Lang (born 1950). Due to the freedom from censorship it was also possible to present the fates of the Home Army soldiers and underground armed forces who also operated on the territories occupied by the Soviet Union.[12] Almost immediately after Poland regained independence, Marcel Łoziński

12 This subject is raised e.g. in the films by Wincenty Ronisz (born 1934): *Byli żołnierzami Jodły* (2000), *Losy niepokornych*, *Żołnierze wyklęci* (2006).

(born 1940) presented a shocking image of the Katyn massacre in his documentary *Las Katynski* (*Katyn Forest*, 1990).[13] Using documentary reconstruction, many directors of the younger generation presented the subject of the Holocaust openly and bravely, like for example Paweł Łoziński (born 1965) in his film *Miejsce urodzenia* (*Place of Birth*, 1992). Jolanta Dylewska (born 1958), the author of the film *Kronika powstania w getcie warszawskim według Marka Edelmana* (*Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising According to Marek Edelman*, 1993), using well-known pictures and film materials, carried out specific image transformations by slowing them down, framing, zooming and using freeze-frame. The film procedures applied by Dylewska, such as focusing on details, provoke emotions and completely new dramatics: the well-known crowd is now devoid of anonymity. By doing so, Dylewska goes beyond the limitations of archival materials. She uses them as a basis to create her own, 'new' photographic-film material: individualised, personal, drawing attention to singular human fates and thus having more emotional impact on the contemporary viewer. Among the great number of Polish films that raise the subject of the Holocaust, *Fotoamator* (*Amateur Photographer*, 1998) by Dariusz Jabłoński (born 1961) is noteworthy. It is based on almost 400 colourful slides made during the war in the Lodz ghetto by a German accountant and amateur photographer Walter Genewein. Pictures of the German photography lover are contrasted with the contemporary account of the victim, filmed in black and white. Another photographer, Wilhelm Brasse, who was sent to Auschwitz with one of the first transports, also talks about the photographs he had to take. He was ordered to keep photographic documentation of everyday life in the camp: the social meetings of the officers, the work of the prisoners and the medical experiments. In the film by Ireneusz Dobrowolski (born 1964) *Portrecista* (2005), Brasse talks about the human faces that cannot let him sleep at night and says that he has not taken a single photograph since the war ended. Some of the documentaries realised after 1989 revealed unexpected secrets. *Za winy niepopełnione. Eugeniusz Bodo* (*For the Sins Uncommitted*, 1997) by Stanisław Janicki (born 1933) recalls the mysterious death of one of the most popular actors of interwar Polish cinema. According to a version that was official for many years, Eugeniusz Bodo (1899–1943) died at the hands of the Nazi aggressors in Lviv. Yet, the actor with a Swiss passport was in fact found

13 The Katyn massacre and other crimes committed in the east were also the subject of the following films: *Katyn – zmowa milczenia* (1990) by Alina Mrowińska and Jolanta Sztuczyńska, *Nie zabijaj* (1992), *Film znaleziony w Katyniu* (1992) and *Katyn* (2007) by Józef Gębski, *Pochowajcie mnie razem z nimi* (1994) by Mirosław Dembiński, *Ostatni świadek* (2005) by Paweł Woldan, *Gdzie rosną poziomki?* (2006) by Anna Ferens, and other films.

by the Soviets to be a spy, deported to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow and then to one of the labour camps near Kirow, USSR, where he died. Janicki finds Bodo's fellow prisoners and reconstructs the shocking drama of a mentally haunted and completely broken individual.

Since 1989, documentary filmmakers, free from the pressures and ideological obligations of the previous political system, have decided to show the war from a completely new perspective. Marek Drążewski (1947), a director and screenwriter of the film *Dzięki niemu żyjemy* (*We Owe Him our Lives*, 2008) devoted this film portrait to the German Wehrmacht officer Wilhelm Hosenfeld. During the war, Hosenfeld contributed to saving the lives of several Jews and Poles, including the composer and pianist Władysław Szpilman. After the war he landed in a Soviet labour camp near Stalingrad. Szpilman's efforts to get him released proved unsuccessful. Hosenfeld died in the camp in 1952. *Radegast* (2008), a film realised by Borys Lankosz (born 1973), reveals a completely new aspect of life in a ghetto. When in 1941 trains from western Europe come to the Radegast train station, 20,000 Jews are deported to the Lodz Ghetto. The barristers, doctors, artists and scientists among them find themselves not only in the hell of war, but also in unhygienic conditions that are shocking for them, and among the society of the central European Jews, who are strange and unknown to them. Polish Jews, on the other hand, remember the newcomers from the west as the ones who looked down on them and treated them as second-class citizens.[14]

One of the examples of a revision of the hitherto prevailing interpretations of historical events is Anna Jadowska's (born 1973) film *Generał – zamach na Gibraltarze* (*The General: The Gibraltar Assassination*), a cinematic version of the four-episode television series *Generał* (*The General*) about the last days of the life of General Władysław Sikorski, General Inspector of the Armed Forces and the Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile. Based on the research and hypothesis of the historian Dariusz Baliszewski, Jadowska builds an interpretation of events that happened just before the still-unexplained death of the general in a plane crash in Gibraltar. On 4 July 1943, the plane, with General Sikorski on board, crashed into the sea only 16 seconds after it had taken off. Was it a tragic accident or was Sikorski murdered?

There was also a great deal of comment about the realisation of *Tajemnica Westerplatte* (*The Secret of Westerplatte*, 2013, written and directed by Paweł Chochlew, born 1979). Stanisław Różewicz had already made a film about the dramatic,

14 This paper refers only to some documentaries realised after 1989. For more on the subject see M. Hendrykowska, *Film polski wobec wojny i okupacji*, op. cit.

seven-day defence of the small Westerplatte peninsula in Gdańsk Bay that marked the beginning of World War II. Since it was first screened, his *Westerplatte* (1967), written by Jan Józef Szczepański (born 1919), has been a symbolic image of, on the one hand, the unequal fight with the invader and on the other, the whole war ordeal. The film includes everything: waiting for the war, the attack, the unequal fight, the conflict between heroism and rationality, the heroic moments and the bitter defeat. It depicts the last hours of peace, the beginning of the war and the dramatic defence of 182 soldiers, who were attacked from the sea, from the land and from the air.[15] They were supposed to hold out for twelve hours, but they survived for almost seven days. The key scene of *Westerplatte* is the dispute between the Polish commander, Major Henryk Sucharski and his deputy, Captain Franciszek Dąbrowski, about the point of continuing the defence. The question whether to fight to the last shell and die or to choose rational attitude, surrender and live on thinking of the future made Stanisław Rożewicz's film a universal image that goes beyond the boundaries of this tragic war episode.[16] Very popular in the next decades and among a few generations, the film supported the legend of Polish September 1939.

The directors of *Tajemnica Westerplatte* and *Westerplatte* are separated by two generations, but still share the cultural memory that the older film shaped. Was the interpretation of events in *Tajemnica Westerplatte* the result of an unwillingness to reproduce stereotypes, or perhaps a simple desire to gain popularity?

The project of *Tajemnica Westerplatte*, screenplay excerpts of which were printed in the Polish press in 2008, aroused intense emotions. At best, it was seen as controversial. One could conclude from the published fragments that the authors, contrary to the tradition and the legend, decided to present non-heroic behaviour of the soldiers and some scenes were considered to injure the good name of Polish soldiers.[17]

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15 Many years later Krzysztof Pulkoski (born 1956) returned to the history of the Westerplatte soldiers in his historical documentary reportage *Lwy Westerplatte* (*The Lions of Westerplatte*, 1997), presenting the postwar fates of the living defenders of the Military Transit Depot: bitter feelings of being unappreciated and not respected.

16 M. Hendrykowski, *Stanisław Różewicz*, Poznan, 1999, pp. 73–77. In his analysis of *Westerplatte,* the author not only perceives it as a war film, he also situates it in a wider context of ideological struggle that took place in Poland at the time.

17 Among numerous articles in the Polish press see e.g. B. Gondek, 'Eksperci premiera o *Tajemnicy Westerplatte*', *Gazeta Wyborcza* 28 August 2008; B. Gondek. R. Daszczyński, 'Obrona Westerplatte', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 August 2008. Agnieszka Holland, Robert Gliński, Janusz Głowacki, Feliks Falk and Jerzy Stuhr were among those who defended

The published excerpts of the screenplay were confronted with the popular film by Stanisław Różewicz about the heroic defence of this piece of land in September 1939. Should the attachment to this vision forever exclude the possibility of a different perspective? It certainly should not. A director or a screenwriter should not work under the pressure of auto-censorship and be afraid of one's own interpretations, even the most seditious. However, can one let one's imagination run wild to prioritise the attractiveness of the film, for the sake of a modern, original perspective, and to express the emotions that are important for younger generations? Is there not a danger that the viewers will perceive the 'attractive' and spectacular world of war emotions as a simplified reality of only black and white, deprived of the moral dilemmas that are crucial for extreme times and situations? The film seemed to be cursed (serious financial troubles, Bogusław Linda resigning from the leading role, etc.).[18] Production lasted intermittently from 2009 to 2013. Finally, the Polish-Lithuanian production *Tajemnica Westerplatte* premiered in February 2013.

The film returned to the problem of the confrontation between two types of patriotism (which was also present in the Różewicz's film): the conflict between Major Sucharski and Captain Dąbrowski. It did not, however, present soldiers as flawless monuments to nobility but showed moments of weaknesses, doubts, fear or pettiness. The screening of *Tajemnica Westerplatte* met both positive and withering reviews.[19] The least emotional and most balanced review, written by Tadeusz Sobolewski, emphasised that *Tajemnica Westerplatte* simply does not make the viewer feel involved in the story that is on the screen: 'At one point the viewer hopes for a quick capitulation so as this half-dead film could finally end. (…) The dilemma – rational resistance or squandering people's lives in the name of honour in a hopeless situation – was presented in Chochlew's film in a declarative manner, resembling a game of stereotypical characters. The director carefully represents both sides, supporting each one at a time. Nothing can cover the lack of dramaturgy: not pyrotechnics, not special effects, not the music by Kaczmarek.'[20]

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the film in the name of the freedom of speech: F. Bajon et. al., 'List otwarty do mediów i polityków w sprawie filmu *Westerplatte*', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 September 2008.

18 Detailed explanation of this problem see e.g. http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajemnica_Westerplatte (for the English shorter version see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajemnica_Westerplatte, accessed 10 December 2015).

19 See e.g. E. Winnicka, 'Westerplajta', *Polityka*, no. 22, 2011; Z. Pietrasik, 'Westerplatte sie broni', *Polityka*, no. 6, 2012; M. Sadowski, M. Rosolak, 'Pułapki na Westerplatte'. *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 38, 2013; R. Kostro, 'Historia i miť, *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 47, 2013; A. Piotrowska, 'Psy majora', *Tygodnik Powszechny,* no. 8, 2013.

20 http://culture.pl/pl/wydarzenie/tajemnica-westerplatte, accessed 10 December 2015.

Another film that aroused intense emotions was the adaptation of Aleksander Kamiński's novel *Kamienie na szaniec* (*Stones for the Rampart*), written in 1943 and based on the authentic story of the members of the Polish underground scout movement *Szare Szeregi* (The Grey Ranks). The film with the same title was directed (premiered in 2014) by Robert Gliński (born 1952). The director did not intend to make a faithful screen adaptation of the book. However, he kept the main plot about the group of Warsaw scouts who are confronted with the realities of war. It includes the development of *Szare Szeregi*, sabotage and the consequences of the underground activity: arrests, murderous interrogations, the rescue of Janek Bytnar (nom-de-guerre 'Rudy') from Gestapo captivity, and revenge by the Germans.

Gliński, as well as many other directors of the postwar generation, intended to bring the demeanour of the young conspirators (legendary figures, not only because of literature) closer to the contemporary youth. Therefore, the film included threads that became a stumbling block in the eyes of the older generation of viewers, such as the young conspirators undermining the authority of the leaders, treating sabotage activities as sheer adventure, a lack of discipline, introducing sensational topics that have no basis in historical facts (e.g. a spectacular scene in which the conspirators chase a car driving from Pawiak prison to the headquarters of the Gestapo), etc. Gliński has from the beginning declared in interviews that he focused on the story of friendship in his attempt to debunk the legendary figures and bring them closer to young viewers. However, the film met with fierce criticism from the veteran milieu and the right-wing press. The former soldiers of *Szare Szeregi* also expressed their indignation, criticising the film characters for being amateurish and arrogant towards their superiors, and negating the leadership of the commander of *Szare Szeregi* and the Home Army; they also criticised the overwhelming chaos.[21] It is hard to resist the impression that after a few decades the participants of the events remember only the 'starry diamond' and every deviation from the hieratic and mythologised history is interpreted as lie and betrayal.

The directors of the generation that did not personally experience the war and the occupation often break stereotypes freely and without complexes. In Leszek Wosiewicz's film *Taniec śmierci. Sceny z powstania warszawskiego / Był sobie dzieciak* (*The Dance of Death. Scenes from the Warsaw Uprising / There Once Was a*

21 Wojciech Faleszko, the owner of the copyrights to the book and a descendant of the author of the novel, and Grzegorz Nowik, the historical consultant working on the film, demanded removal of their names from the film credits.

Kid, 2013)[22] a young boy traverses the city engulfed by the Uprising to reach his father. On his way, he meets a woman whose life he will later save. Contrary to the hitherto prevailing film conventions, the woman will not turn out to be a brave liaison officer or a nurse but a *Volksdeutsch* collaborating with the Germans who is looking for her son, who, in turn, is fighting on the side of the insurgents. The image of the Uprising becomes morally, culturally and nationally complicated. The director also introduces some details of the insurgent fight that are not well known. Although Wosiewicz's film uses the well-worn subject of war and first romantic infatuation, it is also an attempt to introduce a new formula of a historical war film. However, at the same time commercial war films are being made, intended primarily for television viewers: *Jutro idziemy do kina* (*Tomorrow We Are Going to The Movies*, 2007) by Michał Kwieciński (born 1951) or the aforementioned very popular serial *Czas honoru* (*Days of Honour*). Smoothly, 'contemporarily and uncontroversially, they show young heroes in clothes from the 1940s. They develop an appetite for the knowledge of Polish history but prefer not to take sides.'[23]

Over the last ten years, the newest digital technology has made it possible to reconstruct the memory of the witnesses of war events in a particular way. Of the many examples, it is worth mentioning two films of a documentary character: the animated 3D digital reconstruction of the bombarded Warsaw in *Miasto ruin* (*The City of Ruins*, 2010), directed by Damian Nenow (born 1983) and a film reconstructed from the insurrectionary chronicles entitled *Powstanie Warszawskie* (*Warsaw Uprising*, 2014).

