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Solidarity's Afterlife: Amidst Forgetting and Bickering

Solidarity was one of the most massive social movements in history. It was also one of the most consequential because – as most observers agree – it was a key cause of state socialism’s downfall. Yet, it has not entered the pantheon of great movements that are commonly credited with changing the history of the twentieth century: the American civil right movement of the 1960s, Gandhi’s movement against the British Empire or the anti-apartheid mobilization orchestrated by the African National Congress. The end of communism is routinely associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall, not with the Polish upheaval. The Polish movement is poorly known in most countries, international (and domestic) celebrations of *Solidarity* are not as conspicuous as the celebrations of other major movements, and the Gdansk-born movement has not become a paradigmatic case studied in the literature on protest politics.¹

The major movements of the last decades have come to be associated with moral principles that offer the world innovative and powerful ways of conceptualizing and organizing the struggle for justice, equity, and freedom. Gandhi developed and propagated a practical philosophy of *satyagraha* (non-violent resistance), Martin Luther King led the movement that became emblematic of the struggles for *civil rights*, Mandela and Tutu (the leaders of the South African ANC) contributed to the dissemination of the philosophy of *ubuntu*,² the Dalai Lama travels the world to promote *Buddhist compassion* that underpins the movement for Tibetan autonomy/independence he leads. Lech Wałęsa, certainly a popular figure on the world stage, is not seen as a propagator of the potentially

¹ In a recent article Meardi [Meardi, Guglielmo: “The Legacy of ‘Solidarity’: Class, Democracy, Culture and Subjectivity in the Polish Social Movement”. *Social Movement Studies* 4, 3 (December) 2005, pp. 261-80] reexamines the viability of Touraine’s conceptualization of *Solidarity* as movement organized around three principles: class, nation, and citizenship.

² On Ubuntu see Cornell, Drucilla: “A Call for a Nuanced Constitutional Jurisprudence: Ubuntu, dignity and reconciliation”. 19 *SAPR/PL*. 2004; and Swanson, Dalene: “Ubuntu: an African contribution to (re)search for/with ‘humble togetherness’”. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, Vol. 2, No 2 2007, pp.53-67.

attractive philosophy encapsulated in the name of the movement he led, *Solidarity*. Why?

The answer can be simple. In order to successfully promote a moral principle two conditions need to be met: (1) the principle needs to be clearly articulated in a variety of expertly crafted discourses, and (2) such discourses need to be disseminated in a coordinated and sustained fashion in as many symbolic vehicles as possible. The first task belongs to the intellectual, political, and artistic elites; the second to political entrepreneurs and social activists.

There is no room here to present the intellectual and artistic efforts behind the global establishment of such principles as American *civil rights*, Indian *satyagraha*, South African *ubuntu*, or Tibetan (Buddhist) *compassion*. A systematic comparative research project on this issue awaits its author, but it would be easy to show that each of these principles has been subjected to much more extensive philosophical and artistic examination, elaboration, and amplification than Polish *solidarity*.

During *Solidarity's* heyday Father Tichner, the movement's undisputed chief chaplain, offered a series of meditations on *Solidarity/solidarity*³ that for some time seemed to be quite influential, at least in Poland. But his work has not been continued. Since 1989, remarkably little intellectual energy has been invested in the development of the principle of *Solidarity*, that enormously successful master frame of the movement that helped to bring down state socialism. Immediately following the collapse of the communist regime in Poland some activists of the Citizens' Committees attempted to use this principle to develop a novel social philosophy centered on the idea of the "third way," but their efforts faded away very fast. I am aware of only two major efforts to systematically elaborate *solidarity* as a philosophical concept. Arista Cirtautas wrote a fascinating treatise that links the ideals underpinning Polish dissident movements, particularly *Solidarity*, to the tradition built around the philosophy of natural rights and – most originally – to the humanist, Renaissance ideals of human dignity.⁴ Włodzimierz Wesolowski and Aneta Gawkowska showed the embeddedness of the values animating Polish dissidence – again with

³ Tischner, Józef: *The Spirit of Solidarity*. Harper and Row: San Francisco 1984.

⁴ Cirtautas, Arista: *The Polish Solidarity Movement: Revolution, Democracy and Natural Rights*. Routledge: London 1997, p. 168.

Solidarity being most prominent – in several trends of the Polish social and political philosophy dating back to the nineteenth century.⁵

Short on systematic elaboration, the principle of *solidarity* has not been promoted beyond a group of devoted aficionados⁶ in any sustained fashion. Obviously, promotion is difficult if not impossible without a prior clear (philosophical or artistic) articulation and systematization. So, why has such potentially attractive symbolic capital, which could have been employed in international promotion of Polish post-communist successes, been wasted? The answer lies in the inability of the Polish elites and the population at large to formulate once and for all a clear and broadly accepted interpretation of the movement's history, its heroes, and its most significant successes. Most importantly, as of 2014, there has been no agreement on how to remember the Round Table Agreements (arguably the movement's most spectacular political success) and whether and how to celebrate its leader, Lech Wałęsa. By contrast, American debates over the commemoration of King, Tibetan discussions over the Dalai Lama, South African over Mandela, or Indian over Gandhi seem to be surrounded by less intense debates and controversies than the similar efforts to commemorate and celebrate Wałęsa's leadership.⁷

Let's push this train of thought a step further. If the international promotion of *solidarity* (as a principle) and *Solidarity* (as a movement) has so far (2014) failed due to the Polish society's inability to agree on how to remember and celebrate both, what accounts for this situation? The rest of this essay is a sketch of a possible answer.

Mnemonic reconciliation and the democratic consolidation⁸

⁵ Wesołowski, Włodzimierz / Gawkowska, Aneta: "'Communitarian' Motives in Polish Political Thought". *Polish Sociological Review*, 1 (145) 2004, pp. 15-31; and Wesołowski, Włodzimierz / Gawkowska, Aneta: "Jednostka, wspólnota i solidarność: motywy komunitarne w polskiej myśli społeczno-politycznej". In: Kurczewska, Joanna / Tarkowska, Elżbieta (eds.): *Spotkania z kulturą. Antoninie Kloskowskiej w pięta rocznice śmierci*. Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN: Warszawa 2006, pp. 246-93

⁶ See, The European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk (<http://www.ecs.gda.pl>) and a research collective at the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw (<http://solidarnosc.collegium.edu.pl>). Both institutions publish interesting studies and documentary evidence.

⁷ But it is important to note that even in "older" democracies, while the intensity of discursive struggles over the system's symbolic foundations diminishes (see Brier 2009, p. 81), it is never fully extinguished.

⁸ This section and several other fragments were first written together with Amy Linch. Here I have developed some of our ideas further and reorganized some of our original arguments. Our earlier common work was published as Kubik and Linch 2006 and in Linch and Kubik 2009. I want to thank Amy

Why is it important to have the domain of national memory “ordered” and arranged around a more or less coherent and broadly shared vision of the collective past, particularly in a new or consolidating political regime? Why is such an arrangement important for democracy?

Many scholars argue that there is a positive correlation between the depth of post-conflict reconciliation and the progress of democratic consolidation. The concept of reconciliation employed in the literature on transitions to democracy refers variously to the process through which a society emerges from civil conflict, the confrontation with the past within that process, and/or to the goals of social harmony, human rights, institutional legitimacy and socio-economic justice. As a key component of transitional justice, reconciliation is alternately denounced as a weak substitute for “true justice” or championed for eschewing vengeance and creating opportunities for social healing.⁹ Its ambiguous referent and connotations of spiritual transformation is seen as a possible impediment to the consolidation of liberal democracy for some.¹⁰ For others, those very characteristics help heal fractured social bonds whose restoration is necessary to rebuild both legal and economic relationships within a community.¹¹ There is, however, a third way of thinking about this issue: mutual reinforcement. Krygier and Czarnota argue that “dealing with the past as a constitutional question is a problem of creating social conditions

and my wife, Martha, for their editorial remarks. My further work on these issues was conducted with Michael Bernhard and a group of colleagues. Their names and our results can be found in Bernhard and Kubik 2014.

⁹ Tutu, Desmond: *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Doubleday: New York 1999; Minow, Martha: *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence*. Beacon Press: Boston 1998; and Villa-Vicencio, Charles / Verwoerd, Wilhelm (eds.): *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*. University of Cape Town Press: Cape Town 2000.

¹⁰ Ash, Timothy G.: “True Confessions”. *New York Review of Books*. July 17, 1997, pp. 33-38; Norval, Aletta: “Truth and Reconciliation: The Birth of the Present and the Reworking of History”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25 (3) 1999, pp. 449-519; and Forsberg, Tuomas: “The Philosophy and Practice of Dealing with the Past: Some Conceptual and Normative Issues”. In: Biggar, Nigel. (ed.): *Burying the Past Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*. Georgetown University Press: Washington DC 2003.