Miasto ruin is a five-minute digital reconstruction (the project was commissioned by Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego/ the Warsaw Rising Museum) that presents a virtual flight by the Liberator airplane. From the perspective of someone aboard, we can observe Warsaw as it looked in spring 1945: completely destroyed and deserted.[24]

Seventy years ago, in August 1944, upon the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, a group of cameramen, Stefan Bagiński, Roman Banach, Seweryn Kruszyński, Jerzy Gabryelski, Antoni Wawrzyniak, Henryk Vlassak, Jerzy Zarzycki and others, led by Antoni Bohdziewicz, risked their lives to document the course of the Uprising and

22 The film was screened on 1 August 2013 under the title *Był sobie dzieciak*. However, the television premiere of the film (Canal +, 3 October 2013) had the title *Taniec śmierci. Sceny z Powstania Warszawskiego.*

23 O. Salwa, 'Film dla widza bez narodowości', *Kino*, no. 3, 2014.

24 Since 1 August 2010, the film has been a part of the permanent exhibition in Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego.

the everyday life of the city residents.[25] These documentary records were not only dedicated to posterity; they were almost immediately shown to the residents of the burning Warsaw. On 13 August 1944, in the downtown cinema Palladium (designed for 1000 viewers), the documentary material about the Uprising entitled *Warszawa walczy. Przegląd numer 1* (*Warsaw Fights: Volume 1*), the film reel of which stretched for 300m, filmed by the cameramen of the film division of the Home Army[26] was first screened. On 21 August 1944, another episode of the documentary was shown and the third one soon afterwards. According to the accounts of the viewers, the live commentary by Antoni Bohdziewicz accompanying the film was extremely moving. The shows were stopped at the beginning of September after the cinema was bombed.

The material recorded during the Uprising was digitalised and colourised and the sound was reconstructed.[27] According to the filmmakers, the introduction of colour to the film brought the events recorded on the old tapes even closer to contemporary viewers. Two other interesting decisions were made in the process of film reconstruction. One of them was the attempt to identify the participants of this dramatic fight. 150 people were finally recognised. Another was introducing sound, not only in the form of a hum of voices or background noise, but by reading the dialogues and conversations of the insurgents standing in front of the camera. A lip-reading expert helped reconstruct the insurgent's dialogues. The insurgents knew the cameras did not record sound, hence so many trivial and private conversations in the reconstructed material. The reality of the Uprising reconstructed in this way introduces the viewer into the authentic space of the city, amid the fighting people, and thus the film becomes a true witness of history.[28] Unfortunately, a fatal mistake was made. Fictional dialogues of two brothers filming the Uprising were introduced as off-screen voices in order to make the film more attractive and closer to young viewers. Artificial and pretentious dialogues trivialise the narrative and decrease the expressive power of the image.

The Warsaw Uprising is a hugely important subject. Alongside the tragedy of September 1939, the Uprising has a central position in the memory of the wartime

25 For more on the subject, see e.g. S. Ozimek, *Film polski w wojennej potrzebie*, Warsaw, 1976.

26 Sekcja Filmowa Biura Informacji i Propagandy Komendy Warszawskiego Okręgu AK.

27 The digitalisation, mastering and image stabilisation of the material was carried out by the Orka Film Studio. The greatest difficulty was the colourisation, the work commissioned by Orka to a team of over ten people from the United States.

28 B. Putkiewicz, 'Usłyszeć powstanie', interview by P. Bocheńska and N. Wrzyszcz, *FilmPro*, no. 2, 2014.

generation and in the historical consciousness of the people born after the war. The three generations of filmmakers and viewers share an emotional bond with the Uprising, despite the fact that there have been questions about its justification and, in consequence, about the model of Polish patriotism, the problem of survival and the attitude to the created myth.

When on 1 August 1944 the heroic rebellion of Warsaw civilians started, about 23,000 soldiers of the Home Army joined it, mainly boys and girls in their twenties. They did not all have weapons. When the Uprising was bleeding out on the left side of the Vistula River, the Red Army were calmly waiting on the right side. From the beginning, Stalin had not planned to provide any help to the insurgents, and he did not allow the Allied planes carrying aid to land on the nearby Soviet airfield. After a few weeks, about 36,000 Warsaw citizens joined the active fight. In the face of the number of civil casualties, increasing every day, the lack of water, food, medicine and the expected help from the east, the commandership of the Uprising decided to surrender on 2 October 1944. After 63 days of fighting, the city was ruined. Civil casualties were estimated at about 180,000. The deaths of the insurgents were estimated at 18,000 and the soldiers of Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division at 3,500. Over 520,000 city residents were expelled from the city without means to live in the face of approaching winter. About 17,000 soldiers were sent to POW camps, others went missing. Special German troops were sent to Warsaw to demolish the Polish capital.

Although the Warsaw Uprising did not achieve its military or political aims, it became a legend for several generations of Poles: a symbol of courage and determination in their fight for freedom and independence.[29] Thus, it is not surprising that the Uprising became the subject of many literary, theatrical and film works. It is also present in popular culture in the form of comics and songs.

The politics and the ideology that were imposed on Poland were the reason why it was only after 1956 that the Warsaw Uprising became a primary subject in film, although there was one film project from 1945 that concerned the finale of the insurgent battles and what followed the pacification of the city. The history of this project is one of the first examples of the restriction of artistic freedom in Poland by political decisions.[30]

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29 A. Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski*, Warsaw, 1995, p. 84.

30 This was *Robinson Warszawski*; a film written by Jerzy Andrzejewski (1909–1983) and Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004). The story was based on the authentic experiences of the composer Władysław Szpilman (1911–2000), hiding in the deserted Warsaw after the fall of the Uprising in October 1944 until the Russians came in January 1945.

Although this paper focuses on cultural memory after 1989, it would be impossible not to refer to *Kanal* (1957) by Andrzej Wajda, one of the most famous European war dramas. The film set a kind of a paradigm of a film story about the Warsaw Uprising. Interestingly, problems with its reception surprisingly correspond with the problems encountered by a contemporary film about the Uprising, *Miasto 44*, which will be discussed later.

The film by Andrzej Wajda, for whom the war was a personal, conscious experience, telling the story of the tragic fates of a group of Home Army soldiers who try to get to the Old Town through the city sewers, was the first Polish film devoted to the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising and to the Home Army soldiers. All the soldiers of the *Kanal* die: disarming grenades, walking out of the channels right in the hands of the Germans, committing suicide or staying in the maze of stinking sewage. Two insurgents, with their last ounce of strength, reach the mouth of the channel that leads directly into the Vistula River, but an iron grille closing the inlet of the channel stands between them and freedom. Thus, they will only see the lazily flowing river and the peaceful, sunny right bank of the Vistula. The last scene of the film was an allusion, clearly read by Polish viewers, to the Soviet troops waiting on the other side of the river until the Uprising bled out. Those who survived fell into a deadly trap of history: behind a symbolic grate.

The film was screened 13 years after the events of the Warsaw Uprising, when the memories were still fresh in Polish society. Therefore, one could assume that *Kanal* would receive enthusiastic reception. Yet, it did not. The heated debate that took place after the film premiere had little to do with its artistic merits. The first film about the Warsaw Uprising was expected to be a heroic epic, a monumental image filled with national pride, a tragic but beautiful legend or a detailed reconstruction of the events of the Uprising. Those who survived the Uprising wanted to see it victorious even if it had not been. The film by Wajda from 1957 was a contradiction of all these expectations. A part of the audience (particularly former insurgents) and critics accused the film of 'slandering Polish history and national pride', and 'having little to do with the reality', emphasising that the insurgents were not involved in 'love affairs' and acts of desperation. It was only after *Kanal* received the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival (ex aequo with Bergman's *Seventh Seal*) that some reviewers changed their tone, referring to the enthusiastic opinions among the foreign press.[31] Some called *Kanal* an honest and brave attempt to debunk Polish national history and the beginning of a desire to speak the truth about recent history and the

31 Konrad Eberhardt refers to some of these opinions, e.g. Jeana Cocteau's, André Bazin's and Ado Kyrou', see K. Eberhardt, *O polskich filmach*, Warsaw, 1982, pp. 180–181.

whole war generation.[32] Film critics later regarded *Kanal* as a work that inaugurated the artistic formation called the Polish Film School.

For over twenty years (1992–2012), there were no feature films about the Warsaw Uprising in Polish cinematography until the 70th anniversary of its outbreak was approaching. Suddenly some films (and numerous projects) about the Uprising were produced by the young generation of directors, for whom the war was 'cultural memory', shaped mostly by cinematic images.[33] Assured in their willingness to break with the prevailing mythology and heroic paradigm of speaking about the war and Uprising, they decided to refresh the formula of a historic war film. At the same time, a new, dangerous temptation appeared in the form of commercial success and, consequently, searching for spectacular effects and attractive dramatics at all costs. These new tendencies often influence contemporary ideas about the war and the occupation.

On 1 August 2014, on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Uprising, *Miasto 44* (*Warsaw 44*) by Jan Komasa (born 1981) was screened for the first time in the National Stadium in Warsaw. 12,000 viewers, representing three or even four generations, watched it on this day with some surviving insurgents among them. Produced by the Warsaw Upising Museum the film aroused emotions as intense as Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* almost 60 years earlier. The grand, spectacular, big-budget vision of the Uprising, full of special effects, was accused of being influenced by Hollywood popular productions. An often-repeated argument was that *Miasto 44* was not a film about the Uprising but a love story that is set in the times of the Uprising, hence burdened with plotlines of love initiation. The choice of such a narrative frame 'brings the film closer to Hollywood patterns and further from the paths opened by Andrzej Munk or Miklos Jansco: towards generic tropes rather than reflection. (…)'[34]

Asked by a journalist about the comments on *Miasto 44* such as: 'insurrectionary cliché' or 'kitsch made to impress the audience', the 33-year-old director answered: 'I am honest. I do not pretend I know how it was. I did not experience the Uprising. I know, however, what the young people think about it. Beautiful boys, beautiful girls. Kissing. Bullets are whizzing around. And then the terrible massacre. And this is what the film is about. About today's image of the tragedy.

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32 For more information about the reception of *Kanal*, see D. Fredericksen and M. Hendrykowski, *Wajda's 'Kanal'*, Poznan, 2007. It includes a rich bibliography about *Kanal*.

33 Aside from the films mentioned in the paper, see also *Sierpniowe niebo. 63 dni chwały* (2013) by Ireneusz Dobrowolski (born 1964) and *Baczyński* (2013) by Kordian Piwowarski (born 1978).

34 K. Świrek, 'Miasto 44', *Kino*, no. 9, 2014.

Let me repeat: I was guided by the desire to create a Disney legend and drown it in blood.'[35]

The youngest generation of viewers is still hungry for history, as evidenced by popular reconstructions and staging of historical events, including those related to World War II and the Warsaw Uprising. This is one of the methods of cultivating national memory. Without doubt, the newest war cinema, created by people formed by the cultural memory, brought up and educated in Poland after 1989 and using new technologies without complexes, for whom cinema is only cinema and not an intermediary in the fight against myths and a space for resentful reflection, are looking for their form of expression. Did the youngest generation of Polish directors manage to begin a dialogue with the generation of the Polish Film School on the basis of war cinema?

'The films by Gliński and Komasa', Tadeusz Sobolewski writes in his review under a significant title *Nowe kino przegrało wojnę* (*New Cinema Lost the War*), 'were another encounter for Polish cinema with war, youth, death and legend. (…) Regardless their staging panache, the large number of viewers, the advertising and the publicity, these films told us nothing except the truism that war is a terrible thing and one can die in it. These films have nothing but special effects and nothing that could provoke deeper thought in the way the films of the Polish School used to do. (…) Our thinking about the war, as Gliński's and Komasa's films have demonstrated, is permeated with care and concern not to fall into a cult of mindless heroism. At the same time, new movies aim to satisfy the appetites of teenagers raised on action movies and war games. These are two conflicting objectives. The result is a melange of war attractions, didacticism and sentimentalism. (…) The Polish films of the new generation present the war out of historical context, as if it had no causes and was the first and last war in the world.'[36] In another review, Sobolewski writes:

> *Kanal* and *Eroica* were a farewell to the tragic legend of the Uprising. Today, this legend comes back in a new, unproblematic form. Commercialised. Presented in hyperrealist images. Everything can be shown but for what? (…) There is, however, an essential difference: *Kanal* was intended to reveal the horrors of the war and the absurdity of the Uprising; here, it is about the intensity of experience. This is the shift of the memory of the Uprising towards pop culture: what matters now are emotions intensified by special effects, and shocking the viewer. If I were to describe my impressions in a most blunt manner, I would compare *Miasto 44* to a tunnel of terror in an amusement park, through which couples in love ride in the darkness, passing the stations of horror (…) What would

35 J. Komasa, 'Lubię jak mnie szukają', interview by J. Wróblewski, *Polityka*, no. 4, 2015.
36 T. Sobolewski, 'Nowe kino przegrało wojnę', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 January 2015.

> remain of *Miasto 44*? What we have here is a chain of emotions, which do not lead to a metaphor, do not resonate but cause slight indifference. (…) Was the destruction of the city necessary for a boy and a girl to meet? A viewer hungry for excitement will not be disappointed. The cinema says: look, it really happened, you could participate in it. Yet, this is an imitation. At times excellent, but only an imitation: of events, conflicts, dramas. An imitation of great cinema.[37]

Does it mean that contemporary cinema diluted this dialogue of memory between the generations? Is it doomed to failure? What is the essence of the dialogue between the three generations – providing such a dialogue is possible when it comes to war subjects?

Polish films about war and occupation after 1989 are made in permanent conflict between building and destroying (debunking) myths, between building collective memory and its critical analysis and between the glorification of the cult of sacrifice and the need for rational action. Representatives of the youngest generation of directors tend to choose to destroy and debunk. At the same time, the example of the aforementioned Wajda film, *Wyrok na Franciszka Kłosa*, suggests that this point of view is sometimes also adopted by the generation that personally experienced the war. Even if the younger generation attempts to break the traditional image of the war and occupation and liberate themselves from myths, the cult of Polish suffering and national stereotypes, they do so (or at least declare to do so) in order 'to make history become attractive again' and close to the young viewer. Perhaps the emotions, of which they speak so willingly, spectacularity and dynamism are nothing but an attempt to create their own language to speak about the war and the occupation; just as the Polish Film School used understatement, metaphor and symbol – the Aesopian Language in which the filmmakers perfectly communicated with the viewers. The young generation uses irony, grotesque or even blasphemy, intending to oppose the commonly known, worn-out formulas and provoke viewers to reflect and lead them to more universal experiences. This is definitely true for *Kornblumenblau* but not for *Tajemnica Westerplatte*, as rebellion as such does not make much sense if one has nothing interesting to say.