¹¹ Shriver, Donald: “Where and When in Political Life is Justice Served by Forgiveness”. In: Biggar, N. (ed.): *Burying the Past Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*. Georgetown University Press: Washington DC 2003; Biggar, Nigel (ed.): *Burying the Past Making Peace and Doing Justice after Civil Conflict*. Georgetown University Press: Washington, DC 2003; Graybill, Lyn S.: *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder 2002; and Elshtain, Jean. B.: “The Hard Questions: True Confessions – The Moral and Political Wisdom of South Africa’s Truth Commission”. *The New Republic*, November 10, 1997.

for the new socio-political order, as well as *regenerating damaged moral bonds in the society* [emphasis added – JK].”¹²

The most comprehensive conceptualization of reconciliation regards it as a multi-level, multi-stage process that begins with the preconditions for institutional agreement, encompasses the agreement negotiations and implementation, and ends with its legacies, both cultural and institutional. Reconciliation is both the *process* of promoting social and political peace by channeling contention into representative institutions and an *approach* to the issues that stand in the way of peace and cooperation among the parties involved in the functioning of those institutions. It is about overcoming social and economic inequities engendered by the *ancient regime*, proposing new cultural scenarios, changing perceptions, and rebuilding damaged relations on all levels of society. It is further argued that such a repair is beneficial for the consolidation of democracy.

Agreement among elites – arguably a necessary though insufficient step in reconciliation following a regime change – is predicated on their perceiving themselves as potential collaborators in bringing about peace rather than as enemies.¹³ In the case of negotiated transition (transplacement – in Huntington’s terminology) amnesty is often recommended. Huntington advises: “If transformation or transplacement occurred, do not attempt to prosecute authoritarian officials for human rights violations. The political cost of such an effort will outweigh any moral gains.”¹⁴ The development and acceptance of a joint project designed to bridge the political and/or social divisions provides the preconditions for the development of trust and mutual accommodation among elites. But the change devised at the top must then be convincingly communicated to the society at large in order to generate support for the agreement. In short, a functioning democracy requires that the constituents represented by the elites who are party to the negotiations accept the new terms of

¹² Krygier, Martin / Czarnota, Adam: “After Postcommunism: The Next Phase”. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, Vol. 2, December 2006, p. 327.

¹³ Kriesberg, Louis: “Changing Forms of Coexistence”. In: Abu-Nimer, M. (ed.): *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence, Theory and Practice*. Lexington Books: Lanham, MD 2001; and Kennedy, Michael: *Cultural Formations of Post-communism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation, and War*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 2002.

¹⁴ Huntington, Samuel: *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman 1991, p. 231.

engagement and begin to establish working relationships with their former adversaries.¹⁵

In other words, the speed and “quality” of democratic consolidation is thought to depend upon the willingness of people previously mobilized in conflict to accept new rules of engagement, rules that are often anathema to the identities and framing of issues that galvanized them in the first place. The newly formed representative institutions offer the promise of a less disruptive means of channeling political and social conflicts, but their legitimacy requires a realignment of loyalties, interests and – most importantly – understandings of political reality, including the cultural foundation of a common collective identity. Elshtain defines reconciliation as acknowledgement “that we are all enclosed in a single sociopolitical frame and enfolded within a common ethical-political horizon.” (1997) The formation of such “frame” or “horizon” is often coterminous with the establishment of a “nation” construed as a community founded on shared experiences conserved within a standardized set of narratives. The invocation or creation of a common symbolic frame (“nation”) within which people can collectively interpret their experience helps to reconcile the diverse and factious experiences of the past. But as most theorists agree, the construction of a coherent collective memory occurs through coordinated communication rather than a spontaneous “amalgamation” of private remembrances.¹⁶ Therefore, culturally focused reconciliation projects that attempt to provide “closure” regarding the crimes of the past do not work particularly well if they are not sponsored by the state and place the burden of redress and remembrance on societal groups alone.¹⁷ That is, for the process to be successful the “nation” must work in unison; factionalization thwarts the effort.¹⁸

¹⁵ Bloomfield, David / Barnes, Teresa / Huyse, Luc (eds.): *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict. A Handbook*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: Stockholm 2003. (electronic version available at www.idea.int/publications/reconciliation/upload/reconciliation_full.pdf).

¹⁶ Connerton, Paul: *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press: New York 1989; Olick, Jeffrey: “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures”. *Sociological Theory*, 17, 3 (November) 1999, pp. 333-48; Olick, Jeffrey / Coughlin, Brenda: “The Politics of Regret: Analytical Frames”. In: Torpey, John. (ed.): *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD 2003.

¹⁷ Kubik, Jan / Linch, Amy: “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic: Discounting ‘Solidarity’ and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation”. *Polish Sociological Review* 153 (1) 2006, pp. 9-38.

¹⁸ Bernhard, Michael / Kubik, Jan (eds.): *Twenty Years after Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*. Oxford University Press: New York 2014.

A number of scholars have argued that reconciliation, so critical for building a (relatively) united national whole, must include developing a shared narrative regarding the past, a common collective memory. In a sense, the goal of narrative reconciliation (understood as a process) is mnemonic reconciliation. Both are achieved when members of previously contending groups can acknowledge the legitimacy of one another's perspectives on their own experiences.¹⁹ Time and coexistence are important factors in promoting narrative reconciliation according to some scholars,²⁰ but perhaps even more important are the institutional channels through which stories of the past are told. Dwyer²¹ cites the power of competing narratives of the past in the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi. UNESCO's creation of a history book to mediate the different versions of Burundi's past that stoke the hatred between the two groups is a good example of a productive institutional intervention.

Additionally, successful narrative reconciliation is to a large degree dependent upon the cooperation of the elites who are most invested in perpetuating attachment to exclusive narratives of the past among their constituents. The Spanish case is a rare example of coordinated effort among elites to exclude contentious issues from public debate and mobilize collective memory (of the civil war) as a deterrent to civil unrest. The king became a symbol of national reconciliation and in the years following Franco's death popular pride in the creation of the Spanish democracy became a unifying source of national identity.²² Splits among elites and unresolved private grievances can pose obstacles to popular acceptance of a unifying narrative frame, as evidenced by the experiences of the southern cone countries of South America where the military blocked demands for accountability and truth by victims and human rights advocates. Political leaders argued that peace required putting aside principle driven politics. Ethical and ideological commitments were faulted for the collapse of

¹⁹ Torpey, John (ed.): *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, MD 2003; Bernhard and Kubik 2014.

²⁰ Kriesberg 2001; Huntington 1991, pp. 208-79; Sa'adah, Anne: *Germany's Second Chance: Trust, Justice, and Democratization*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge 1998.

²¹ Dwyer, Susan. J.: "Reconciliation for Realists". In: Prager, C. / Govier, T. (eds.): *Dilemmas of Reconciliation*. Wilfrid Laurier Press: Waterloo, ON 2003.

²² Edles, Laura: *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain. The Transition to Democracy after Franco*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998; Aguilar, Pamela / Humlebæk, C.: "Collective Memory and National Identity in the Spanish Democracy. The Legacies of Francoism and the Civil War". *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past*. Vol. 14. 2002.

democracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s and reconciliation was construed as moving forward by forgetting the past. In Chile the arrest of Pinochet brought polarizing “irruptions of memory” into the public sphere resurrecting the aborted public debate about both Pinochet’s crimes and the state of the country under Allende.²³ In South Africa, on the other hand, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) attempted to promote reconciliation by weaving a narrative of forgiveness from the suffering people experienced under the old regime. The TRC symbolically constructed the new nation as an ethical commitment to prevent the abuses of the old regime by creating a culture of human rights. It attempted to promote reconciliation on the societal level by framing the crimes of the past in terms of the unjust system rather than as the fault of individuals. The two years during which the crimes of the apartheid regime dominated public life helped to overcome the severe segregation of social memory among the black and white communities and provide a frame through which they could begin to understand a common future.²⁴

The discussion so far can be summarized as follows. There are several factors that shape the consolidation of democracy or the improvement of the quality of democracy; one of them is the formation and maintenance of mechanisms assuring the relatively amiable and “civil” relationships among various groups in the society and/or the formation of sufficiently high level of intra-societal trust. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between the condition of collective memory on the one hand and the “civility” as well as the level of such trust on the other: the more harmonious the former, the higher the latter.²⁵

In other words, the achievement of a high level of political legitimacy and the development of a high level of the intra-societal trust depend on or at least are positively correlated with a state of collective memory that may

²³ Wilde, Alexander: “Irruptions of Memory: Expressive Politics in Chile's Transition to Democracy”. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 31, 2 (May) 1999, pp. 473-500.

²⁴ Asmal, Kader / Asmal, Louise / Roberts, Ronald S: *Reconciliation through Truth*. David Philip Publishers: Cape Town 1996; Gibson, James: *Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile the Divided Nation?* Russell Sage Foundation: New York 2004; Kraybill, Ron: “From Head to Heart: The Cycle of Reconciliation”. *Conciliation Quarterly*, 7, 4 (Fall) 1988; Krog, Antjie: *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. Times Books: New York 1999; Liatsos, Yianna: “Historical Catharsis and the Ethics of Remembering in the Post-Apartheid Novel”. Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University 2005.