For a few years, the Polish animator Tomasz Bagiński (born 1976, his film *The Cathedral* was nominated for an Oscar in 2003) has been speaking about making a full-length computer animation called *Hardkor 44* (*Hardcore 44*), which is planned to be a super-modern vision of the Uprising with the use of computer games, gadgets and the latest animation techniques. In this interpretation of the Warsaw Uprising, the SS divisions will be replaced with cyborg troops and Polish soldiers

37 T. Sobolewski, '*Miasto 44*. Doskonała imitacja wielkiego kina', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 July 2014.

will resemble superheroes from American comics. In 2009, in his comment to this project Professor Mirosław Filipowicz, a historian at KUL (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) said: 'If the Uprising does not enter public circulation in the language of pop culture, it will disappear from the awareness of young people.'[38] I do not share this view.

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Joanna Krakowska

Why Does Theatre Need War? Why Do Historians Need Theatre? Images of War and the Subject of Occupation in Polish Theatre After 1945

Theatre is a medium of history. Contrary to the constantly repeated belief about its ephemerality, evanescence and transience, theatrical performance exists only in a historical context, because only in retrospect can one see the network of meanings and contexts it produces and by which it is produced. A theatrical performance is not so much an aesthetical fact referring to the events on stage as a historical fact that can only be researched by historical tools. It is a complex construct that comprises the stage, the audience, media discussion of the performance and the theatre director's documents; often it also involves a minister's office, or even the Prime Minister's or, in the past, the First Secretary's. A reconstruction of stage events, scenic design, acting and lighting that ignores their meanings and frames of reference, determined by all the factors and contexts mentioned above, is purposeless.

A theatrical performance is also a story that is being told. Regardless of whether or not they are organised by a cause-and-effect structure, these stories always refer to dominant narratives and alternative histories. Contemporary theatre involves many competing narratives about the past. What is more, the history of theatre can be told alternatively. Thus, it is no coincidence that the latest monograph on Polish theatre by Dariusz Kosiński, *Teatra polskie. Historie* (*Polish Theatres: Histories*) ends with a question: 'And what is your history?',[1] addressed to anyone who may wish to rewrite it.

Not only is theatre a medium of history, it is also a public medium that focuses social tensions, political disputes and identity crises and thereby wages war on historical narratives. World War II has always been a subject that allowed Polish theatre to bring historical antagonisms to light and reveal flash points of public discourse. It is therefore easy to explain why theatre needs history.

1 D. Kosiński, *Teatra polskie. Historie*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 516.

3T Formula

One can distinguish three main reasons why historical subjects in Polish theatre appear on stage, either directly or through metaphors that the audience and critics can easily decipher. I propose to refer to these reasons as a 3T formula: Therapy-Togetherness-Transfer. Therapy means using theatre as treatment and rehabilitation following social and national traumas and trauma related to war. Togetherness means regarding theatre as a space for confrontations related to traditions and the foundations of community. Transfer is a theatrical method of conducting historical revisions and re-evaluating historical discourse. History is, respectively, a subject of confrontation, negotiation or deconstruction. The abovementioned reasons often occur together, referring to different aspects of a performance and, therefore, different strategies of reception. The illustrating examples are performances that relate to the events from the times of World War II.

Therapy

The therapeutic power of theatre directly after the war was expressed in performances that organised an empathetic community of spectators by reaching out to war experiences, giving them a sublime form, metaphysical legitimacy, and, thus, a meaning. The romantic tradition and language it offered, with its Messianic and sacrificial complex, proved invaluable for this purpose.

Directly after the war, theatre dealt with the subject of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The imperative was to give testimony to pain and mourning; however, there was a sense of inability to find a new symbolic language that would serve this purpose. Therefore, theatre used the language it knew best: sublimity and pathos derived from the romantic tradition. Theatres staged poetic performances devoted to the uprising and employed texts that used victimhood as a symbol, converted it into a myth and made it a part of comforting legends. A contemporary story of Job (*Mąż doskonały* [*The Perfect Husband*] by Jerzy Zawieyski, 1945) was selected as the inaugural play at the Old Theatre in Cracow. The Polish Theatre in Warsaw, reconstructed from ruins, premiered a romantic drama that served to elevate suffering (*Lilla Weneda* by Juliusz Słowacki, 1946).

Conflict resulted due to the fact that the aesthetics of pathos is considered by many to be a false comfort, and because the political meaning of this form of commemoration legitimised the controversial decision to begin the uprising. A performance perceived as emblematic of the Warsaw Uprising dispute was Giraudoux's *Electra*, directed by Edmund Wierciński and staged in 1946 in Lodz. The daughter of the murdered Agamemnon must decide whether to enter into

alliance with the murderers of her father. Should she punish the murderer and let the city die in the name of justice and moral order, or should she collaborate with him and give him power, but save the city? Electra chooses the destruction of the city but at least, as the ending of the play says, 'one can breathe freely' after the hecatomb. Thus, the reception to *Electra* must have been radically polarised. For some, it had therapeutic value by elevating the suffering related to the defeat of the uprising and providing it with loftiness. For others, it was a hotbed of a great ideological dispute that related not only to the defeat of the uprising, resulting in the death of two hundred people, but also with different attitudes to the rule of the liberators – now occupiers, who, by the way, ordered *Electra* off the stage.

Performances two decades later offered therapeutic value of a different kind. One of them was the adaptation of Roman Bratny's novel, *Kolumbowie. Rocznik 20* (*The Columbus Boys: Warsaw 44–46*), directed by Adam Hanuszkiewicz and staged at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw in 1965. It was a kind of historical fresco that let the spectator enjoy the drama of events and derive satisfaction from their patriotic message. The play also removed from the narrative the sediment of bitterness about the uprising left by the Polish Film School group and their works after 1956, such as *Kanał* (*Canal*) by Andrzej Wajda or Munk's *Eroica*. The rehabilitation of the heroic narrative had a comforting value also in the context of former attempts to question it. At the same time, *Kolumbowie* revealed the extent to which subject of the Warsaw Uprising lost its controversial character and confrontational aspect in the mid-1960s. The play attracted a great deal of attention from the press; it was largely positive but the debates mostly concerned historical events rather than the performance, and did not feature any ideological content. The political climate of the 1960s was favourable to the memories of war veterans rather than historical revisions. Theatrical staging of the Warsaw Uprising followed this pattern and the adventurous and martyred character of the performances did not bring any controversies.

In a sense, theatrical performances relating to the Holocaust also had a therapeutic value. In most cases, however, they were an example of a comforting, sentimental narrative, as in Milan Kundera's notion of the 'second tear'. Paraphrasing Kundera, the first tear says: 'how terrible to see what happened to the Jews!' The second tear says: 'How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by the fate of the Jews!'

This kind of mournful and, in a way, narcissistic narrative was reflected on stage in *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds* by An-ski (1988), directed by Andrzej Wajda at the Stary Theatre in Cracow. The performance began with an image of an old Jewish cemetery in the background, with tilted tombstones and the remains

of withering plants. A black, tulle curtain hanging between the stage and the audience gave the image an elegiac character. The beauty of the scene was greeted by applause from the audience, and later ceremonial review comments about the 'tribute', 'friendship and honour' and the 'obvious respect' for 'bygone culture'.

Another example of a historical and therapeutic performance is an adaptation of Kazimierz Moczarski's *Rozmowy z katem* (*Conversations with an Executioner*), directed by Wajda and staged at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw in 1977. The booklet focused on drastic images of the Warsaw ghetto, and the structural axis of the play was conversations with Jürgen Stroop, the commander of forces that liquidated the ghetto. However, the performance pushed the subject of the ghetto, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Holocaust into the background. Spectators seemed to be interested mainly in the harm done to Kazimierz Moczarski, the Home Army hero, imprisoned in a cell with a Nazi murderer. The historical subject served in fact to provoke political excitement about the anti-Stalinist message of the performance and the parallels between the two totalitarian regimes. What provided the therapeutic value of *Rozmowy z katem* was not the shock of the contact with Stroop and his narrative but the opportunity to overcome the aversion to the political system.

Over the last decade, Polish theatre has had the particular role of a *pharmakon* – a poison and a remedy – in the context of the Jedwabne case. On the one hand, it took up a difficult and uncomfortable subject, discussing the problem of Polish responsibility, anti-Semitism and complicity in the crime; on the other, it bravely faced the social conflict provoked by this discourse. In Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk's drama *The Mayor*, the title character is forced to confront his townspeople, who refuse to acknowledge their ancestors' guilt:

> MAYOR BEFORE
> I told you the Truth would come to us in the end.
> Those who left,
> Those lying there
> In the cemetery that isn't there
> Were killed by our fathers
> Not by THE GERMAN
> Not by THE GERMAN
> […]
>
> TOWNSPEOPLE: SONS-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW
> The dead walk
> Among the living.
> They're all mixed up,
> They were supposed to lie where

Corncockles and cornflowers
Uselessly grow,
Shunned by cows –
Smart critters that they are.
But now they're walking
[…]

TOWNSPEOPLE: SONS-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW
Hear that, Mayor!? Cast them out! Lead them underground, play your pipe, let them follow you like rats to their death.

MAYOR BEFORE
My Townspeople, Sons, Sons-in-Law! Those are no rats!
They're Jooz!

TOWNSPEOPLE: SONS AND SONS-IN-LAW
Drown them in the river, like in the fairy-tale.
[…]

MAYOR BEFORE
I won't cast them out! I won't cast the Townspeople of my Town out of my Town.
I don't know what to do. How do I talk to them?
I don't know what they're here for. Their children have left. They don't have their children anymore. We're their children now. Right?

TOWNSPEOPLE: SONS AND SONS-IN-LAW
We're not the children of those corpses. Cast them out, Mayor![2]

The number of dramas and performances that are the aftermath of Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbours* (2001) and Anna Bikont's *My, z Jedwabnego* (*We, from Jedwabne*, 2005) is two-digit. For this reason, not only do they have the role of therapeutisation of guilt, they also have the power to undermine national myths and enter the dispute about mental tradition. By referring to history, theatre boldly takes up the subject of Polish identity. We are a 'myth-cleaved generation' – says Bożena Keff in *A Piece on Mother and the Fatherland* – a book that was twice adapted for stage.[3] The question of identity is thus a question of the foundations and conditions for creating a community.

2 M. Sikorska-Miszczuk, *The Mayor*, in K. Duniec, J. Klass and J. Krakowska (eds.), *(A)pollonia. Twenty-First-Century Polish Drama and Texts for the Stage*, London/Calcutta, 2014.

3 In 2010 and in 2011.

Togetherness

The myth favoured by national narratives – the sacrificial myth of a romantic origin– has long been undermined by theatre in various ways. It was already questioned in 1946, right after the war, when *Electra* was staged. The play met ideological objection from the opponents of the uprising, although at the time questioning Messianic attitude, sacrificial rhetoric and the meaning of martyrdom was regarded as an expression of support for the new government and being servile towards 'Bolsheviks'.

Nowadays, questioning the idea that romantic heritage is the paradigm of Polishness usually results from a deep historical reflection. Theatre throws into doubt the stereotypical image of a heroic and sacrificial past as the foundation of national community and the 'cleaving myth' by employing embarrassing, suppressed, hidden or previously unknown stories, or by reinterpreting stories that have been highly valued so far.

Krzysztof Warlikowski's *(A)polonia* (2009), an authentic story of Apolonia Machczyńska, who saved the lives of Jewish children at the expense of her own, managed to reveal the morally ambiguous character of sacrifice and relativise it instead of making it absolute, which is usually the case. Not only did Warlikowski's play demystify the sacrificial myth, it also revealed its symbolic power. However, the historical revision offered by the performance involved more than a simple statement that, for some, sacrifice entails the suffering of others. Desacralisation of sacrifice led directly to the revision of the paradigm on which Christian culture is founded, as well as Polish Messianism, the Polish cult of sacrifice and Polish sacrificial historical discourse.

The introduction of characters such as Stefan Dąmbski (*Trzy furie* by Marcin Liber, 2011), a partisan fighting against the Germans but also the executioner of the sentences imposed on those accused of treason, forced viewers to reflect on the model of patriotic education that led to the fact that those brought up to be heroes could easily become ordinary murderers. It also exposed motives that had been completely ignored in collective narratives but were deeply present in the individual ones. As a result, the traditional patriotic narrative, as one of the founding myths of Polishness, was weakened. Moreover, an alternative identity-narrative developed, which is expressed in 'history in crumbs', history behind the frontline. *Trzy furie* (*Three Furies*) is an example of a search for alternative patterns, alternative sites of memory and collective identification and alternative histories that would not be ruled by the cult of sacrifice, military mania and national phantasms. It is also an attempt to take control of identity-narratives, made by those who rate ambition and honour lower than empathy and justice

and for whom Polishness, in contrast to solidarity, for instance, is not a value in itself. The heroine of *Trzy Furie* chants a Song of Outrage:

> I accuse, for Warsaw, for all the villages and towns, around which thousands of refugees crawled, hidden under their hosts' dresses. For these brats coughing in their hands, so as not to reveal the hiding places. For these women girded with bundles, so as to carry and preserve as much normalcy as possible. For these flowers in the backyard shrines, nice pictures brought down to the basement, so it would be nicer to wait for the bombs.'[4]

Paweł Demirski, one of the most prominent contemporary theatre writers, bases many of his dramas on a thorough polemic against whatever constructs and sustains the romantic paradigm of Polishness. In his drama *Dziady ekshumacja* (*Dziady Exhumation*), which is a kind of transcription of the Mickiewicz's work, Demirski offers an alternative narrative about Polish history: its heroes are not saints but humans, and its subject is not the metaphysics of sacrifice and imbuing it with meaning, but the reality of experience and palpability of suffering. Thus, Demirski's alternative history of Poland is not a history of noble and heroic deaths but of cruel and meaningless murders: a German from the Recovered Territories, a Pole from Volhynia, a Ukrainian from Kresy, a Pole taken for a Jew and stoned to death in 1946, a Czech killed by Polish tanks in 1968, a student tortured to death at a gate. The alternative history is not a history of rebirth through death but, on the contrary, a history of people who committed suicide who did not withstand the moral witch-hunt: 'Divorcee/Whore/Single mother/These are the words that kill/These are the words that push out from the windows/Under the trains/Under the joists/Under razor blades.'[5]

Demirski even refers to the anti-heroic death of a member of the Communist party (Polish United Workers' Party)[6] who after 1989 could not stand that 'they spit on him for everything / for the priest's murder / for the dollar loans one needed to pay off', while they only remembered that 'one did not live in the People's Republic / And if one lived, he fought all the time / he sang the walls[7] and carried underground press.'[8] The author of the new *Dziady* becomes an advocate of suspicious characters, non-impressive biographies and senseless sacrifices. What interests him in Polish history is: 'a non-Polish / evil Pole / a treacherous Pole / a false Pole / a wrong Pole';[9]

4 S. Chutnik, M. Fertacz and M. Sikorska-Miszczuk, *Trzy Furie*, unpublished.
5 P. Demirski, *Dziady. Ekshumacja*, in id., *Parafrazy*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 38.
6 Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR.
7 *Mury* (*Walls*) was a protest song written by Polish singer Jacek Kaczmarski, which became a symbol of the opposition to the communist regime.
8 P. Demirski, *Dziady. Ekshumacja*, in id., *Parafrazy*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 38.
9 Ibid.

in other words, 'the hidden', using the title of Michael Haneke's film that depicted similar concealments in the contemporary French history. Demirski, in contrast to the creators of historical myths, constructs his historical narrative based on a recognition that 'a nation always has sidelines' and the stories of what happens on the sidelines serve collective reflection rather than collective arrogance.

This radical shift of attention in the theatre, toward sidelines, muddy roads and cellars where 'women with children' sit, and to giving voice to those who had until then been deprived of the right to speak, led to a historical revision that is now happening in theatre and through theatre. I called it a 'transfer' – a transfer of interest, appreciation and empathy.

Transfer

Transfer! – a performance directed by Jan Klata and staged in 2006 at the Współczesny Theatre in Wrocław – inaugurated a kind of a turning point in Polish theatre. It was a turning point in a double sense. Theatre introduced conspicuous historical subjects onto the stage and gave voice to witnesses who had until then been excluded from the historical narrative, and to their micro-histories that had been suppressed from Polish memory. Instead of actors, authentic veterans of displacement played themselves. Germans born before the war on the lands that Poles later called 'regained' talked about their experiences during the war and after it, when they became 'the expelled' (*Heimatvertriebene*), as the Germans later called it. Poles from the *Kresy* also recounted their stories on the stage: 'And of course everybody had a copy of *Mein Kampf* but nobody ever read it,' Hanne-Lore Pretzsch said. 'And we had a really loving father. But, unfortunately, he had to go off to the war. That's when all good things came to an end,' Ilse Bode related. 'The women tried smearing soot on their faces, putting on dirty long dresses, but it was no use. It was all the same to the Russians' – Hanne-Lore Pretzsch recounted what happened after the Red Army invasion. Zygmunt Sobolewski said that

> When they were coming back from the Eastern Front, the Germans
> weren't that elegant anymore
> they would come to our house
> grab some hay
> pull off their shoes
> then you could see the wounds, the blisters, the calluses, the frostbite.

Poles recounted the situation after 1945, when, expelled from the *Kresy*, they moved into the homes and flats from which the Germans were displaced:

> a militia-man took me
> to a three-room place on Grunwaldzka Street

but there were Germans still living there
–a woman with her daughter
of twenty
the militia-man says I'll be taking the apartment
and they will be resettled
I moved in/into the apartment.[10]

In this way, *Transfer!* transformed Polish collective memory by supplementing it with the memory of someone else's fate. Although it was the fate of the enemy, it evoked unexpected empathy. Therefore, the hitherto prevailing historical narrative was disrupted as the traditional Polish-German conflict was replaced with a community of the experience of displacement. Thus, individual and personalised experience, and not a list of wrongs, could become the structural axis of the new historical narrative.

Theatre had already experienced transfers of emphasis and historical revisions many times before. It dealt with the subjects that, even if present in historical research, were absent from the public discourse. As a result, their influence, political power and potential to inspire were strong. The most famous theatrical pieces that revolted or disturbed the prevailing historical narrative concerned the image of the underground army that depicted primitive degenerates instead of heroic 'boys from the woods'; the fate of women prisoners of a concentration camp who were forced to prostitution; and the testimonies of the Polish 'great fear' of the early postwar period.

In 1979, *Do Piachu* – a wide and comprehensively critical panorama of the Polish underground army by Tadeusz Różewicz – seriously weakened the myth-making potential of the resistance movement, resulting in an avalanche of protests by veteran organisations. The drama was staged only because the director of the Na Woli Theatre and a prominent member of the Polish Communist party PZPR, Tadeusz Łomnicki, was interested in doing so.

In 1973, Jan Kulczyński produced a piece for Teatr Telewizji (Television Theatre) based on a play by a Yugoslavian writer, Dorde Lebovic, titled *Lalka z łóżka nr21* (*The Doll from Bed No. 21*). It raised the problem of prostitution in concentration camps and the stigmatisation of the women forced into it who were deprived of victim status after the war. The piece was not broadcast following a protest by the activists from organisations whose members are former camp prisoners, who believed it tarnished the good name of the victims. It has been imprisoned on archive shelves since then.

10 D. Funke and S. Majewski, *Transfer!,* in K. Duniec, J. Klass and J. Krakowska (eds.), op. cit.

In 1981 Stanisław Mrożek's *Pieszo* (*On Foot*) was staged. This drama, depicting the social panorama of the early postwar period, captured the experiences and phenomena of the time in a way that was precursory to Marcin Zaremba's book *Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947* (*Great Fear: Poland 1944–1947*; 2012). The history of a migration through the ruined country, full of uncertainty and fear of bandits hunting Jews, was a new subject in the public life of the early 1980s.

The subject of war rapes is also a new topic, and of late has often been dealt with by contemporary theatre (*Transfer, Trash story, Niech żyje wojna!*). Theatre projects sometimes involve archive searches and gathering of witness testimonies. Moreover, theatre sometimes infuses historical discourse not only with micro-histories but also with diagnoses or syntheses, like in the case of *Jakub S.*, Paweł Demirski's drama staged at the Dramatyczny Theatre in Warsaw by Monika Strzępka (2011). The production, to a large extent precursory to Andrzej Leder's book *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenie z logiki historycznej* (*A Waking-dream Revolution: An Exercise in the Logic of History*), focuses on the peasant roots of Polish society and, from this perspective, criticises the prevailing historical narratives, asking the audience: 'Who invented for you those noble gracious roots you fool?' The question about the roots does not concern the origin of Polish society as much as its present complexes and ambitions and most of all, the vision of Polish history as a string of exclusions, suppressions and mediations. Thus, this question, in a sense, allows one to answer another question:

Why do historians need theatre?

Theatre is sometimes first to thoroughly explore historical problems that have been absent or not sufficiently present in historical research and missing from popular discourse. Theatrical performances that raised the subjects of camp prostitution, degeneration of the national partisan organisations, postwar trauma and war rapes sometimes preceded historical research and studies. Theatre as a source of inspiration? Why not?

Most of all, however, theatre is a perfect space for an insight into the past. Contrary to a painting, which is equal to what is on the canvas, performance is not equal to what is on stage. Performance is only what is told and what is done; it is a discourse, a dynamic structure that is generated again and again depending on what is taken into consideration, by whom and the position from which one is talking. Historical performance is not an artefact that can be pinned and described outside this complex network of variables, which are determined by the choice of a narrator / historian. Therefore, one cannot study and analyse a performance in any other way than by examining the context it creates and by which it is created.

How the performance looked (from the sofa colour to the stage movement) is much less important than how it functioned in a particular historical moment. This means that theatre can effectively examine historical contexts and transformations of historical discourse.

Thus, theatre becomes a specific historical source that one must produce for his or her own purpose. When this proves to be successful and the meanings and contexts shape into a coherent narrative, theatre proves to be an incredibly valuable source of knowledge about the past – about customs, political tensions, language, economics, social issues, etc. The study of war and occupation in theatre – how they are handled, what their political outcome and critical reception are – allows one to effectively research how the Polish public discourse about war and occupation has been transforming: from elevation, through appropriation, claim and revision to deconstruction.

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Żydokomuna: The Construction of the Insult

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Although it often assumes hidden forms, the term *żydokomuna* is still present in the Polish public sphere, as well as in popular use. *Żydokomuna,* as a stereotype that firmly embedded in the anti-Semitic language of the Second Republic, played an important role in shaping the attitude of Poles toward the Jews. Polish society had multiple occasions to express this attitude before, during, and immediately after the war and it is this issue that the present article discusses.

One of the disciplines still referring to it is contemporary Polish historiography which functions within the anti-Communist paradigm. This paradigm, central to current official governmental historical policy, also provides grounds for the sustained vivacity of the term *żydokomuna*. The aim of this article is to explore the findings that have arisen during research on the history of this term and its use. On the basis of this 'investigation', I reconstruct a body of unspoken assumptions accepted without reflection, upon which rests not only anti-Semitic, but also anti-Communist reasoning. In addition to an analysis of discourse, I also address the issue of social and political involvement of persons of Jewish origin in pre-war Leftist and Communist movements.

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In this article, I use historical analyses as well as historical sources. According to the typology of personal documentation literature suggested by Jacek Leociak,[1] the sources I use in this article include *written sources*: memoires, biographies, journals; and *oral sources*: testimonies by the witnesses of the Holocaust housed in the Archive of Jewish Historical Institute, entries on online forums. Regarding the chronological order, an overwhelming majority (except the testimonies of Holocaust witnesses recorded immediately after the war) fall into the category of *post factum* – the informants speak of past events from a distant perspective.[2]

1 J. Leociak, *Literatura dokumentu osobistego…,* p. 17.

2 Ibid., pp. 27–28.

This article also uses another methodological framework that needs to be problematised in the introduction. It is an analysis of the above-mentioned *History discourse* in which the term *żydokomuna* appears – whether overtly, as an allusion, or in the form of hidden general knowledge. I want to show that the claim 'a historian turns that which is alien and unknown into the known and recognisable, as it is expressed in the terms of the above-mentioned expressions, i.e. archetypal patterns of understanding, on which the knowledge about the world is based',[3] defines the anti-Communist paradigm which currently characterises the debate on the causes and effects of the dislike of Jews by the Poles. Following Sander Gilman, I consider discourse analysis to be a tool that serves to identify the mechanisms of designation and assignment of meaning, which are part of the systems of authority and in whose framework the stereotypes are created and reproduced. Such a tool, which is most often applied to popular culture and media output, should with equal insight be applied to academic statements.[4]

According to Gilman, a stereotype is an excellent source of knowledge about those who create stereotypes, but never – contrary to Chrostowski's claims – about those who are being stereotyped. A similar mistake is manifest in the ambiguity of statements such as:

> When it comes to Jews, **there was a general belief** [emphasis: AZ] that they collaborated with Stalin in Kresy Wschodnie in 1939–41 and with the Communist Underground in 1942–1944. Besides that, the Jews **were being accused of** [emphasis: AZ] war banditry, given that in order to survive, they often had to loot food and groceries from Polish farmers.[5]

Or:

> All the minorities were definitely **considered** [emphasis: AZ] hostile to Poland, given that, as American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski shows, the most visible and energetic extremists that originated from them were behaving disloyally towards the Polish majority and the Polish state during the war.[6]

But also:

> It must be clearly and explicitly marked that Communist or Communising organisations posed a threat to the existence of an independent Polish state. **Such was the opinion of**

3 Ibid., p. 20.

4 S. L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of sexuality, race and madness*, New York, 1990, especially chapter *What Are Stereotypes and Why Use Texts to Study Them?*, pp. 15–35.

5 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*, Warsaw, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance), 2008, p. 58.

6 Ibidem.

> **all** [emphasis AK] the political forces representing the nation before the outbreak of the WWII. They were also supported during the Occupation.[7]

This begs the question whether their authors, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and Sebastian Bojemski, reconstruct generally accepted opinions, reproduced with the assistance of anti-Semitic moods or anti-Communist ideology; or rather facts such as collaboration, property seizure, and finally designs against Polish independence. There is also another question regarding hidden assumptions behind the use – in the context of the history of the Jews after the Holocaust – of terms such as *disloyalty*. The use of the above-mentioned category indicates that the author thinks that the Jews should behave in respect to the Polish majority as they would in respect to their own group. The problem is that – and Chodakiewicz admits this himself – this majority that demanded loyalty from them was treating these very Jews as alien, which means that it did not classify its own actions in respect to the Jews as based on loyalty. Following the author's reasoning, this would mean that the opinions of Poles about the Jews were based on the knowledge of facts. In light of Gilman's theory, this assumption is false.

Gilman's theory, inspired by psychoanalysis, is based on the premise that individuals and groups exclude beyond the borders of their own subjectivity all the contents that can endanger their image, self-consciousness and conformity with historically and contextually established norms. Exclusion is done by the projection – in the shape of a stereotype – of unwanted contents onto an alien group. Stereotyping is a tool for controlling the world; a defence mechanism of a subject full of fear of something that is dangerously close, differentiated and disavowed. Following the history of the stereotype therefore consists in the research of what is acceptable and unacceptable to the society that creates the stereotype, projecting the contents, behaviours, and attitudes forbidden within its own limits onto the Other. Such an analysis of stereotypes that shape the perception of individuals reflects the basic traits of the given culture or period. They can be described and identified precisely by stereotypes (this does not mean that this prevents us from looking for hidden meanings). However, they can constitute the thread running through the entire analysed text of a culture. I consider the Gilmanian category a valuable tool for the analysis of hidden assumptions in anti-Communist discourse.

Both source analysis and discourse analysis qualitative approaches to research. They seem to be more appropriate for following the history of the term or the consequences this term may cause, than quantitative research that meets the requirements

7 S. Bojemski, 'Likwidacja Widerszala i Makowieckich, czyli Janusz Marszalec widzi drzewa, a nie widzi lasu', *Glaukopis*, no. 9–10, 2007–2008, p. 365.

of representativeness. However, the issue of numbers does not shy away from the topic of *żydokomuna*. They appear in the works of historians who show how many Jews participated in the building of the Polish state after WWII. I treat these numbers, just like the categorisations, as a part of the analysed *History discourse.*

Pogrom Potential

It is a generally accepted belief that the term *żydokomuna* is most closely connected to the participation of Jews in the government bodies of post-war Poland. Undoubtedly the declarations in which the new authorities condemned anti-Semitism and the acceptance of persons of Jewish origin into government employment provided valuable fodder for the myth of *żydokomuna*. However, this myth already existed, and had an occasion to reveal its potential, a quarter of a century earlier.

> Rabbi Szapiro Executed![8] – wrote Róża Rozenberg in 1920, an eyewitness of the war against the Bolsheviks. – I am not a supporter of the clergy, but how could a Jew-fanatic-rabbi, who did not understand a word of Polish or Russian – how could he be suspected of supporting the Bolsheviks? How is that possible?[9]… They killed him, a father of eight, a representative of fanatical long-coated Jews – and for what? For what? If you existed, God, you would cast lightning bolts at his executioners, would not allow this innocent blood to be shed! … (…) The rabbi was shot at three o'clock, and at as soon as three thirty there were announcements hanging on the corners about the execution of the sentence. And the Poles were reading, laughing and clapping their hands in joy…[10]

Róża Rozenberg was an atheist and a supporter of Socialism, which caused a lot of tension in her family, because some religious Jews thought that the violence to which they were falling victim was a punishment for the sin of giving up the creed of Moses or for assimilation:

> Since early morning – hell in the house, because father cannot control his pain for the nation and plundering of so many Jews. And he considers me the main cause of all the misfortune [because of atheism].[11]

8 By Poles. This happened in 1920. During the war, Jews were being accused of co-operation with the Bolsheviks (after: A. Cała (ed.), *Ostatnie pokolenie. Autobiografie polskiej młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego*, Warsaw, 2003).