²⁵ Rothstein, Bo: “Trust, Social Dilemmas and Collective Memories”. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 12 (4) 2000, pp. 477-501. See also: Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, eds. 2003; de Brito et al 2001; Davis 2005; Gibson 2004; Gready 2003; Hodgkin and Radstone 2003; Jelin 2003; Liatsos 2005; Torpey 2003; Wilde 1999.

be called *harmonious* or *unified*. This condition can take several forms and can be achieved via several mechanisms. (Bernhard and Kubik 2014) For example, it can mean the creation of a situation in which (almost) all members of given society share the same set of memories that are additionally shaped in such a way that they improve the government's legitimacy and/or contribute to the achievement of reconciliation. This is a situation of *mnemonic hegemony*. Often this condition is achieved through more or less coercive manipulation of cultural production. Another situation is the existence of several memory domains (or memory regimes) in a given society with a set of accepted rules that establish and regulate a *peaceful* co-existence of these domains (regimes). This is a condition of *mnemonic pillarization* with separate memory regimes sharing a minimal set of common mnemonic fundamentals. This is, in turn, conducive to *mnemonic reconciliation*. Without such reconciliation it is difficult to propose a national frame for considering a new polity's identity and there is no integration of disparate trust networks.²⁶ For example, it is often argued that a new state or political regime should be inaugurated through the establishment of a national narrative that explains the fundamental relationship among the people who comprise it, accounts for the suffering involved in its creation, and ultimately provides a basis for the establishment of standards of justice and fairness.²⁷ If this is not accomplished, people remain polarized and focused on their own elites, and the public realm remains divided. Or put differently, a society with a *fractured* collective memory (no single hegemonic collective memory, no mnemonic pillarization or no mnemonic reconciliation among competing memory regimes) will have a weakly legitimized political regime and low levels of social trust.²⁸

²⁶ See Tilly (2005, 2007) on the concept of trust networks.

²⁷ A broadly accepted generalization to be found in various theoretical works and more practice-oriented manuals, runs as follows: "A functioning democracy, then, is built on a dual foundation: a set of fair procedures for peacefully handling the issues that divide a society (the political and social structures of governance) and a set of working relationships between the groups involved" (Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, eds. 2003). See also: Tilly 2007.

²⁸ Political-cultural entrepreneurs in a country with a fractured collective memory may decide that this constitutes a problem - for example, for the system's legitimacy - and can initiate cultural-political projects aimed at the achievement of some form of mnemonic hegemony or mnemonic reconciliation. It seems that non-democratic regimes will tend to prefer the former, while democracies have no choice but follow some version of the latter.

Polish troubles with mnemonic reconciliation

Poland emerged from communism as the country with the most distinguished history of anti-communist opposition and Poles can boast that they organized the most massive popular challenge communism ever faced – the *Solidarity* movement. The conditions for mnemonic reconciliation and thus successful cultural consolidation of the society can hardly be any better. *Solidarity* generated a rich and multifaceted lore of symbols, narratives, and (collective) memories. The post-communist order had a clearly defined founding moment: the Round Table Accords. It had at least one candidate for a great national hero: Lech Wałęsa. And it could easily add to the extensive list of the nation's sacred spaces one more: the Gdańsk Shipyard. Yet neither a symbolic closure of the Round Table process nor broader mnemonic reconciliation has been achieved to date (2014). What happened?

There is no room in a short essay to develop an exhaustive description and explanation of the failure to establish a common mnemonic regime that would strengthen democratic consolidation, facilitate the promotion of Poland (as “communism’s slayer”), establish *Solidarity* among the great movements of the twentieth century, and certify the movement’s authorship of an innovative moral principle. In a sketch of such an analysis I identify the relevant elements or dimensions of the past that *potentially* could become enshrined and celebrated in collective memory and juxtapose them with those that actually are the subject of mnemonic contests whose participants try to develop specific versions of national memory. A comparison of the potential set of elements to remember with the elements actually selected by political actors to build “histories” or “visions” of the past helps to identify the strategies involved in the politics of memory.

Solidarity was such a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that it can be remembered in many different ways. To facilitate the examination of this complexity and to identify the dimensions of the *Solidarity* phenomenon that are relevant for the formation of collective memory (or legacy) I will try answer four questions:

- Who is the audience evaluating a given legacy and its impact?
- Which period of *Solidarity's* existence should be remembered/studied as a legacy?
- Can we identify different periods influenced differently by the legacies of *Solidarity*?

- What areas of impact should be selected?

The first question has an easy, simple answer: there are two basic audiences relevant for the mnemonic contests: domestic and international. Second, it is sufficient to investigate the legacies of two main periods of *Solidarity's* existence: the so-called "first *Solidarity*" (August 1980 – December 1981) and the 1981-1989 period (Underground *Solidarity* and the Round Table negotiations). There are also two answers to the third question: each period of *Solidarity's* existence influenced – albeit differently – both the decomposition of state socialism and the consolidation of democracy. Fourth, the areas of impact can be conveniently conceptualized using a minimum of tools provided by the classical social movement theory.²⁹ Any movement (or protest activity) influences and is influenced by: (1) the political opportunity structure (POS), (2) organization of the societal forces opposing or counterbalancing the regime's power, and (3) cultural framing of the political struggle. This set of distinctions is summarized in the following list:

- 1.1. Two "audiences:"
 - 1.1.1. Domestic
 - 1.1.2. International
- 1.2. Two legacies:
 - 1.2.1. *Solidarity*" (1980-81)
 - 1.2.2. "Second *Solidarity*" (1989) and the Round Table
- 1.3. Two periods of impact:
 - 1.3.1. Short term (decomposition of communism)
 - 1.3.2. Long term (democratic consolidation)
- 1.4. Three areas of impact (classical social movements theory):
 - 1.4.1. Political opportunity structure (POS)
 - 1.4.2. Organization
 - 1.4.3. Frames (ideas, ideology, culture)

While *Solidarity*, particularly as a novel moral principle, has not become a focus of sustained studies or intense international moral debates, post-communist Poland does attract a great deal of attention from the

²⁹ Tarrow, Sydney: *Power in Movement*. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998; McAdam, Doug / McCarthy, John D. / Zald, Mayer. N. (eds.): *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1996; McAdam, Doug / Tarrow, Sydney / Tilly, Charles: *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge University Press: New York 2001.

international scholarly community. Foreign experts study both Polish accomplishments and tribulations in a variety of comparative projects and almost uniformly rank Poland as one of the greatest success stories in post-communist Europe. The role of Poland as a pioneer and leader in the struggle against communism is broadly acknowledged and *Solidarity* is credited for its bravery and tenacity, as well as for its creative and skillful strategizing during the extremely difficult period of state socialism's collapse and power transfer. Scholars count Polish economic reforms among the most successful in post-communist Europe and commend the stability of Polish democracy (despite some problems, such as low electoral turnouts and a relatively dysfunctional party system) and steadiness of its foreign policy.

Yet many Poles – particularly a significant segment of the nation's intellectual elite, particularly on the right – are critical of the political and social situation in the country. Many right-wing critics of the Polish post-communist condition claim that the country is in bad shape and the reasons for that lie in a series of serious mistakes, if not outright malicious maneuvers, committed or orchestrated by a part of the elite that was in charge during the critical moment of power transfer. Often, the criticism is extended to the post-1989 period that is seen as a series of botched efforts to bring the ex-communists to justice and to build a polity truly reflecting the needs and desires of the Polish nation, defined according to the precepts of a rather narrow, exclusive formulation of Polish nationalism. Sometimes such criticisms are measured and focused on specific issues; sometimes they are total and indiscriminating.³⁰

Most foreign observers who care to follow the spectacle of historical revisionism that has erupted in Poland almost since 1989 are flabbergasted. They learn, usually with incredulity, that domestic revisionists often see the Polish Round Table as an act of treason and Lech Wałęsa as a treacherous communist agent. Recall that for most scholars and friends of Poland the Round Table is seen as a creative, path-breaking solution to an incredibly complex political standoff, while Wałęsa is celebrated as a tough, charismatic and effective popular political leader. Paradoxically, then, the

³⁰ For the former see, for example, Śpiewak 2005; for the latter a group of publicists associated with *Radio Maryja* and the daily *Nasz Dziennik*. For a useful site that monitors *Radio Maryja's* activities (including English language publications consult <http://www.radiomaryja.pl.eu.org>). For more radical criticisms of the post-1989 Republic see Legutko 2008 and Krasnodebski 2003. Wildstein offers a strong critical view (from the right) on the lack of decommunization or lustration (2000).

informed international audience tends to consider *Solidarity* an exceptionally resourceful and heroic social movement (albeit not studied much) that is one of the reasons for Polish post-communist successes, while Poles are still trying to figure out how to commemorate and celebrate *together* the movement they once formed and ran so successfully.

In the next two sections I identify the major elements of *Solidarity's* legacy that hypothetically could or should be remembered collectively and celebrated.

Legacies of the "first" *Solidarity* (August 1980 – December 1981)³¹

The short-term impact of the "first" *Solidarity* on the decomposition of state socialism (1981-89) can be analyzed using the three broad categories introduced earlier. The Polish communists' official recognition of *Solidarity* in the fall of 1980 changed the rules of the political game through which the Soviets dominated Eastern Europe after the Second World War. A massive organization, fully autonomous and free from communist control, was legally established and from that moment on the political strategies of all collective actors in Poland had to be recalculated. Moreover, the emergence of the movement and the system's reaction to it within the Soviet Union indicated that state socialism was ready for some, albeit unspecified, quantum of reform. In the parlance of the political process theory of social movements, the political opportunity structure (POS) was redefined and at least partially opened in response to popular mobilization.

In the organizational sphere, *Solidarity's* innovations were as numerous as they were path breaking. First, *Solidarity* was a complex social entity that still defies easy conceptualization and generates interesting debates. (Meardi 2005) Arguably, the unorthodox social form of the movement – a cultural class as I labeled it³² – was the source of its strength that proved impossible for the communists to crack. Second, despite many actual and potential cleavages, *Solidarity* remained united behind its leader, Lech Wałęsa, whose authority was unquestioned by the movement's other underground leaders. A unique duumvirate emerged in

³¹ The presentation of the empirical material used in this section draws heavily on Kubik 2000 and Kubik and Linch 2006. This material was collected for the *Communism's Negotiated Collapse* project (see Bibliography).