9 Rabbi Chaim Szapiro was only posthumously cleared of the charges of espionage for the Bolsheviks (after: Ibid.).

10 Róża Rozenberg's (born 1903) diary, in ibid., p. 137.

11 Ibid., p. 132.

Róża Rozenberg's description clearly shows that rumours about Jewish espionage in favour of the Bolsheviks, which led to the murder of Rabbi Chaim Szapiro, were widely circulated and approved of among the Polish population.

> Shall I describe to you what is now happening in Płock? – wrote Rozenberg in a letter to a friend – it is too difficult, as it would be necessary to come up to each Polish Catholic and ask him what the Jews have done, and one would definitely hear: 'they were pouring boiling water on our army, and also with sulphur and phosphorus; they had a secret telephone line to the Bolsheviks, and the spies were directed by the very rabbi who was executed, they were showing the Bolsheviks around the town'[12].

Boiling water poured on the heads of our soldiers, and also the 'secret telephone line' are examples of recurrent trope in contemporary historiography; failure to recognise these prevents the evaluation of 'facts.'[13] The motif of making accusations against the Jews for secret telephone calls and espionage in favour of the enemy appears in Szymon An-sky's *Dziennik 1914–1917*. The author describes the cruel treatment of the Galician Jews by the Russian army during WWI:

> The most common suspicion regarded secret telephone calls the Jews were allegedly making in order to give secret information to the enemy.[14]

In this case, the key motif seems to be the Jew as a traitor, not a Communist, as the Jews were being suspected of a conspiracy in favour of the Austrians. Pouring boiling water over the heads of the soldiers is in fact a common anti-Semitic cliché connected with the accusations of Jews of sabotage in favour of the Communists.

> That was about the killing of a Jew. They found the killer – he got eight years. This guy G. from Klimontow. The court asked why he had done it. Because he had a brother, an officer in Lviv and he was tormented to death by the Jews. They were pouring tar and boiling water from a balcony when the army was walking underneath after the capitulation.[15]

This story was recorded by Radosław Januszewski, an investigative journalist who was looking into the 1945 murder of Klimontow Jews.[16] Even during WWI the motif of a Jew–Communist, exacerbated by the news about the presence of Jews among Russian revolutionaries, was already supporting the existing conviction that the Jew was a hidden enemy of the Poles. This conviction was one of the elements

12 Ibid., p. 139.

13 See J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*, Warsaw, W.A.B, 2009, p. 103.

14 Sz. An-sky, 'Zagłada Galicji. Wyjątki z Dziennika 1914–1917', *Krasnobruda*, no. 11, Sejny, 2000, p. 166.

15 R. Januszewski, 'Szkoła Tysiąclecia', *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 October 2001.

16 See the section on Abraham Złotnicki in this article.

of the worldview that allowed the Jews to be treated not only as alien, but also as being suspected of a conspiracy against Poles and capable of betraying a neighbour.

> The image of a Jew-Bolshevik was exceptionally terrible, as it differed markedly from a 'cunning, sly swindler-Jew' solidified in folk proverbs or in popular literature. It is a cruel man, capable of killing, of destroying the entire Christian civilisation.[17]

The end of the Polish-Bolshevik war did not mean the end of the *żydokomuna* myth though, and therefore the two inter-war decades are the first 'characters' in our film. We asked the witnesses of history about this period in particular, as this is where we start to look for the causes of the involvement of a number of Jews in the Polish Leftist movement.

Right to Self-Identification

Pre-war Socialist and Communist parties, postulating equality, likewise took Jews into account. They considered ethnic antagonism to be artificial, purposely stimulated and nourished by political enemies in order to hide the real conflict of interests leading to exploitation, i.e. class antagonism. The Belarusian Hramada and the Communist Party of West Belarus, just like the Polish Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Poland (banned before the war), and then the Polish Workers' Party, did not base their programmes on xenophobia and racial hatred. They considered Jews to be citizens who were largely members of the exploited class. There were Jews who could prove to be enemies – however, not due to their ethnic, but to their class origin. One could say that Leftist parties were representing the interests of Jews as a persecuted minority. However, it would be more appropriate to call it indifference: they claimed that it was not the Jews who were the enemies of the wellbeing of the inhabitants of Poland or the world, but the class of capital owners.[18] However, when compared with the programme of the overwhelming

17 I. Kamińska-Szmaj, *Judzi, zohydza, ze czci obiera. Język propagandy politycznej w prasie 1919–1923*, Wroclaw, 1994, p. 126, cited in I. Jeziorski, *Od obcości do symulakrum. Obraz Żyda w Polsce w XX wieku*, Cracow, 2009, p. 273.

18 The situation was diametrically altered by the rise of pre-war anti-Semitism and the ensuing Holocaust. Grabski states that one must admit that the Communist stance regarding the so-called Jewish question was full of goodwill. The PPR programme declaration under the title *O co walczymy* ('What We Are Fighting For'; November 1943) states: 'Citizens of this state are treated equally, regardless of their ethnic origin. Being of Polish nationality must not be regarded as a privilege in comparison with other national minorities (…).' For more on the declarations of equality and the condemnation of anti-Semitism, see: A. Grabski, 'Kształtowanie się pierwotnego programu

majority of the remaining political factions, who were calling for an active disposal of the Jews in various ways – whether economic, symbolic, legal or finally physical – this indifference bears signs of anti-Jewishness.

In order to understand the context of the use of the term *żydokomuna,* it would be worthwhile to enrich the sociological toolkit with anthropological tools. One of them is Kenneth L. Pike's *emic* and *etic* dichotomy, which describes two types of ethnographic data and two methods of their analysis. The emic model (from the word *phonemic*) is based on explaining the phenomena of a given culture in terms of this culture. The etic model (from the word *phonetic*) is based on categories from outside the given culture, e.g. those supplied by the academic terminological framework. The former takes into account the particularities of a given culture, the second aspires to universality. A penetrating analysis of ethnographic data incorporating the dichotomy of two terminological frameworks – emic, stemming from the analysed culture and etic, stemming from the academic language – allow us to make a cultural translation. When used separately, these models lead researchers to various pitfalls. The danger of the former is to treat the emic vocabulary as a literal reconstruction of the analysed world, without the intermediacy of language and the researchers' value system. The pitfall connected with the latter is similar to that described by Jacek Leociak in an excerpt analysis of the *History discourse.* Etic categories, used without reflection, lead to the imposition of one's own classification system (descriptive and judgemental) onto the given culture.[19] The term *żydokomuna* is part of the etic language. The context of majority-minority notwithstanding, the use of exclusively etic categories results in the colonising of the research subject and the depriving it of their voice, which is unethical in the moral sense of the word.

The very term *żydokomuna* therefore reveals an inner logic of domination: it can be used, in accordance with its meaning, only as part of the majority discourse. By defining someone's identity – nobody used this term to express one's own identity, *żydokomuna* functioned as a denunciation or an insult – this term denies a group or individuals their right to self-identification. 'We know better who you are than you do,' the users of this word seem to be saying. Whatever might have been chosen by a given person – e.g. membership in a religious community, political views – becomes invalidated and. With the use of the term *żydokomuna,* both the Jews and the Communists were being deprived of social trust and branded

żydowskich komunistów w Polsce po Holokauście', in *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, G. Berendt, A. Grabski, A. Stankowski (eds.), Warsaw, 2000, p. 69.

19 'Emic and etic' in A. Barnard and J. Spencer (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, London, Routledge, 2005, pp. 180–183.

as persons suspected of hiding the truth about themselves.[20] On exposure as the core of the use of this term, Ireneusz Jeziorski says the following:

> The myth of *żydokomuna* is the myth of an enemy, in fact the worst enemy, a hidden enemy. Here (…) the attempt to apply the theory of the Other to historical, cultural and political matter is of utmost importance. One should not make contact with the Other, but instead identify him (name him – generalise him) – in order to render him harmless.[21]

Żydokomuna is therefore a form of hate speech: it is a 'word-action', a 'word-denial.'[22] Within the research on *żydokomuna,* the right to self-identification, which this term denies, is one of the key issues exactly because in the light of an asymmetrical relation between the majority and minority, it becomes an issue of struggle. A voluntary identification is a privilege; an imposed one is a stigma.[23]

Reversed Causality

Trying to rise to the confrontation, the lack of which was lamented by Julian Stryjkowski, we must pay greater attention to the hopes that Communism might have awakened among the Jews. This is what Michał Głowiński has said about them:

> Communists were internationalists. They did not feel they were Poles, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians or Russians. In the Communist movement, there were no better or worse categories when it came to nationality. A large group of assimilated Jewish intelligentsia

20 Examples of refusing the Jews their right to self-identification can be found, among others, in historian Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's book *Po Zagładzie*. He states: "In their description of Communists of Jewish origin, sociologists Jan Tomasz Gross and Jaff Schatz pointed out their rejection or at least obliteration of their Jewish identity during that period in their lives. However, most people did not see them as Poles. Even the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw described them as 'a group of activists apparently suffering from Jewish nationalism'." (M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polskożydowskie 1944–1947*, Warsaw, pp. 51–52).

21 I. Jeziorski, *Od obcości…*, p. 274.

22 See S. Kowalski and M. Tulli, *Zamiast procesu. Raport o mowie nienawiści*, Warsaw, 2003.

23 Erving Goffman defines stigma as the bearing of a trait one has not chosen. In his understanding, therefore, Jewish origin may become a stigma, whereas Communism – even if one were persecuted for it – cannot, as it is a matter of a choice of worldview. See E. Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York, 1996. Abraham Furman's testimony may be of interest here: 'I am a true-born Jew, but I am of Polish nationality, because I like it this way' [AŻIH 301/4716], cited in: J. Tokarska-Bakir, 'Sprawiedliwi niesprawiedliwi, niesprawiedliwi sprawiedliwi', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, no. 4, 2008, p. 199.

> believed this illusion of equality before the war. They participated in the Communist movement because they felt they were being discriminated in Poland. They could not get jobs; they were facing hatred. I am not trying to find excuses for them, I am trying to understand. The ONR slogan such as 'Poland, a Catholic state belonging to the Polish nation', i.e. a vision of a mono-racial and mono-religious country, must have been frightening. And it **pushed people towards Communism** (emphasis AZ).[24]

Ireneusz Jeziorski's postulation of contextual sociological research on *żydokomuna* as resistance against the oppression of the dominant culture runs in a similar vein:

> Members of a minority group dependent on the system in which they happen to live often actively adapt by embarking on the road of opposition to this system. Their identity is often generated by specific cultural conditions in which these individuals have found themselves. Not belonging to the traditional structure of a Jewish community anymore, they are not allowed to participate in the life of the Polish community on an equal basis. This state (a perpetual liminal phase) leads to the contestation of the current order, activates the instincts of resistance and is conducive to all manner of social movements (…). The Jewish pariahs as a mass found it difficult to free themselves from the second-rate role. The expulsion of Jews beyond the limits of the community, the national, religious and cultural ostracism they were subject to in Poland, **partially forced them into the arms of the Communist doctrine** (emphasis AZ), a secular Messiah, the international proletariat.[25]

The ethnic equality that the Communists were striving for applied to the professional and material status as well as to equal chances of access to professions and jobs.[26]

> Just like others in the same material situation, I was concerned with the matter of unemployment, which did not exist in Soviet Russia. This mirage had the strongest impact on the Jewish intelligentsia, especially the teachers, who had no prospect of getting a job in a state-run school. Communism to me therefore became a panacea to anti-Semitism, to the solution of the Jewish problem, as the Communist authorities were condemning it so effectively that in the USSR it allegedly disappeared as if by magic, just like the Jewish unemployment. In the Soviet Union, the Jews have jobs; they even hold high positions, inaccessible to them in Poland; they are ministers, generals, directors… Was it not a powerful trump card? We believed in this heaven on earth.[27]

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24 'Polskie gadanie. Teresa Torańska's interview with Michał Głowiński', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 May 2005.

25 I. Jeziorski, *Od obcości…*, pp. 274–275.

26 A. Grabski, 'Żydzi a polskie życie polityczne (1944–1949)', in *Następstwa Holokaustu*, F. Tych, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (ed.), Warsaw, Żydowski Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute), 2009.

27 *Ocalony na Wschodzie. Z Juliuszem Stryjkowskim rozmawia Piotr Szewc*, Montricher, Noir sur Blanc, pp. 73–74.

Lack of social welfare, poverty, even destitution, which concerned not only the Jews but were also a daily experience or a real worry among a large part of a society divided into classes, appear in the memories of almost all of my interviewees. In fact, it is the same with the boycott of Jewish shops, when the buyers who ignored it were being attacked by Rightist gangs, or the *getto ławkowe* (segregated seating in some Polish educational institutions, transl. note), enforced by the members of the National Radical Camp with the use of clubs. The racial segregation in Polish universities was actually opposed by the Communists and the Socialists, who stood by the Jews and would go out to the university gates in order to accompany them into the building, protecting them from the gang members, and arguing against such ghettoisation in newspaper articles.[28]

The current ignorance of the anti-Semitic character of pre-war Poland and the conditions of 'wild Capitalism', to which the minorities are the first to fall victim, result in the confusion of causes and effects; thereby, the Leftist involvement on the part of the Jews becomes an accusation. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the reversal of the causal relationship represents a paradigm of all the fallacies of racist hatred, as it blames the victim for the lot inflicted upon him.[29] Thanks to the reversal of the cause and effect, the historical relation of domination seems to be something natural and everlasting, having nothing to do with power relations.

Similarly, the issue of 'Jews welcoming the Red Army,'[30] which has become another trope in Polish culture, denotes both the 'betrayal' on the part of the Jewish neighbours, as well as the exposure of the 'treacherous nature' of the Jews. This image contains an anti-Semitic cliché of Jews as conformists; as those who always associate with the victor; as opportunists who want to snatch some power for themselves. A systematic repetition of this image puts the focus on the Jews and their alleged specific traits rather than on an analysis of reasons why the Red

28 As a form of protest, the Jews who had been forced to use separate seating would remain standing during the lectures.

29 See P. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations,* Cambridge, 2000., p. 72 and P. Bourdieu, *Male Domination*, Cambridge, 2001, Chapter I.