³² Kubik, Jan: *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. The Penn State University Press: University Park 1994.

which the underground leaders coordinated covert activities, while Wałęsa was active on the "surface." This structure proved to be an exceptionally effective coordinating device during the difficult 1981-88 period. Third, the union that functioned as an organizational skeleton for a massive, multi-layered network of cells, groups, allied organizations, social initiatives, etc. was able to cover the territory of the whole country. Fourth, the potentially over-centralized power of Wałęsa and the National Commission (KK) was effectively counterbalanced by decentralization, particularly at the regional level. Fifth, the standard principle according to which union activities are organized – the *place of employment* – was supplemented by the *place of residence* principle that allowed people in various locations to connect and build alternative communities and organize common actions.

Solidarity's unique genius resided particularly in the domain of culture (Kubik 1994). The Polish anticommunist "revolution" was a massive cultural-political phenomenon. No other East European country's resistance movement came close to its breadth of social incorporation or the intensity of its conceptual and symbolic battle against communist authoritarianism. During the 1970s and early 1980s, a substantial number of people engaged in the formulation, development, and defense of a counter-hegemonic vision that de-legitimized the state-socialist system and, simultaneously, allowed these people to constitute themselves as an "oppositional" cultural-class of *Solidarity*. The cultural frame that defined this class and held it together was built as a polar vision of "we/the people/*Solidarity*" versus "them/the authorities/communists." This bi-polar conceptualization ((di)vision) was not shared by everybody, yet it served as a mobilizing frame for the most active individuals and groups. It was powerful enough to "cover," at least during the 1980-81 period, the ideological divisions within the mobilized public. This in turn, contributed to the movement's staying power and its political effectiveness.

The long-term impact of *Solidarity* (on the post-1989 period) has been no less spectacular, though it was most clearly felt during the early years of post-communist transformations. Poland entered post-communism with a level of popular mobilization that far surpassed that of any other post-communist country. This translated promptly into the formation of a deep (by comparison with other post-communist countries) counter-elite relatively well-prepared for the formidable and unprecedented task of taking power from the communists. It is one of the axioms of the post-communist studies that the success of political and economic reforms is

positively correlated with the strength and depth of the anti-communist opposition.³³ Poland is the prime example of this regularity. Another long-term effect of *Solidarity's* first period of existence is the formation of a broadly based trade union that challenged the communist monopoly in the area of union organizing and eventually contributed to the pluralistic character of Poland's labor union sector. *Solidarity* was the main vehicle of the anti-communist opposition before 1989, and, as our research shows, it became the dominant organizer of popular (including labor) protests in post-communist Poland.³⁴

Participation in *Solidarity* was so massive that the society accumulated considerable organizational capital, which proved to be particularly useful during the period of transfer of power (1989) and the early consolidation. *Solidarity's* organization according to the territorial (*place of residence*) principle during the clandestine years allowed it to accomplish three feats: (1) organize as *Citizens' Committees* and run an effective electoral campaign between the end of the Round Table negotiations (April 4, 1989) and the semi-free parliamentary elections of June 4, 1989, (2) prepare and implement far-reaching decentralization of the state administration, and (3) hold the unprecedented local elections conducted already in 1990 and won by the candidates supported by the movement. *Citizens' Committees*, extremely effective as they were in harnessing social energy right after the fall of the old system, produced also an ideology whose legacy is dubious: the idea of the "third way" (between capitalism and socialism) that was never fruitfully applied and might have contributed to the delaying of the formation of an effective system of political parties.

The long-term cultural legacy of *Solidarity* poses a paradoxical problem. The symbolic overheating was an extremely effective weapon during the years of struggle. It allowed the people to separate themselves from the party-state and helped them sustain mobilization throughout the difficult Martial Law period. But it also posed a potential danger to the new

³³ Bunce, Valery: "The Political Economy of Postsocialism". *Slavic Review*, 58, 4 (Winter) 1999, pp. 756-93; Ekiert, Grzegorz: "Patterns of Postcommunist Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe". In Ekiert, G. / Hanson, S. (eds.): *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2003, pp. 89-119.

³⁴ Ekiert, Grzegorz / Kubik, Jan: *Rebellious Civil Society, Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989-1993*. University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor 1999; Kubik, Jan / Wenzel, Michał: "The Logic of Civil Society: Poland, Hungary, South Korea and Taiwan. Project's Outline and Preliminary Results". *Societas/Communitas*, 4-5(1) 2008, pp. 97-106 (in Polish).

political system. Democratic politics seem to be at their best when guided by the spirit of pragmatism and compromise.

Twelve attributes of *first Solidarity* are summarized in Table 1. Each of them is a potential legacy that may or may not be cultivated in collective memory.

Table 1: Attributes (potential legacies) of the *first Solidarity* (1980-81)

	IMPACT ON POS	ORGANIZATION	FRAMES/CULTURE
SHORT TERM (1980-89)	1. The beginning of the end of state socialism (most massive challenge state socialism has ever experienced)	2. Social movement cum labor union. 3. Charismatic leader, collaborating with "underground" deputies. 4. Country-wide. 5. Decentralized. 6. "Place of residence" organizational principle (territorial structures)	7. Over-symbolization (based on religious frames): effective mobilizational weapon.
LONG TERM (post-1989 consolidation)	8. Formation of a well-defined counter-elite (the most effective political mechanism of accountability) 9. Labor movement pluralism	10. Territorial mobilization → self-government. 11. An idea of the "third way" (a philosophy of the <i>Citizens' Committees</i> movement that emerged from <i>Solidarity</i>)	12. Symbolic overheating Symbolic rift never closed (no rite of passage), thus potential for incessant politicization

Potential legacies of the underground *Solidarity* and the Round Table (December 1981 – June 1989)

The short-term impact of this period and its crowning event – the Round Table negotiations – is nothing less than historic. The well-organized and steadfast resistance that *Solidarity* managed to put up after the communists delegalized it on December 13, 1981, was unprecedented and eventually brought Jaruzelski and his team to the negotiating table. There can be little doubt that this breakthrough development would not have been possible without a dramatic change in the external political opportunity structure brought about the elevation of Gorbachev to the position of supreme power in the Soviet Bloc and his subsequent rapprochement with Reagan, a steadfast supporter of *Solidarity*. But the nitty-gritty logistics of the unprecedented power transfer were in Polish hands and the pioneering experiences of the country's elites set the strategic tone for the regime transformations in the whole region. The Polish communists suffered an embarrassing electoral defeat on June 4, 1989 and the first non-communist government in this part of the world since the 1940s was formed on August 24, 1989. Other dominoes then began to fall, including the spectacular opening of several, practically uncontrolled crossings through the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. The state socialist system in Central Europe ended.

The early institutional landscape of Polish post-communist transformations was characterized by a unique innovation, later largely forgotten: the *Citizens' Committees*. On December 18, 1988, when it was clear that the communists accepted negotiations with the opposition, Wałęsa officially convened the Citizens Committee of the Chairman of *Solidarity*. It was an elite group of intellectuals and activists, conceived mostly as an advisory board to the Chairman, but also as a shadow cabinet of sorts. After the communists agreed to hold semi-free elections to the Parliament, *Solidarity's* leadership decided to form regional and local Citizens' Committees (CCs) throughout the country in order to overcome the incumbent party-state's tremendous advantage in resources and media access. Thousands of such committees that sprung up during the next two

months prepared and ran *Solidarity's* electoral campaign with the help of often improvised and homemade propaganda materials. The elections of June 4 were a stunning success for the just re-legalized movement and an unanticipated, thorough defeat of the communist bloc; *Solidarity/CC* candidates won all but one of the mandates they were allowed to contest.

Thanks to the Citizens' Committees Poland was the first post-Communist country to introduce a dramatic devolution of power and far-reaching reconstruction of local and regional administrations. Later, others followed, but again Poland was a pioneer. Due to the fact that *Solidarity* in the guise of Citizens' Committees had its cells in all 2400 plus *gminas* (municipalities and communes), it immediately triggered political competition at all levels of the political system. Again, this helps to explain Poland's later successes in developing independent, effective (certainly by regional standards), and often innovative local governance (despite corruption), whose effectiveness was recently demonstrated in a comprehensive comparative study.³⁵

Several studies of the 1981-1989 period in Poland concluded that the cultural vitality and political significance of the polar frame (*Solidarity* versus the party-state) during these years not only did not decline, but seems to have increased. Anna Uhlig, author of an excellent study of political symbolism of the 1980s, wrote: "after December 13, 1981 the opposition's drive to make a distinction between 'our Poland' (the *Solidarity* Republic) from 'their Poland' (Polish People's Republic) intensifies."³⁶ The events that helped the underground movement to cultivate this hegemonic polar cleavage included two papal visits, the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko and the immediate emergence of his cult, countless street demonstrations and clashes with the police as well as large industrial strikes in 1988. Not everybody, of course, participated in this ongoing, political and symbolic confrontation with the regime, and not everybody accepted the polar vision of the conflict. In fact, the actual numbers of those who supported *Solidarity* kept declining throughout the 1980s and rebounded only after *Solidarity's* spectacular electoral victory in 1989. Yet, the perception of the hegemonic conflict between "us" and "them" continued to

³⁵ Trutkowski, Cezary: "Przemiany wspólnot lokalnych – społeczny wymiar decentralizacji". paper presented at the conference "Polska po 20 latach wolności". Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, May 22-23, 2009.

³⁶ Uhlig, Anna: *W kregu symbolu. O polskiej kulturze politycznej lat osiemdziesiątych* [*Symbol's circle. On the Polish political culture of the 1980s*]. Uniwersytet Warszawski, Instytut Nauk Politycznych: Warsaw 1989, p. 61.

be the most characteristic feature of Polish popular political culture. Jasiewicz and Adamski summarized a longitudinal study of Polish attitudes in the following fashion: "Spontaneous answers show that in 1988 somewhat fewer respondents than in 1984 perceive the presence of conflict in Polish society, which is, however, noted by almost half the respondents. The great majority of those who perceive conflict define it as between the authorities and society."³⁷ It is therefore clear that during the waning years of state socialism in Poland (1976-1989), an extreme, bi-polar conceptualization of the public space ("us" versus "them") was formed and became a crucial weapon in the "society's" struggle against the unwanted regime.

As the negotiations with the representatives of the regime began, the *Solidarity* activists still subscribed to this basic bi-polar image, but a picture of the "untouchable" enemy had to be partially replaced by a vision of an adversary-as-a-negotiating partner. Negotiations are impossible without a symbolic platform of commonality. To create such a platform, several principal actors engaged in discursive actions aimed at discharging potentially explosive historical memories. As Janusz Reykowski, a representative of the party-state at the Round Table, recalled:

Another [condition of successful negotiations - JK] was the principle of not discussing symbolic problems. We were to solve the future, and avoid arguing about the past. We believed, and I think most of us agreed here, that if we started getting into discussions about the past wrongs, we wouldn't accomplish anything. We had to accept the fact that we looked at different things from the past in different ways, and that we had different visions of various symbolic problems. There were situations when someone couldn't help raising such a problem, and the emotions flared, but I think we were in solidarity trying to weaken these emotions during the negotiations.³⁸

³⁷ Jasiewicz, Krzysztof / Adamski, Władysław: "Evolution of the oppositional consciousness". In: Adamski, Władysław (ed.): *Societal Conflict and Systemic Change. The Case of Poland 1980-1992*. IFiS Publishers: Warsaw 1993, p. 55.

³⁸ *Communism's Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table, Ten Years Later. A Conference at the University of Michigan. April 7-10, 1999. English Transcript of the Conference Proceedings*, trans. Kietlinska, Kasia: ed. by Donna Parmelee (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2000). Preparation of this conference transcript was supported in part by a grant from the United States Institute of Peace awarded to Michael D. Kennedy and Brian Porter. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessary reflect the views of the United States Institute for Peace.

The logic of negotiating requires, however, that the construction of a common (symbolic) ground must be counterbalanced by the images of separateness.³⁹ Otherwise, the supporters of the negotiating team (its “base”) may conclude that their representatives are “selling out” and some critics of a dialogue have an easy task should they decide to develop a narrative of treason. As a result, an ambiguous, hazy picture of the elite replaces a crisp, bi-polar vision of the socio-political field; the previously totally separate elites are appearing as at least partially overlapping. With such ambiguous cultural baggage, Poland entered the period of democratic transformations. The complex symbolism of the 1998-89 negotiations has become the target of intense interpretive wars, with the Round Table construed variously as a symbol of: (1) victory, (2) murky compromise, or (3) outright failure. The main reason for this mnemonic chaos was the lack of a properly devised and staged ritual of *closure cum purification* that would simultaneously close the previous period and ceremoniously initiate the new one.⁴⁰ It is easy to argue, however, that this was precisely the price that had to be paid for the pragmatic spirit of compromise that not only made the negotiations possible, but also set the tone for the subsequent political moves. As has been often observed, despite occasional “authoritarian” rhetorical flourishes, Polish democratic politics has remained remarkably sturdy for the last twenty years. Quite possibly the key reason for this institutional stability is the spirit and practice of compromise already demonstrated at the Round Table. (Kennedy 2002)

This pragmatic attachment to democratic procedures has served Poland well. As all major democracy-monitoring organizations, such as the

³⁹ Hall observed in his conversation with Castle (2003, p. 72): “The most important thing was that society, and particularly that part of society which identified with “Solidarity” and with the opposition, did not get the impression that the border between the camp of the authorities and the camp of the opposition had been erased. That it didn't get the impression that the system was being transformed only as a result of co-opting part of the former opposition elite into the ruling elite. That would have meant a defeat, a fundamental defeat for all of us, since we were convinced that our strength resulted above all from social support. For society it must be clear that it isn't a matter of creating a new Front of National Unity, but that instead there are two forces here, each internally differentiated but each clearly distinct from the other: the camp of the authorities and the camp of the opposition.”

⁴⁰ “Amnesia, or perhaps falsified memory, is a fact confirmed by public opinion polls and press statements, and it is a fact of profound significance for the fate of the new state and the democratic system. As many publicists, historians, and priests argue, chaos in the ethical sphere is a result or simply a correlate of forgetting” (Śpiewak 2005, p. 174).

Freedom House or the Bertlesman Index, conclude, Polish democracy has been one of the strongest in the region since 1989. It has provided a viable framework for the far-reaching economic reforms whose implementation was an urgent priority as early as 1988.⁴¹ Polish politics, plagued by electoral and party volatility as well as passionate cultural wars, has shown remarkable institutional stability. But the price for this was the acceptance of ex-communists, in their redesigned institutional form, as legitimate participants in the game of democratic politics.

The long-term cultural legacy of the Round Table – arguably the most consequential and controversial of all *Solidarity* legacies – has been shaped by the interpretation of the major strategic moves made by the *Solidarity* negotiators prior to, during, and right after the negotiations. The period from the inception of the Round Table negotiations to the formation of the Mazowiecki cabinet (February 6, 1989 - August 24, 1989) generated or exacerbated two powerful cultural-political cleavages. The first was between the symbolically important *logic of confrontation* that contributed to *Solidarity's* staying power in the 1980s and the reasoned *logic of compromise* that made possible the peaceful systemic change. The second was between the *logic of exclusion* that brought the selected elites from both warring sides (self-appointed by some interpretations) to the Round Table process and the *logic of inclusion* that underlay persistent attempts by both groups of elites to stay in touch with their “bases.”⁴²

For any negotiations to be viable, the number of actors directly involved must be limited. Thus, the politics of exclusion (who gets in, who is left out, and who makes such decisions) comes to the fore. The logic behind the specific choices that produced “Wałęsa’s team,” which came to represent the “society” during the Round Table negotiations has become the subject of heated debates that cannot be analyzed here. Suffice it to note that “the excluded” engaged almost immediately in the critical double guessing of the negotiators’ motivations, as is invariably the case in such

⁴¹ In the words of a foreign analyst: “Solidarity honored the Agreements because they were the only guidelines for managing an uncertain political transition. It believed that only gradual political reform could work in the face of communist authorities who had used force in the past, especially while Soviet troops were still stationed in Poland. The talks successfully ended in a compromise because both negotiating partners – the PZPR officials and Lech Walesa’s Solidarity team – set aside a serious discussion of the past. Thanks to the ‘forgive and forget’ strategy the political transition proceeded smoothly and allowed the country’s new leaders to concentrate on economic reforms” (Stan 2006, p. 48-49).

⁴²See Geremek’s vivid and dramatic depiction of this process (1990, p. 146).

situations. The critics offered two prominent critical discourses. Some argued that the compromises in the negotiations were unnecessary or ill-conceived (Leszek Moczulski). Others contended that it was an imperfect though desirable method of dismantling the old system that opened up a whole new field of opportunities. For the latter group, the problem was the subsequent squandering of these opportunities (Wiesław Chrzanowski, Aleksander Hall). Moczulski developed a very complex, counterfactual vision of the various unrealized negotiating scenarios that were possible (in his mind) had *Solidarity* only waited a few more months.⁴³ He imagined a triangular table that included the Church as a fully-fledged third side rather than merely as mediator, or a square table where the radical, independence-oriented, opposition joined the other three for a negotiating table that covered a fuller spectrum of the salient political options of the time. In his story, communism was disintegrating due to a complex process in which Gorbachev played a prominent role. The main task for the Polish elites was to react properly to Soviet developments, where the causative agency ultimately lay. Unfortunately, the dominant *Solidarity* elites, because they were “politically, poorly prepared,” opted for the suboptimal strategy of premature negotiations at the Round Table.

Chrzanowski’s and Hall’s vision was different; it had two important components. First, they regarded the composition of the “societal” side at the Round Table as incomplete. Among the important absent political options were those represented later by Chrzanowski’s ZChN, Dzielski’s “Thirteen,” and Macierewicz’s “Głos” milieu.⁴⁴ Hall’s own “Movement of the Young Poland” and other (moderate) conservative circles were “insufficiently” represented (Chrzanowski Interview, p. 4). Second, the main strategic error came after *Solidarity*’s electoral victory on June 12, 1989. As Chrzanowski put it:

After the fall of the Berlin Wall the opposition should have asserted that certain Round Table agreements were no longer valid. ‘Why is it so?’ Because [UNCLEAR], [in addition to – JK] *pacta sunt servanda*, that is “agreements entered into shall be kept,” there is another legal clause, *rebus sic stantibus*, that is, “provided the circumstances have not changed” (Chrzanowski Interview, p. 5).