30 See http://www.dziennik.pl/kultura/article301055/Prawdziwa_historia_zydowskiej_partyzantki.html (accessed 12 October 2009). 'Neighbours, who had been living in peace for many years, suddenly turned against each other. Poles wanted to take revenge against the Jews, who were welcoming the Red Army soldiers with joy' writes the author of the article. See also an interview from the Ethnographic Archive's fieldwork in the Sandomierz region: 'When the Red Army was entering in the east, what was happening? The Jews were welcoming the Russians with flowers! They were building triumphal gates!' (S1297, Ożarów)

Army represented a greater relief to the Jews in comparison with the Poles. There are many such reasons, but two of them merit special attention: firstly, the armed forces of the Polish Underground State did not allow Jews to join their ranks;[31] secondly, in addition to the Nazis, the Polish anti-Communist guerrilla,[32] the Blue Police and the Polish neighbours were all a threat to the Jews, as the German occupation was giving them an opportunity to express anti-Semitic hatred with impunity.[33] In the national liberation discourse, both these reasons have been affected by the cause and effect reversal logic.

The Anti-Communist Paradigm

In their review of Piotr Głuchowski and Marcin Kowalski's book *Odwet: Prawdziwa historia braci Bielskich,* Dariusz Libionka and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska describe the same logic when they write that ignoring the attitude of the Polish Underground towards armed and unarmed ghetto escapees; the reasons why citizens of the Polish Republic who were of Jewish origin were joining Soviet partisans; and the context in which armed Jews had to act all represent a focus on the unfolding and the consequences, rather than on the causes of this situation. According to Libionka and Adamczyk-Garbowska, this operation embodies the 'anti-Communist paradigm in the description of Polish-Soviet conflict.'[34]

The gist of this paradigm is pertinently described in the words of Marek Jan Chodakiewicz:

> The anti-Semitism of Polish resistance fighters was not the main motive for the murders of Jews. (…) To describe the Communist and Soviet enemies, the Polish resistance

31 See A. Bańkowska, 'Partyzantka polska lat 1942–1944 w relacjach żydowskich', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, no. 1, 2005.

32 A. Cała and H. Datner-Śpiewak (ed.), *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944–1968. Teksty źródłowe*, Warsaw, 1997, pp. 15–19, 23–74; A. Skibińska and D. Libionka, 'Przysięgam walczyć o wolną i potężną Polskę, wykonywać rozkazy przełożonych, tak mi dopomóż Bóg. Żydzi w AK. Epizod z Ostrowca Świętokrzyskiego', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały,* no. 4, 2008, pp. 287–301; M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944–1947*, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 56–66.

33 See also Jewish testimonies from Podlasie regarding the Holocaust and its consequences, found at the Jewish Historical Institute Archive (transl. from Hebrew by Aleksandra Geller, Sara Arm) and available at http://www.archiwumetnograficzne.edu.pl/readarticle.php?article_id=25 (accessed 12 October 2009).

34 D. Libionka and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, 'Odwet. Prawdziwa historia braci Bielskich', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 January–1 February 2009.

> Underground was using the term '*żydokomuna*' referring to a Jewish Communist conspiracy, and therefore expressing anti-Communism in an anti-Semitic sense.[35]

Therefore, the first element of the anti-Communist paradigm, crucial with regards to the topic of *żydokomuna*, is the justification of anti-Semitism by anti-Communism. The second one, just as important, is expressed in the postulates of Piotr Gontarczyk, employee of the Institute of National Remembrance and a publicist for Rzeczpospolita. Gontarczyk regrets that during WWII, the Polish Underground did not undertake a decision to systematically murder the Communists.[36] Addressing Prof. Andrzej Friszke's claim that the realisation of such a postulate would result in international disrepute, along with the downfall of the Polish Underground State, Gontarczyk answers:

> Professor Friszke argues that using weapons against Communists was undesirable due to Poland's affiliation with the anti-Hitler coalition. I am not sure whether in his ruminations he has taken into account an order issued by the supreme commander of the AK, Gen. Leopold Okulicki 'Niedźwiadek' from January 1945. Okulicki forbade any operations of aggression against the Germans (!) and ordered to concentrate the entire effort against various random groups, including those [fighting] under the PPR banner: 'all the bands, partisan units and individual persons regardless of their affiliation, when found to be bandits must be ruthlessly eliminated' (*AK w dokumentach*, vol. I)[37]. Prof. Friszke would undoubtedly consider this document an incitement to crime by 'Far-Right groups'. I have a different opinion upon this matter: it is a pity that the supreme commander of the AK had not issued his orders earlier.

35 M. J. Chodkiewicz, *Po Zagładzie…*, pp. 56–57.

36 P. Gontarczyk, 'To nie była wojna domowa', *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 August 2008.

37 See also S. Bojemski, 'Likwidacja Widerszala i Makowieckich, czyli Janusz Marszalec widzi drzewa, a nie widzi lasu', *Glaukopis* no. 9–10, 2007–2008: 'Obviously, national organisations such as those forming the NSZ: the national-radical group 'Szańca', National Party's group 'Wielka Polska', and the National Party itself called for an active anti-Communist operation. However, the Labour Party and Henryk Glass' Anti-Communist Alliance BLOK were equally anti-Communist, not ruling out an armed operation against the Communists. It should also be mentioned that Gen. Bór-Komorowski issued orders to eliminate subversive bands of robbers, i.e., as Communists correctly realised, the GL-AL groups operating in the forests. Rank-and-file members of resistance organisations likewise appealed for an intensification of the anti-Communist operation. An appeal by 25 AK, NOW and NSZ partisan unit commanders and officers from October 1943 is a good example of this: it appeals for a united armed effort against the 'growing danger from the Soviet army units and the PPR' (p. 370).

Gontarczyk's opinion is echoed by journalist and historian Piotr Skwieciński:

> And what would have happened had among the decisive factors in Polish politics prevailed a way of thinking that can with simplification be called the NSZ way? Represented by a slogan: 'Before Hitler falls, Communism dies!'? Had the AK received orders to eliminate Communists in 1943? The London forces would definitely have won such a small civil war. And then who would the Russians have relied on one year later? The would-be chiefs of county security bureaus would in fact have been under the ground for about a year.[38]

Skwieciński considers the scenario of AK forces turning against the Polska Partia Robotnicza, Armia Ludowa, Gwardia Ludowa and Communist partisan fighters a way of 'escaping the episode in our history called the PRL'. Therefore, the anti-Communist paradigm can be summarised in the form of a dialogue:

– Why was it permitted to kill Jews?
– Because they were Communists.
– Why was it allowed to kill the Communists?

The fact that the second question very often remains unanswered, along with the fact that the answer that precedes it retains its validity, testify to the successful inscription of anti-Communism in the doxa of Polish statehood.

However, there are individuals who do answer this question. Piotr Gontarczyk rejects the accusation of calling for fratricide by expelling Communists from the Polish community. He states:

> Communists were not part of the Polish political life, just like the Komintern and NKVD representatives were not either.[39]

Gontarczyk's argument rests on a similar construction to the one used to justify anti-Semitism with anti-Communism. Let us take a closer look at it: the Jews are exempt from the rule of loyalty to the members of one's own group, i.e. are made to be the Other by ascribing Communist inclinations to them. Communists are exempt from the rule of loyalty to the members of one's own group, i.e. made to be the Other by denying them the right to a Polish identification. Gontarczyk counters the accusation of calling for a civil war as follows: it would not be a civil war, as Communists and 'us' do not belong to the same community. Quoting the AK bulletin, he brands the Communists 'an agency of a foreign and hostile power'. 'According to them [the Resistance movement members] the only real Poles were the anti-Communists,' writes Chodakiewicz.[40]

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38 P. Skwieciński, 'Utracona szansa finlandyzacji', *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 December 2008.
39 Piotr Gontarczyk, 'To nie była…', op. cit.
40 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie*…, op. cit., p. 57.

Gontarczyk absolutely shares the opinion of the Resistance movement members and thus draws the circle of Polish community, excluding those participants who do not share his political views. This way, he performs a typical act of exclusion, which leads to persecutions and extermination, which Gontarczyk in fact explicitly promotes.

> An enemy is someone whom I know how to treat, as I assume that he disturbs the rules of the game that bind us both, and in them I find the legitimisation for my retributive behaviour. An enemy has a point of view that, if it threatens my interests, I am entitled to fight according to my viewpoint[41].

The rules of the game assumed by Gontarczyk lie in the acceptance of the political vision of the Polish State proposed by the AK leaders and later by the anti-Communist guerrilla. Its rejection means breaking the contract.

Nobody had signed this contract, and therefore it must be inscribed into an anti-Communist doxa, so that questions about it could not be asked, reflexion about it could not even be contemplated and contesting it would make the person look suspicious or mad. And precisely because nobody had signed it, the fact that it does not exist must be forgotten with the aid of anti-Communism as self-evidence[42]. Self-evidence that solely anti-Communists were working for the good of Poland; that Communism has always been outright against Polish interests; that the coming into existence of the PRL was a decided evil which nobody wanted, except for the Communists, previously defined as non-Poles.

Let us add that this 'non-Polishness' that Gontarczyk writes about is analogous to the 'non-Polishness' that the anti-Communist Underground referred to when branding Jews the enemies of Poland:

> Among the Communist agents wandering about the country, there are many jews [sic!] pretending to be Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians or Russians. The Jewish intelligentsia has likewise been communised and has an anti-Polish attitude, to a no lesser degree than the Jewish proletariat.[43]

41 I. Jeziorski, *Od obcości…,* op. cit., p. 274.

42 On acceptance without knowledge as a necessary condition for the acceptance of a domination maintained by a doxa, see P. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, Cambridge, 2000.

43 Materiały do akcji przeciwkomunistycznej, May 1942 [AAN AK 203/VII-62], cited in M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie…*, op. cit., p. 58.

> We represent the whole Polish Nation – we want to create a Poles – Soviets dichotomy. (…) To be ready to fight means: (…) to convince the whole society that the whole nation is with us, and on the other side there are only Soviets and Jews.[44]

Thus the struggle revolves around the power to delineate the limits of the community and to define its value. Breaking the rule of anti-Communist doxa, we must ask the question of how it is possible that a straightforward and explicitly expressed identification with the Home Army and the National Armed Forces is 'transparent', i.e. it is not subjected to doubt despite the fact that it presents a bias to the integrity of historical research conducted by an employee of a public historical institution responsible for historical education and activities of the Office of Public Prosecutor. At the same time, casting doubt on such identification becomes a topic of discussion about academic methods (see, for example objections raised against books written by Jan Tomasz Gross).

At an event dedicated to the journals of Zygmunt Klukowski, his editor Zbigniew Gluza, head of Ośrodek Karta,[45] said:

> The end of war had not changed anything: one Occupation changed into another.[46]

Once again breaking the rules of anti-Communist doxa, i.e. exposing its existence, it is necessary to ask the following question: for whom had the end of war not changed anything, i.e. in whose name is the historian speaking? To Poles, the liberation of Polish lands from Nazi Occupation undoubtedly meant fear of another authority, the necessity to negotiate with it, the settling of accounts with the previous one, and to those who were opposed to Communism – defeat and hostility. However, to Jews – those that had managed to escape – it meant they could come out of the cellars, attics and holes in the forests after many years in hiding in inhumane conditions; the fear of Germans and Poles who could have denounced them had come to an end, just like the payments to Poles for shelter (or silence about the shelter). To those who had not managed to escape, but nevertheless survived, it meant that the concentration camps would open their gates. For these reasons, Gluza's statement does not speak of historical events, but rather says a lot about the topic of national and political identification of its

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44 Col. Mieczysław Liniarski 'Mścisław', 'Konspekt propagandowy nr 14, BiP Białostockiego Okręgu AK', 15/5/1945, cited in M. J. Chodakiewicz, op. cit., p. 59.

45 The KARTA Centre is a prominent historical institution in Poland and a public benefit organisation that curates archives, organises exhibitions and publishes books and magazines.

46 An orientation meeting before leaving for a fieldwork trip to the Zamojsc region; Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw, 27 February 2009.

author. Domination of the anti-Communist paradigm is attested by the fact that ethnically Polish and ideologically anti-Communist identification gives validity and universality to theses proposed by academics. On the other hand, any other identification – e.g. viewing 20th century history from the perspective of a person of Jewish origin – is branded particularistic. With the former, the spotlight is on **what** has been said; with the latter, it is aimed at **who** is speaking.

I am analysing Gluza's seemingly unimportant statement in such detail due to its normative character. Just like Piotr Gontarczyk's journalism, it defines the limits of a community, excluding those individuals for whom the end of the war had in fact changed 'something', and their descendants – not only biological or ethnic, but also ideological ones. The gesture of exclusion – just like an act of love or tolerance – is the privilege of the dominating ones.

Analysing the anti-Communist paradigm in view of Gilman's theory, it becomes clear that the dominant group uses the term *żydokomuna* to project something it deems unacceptable onto the subordinate group, such as involvement in Communism or at least the lack of hostility towards it. Above all, however, it was the unacceptability of the lack of identification with the ideology propagated by the London government and its military forces, which Historians today attempt to present as approved of by all Poles. Here, Communism or scepticism regarding the national ideology represents 'pollution', from which one's own group becomes ritually cleansed by accusing the Other of it: it was the Other who had brought the pollution, propagated it and contaminated our community with it. The community will be clean again if only we can expel the Other beyond its limits. If Communism is the greatest crime and 'monstrosity', the absolutely positive image of Poland, which the historians quoted above are striving for, can be saved only by unmasking its proponents as non-Poles. The first candidates for this name are the Jews.

Case 1: Abraham Złotnicki (Abram Złotnik)

Murders of Jews by the Poles during the war and immediately after it are subject to typical explanations using the rule of reversed causality. In order to find an excuse for the perpetrators, they posit that the victims died not because they were Jews, but because they had collaborated with the NKVD or UB, denouncing the activists working for the Polish anti-Communist Underground.[47]

47 See M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie…*; M. Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Żydzi w zaborze sowieckim. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II RP pod okupacją sowiecką (1939–1941)*, Warsaw, 2007.

Let us reconstruct this explanation more precisely: if you are a Jew, most probably you are also a Communist, as the Communists have a tendency to 'opt for the red' – and it is of no consequence whether we ascribe that to the Jews' hopes for a world without anti-Semitism, or to the allegedly natural predisposition of Jews to betray the Poles, which is best realised by joining the Communists. If you are a Communist, it means you are a traitor – according to the anti-Communist paradigm, Communism represents a betrayal of Poland – and for this reason you may be murdered. However, this deed will not be called murder on ethnic grounds, but rather elimination based on political grounds.[48] Such a construction of reasoning serves to clear the AK, NSZ, and war-time and post-war anti-Communist guerrillas of the accusations of anti-Semitism[49]. Here, *żydokomuna* comes to the rescue with its overlooking of the order of cause and effect: the fact that someone was suspected of Communism meant that they were an informer. The fact that someone is an informer means that they are a Communist. The fact that someone was being accused of this resulted from them being a Jew. However, to those who consider *żydokomuna* a descriptive term, the causal order is a question of what came first: the egg or the chicken? If someone was a Jew, they were therefore a Communist.[50]

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48 *Atlas Polskiego Podziemia Niepodległościowego 1944–1956* describes the murder of Lezajsk Jews by the National Military Union *(Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe)* in the following way: '18–19.II.1945 – Elimination of two NKVD functionaries and nine persons of Jewish nationality suspected of cooperation with the NKVD by NZW (NOW) soldiers from Lezajsk and O. Wołyniak. NZW (NOW) losses – 1'. In *Atlas Polskiego Podziemia Niepodległościowego 1944–1956*, R. Wnuk, S. Poleszak, A. Jaczyńska, M. Śladecka (ed.), Warsaw-Lublin, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance), 2007, p. 182. During a debate 'Czterdzieści lat później: Marzec 1968–2008', Wiktor Osiatyński described this mechanism as follows: 'Political rivals are fought, while Jews are attacked'. Stara Biblioteka, University of Warsaw, 8–9 March 2008.

49 This very construction appears in Andrzej Przewoźnik's statement from August 13, 2006. At the unveiling of a monument to Józef Kuraś 'Ogień', whose crimes against Jews are well-documented, this historian said: 'Ogień is one of the Polish heroes that should be followed, and Poland is indebted to him. In this way, we commemorate the hopeless fight against the Communist system'. Former AK members who had opposed the bulding of a monument to a 'murderer and robber' were accused of Communist sympathies. See J. S. Łątka, *Bohater na nasze czasy?*, Cracow, 2007, p. 29, 32.

50 According to Dr. Julian Kwiek, this was 'Ogień's' reasoning when carrying out those 'eliminations': 'Almost always Ogień considered Communists and Jews one and the same. It is impossible to determine whether he considered all the Jews to be supporters of the new system, or whether he was using – in an ideological sense – the cluster of '*żydokomuna*', or whether the Jews perhaps represented an alien element in Podhale to him, exacerbated after the war by the popular slogan of '*żydokomuna*'. Regardless of his

The story of the Jews from Klimontow[51] near Sandomierz combines elements that we overlook once we accept the above mode of reasoning. What is called 'cooperation with Communists' usually consisted of giving information to the militia about who in the particular town or village was murdering Jews or collaborating with the Germans by handing them over to the Occupants, identifying the hideouts, denouncing neighbours who were sheltering Jews, and catching Jews who were hiding during mass deportations to concentration camps. Some of these Poles were members of partisan units created after 1942 and murdered Jews as part of the operations of their units. Giving their names to UB functionaries was considered an act against Polish anti-Communist armed forces.

Jews who survived the Holocaust were returning to their hometowns. Their property was already in the hands of Poles, who had appropriated it immediately after the deportation or flight of Jewish residents. The Jews did not always manage to get their property – including houses – back.[52] Being unable to reach an agreement with their pre-war neighbours, they sought the help of the functionaries of already functioning militia – an official institution that was supposed to serve Polish citizens in case of a breach of law. This way, the Jews were labelled collaborators and as such were being 'eliminated'.

It was probably both his help in the search for informers that had denounced Jews and his effort to get his property back that had played a decisive role in the accusation of Abraham Złotnicki – a Jew from Klimontow – of 'cooperation' with the NKVD[53]. On the occasion of Złotnicki's execution, carried out in April 1945 by a still active National Armed Forces or Peasants' Battalions partisan unit,[54] five

motives, it must be said that 'Ogień's' anti-Semitic attitude was obvious'. See J. S. Łątka, *Bohater na…*, p. 44.

51 A detailed reconstruction of the post-war history of Klimontow Jews, based on Polish and Jewish sources, can be found in Joanna Tokarska-Bakir's article 'Następstwa Holokaustu w relacjach żydowskich i w pamięci polskiej prowincji w świetle badań etnograficznych', in F. Tych and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (ed.), *Następstwa Holokaustu*, Warsaw, 2009.

52 See L. Olejnik, 'Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960', Lodz, 2003. 'Jews returned to their hometowns only to find their houses and workshops destroyed or under the management of national or local government institutions (or private persons). It was not always possible to get the property back.' (p. 358)

53 See E. Niebelski, *W dobrach Ossolińskich. Klimontów i okolice*, Klimontów 1999, pp. 67–68.

54 See Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, 'Następstwa Holokaustu…'; The Home Army, which had incorporated the National Armed forces, was formally dissolved in January 1945, whereas the Peasants' Batallions were dissolved in March 1945. However, not all the

other Jews were also murdered. This peculiar 'prevention' shows that collective responsibility was being applied to the Jews, that the anti-Communist Underground was treating them according to racial categories, and considered the Jewish race to have been corrupted by Communism.

Some 'admit' that this was due to revenge: Jews had been treated badly in Poland, and so when an opportunity came, they decided to give Poles a taste of their own medicine. The motif of revenge[55] will return with a double strength in reflections upon the origin of the persons employed by the UB. It is typical that this supposes the exact thing that is earlier attempted to be hidden in the framework of the very same anti-Communist discourse: that the Jews were not part of the Polish community, that they felt painfully excluded from it, were being treated as Other, and therefore allegedly out of resentment they adopted a Communist identification, waiting for an opportunity for revenge.

Pre-war National Democratic publications (and post-war ones as well) suggest, however, that Jews have treason in their blood – metaphorically, but also literally. They strive to realise the goals of the global Jewish community, and will therefore support all movements and groups endeavouring to destroy the Polish nation. These goals include political and economic control, power and wealth. According to the National Democrats, many Jews are working on this somehow unconsciously, following a peculiar Jewish instinct, today we would probably say a Jewish gene.[56] This gene is in fact a gene of treason and betrayal of anyone who is not a Jew.

The vivacity of these convictions has been manifested in Cezary Michalski's interview with Michał Cichy, a Gazeta Wyborcza employee of many years. When speaking of Helena Łuczywo – Gazeta Wyborcza's editor-in-chief – he said:

> To me, Helena is a personality of historical importance; she cannot be compared with contemporary personalities. Out of all the people living in Poland in the 20th century that I know, I can only compare her to Celina Lubetkin, who was the wife of Antek Zukierman, leader of ŻOB [Pol.: Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, Jewish Combat Organisation, transl. note] And the real leader of the ghetto uprising. Helena being one hundred percent Jewish, her mission always consisted in protecting Polish Jews from any bad fate.

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units had left the Underground and laid down their weapons. Some of them participated in anti-Communist guerrillas active after the end of the war.

55 Ibid.

56 'Adam Sapieha lamented that ‹many support a foreign ideology, **created by a race,** whose tendency is the depravation, and consequent exploitation of the nations amongst whom it lives›. (…) [Stanisław] Stomma also argued that despite pogroms, most Jews ‹sided with Russia›, as their **minds** were attracted to Russian nihilism, negation and hatred of the Latin culture›'. I. Jeziorski, *Od obcości…*, p. 271 [emphasis AZ].

> She rose to this task one hundred percent. She was the ZOB leader in the 1990's. It is not surprising that she, **with her cultural and genetic background** [emphasis AZ], was not particularly sensitive to the murders of clergy after 1981, or to General Fieldorf's being a victim of judicial murder, in which Judge Wolińska was involved. Łuczywo's mission was to save Judge Wolińska and all the Poles of Jewish origin, no matter what their role in history, from any kind of misfortune. Also from anti-Semitism that really exists here.[57]

This racist reasoning – alleging that genes, i.e. a biological trait – decide about our perception and evaluation of a situation, springs up again when it appears in reference to Communists. It has been recently presented by Lech Wałęsa, who stated that Sławomir Cenckiewicz as 'the grandson of an *ubek*' should not be granted access to the files at the Institute of National Remembrance[58]. In his statement, he was referring to Cenckiewicz in plural form, using the expression '*ubek* grandson', addressing it to both the INR employee himself and his father. The meaning of this statement was well, if unconsciously, explained in the above-mentioned interview with Cezary Michalski:

> (…) everyone sees as much around him as he is able to. Where one comes from, what his experiences are and what he soaks up at family teas and breakfasts, all this is very important. One cannot blame Helena Łuczywo, who was the daughter of a Communist censorship functionary Ferdynand Chaber, for the fact that her viewpoint incorporated the environment she was dealing with.

Admittedly, Cichy is right in that it is important 'where one comes from, what his experiences are and what he soaks up at family teas and breakfasts'. However, as sociologists specialising in the reproduction of culture and generational change know, acculturation does not have one source (in this case: parents) and does not occur by direct takeover and acceptance of the opinions of all the important persons taking part in it. On the contrary: it often consists of their radical rejection, which is just as strongly determined by family history. Therefore, even though Cichy is speaking of acculturation, his statement – just like Wałęsa's – is based on a conviction that the outlook on life of these persons has its source in their origin in a genetic, not social sense. The manipulation of this message, used by Wałęsa, lies in casting responsibility on the members of a family for something one of them was doing and which did not depend on the will and the decisions of the rest.

However, in the context of *żydokomuna,* it is of utmost importance that in the statements quoted above, the 'Jewish gene' (Cichy) is being freely transformed into

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57 'Wojna pokoleń przy użyciu ‹cyngli›. Michał Cichy w rozmowie z Cezarym Michalskim', *Dziennik*, 21–22 February 2009.

58 'Wałęsa o Cenckiewiczu: wnuk ubeka', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 February 2009.

the 'Communist gene' (Wałęsa). This peculiar mutation is yet another unmasking of the structure of the anti-Communist paradigm, in whose framework the murder of Abraham Złotnicki can be excused by his Communist involvement.

Poles hostile toward the Jews, supporters of the National Democracy or other political parties who considered the Soviet Union and Communism to be dangerous forces, second only to Jews, thought it obvious that a Jew is intentionally working to the detriment of Poland. If however Communism is also such an activity, the union of Jews and Communists seemed to them a natural outcome: the Others are creating a unified front against us. It is not surprising then that Communism with its internationalism seemed to those who could only grasp the concept of community in national terms, to be the essence of the Jewish conspiracy. The vision where a person of Jewish origin might identify himself as someone else than a Jew – e.g. as a person with no citizenship, a Socialist, a Pole – has no chance to exist here. Polish national thought treats Communism somewhat secondarily, as an ideology produced by Jews, a cleverly constructed guise concealing the real Jewish designs[59]. At the same time, however, Communism – in fact an unmasked Jewish conspiracy – does have a chance to reveal the dimensions of the Jewish plans to take over the world. *Żydokomuna* here is a keyword expressing the essence of unmasking.

Case 2: Samuel Willenberg

Another topic that comes up when discussing *żydokomuna* is the participation of Jews in people's armed forces, the Communist guerrilla and the Red Army.

The Home Army was reluctant to accept Jews into its ranks. They were often rejected, for the reason that their presence would lead to negative moods among Polish soldiers. Such moods could stem from a stereotype that Jews are Communists, and the Home Army considered the latter enemies.

Secondly, the already documented cases of executions of Jews carried out by Polish Underground units must have been known to an increasing number of Jews who wanted to take part in the warfare. The AK leadership failed to react and punish its members. Documents show that this was wilful negligence.

> That KPP, just like the Communist movement, was penetrated by the Jewish element and led by jews [sic!] with a negative attitude towards Poland, is well known. But even now [May 1942], the Jewish influence in the PPR is immense. (…) The Jewish intelligentsia

59 Róża Rozenberg notes in her diary: 'September 23, [1920]. Today, as part of the civics curriculum, I went to a rally organised by the National Democracy with my class… (…) Of course, they could not do without ‹polite› epithets for the Jews (…)'. *Ostatnie pokolenie…*, p. 142.

> has likewise been communised and has an anti-Polish attitude, to a no lesser degree than the Jewish proletariat. From the political viewpoint, the Communists protect the Jews and promise them not as much as full equality, but important posts in the new – and according to their intentions - Soviet Poland. We must mention the ['disloyal'] stance of the Jewish masses in the tragic days of autumn 1939 and later under Bolshevik Occupation. Anti-Semitism is still a very effective weapon in the fight against Communism.[60]

The above is an excerpt from an article by August Grabski. He continues:

> Accusing Jews of pro-Communist attitudes was one of the main excuses the Underground State leadership used to refuse to help the Jews at the time of the Holocaust. In case of the ghetto in Vilnius and Białystok, the AK refused to assist the local Jewish resistance movement due to the participation of Communists in it. While the possibilities of Jewish escapees from the ghettos to join the AK were minimal, and the AK and to a larger degree the NSZ are burdened with the accusation of many crimes committed against the Jews hiding in the forests, Communist or Soviet partisan groups considered ghetto escapees good draft material.[61]

Therefore, the Jews who wanted to fight or for whom partisan warfare was the only chance of survival, as it provided shelter, weapons and access to food, were only able to join the units created by the PPR. However, the users of the term *żydokomuna* are not reluctant to present this as yet another proof of an above-average access of Jews to Communism and of the betrayal of Poland and her interests.

The schema described above applies, among others, to the story of Samuel Willenberg, a participant in the Treblinka revolt and later in the Warsaw Uprising, who in 1950 emigrated to Israel, where he lives to this day. Willenberg took part in the Uprising as a soldier with the AK battalion 'Ruczaj'. He presented himself to the commanding officers and other soldiers as a Jew. He was warned by a liaison that he might be facing danger from some of the members of the battalion due to his origin. In his memoirs, he describes a scene where during a battle, some shots fired at him had been fired by AK members.[62] He also recounts conversations with persons who had witnessed an execution of more than a dozen Jews who had been hiding and whose bodies were found in Prosta Street and in the cellar of one of the houses. According to the witnesses, the looting, rapes and

60 M.J. Chodakiewicz, P. Gontarczyk and L. Żebrowski (eds.), *Tajne oblicze GL-AL i PPR*, Warsaw 1999, vol. 3, p. 61. Cited in A. Grabski, 'Żydzi wobec polskiego życia politycznego 1944–1949', in F. Tych and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (eds.), *Następstwa Holokaustu*, Warsaw, 2009.

61 Ibid.

62 S. Willenberg, *Bunt w Treblince*, Warsaw, Res Publica, 1991, pp. 141–150.

murders were committed by AK soldiers.[63] The issue of the credibility of Willenberg's sources of information notwithstanding, it is enough to imagine that these two incidents could have led a person of Jewish origin to leave the Home Army and join the Polish People's Army,[64] as Willenberg had done. It is symptomatic that Tomasz Potkaj, describing Samuel Willenberg as a hero in his biography in Tygodnik Powszechny, stresses that the People's Army that Willenberg joined was 'Leftist, but not Communist.'[65]

Case 3: Tewje, Zus, Asael, and Aaron Bielski

The Red Army partisan unit, in which the Bielski brothers were fighting, and the vicissitudes of a Jewish forest village set up and commanded by the Bielskis, which provided refuge for ghetto escapees, are shown in Edward Zwick's film *Opór* (2008). The film provoked a discussion about the story of the Bielski brothers, who were being accused of involvement in a pogrom on Polish inhabitants of a Belarusian village Naliboki in May 1943.