⁴³ Moczulski, Leszek: Interview by Maria Krisnan, 8 February, 2000. Warsaw. University of Michigan Center for Russian and East European Studies: Ann Arbor, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴ Chrzanowski, Wiesław: Interview by Marjorie Castle, 10 April, 1999. Ann Arbor. University of Michigan Center for Russian and East European Studies, Ann Arbor 1999, p. 3.

In the opinion of this group of critics, the circumstances did change and after the elections *Solidarity* should have promptly conducted an ideological cleansing and eliminated former communists from public life much more vigorously than they actually did. Nonetheless, for both Chrzanowski and Hall the Round Table was unquestionably the right, “positive” strategic solution for that specific moment in time.⁴⁵

During the negotiations, both sides assumed that the “size” of their respective constituencies (“bases”) and the “depth” of their support were powerful bargaining chips. In order to strengthen their positions at the negotiating table both groups invested resources in creating and upholding an image of a “massive base.” As Jacek Kuroń, one of the “*Solidarity*” top leaders famously quipped: “We threatened each other with our bases” (Castle 2003, p. 73). “The Round Table talks were not only talks between the representatives of the opposition and the representatives of the authorities. They were also our talks with society,” observed Piotr Nowina-Konopka, a *Solidarity* spokesman (Castle 2003, p. 69). But since 1989, a significant segment of the “society” has never felt “included.” Many activists and rank-and-file, drawn mostly from the “excluded,” bought into neither the logic of compromise nor the logic of inclusion, regarding the former as treason and the latter as a sham façade hiding the de facto exclusion of their representatives or most of the society from the Round Table deal. As they began politically mobilizing around these “revisionist” frames of interpretation, a powerful cleavage between “reformists” and “revolutionaries” opened in *Solidarity*, which until then had been remarkably united.⁴⁶ This cleavage existed largely independently from the more obvious one that continued to separate the *Solidarity* camp and ex-communists. Both have remained salient throughout the last twenty years and still help to explain the basic maneuvers on the Polish political scene. Importantly

⁴⁵ Hall, Aleksander: Interview by Grzegorz Ekiert, 10 April, 1999, Ann Arbor. University of Michigan Center for Russian and East European Studies, Ann Arbor, page 1. This interview and several others cited in this paper were conducted with support from a contract awarded to Michael D. Kennedy, Brian Porter, and Andrzej Paczkowski from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), under the authority of a Title VIII grant from the U.S. Department of State, for the project, “Negotiating Revolution in Poland: Conversion and Opportunity in 1989.” Neither NCEEER nor the U.S. Government is responsible for the views expressed here

⁴⁶For its description see Ekiert and Kubik 1999. See also Glenn, John, III: *Framing Democracy. Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe*. Stanford University Press: Stanford 2001, pp. 87-90 and Castle 2003, p. 223.

these two central cleavages in Polish politics have been more “cultural” than in other post-communist Central European states.⁴⁷ They have their origin in the *unrealized ritual closure* of both the Round Table negotiations and the entire Polish People’s Republic (*PRL*) period. A properly staged ritual of closing and *regime passage* would – an anthropologist is tempted to argue – provide a common symbolic foundation for the new socio-political order that had to be built in a society inevitably subjected to powerful centripetal forces generated by the costs of economic reforms and the re-birth of partisan politics.

Quite a few politicians and activists have tried to shed the double legacy of the authoritarian politics of late communism and the extraordinary, liminal politics of the Round Table, but to no avail. *Solidarity* never ceremonialized its victory on a grand, nation-wide scale. Consequently, Poland entered a path of momentous transformations without a ceremonial closure of the communist period and without a ritualized inclusion of the “society” into the political process. The absence of a ceremonial rite of passage from “communism” to “post-communism” has had serious consequences for post-1989 public life in Poland.⁴⁸ It may be the main cause of the symbolic/moral “disorder” or “malaise” that continues to show in various studies; it certainly has helped to generate one of the two dominant symbolic cleavages of Polish post-1989 politics.

A very low level of trust in political parties and a relatively high level of protest politics (Ekiert and Kubik 1999) have characterized the post-1989 public life in Poland. Again, the roots of this dissatisfaction with institutionalized politics may lie in the lack of a proper (ceremonialized?) closure of the Round Table process and the absence of a symbol or ritual signifying the birth of the post-communist Poland. The existing studies

⁴⁷ Jasiewicz, Krzysztof: **Error! Main Document Only.** “Portfel czy różaniec? Ekonomiczne i aksjologiczne determinanty zachowań wyborczych”. In: Markowski, R. (ed.): *Wybory parlamentarne 1997 roku*. Ebert Foundation/ISP PAN: Warsaw 1999a; Jasiewicz, Krzysztof: “Polish Politics after the 1997 Parliamentary Election: Polarization or Pluralism?” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 26 (1) 1999b, pp. 97; Markowski, Radosław: “Party System Institutionalization in New Democracies: Poland - A Trend-Setter with no Followers”. In: Lewis, P.G. (ed.): *Party Development and Democratic Change in Post-communist Europe. The First Decade*. Frank Cass: London 2001; Ziółkowski, Marek: “Memory and Forgetting after Communism”. *Polish Sociological Review* 1(137) 2002, pp. 7-24; Castle 2003.

⁴⁸The lingering consequences of this lack of ceremonialization of *Solidarity*’s victory are carefully analyzed by one of the main actors of the drama, Bronisław Geremek (1990, p. 147). For a more general analysis of the significance of rituals for reconciliation see Schrich 2001.

leave no doubt that for those who negatively or critically evaluate the current situation of the country the Round Table symbolizes the beginning of the wrong path Poland has taken since the end of communism. In Chrzanowski's words such people accept the "black legend" of the Round Table. Significantly, Chrzanowski suggested that the propagation of this legend is politically detrimental and contributes to apathy (Chrzanowski Interview Transcript, 9-10). Ireneusz Krzemiński observes perceptively:

The moral acceptance of former adversaries [by a section of the *Solidarity* camp - JK], including the symbolic persona of general Jaruzelski, /.../ delineated the basic lines of political divisions, but first of all it generated unusually strong and emotionally laden *moral divisions* [original emphasis – JK]. A moral anathema has been imposed by both sides on each other. The symbolic representation of the society was destroyed and as a result a symbolic picture of the end of the old order and the beginning of the new order has not emerged. Such a symbol, that would dwell in the everyday consciousness and that would constitute a focal point for public rituals, practically does not exist; and yet it is sorely needed.⁴⁹

For those who tend to construe the post-communist reality in a manner described by Krzeminski, the Round Table compromise is not seen as an achievement, but rather as yet another example of the murky, if not outright malicious, wheeling and dealing behind the scenes that benefited only the elites of the "Reds" and "Pinks."⁵⁰ In particular, they tend to reinterpret the maneuvers of *Solidarity's* negotiating elite as having detrimental long-term consequences. The following table (Table 2) summarizes succinctly the two strategies of interpreting specific maneuvers employed by the *Solidarity* representatives during the Round Table negotiations.

Table 2

Maneuver by the <i>Solidarity</i> representatives at the Round Table	Interpretation as a "virtue" by the supporters of the Round Table process	Interpretation as a "vice" by critics
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⁴⁹ Krzemiński, Ireneusz: *Moralne skutki transformacji ustrojowej* (manuscript) 1999.

⁵⁰ With some exceptions, the "Pinks" are those members of the "Solidarity" elite who negotiated with the "Reds."

Compromise	Talent for and openness to strategic learning	The lack of "backbone"
Positing modest goals	Realism: incrementalism of steps and gradualism of goals	Short-sightedness, cowardice, giving in
Exclusion of the majority (and other options) from actual negotiating	Technical imperative of negotiating	Sectarian deal-making
Lack of "accounting," illustration in post-1989 Poland	Honoring the agreement	Protecting "dirty" gains

On the other hand, as Michael Kennedy argues at length (2002) the Round Table, properly "symbolically closed" or not, has provided Poland with a model that constitutes the cornerstone of the country's robust parliamentary democracy and remarkably non-violent political practice.⁵¹ Hence, the ultimate paradox of the Round Table: the potentially explosive, deep cultural divisions engendered by the Round Table are routinely channeled through non-disruptive political mechanisms that also have their origins in the Round Table process, and – more broadly – in *Solidarity's* non-violent ethos.

If the lack of a ceremonial closure of the Round Table negotiations and the lack of a dramatically staged rite of passage from the Soviet-type Polish People's Republic to a democratic Polish Republic help to perpetuate the peculiar "culturalization" and symbolic polarization of much of Polish politics, then a way out of this impasse may lie in the formation and maintenance of social/collective memory of negotiations that emphasizes reconciliation and defines a broadly accepted closure of state socialism. This, in turn, can be achieved through a successful ceremonialization of the Round Table reconciliation. Obviously, the staging of a relevant ceremony should have happened right after the 1989 transfer of power. A ceremony

⁵¹Zbigniew Janas emphasized this feature of the Round Table in his interview (Interview Transcript, 13). In Castle's view this spirit and practice of compromise in the post-1989 Poland are "discredited" thus weak (2003, pp. 222-3).

staged many years after the event to be ceremonialized would most likely lack the necessary cultural credibility.

Ten features (potential legacies) of the complex socio-political phenomenon, called the "second" *Solidarity*, are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Ten attributes (potential legacies) of the second *Solidarity*

	IMPACT ON POS	ORGANIZATION	FRAMES/CULTURE
SHORT TERM (1989 transfer of power)	1. Triggers the 1989 revolutions and opens the way for the transfer of power to non-communist forces	2. <i>Solidarity</i> → (National) Citizens' Committee 3. Place of residence principle → local Citizens' Committees (the unsung hero of the Polish revolution)	4. Over-symbolization (mobilizes "the base"), but there is no symbolic closure of the negotiating process. 5. Pragmatism of the Wałęsa faction sets the tone for (much of) political practice.
LONG TERM (post-1989 consolidation)	6. Compromise as the key political <i>modus operandi</i> 7. Legitimizes "ex-communists" as political players	8. Legacy of the Round Table: a. Compromise b. Selective representation 9. Active and viable local political fields	10. The Round Table compromise as the principal focal point of partisan "memory" politics For example: "unselectedness" as a foundation of revisionist politics within the <i>Solidarity</i> camp

The politics of cultural choices

My task in this part of this text is to shed some light on an empirical puzzle: the inability of the Polish elites to find a broadly acceptable ceremonial formula to “close” the period of communism and to establish a symbolic foundation for the post-communist order, despite the fact that the symbolic material for such an undertaking could not to have been better: a massive and successful social movement that generated an original and popular (sub)culture. The theory I work with holds that the regime consolidation, above all in the case of democracy, is positively influenced by mnemonic reconciliation (for more on this see Bernhard and Kubik 2014).

The first task is to identify the potential “material” out of which legacies can be formed. Routine investigations start with cultural constructs that have been already fashioned as legacies and ask questions about them. My analysis begins with a strategy indebted to a well-known, prudent warning not to “select on the depended variable.” Accordingly, the bulk of this essay is devoted to identifying the key components of the phenomenon called *Solidarity*; they constitute the cultural material for legacy building. What remains to be done is to juxtapose the potential elements with those that were chosen to become actually existing legacies and identify the logic of cultural politics that drove such choices.⁵²

Through my analysis I identified twenty-two attributes of the movement that to the best of my judgment are “worthy” of collective remembering.⁵³ It is an ensemble of disparate elements: some refer to actions, others denote actions’ consequences, and a few are attempts to label key components of the movement’s multifaceted “tenor.” Together they constitute a more or less “complete” potential legacy of *Solidarity*. Some of them have become subjects of academic and political debates and a small subset have been politicized as “active” elements of the emerging post-1989 Polish political culture. Obviously, some attributes of a movement have superior *political potential* and are therefore more likely to be

⁵² This type of analysis owes something both to the thinking in terms of counterfactuals (Fearon 1991) and to works on the politics of history investigating various *usable pasts* (Brubaker and Feischmidt 2002, p. 700-1). I sketched a strategy for analyzing cultural legacies in Kubik 2003.

⁵³ The list and assessments are preliminary and arbitrary. A more precise analysis would have to be based on content analysis of (selected) narratives. It would be costly and time-consuming and it is not certain that it would be worthwhile. But without such a study the synthetic judgment on *Solidarity*’s legacies and their politicization must remain somewhat imprecise.

politicized. The selection of *Solidarity* representatives for the Round Table negotiations and the assessment of the whole Round Table deal (see Table 2) are good examples.

Out of the twelve possible legacies of the first *Solidarity* three became central to the Polish post-communist political wars, generating questions and consequently powerful political cleavages:

- Was *Solidarity* a pure, clear-cut challenge to communism or was it at least partially tainted by collaboration? In the context of this general question Wałęsa's role is scrutinized: was he an unswerving hero or possibly a collaborator (even if for a short period of time)?
- Was a deep, independent counter-elite formed? Or did the old elite (communists) and at least a part of the new one (*Solidarity*) collude to constitute what is sometimes portrayed as an unholy alliance of the "Reds" and "Pinks"?
- Was the era of symbolic polarization of politics over in 1989 or did it continue because the foundations of the new republic had not been set properly?

Among the ten legacies of the second *Solidarity*, at least three generated enduring questions and contributed to the saliency a major cultural-political cleavage within the ex-*Solidarity* camp:

- Was the Round Table the best method of ending communism or would communism have collapsed on its own (and would that have been "healthier")?
- Was the pragmatism of Wałęsa's group a smart and necessary strategy or calculated "treason"?
- Were the selection of the *Solidarity* representatives and their strategy at the Round Table negotiations optimal or were they calculated to preserve as much of the outgoing regime's influence as possible? Did the choice of strategy protect the interests of the negotiating group rather than those of *Solidarity* or the society at large?

The answers to these questions, provided by the critics of the post-1989 republic and most of its governments, form a coherent narrative that can be summarized in five points: (1) the compromise at the Round Table went too far and/or the post-1989 governments have not done enough to undo its damaging effects once the ancient regime was irrevocably defeated; (2) as a result, the ex-communists have retained too much

(particularly economic) power in the new system; (3) public life has not been sufficiently cleared of the people tainted by collaboration with the old system; and (4) an unholy alliance of the “Reds” and “Pinks” (ex-communists and the “left” wing of the *Solidarity* movement) retained too much power for too long. The fifth critique is reserved for Lech Wałęsa. He is seen as pivotal figure who betrayed the movement (perhaps as early as the 1970s⁵⁴) and presided over or at least contributed to the four failures listed above.⁵⁵

Effective as it was in mobilizing the political right, this narrative did not become hegemonic in the public space of the post-1989 Poland.⁵⁶ It was always challenged by a competing narrative that focused on the successes of the 1989-2009 period and emphasized *Solidarity's* achievements. What lessons can we draw from the analysis of this discursive confrontation?

First, during the first twenty years of post-communist Poland, one of the dominant, if not the dominant, political cleavages was generated by symbolic or cultural wars.

Second, in these wars only those elements of *Solidarity's* “history” were unrelentingly politicized that: (1) were controversial *ab initio* and/or (2) were easily susceptible to diverging interpretations, and (3) had a strong potential to generate symbolically dazzling and politically advantageous cleavages.

Third, almost none of *Solidarity's* organizational innovations and strategic accomplishments in the areas of organizational innovation and policy making, such as the formation of *Citizens' Committees* or the building of the territorial structure of the movement, became an active part of collective memory.

Fourth, the intense politicization of the most controversial elements of *Solidarity's* history was used as a political strategy largely by only one side of the political conflict: the right-wing critics of the post-communist

⁵⁴ The biggest “scandal” related to Wałęsa was generated by Cenckiewicz and Gontarczyk 2008.

⁵⁵ For example, in a short video available on Youtube, an announcer proclaims while the camera shows the Gdansk shipyard: “This is where everything began. The former secret agent of the Security apparatus, Lech Wałęsa, code name ‘Bolek’ was made into a national hero by the mass media. Thanks to this, the Judeo-commune could fortify itself in a new form, democratically elected by the stupefied nation.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-uh01f5ofc>.

⁵⁶ Somewhat paradoxically this political option included most leaders of the post-1989 *Solidarity* trade union. On this topic see Brier 2009 and Ost 2005.

transformations. Political strategists who chose this course must have decided that they wanted to engage their adversaries on the ground of cultural politics. Was, however, their cultural-symbolic political strategy effective? Did it produce desired “political goods,” such as popular support and thus power for the right wing parties, in particular for the Law and Justice Party, the most tenacious symbolic warrior?

In a survey conducted in early October 2008,⁵⁷ the leading polling organization, *CBOS*, found that Poles regard the post-1989 years as the best period in Polish history of the last one hundred years (49% of the respondents chose this option). The fall of communism was seen as the most important event in the last one hundred years of Polish history (21%), ahead of the election of Karol Wojtyla to the papacy (21%) and the regaining of independence in 1918 (20%). The creation of *Solidarity* in August 1980 was perceived as the most important event by 11% of the respondents. The ranking of Polish successes in the last one hundred years showed *Solidarity* in the sixth place:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Regaining independence in 1918 | 52% |
| 2. Accession to the European Union | 39% |
| 3. Liberation from communism in 1989 | 37% |
| 4. Rebuilding of the country after WWII | 33% |
| 5. Armed struggle against Nazi Germany | 25% |
| 6. Social movement <i>Solidarity</i> | 22% |

Solidarity was enshrined in the collective memory, but many Poles regretted that its legacy was not more prominent in the nation’s post-communist culture. Consider the list of “Poland’s greatest weaknesses of the last one hundred years,” according to the same survey:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Dependence on the Soviet Union after 1945 | 45% |
| 2. Wasting of <i>Solidarity</i> ’s legacy | 25% |
| 3. Poverty and social injustice in
the Second Republic [1918-1939 – JK] | 24% |
| 4. Excessive influence of the Catholic Church | 21% |

In early 2009 *CBOS* conducted a comprehensive survey asking its respondents to assess the twenty years of post-communist transformations.⁵⁸ For a large plurality of the respondents (40%) the Round

⁵⁷ “*Spojrzenie na miniony wiek w historii Polski*,” *CBOS*, Warszawa, November 2008, survey conducted on a random sample of 1107 adult Poles in October 3-7, 2008.

⁵⁸ *CBOS*, “*Opinie i diagnozy 15: Dwadzieścia lat przemian ustrojowych w Polsce*.” Warsaw 2009. Various representative samples of adult Poles surveyed between January and May 2009.