Historians have established which particular units took part in the Naliboki pogrom; the Bielskis' unit was not among them.[66] However, this fact was rarely taken into account when the film was being attacked for unjustified heroification of Jewish partisan warfare. Setting aside the dispute between historians and journalists,[67] and also the complicated succession of publications about the Bielski

63 Ibid., pp. 154–155. A report written by a 'Chrobry' partisan unit spoke of 'a murder of Jews by the Jews with the aim of looting'.

64 Not to be confused with the People's Army.

65 T. Potkaj, ‚Wyspa, która wraca w snach', *Tygodnik Powszechny,* 29 September 2002, http://www.tygodnik.com.pl/numer/277739/potkaj.html (accessed 26 December 2015).

66 'Orders issued on May 10, 1943 by the Commander of Soviet partisans, Vassily Chernyshev 'Platon' show that this operation was performed by units which were part of the Stalin Brigade commanded by Piotr Gulewicz: units 'Dzierżyński' (Commander Szaszkin), 'Bolszewik' (Commander Makejew) and 'Suworow' (Commander Surkow). The losses they suffered amounted to 6 killed and 6 wounded.' D. Libionka, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, 'Odwet. Prawdziwa historia braci Bielskich', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 January–1 February 2009.

67 In the following order: P. Głuchowski and M, Kowalski, *Odwet. Prawdziwa historia braci Bielskich*, Warsaw, 2009; D. Libionka and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, 'Odwet. Prawdziwa historia braci Bielskich', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 January -1 February 2009; P. Głuchowski and M. Kowalski, 'Nie pretendujemy do miana historyków', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6 February 2009; D. Libionka and M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, '*Odwet*. Książka Piotra Głuchowskiego i Marcina Kowalskiego. Nic się nie stało?', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6 February 2009.

brothers,[68] I shall concentrate solely on the discussion about the accusation that the Bielskis' partisan unit was *de facto* a band of robbers.

Users of the website www.blogmedia24.pl published a letter to the media, voicing their disapproval of the showing of the film Opór,[69] excerpts of which had been published in print by Dziennik[70], among others. In it, they wrote:

> The principal activity of this Jewish 'partisan' unit was to procure food for their own groups and for Russian partisans by attacking Polish and Belarusian villages. (…) During those operations, the **Jewish armed gangs** [emphasis AK] were characterised by particular brutality, even when compared to the Soviet 'partisans' who were famous for their cruelty.

Using the term 'gang', and also putting the ennobling word *partisans* into inverted commas is supposed to indicate the true character of the Bielskis' unit. Both of these linguistic operations appear profusely in the comments of internet users. Let me cite only a few from the Gazeta Wyborcza website:

> Great! A gang of Soviet murderers will be commemorated as heroes!
> (author: cp1126841-a.tilbu1.nb.home.nl)

> I definitely prefer some things to be omitted, rather than to attempt to excuse behaviour and activities that amount to common banditry.
> (author: cegorach)

> Please read the book *Odwet*, which describes the truth about those Bielski brothers, whom history and certain circles are attempting to make pure.
> (author: nat-c.trzebinia.msk.pl)

> *Ech*. It is really very sad that when there is a film about jews [sic!], completely unfair to thousands of Poles who fell victim to the banditry of the Bielski brothers, the reaction is minimal, and even defensive. And I already see what would be going on if the Poles made a film about the real story of these bandits. Immediately, the whole world would start a witch-hunt against Polish anti-Semites…
> (author: Gość: ap, chello089078049120.chello.pl)[71]

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68 D. Libionka, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, 'Odwet…'

69 F. Gajek, 'Film 'Defiance' - interwencja o prawdę historyczną', 11 January 2009, http://www.blogmedia24.pl/node/7910 (accessed 26 December 2015).

70 'Internauci nie chcą filmu o Żydach', *Dziennik*, 14 January 2009, http://www.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/article297559/Internauci_nie_chca_filmu_o_Zydach.html (accessed 26 December 2015).

71 All excerpts from: B. Węglarczyk, 'Nadchodzą bracia bielscy', *Endgame*, 25 May 2008, http://bartoszweglarczyk.blox.pl/2008/05/Nadchodza-bracia-Bielscy.html (accessed 26 December 2015).

In a Gość Niedzielny article 'Mojżesz z peemem', although the source is not given, one can find lengthy excerpts copied verbatim from the letter written by internet users, such as the following:

> In reality, Jewish partisans hardly ever fought German soldiers. They mostly focused on drinking and looting the surrounding villages. (…) Unfortunately, at least some Jewish partisans were taking this food **in a bandit way** [emphasis AZ], mistreating village inhabitants, and while they were at it, raping women, and even children.[72]

A direct reference to *żydokomuna* appears in the following paragraph:

> There was nobody in the Kresy villages willing to bring aid to Jewish partisans. Especially because the peasants could not forget the behaviour of the Jews after the Soviets had taken over the Kresy in 1939. The majority of Jews at the time supported the Communists. For almost two years of Soviet Occupation, informers of Jewish nationality kept denouncing Polish neighbours, who were then deported in their thousands by the Soviets to the gulags. For the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the Jewish collaborators with the Soviets, the peasants often blamed all the Jews.

Kucharczak finds excuses for the Polish hostility towards the Jews, currently unfairly considered anti-Semitic. Let us return to the word *gang*. A sentence from Kucharczak's article echoes the political war which is being fought on the rubble of WWII:

> AK members were supported by the inhabitants of Polish villages, while Soviet partisans sometimes found genuine help in Belarusian villages.[73]

The war in the field of memory is organised by particular conversation strategies[74] imposing dichotomous vocabulary: the ennobling term *partisan unit* is contrasted with a degrading term *gang*. In this very way, historians are participating in it as well.

> Communists from the PPR should have been destroyed in the same way in which the Polish Underground dealt with common criminality, as the PPR was living off **common banditry** [emphasis AZ][75]

– writes Piotr Gontarczyk in the above-mentioned article.

> It was in fact common banditry that was the main motive of the armed operations undertaken by the NSZ and the AK against the Communists. (…) GL and AL units were not fit to fight the Germans and most of their victims were mostly Polish peasants and

72 P. Kucharczak, 'Mojżesz z peemem', *Gość Niedzielny*, June 2009.

73 Ibid.

74 See H. P. Grice, *'Logic and conversation'*, in P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and semantics,* vol 3 (*Speech Acts*), New York, 1975.

75 P. Gontarczyk, 'To nie była wojna…', op. cit.

> landed gentry who formed the supply base for the Underground. Communists robbed mills, shops, dairies. The Resistance Underground had to protect the Polish populace.

A sentence from an Underground leaflet:

> We are **no gang** [emphasis AZ], unlike the traitors and wicked sons of our fatherland. (…) We fight for a sacred cause, for a free, independent, just and truly democratic Poland[76]

shows that accusations of mistaking the partisan activities for banditry were being made already during the war.

According to the anti-Communist paradigm, AK and post-AK groups deserve the noble name partisan warfare, as they were fighting the enemy of Poland – first the Nazi one and then the Communist one. The inhabitants of villages in Podlasie remember their deeds differently, but the experience of the Orthodox minority has few opportunities for articulation beyond the local and private sphere. In the framework of this paradigm, the AL, Soviet and Jewish partisan warfare deserves to be called a gang because it was Leftist. However, it was common practice among all the partisan groups regardless of their political affiliation to acquire food, clothing and weapons also with the use of extortion, attacks and robbery.

Interest and politicality

The word *żydokomuna* lurks in the shadows of the debates about Polish history textbooks on the 20th century; about the shaping of the domestic historical policy; about the activity of the Institute of National Remembrance. In fact it is this word that dictates the two dominant stances regarding the disputes mentioned above: proving that Jews were Communists and therefore they were justly being ostracised, as they were working to the detriment of Poland; or showing that the involvement of Jews in the Leftist movement was lower than generally thought. To put an end to the opponents' arguments, both sides use data about the number of Jews among the Communists. Both stances are based on a groundless doxa that Communist involvement was definitely morally and politically reprehensible. In the framework of a dispute defined in this way, there is no room for reflection, either about the diversity of the Leftist movement – it is subject to the same loss of distinction as a group category *Jews* –or about the nonconformism towards non-democratic and racist authorities of the Second Polish Republic, or finally the Communist dream and reasons for its popularity.

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76 T. Łobuszewski and K. Krajewski (eds.), *Od 'Łupaszki' do 'Młota' 1944–1949. Materiały źródłowe do dziejów V i VI Brygady Wileńskiej*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 127.

This is where the deconstruction of *żydokomuna* usually ends. However, this end does not avoid the pitfalls that this very deconstruction has tried to fill up. Its conclusions can be summarised as follows: Communism promised Jews the realisation of their interests as a minority; the Communists sometimes fulfilled this promise and they were definitely not anti-Semitic, therefore the Jews joined the Communist movement. The logic of such reasoning is based on the term 'interest'. This term has been doubly compromised: as part of the anti-Semitic ideology, according to which Jews in all their actions are driven by a will to multiply the profits of their own ethnic group; and as a term describing egoistic behaviour focused on profit, devoid of the element of concern for the common good and of moral foundation.

The political character of the disrepute of the second type, nowadays represented by the liberal discourse categorising (and judging) people according to whether they can or cannot rise above their own interest, has been quite well clarified by Karl Marx. However, to adequately describe the situation of pre-war Communists, among whom Jews were presented,[77] one must rather rely on categories posited by a philosopher who was as much inspired by Marx as she was critical of him.[78]

Comparing French and American revolutions, Hannah Arendt introduces a distinction between interest and politicality.[79] Interest is connected with the *social issues* – a revolt against poverty and demands of bread, disagreement with lay-offs and demands of work, etc. Understood in this way, interest is an indispensable condition for the break-out of a revolution; however, as a paradox, it often destroys it as well, as basic needs can also be satisfied by violence as a negation of freedom and therefore of the revolutionary spirit itself. This spirit is actually expressed in politicality, which means subjectification of acting agents. It is a movement towards freedom, containing a moral element that surpasses ad hoc political goals.

> The gist of Arendt's thought lies in fact in the distinction of the inner logic of political activity as self-subjectification beyond power relations. This implies that the term action is cut off from the pragmatic structure of instrumental reason. Political action does not serve to realise goals, it is not praxeology, but practice.[80]

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77 In 1930, Jews represented 35% of the members of the Communist Party of Poland. See *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, G. Berendt, A. Grabski, A. Stankowski (ed.), Warsaw, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute), 2000.

78 I would like to thank Dr Michał Kozłowski for the idea of considering the analysed issue in the categories of Hannah Arendt's philosophy.

79 H. Arendt, *On Revolution,* New York, 2006 and H. Arendt, *Human Condition*, Chicago, 1998.

80 M. Kozłowski, 'Hannah Arendt na drogach wolności', *Kronos*, May 2009.

According to Arendt, the French Revolution unfolded according to this schema; the social issues triumphed over politicality. The revolutionaries were driven by despair stemming from necessity, and therefore their actions did not stand a chance to produce a particular 'surplus' in the form of upholding the ideal of freedom. Referring to Ancient philosophers of the *polis*, Arendt claims that political action, contrary to the one driven by interest, 'shows the unique personal identity of the agents.'[81]

Despite appearances, this does not constitute a glorification of individualism; it is rather a definition of expressing one's own particularism in the categories of universal values. Taking into consideration the social context of the activities of prewar Communists (KPP was an illegal party; Communist involvement meant the risk of unemployment, police surveillance, prison, trials that brought shame on democratic procedures, imprisonment in inhumane conditions, torture, gulag in Bereza Kartuska, and finally death upon Stalin's, and later Hitler's orders[82]), their involvement – regardless of their origin – can be in fact understood as politicality defined in those terms. Arendt wrote the following about the labour movement:

> The very pathos of the labor movement in its early stages (…) stemmed from its fight against society as a whole. The enormous power potential these movements acquired in a relatively short time and often under very adverse circumstances sprang from the fact that despite all the talk and theory they were the only group on the political scene which not only defended its economic interests but fought a full-fledged political battle. In other words, when the labor movement appeared on the public scene, it was the only organization in which men acted and spoke qua men—and not qua members of society.[83]

Here, 'the struggle against society as a whole' means the undermining of the fundamentals of the social structure, instead of an attempt to acquire within its framework the rights for one's own repressed group, as is nowadays commonly thought of Jewish Communists.

It is therefore going beyond personal identity and social standing, particularly evident among those Communists, including the Jewish ones, who came from privileged classes and were therefore fighting against their own immediate interests. The involvement of Jews in Communism may therefore be viewed in the categories of a fight for freedom understood in two ways: freedom from the

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81 Ibid.

82 'There was little space for far-left opportunism at that moment: on the contrary, the Marxist intellectuals born at the turn of the century suffered persecution in interwar Poland', M. Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918–1968,* New Haven/Connecticut, 2006, p. 8.

83 Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, op. cit. p. 219.

oppression of the ruling classes, but also freedom from imposed identities that create interest groups.

Jews were definitely one such group (because they were treated as a group – defined ethnically and religiously – by the law, customs, and dynamics of stereotyping). A minority group, which – due to being endangered by the often hostile domination of the majority – can display consolidative tendencies. In this sense, the interest of the Jews was represented by the Zionists. From an ethnic category, which the social and political majority imposed on them, thereby excluding the Jews from the Polish community, they created their own identification. According to the logic of a community defined on the basis of nationality, they wanted to take care of the social issues regarding their own group, including the right to own land. According to August Grabski, the attitude of Jewish Communists towards representatives of the Jewish business sphere is remarkably well expressed in the words of Szymon Zachariasz – a personality from the so-called Jewish streets, a worker, initially a member of Poale Zion Left[84] and later of KPP, who spent six years in Sanation prisons, and after the war an activist at the Central Committee of Polish Jews:

> I think that Zionism was, is and will be reactionary (…). The main moment in Zionism is the cessation of the class struggle with the capital.

The involvement of Jews in Communism can therefore be viewed not as an activity in accordance with one's own interest, but rather as political subjectification discussed by Arendt. Subjectification

> which actually makes agents free because, in effect, it generates an identity that is socially ‹un-identifiable›: impossible to be reduced to social class, party, union, corporation, people, nation or religion. (…) The horizon of the political action encompasses the whole world; on the other hand, the strategy of political subjectification presupposes transference of every possible community.[85]

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84 A Jewish social democratic workers' party founded in 1920 in Poland.

85 M. Kozłowski, *Hannah Arendt…*, op. cit.

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