Table agreements were considered as the most important breakthrough event that marked the end of communism in Poland. Their evaluation of the agreements was largely positive: 41% assessed the agreements as "rather positive," 12% as "rather negative," 31% were "indifferent," and for 16% it was "hard to say." Importantly, 44% of the respondents saw the Round Table agreements as a "social contract," while 26% construed it as an "elite deal." For thirty percent it was "hard to say." Criticism of the Round Table was most vividly reflected in the answer to the question whether it was the best method of regime change in Poland: 30% of the respondent thought so, but 37% thought the "the compromise went too far." Only 8% claimed that it was "the wrong method, an unnecessary giving in to the communists." The 25% of the respondents who admitted that it was "hard to say" were mostly too young to remember the event personally.

The survey results reviewed here indicate that the impact of the mnemonic wars on public opinion did not produce the results desired by the chief instigator of such wars, the Law and Justice party. It managed neither to impose its vision of history on the populace at large, nor to achieve any enduring political success. After winning a plurality of votes in the October 2005 *Sejm* (lower house) elections by a rather slim margin (27%, to Civic Platform's 24.1%), it decisively lost in both the November 2007 (32.1%, to Civic Platform's 41.5%) and October 2011 elections (29.89%, to Civic Platform's 39.18%).

In June 2009 Law and Justice was supported by 17% of the CBOS respondents, while its major rival, The Civic Platform, enjoyed the support of 38% of those polled.⁵⁹ But the cultural clash Law and Justice ignited prevented the country from acquiring a standardized discourse on the most recent past that could be referred to by citizens attempting to assess the communist past, commemorate *Solidarity*, and locate a symbolic foundation for the new political order. By late 2013, the relentless promotion of the "anti-Round Table" vision of collective memory started generating political benefits: since August 2013 to the moment of this writing (December 2013), the Civic Platform's support was at the lowest point since its electoral success in 2011. Law and Justice continues to be its strongest opponent and the results of the next election are quite uncertain.

⁵⁹ CBOS: "Preferencje partyjne w czerwcu 2009". A study conducted between May 28 and June 2, 2009 on a representative sample of 1038 adult Poles.

My closing argument is not purely analytical. It is hypothetical, as my points are difficult to substantiate given the state of our empirical knowledge. But it has solid grounding in the existing theories of symbolic politics and political legitimacy. I argue that the mythical realities generated by Law and Justice and supported by a minority of the population, contribute mightily to the formation of cultural chaos that manifests itself in at least four areas.

First, a great opportunity to stage a ceremony that would initiate the new era right after the successful completion of the Round Table negotiations was squandered. There may be good political reasons (particularly uncertainty as to the Soviet reaction and the desire to respect the agreements with the communists) that such a ceremony was not staged; the symbolic logic, however, dictates that there is no better time for performing such ceremonies than the liminal phase, a phase in-between, when the societal tolerance for changing the rules of the political game and proposing new interpretations of the collective past is particularly high⁶⁰ and when a symbolic challenge to the previously dominant rules has a high probability of success. There could be no better liminal/liminoid period than that of late 1989 – early 1990.⁶¹

Second, as national holidays have a very important function of generating the sense of community, the establishment of a common symbolic frame for collective memory calls for periodic re-enactments of the relevant ceremony, preferably in a calendar cycle (usually as an anniversary). As Zerubavel points out:

The notion of a collective memory implies a past that is not only commonly shared but also *jointly* remembered (that is, “co-memorated”). By helping ensure that an entire mnemonic community will come to remember its past together, as a group, society affects not only what and who we remember but also when we remember it.⁶²

⁶⁰ Turner, Victor: *Dramas, Fields, Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca 1974.

⁶¹ Turner introduced a distinction between liminal and liminoid phenomena. The former are “certain intervals of antistructure in simple societies;” the later are “antistructural moments in modern societies [that] are ultimately destructive of the normative order and are often the work of and in service of individuals (although they may have mass effects” (Wagner-Pacifi 1986, pp. 11-12).

⁶² Zerubavel, Eviatar: “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past”. *Qualitative Sociology*. 19(3) (Fall) 1996, pp. 283-300.

Yet, mnemonic synchronization – as Zerubavel calls it – of the Polish national community did not rely on any symbolic markers (events, personalities or locations) related to *Solidarity* as late as the summer of 2005. The founding events of the Third Republic made it into the ceremonial calendar of the new polity as state holidays only in July of that year, but even then not as a full-fledged holiday (a day without work).⁶³ Oddly, while the achievements of *Solidarity* and the Round Table were not enshrined in a uniform, “official” version of national memory for a long time, state functionaries showed several times during the post-1989 period that they did understand the significance of collective memory building by establishing several other holidays including staging the enormously elaborate Sixtieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 2004.⁶⁴

Third, no founding myth of the Third Republic was proposed and popularly accepted. The Republic is an offspring of the Round Table agreements, but the meaning of the agreements did not cease to be an object of political-interpretive conflicts, such as that ignited by the League of Polish Families (LPR) in 2005.⁶⁵ Without a modicum of agreement about the interpretation of this transforming political event, it is hard to imagine the formation of a commonly accepted founding myth of the new Republic. Poles seem to be attached to historical traditions more than many other nations;⁶⁶ it is thus bewildering that both the Polish heroic contribution to the downfall of communism (*Solidarity*) and the peaceful manner of the conflict resolution (the Round Table) – often celebrated and highly valued

⁶³ *Dziennik Ustaw*, 2005, 155, 1295 (July 27, 2005). As of August 2009, there were only four national holidays: (1) May 1 - Labor Day, (2) May 3 - anniversary of the 1791 constitution, (3) August 15 - Polish Army Holiday, and (4) November 11 - the National Independence Day. The latter is designed to celebrate regaining independence after 123 years of partitions.

⁶⁴ The November 11 Holiday was reestablished in 1989, the May 3 Holiday in 1990, and the Holiday of the Polish Army (August 15) - in 1992.

⁶⁵ According to *Gazeta Wyborcza* 06.13.05. (and other sources), Maciej Giertych, LPR's candidate for president opined during his first electoral rally (June 11, 2005): “Już 16 lat rządzą na zmianę PZPR i KOR. Władze podają sobie z rąk do rąk.” (“The Polish United Worker’s Party and the Committee in Support of the Workers have already ruled Poland for 16 years. They pass power from one to the other.”) <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34317,2763230.html>. This framing belongs to a narrative that places power in Poland in the hands of the alliance between the “reds” and the “pinks.” For detailed analysis see Ekiert and Kubik 1999:164-71.

⁶⁶ Domański, Henryk: “Problemy wspólnoty a struktura społeczna [Problems of Community and the Social Structure]”. *Res Publica Nowa*. Warszawa 2004. (accessed June 17, 2005 at <http://respublica.onet.pl/1838,dzial.html>).

around the world – were not turned into canonical components of the national tradition during the first twenty years of the Third Republic.

Fourth, no attempt was made to stage a ceremony/ritual that would offer an official interpretation of the previous system and suggest an official frame for coming to terms with that system's wrongdoings. The state never performed a public legal proceeding cum purification/healing ritual as the new South African state did through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It can be argued that Apartheid's crimes were more severe than those of communism and that societal modes of seeking symbolic closure to a controversial past are as good as those conducted by the state. It may be that Polish state socialism was less oppressive than the South African "white" regime. The issue is not the actual intensity of wrongdoings but the lack of ceremonial accounting of those that occurred. The studies reviewed by Kubik and Linch (2006) argue that bottom-up, societal mechanisms are *less effective* than top-down state-led mechanisms when it comes to discharging the political potential of negative memories, the formation of a nation-wide symbolic frame for collective memory, and achieving mnemonic reconciliation. As of December 2014, the memory of the breakthrough 1980-89 period was not harnessed within a broadly acceptable interpretive frame that would facilitate mnemonic reconciliation; there was no "performance that would ultimately enable the state itself to function as a moral agent"⁶⁷ and a definitive settling of accounts.

Paradoxically, however, the prolonged cultural chaos and indeterminacy in the domain of collective memory may have not been as detrimental to the post-communist consolidation as the theory outlined earlier in the chapter predicts. Most importantly, during the first twenty years of the post-communist period, a solid dose of pragmatism became firmly institutionalized in Poland and formed a practical barrier that no major political figure has dared to cross, despite frequent "radical" rhetorical flourishes. Poles were increasingly satisfied with the post-communist transformations: in December 1992, 49% believed that after 1989 the situation in the country improved. In January 2009, 80% held this view.⁶⁸ But the country entering the year of the 25th anniversary of the fall of communism as an undisputed leader of post-communist transformations

⁶⁷ Borneman, John: *Settling Accounts. Violence, Justice, and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe*. Princeton University Press: Princeton 1997.

⁶⁸ Boguszewski, Rafał / Kuźmich, Ewelina / Skrzyszewski, Michał: "Ocena Skutków Transformacji". In: *Dwadzieścia lat przemian ustrojowych w Polsce. Opinie i Diagnozy* Nr 15. CBOS: Warsaw 2009, p. 67.

has been unable to find a way to celebrate and promote the foundation of this success - *Solidarity* (Bernhard and Kubik 2014). The extensive and multifaceted symbolic capital the movement generated in the 1980s has been irrevocably wasted after the fall of communism.

The country is politically and economically successful without mnemonic reconciliation. So, perhaps such reconciliation does not matter? Perhaps, but there is a nagging thought: the success could have been even more spectacular had such reconciliation been attained.

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