Landscapes of Polish Memory

Conflicting ways of dealing with the communist past in a Polish town

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PhD thesis
2009

I, Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgements

I owe my very special gratitude to Michael Stewart, who supervised this and my previous thesis. *Michael, thank you for all the sources of unconventional inspiration I received from you, for your constant support, understanding and a rigour of clarity that you passed on to me. It is thanks to you that my encounter with anthropology lasted.*

Alexandra Argenti-Pillen was a fabulously engaged and motivating second supervisor. *Alex, thank you for your vigour, expertise, imagination and creativity. I feel unable to express how much I learned from you during our scheduled and accidental meetings.*

Frances Pine was a friend, a host, and an invaluable teacher throughout the duration of this project. *Thank you for all the time spent together, for the night talks and enlightening trips. All of these are unforgettable.*

The UCL Anthropology Department proved to be a particularly fruitful academic environment. I am pleased that I had a chance to live a part of my life around this institution. Particularly precious was Diana Goford's genuine help, as well as all the stimulating exchanges with my excellent colleagues.

John's proofreading help remains inestimable.

This research has been made possible due to the kind support of:

The Wenner-Gren Foundation (Dissertation Fieldwork Grant),
The UCL Graduate School (Graduate School Research Scholarship),
The Visegrad Fund (The Outgoing Scholarship),

as well as thanks to loving and flexible being with my husband Marcin, whom I owe much beyond this work.

To my parents **Stanisława** and **Jerzy**.

W podziękowaniu za wspólne życie.

Abstract

This research centres on the local acts of national memory politics and retributive justice performed in a Polish town during the years 2006-2008, when a conservative Law and Justice Party government was in power. Looking at the political processes of conventionalizing and objectifying the communist past in authoritative settings (commemorative rituals, unveiling of monuments, courtrooms, associational meetings, Catholic masses) the author searched for patterns of inclusion and exclusion of political subjects into/from the commemorative landscape of the Polish historicized national community.

The thesis concerns the two broadly defined categories of people who became politically engaged during communism: the anti-communist activists and the ex-officers of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The author combines participant observation in various institutional settings with archival work, Critical Discourse Analysis of institutionalized discourses, analysis of material culture of commemoration and an in-depth work on personal narratives, in order to address the mediating role which state and religious institutions, their agents, and the representations produced by them have played in individual processes of remembering, commemorating, and recalling.

The thesis describes the conflicting ways in which the two groups of subjects have actively engaged in an interactive production of representations and claims concerning the communist past. It examines ways in which the institutionalization of memory has generated a cultural form of self-perception relying on a sequential and repeatable way of experiencing the self in a collectively achieved framework of 'hero/victim' or 'perpetrator'.

The author approaches the topic of memory by imagining it as a multidimensional figure, understanding the processes of individual remembering and constructing the self as located at the intersection of processes of perception, development of self-schemata, group interaction, and collective instances of objectification and conventionalizing.

Notes on Transcription

...	A silence, pause
[...]	Omitted parts of the speech
CAPITALS	Loud speech
(I thought)	Speech that overlaps with that of another speaker, a simultaneous speech, for instance A: It was really dangerous (to work there) B: (You should have) seen us at that 'job'.
italics	Emotionally loaded utterances
--	An interrupted utterance, for instance A: Did you – B: I thought that he – A: I asked whether you did...
[His fingers tapping on the table]	My comments
[.]	Inaudible material

Table of contents

Appendices

Photographs

Introduction

Landscapes of Polish memory

'Instead of painting the façade of a building and then surrounding it in trees I would pick the architecture through the foliage, so that the picture would push itself up to your eye. I thought that was a much more real way of looking at things, because that is the way the eye looks: you are constantly looking through things, seeing the foreground and the background at the same time' (Doig 2008 [1996]).

This thesis is about *landscapes of memory*, as they have been collectively realized in a historical time of one Polish town – Marianowice[1] - by some of its inhabitants. Marianowice's landscape and the memories held by the people who live in it convey a sense of altering and ruptured history subject to numerous reconstructions. Conflicting commemorative inscriptions pile up on the buildings in which people's thoughts manage to make sense of the seemingly contradictory. The historical time I focus on encompasses the transition from communism to democracy and forces an association with Howard Hodgkin's paintings in which layers are being painted over layers, never fully erased, always unveiling seemingly forgotten details of past social situations. The subject of this thesis concerns the recent collective efforts of conventionalizing and disambiguating the complex past undertaken in Poland, in particular during the years of my fieldwork, from 2006 to 2008. The complexity of the collective appropriation of historical process is visible in many corners of the town, in the ways in which people move in it, as well as in narratives passed on in this locality. Painting of the new layers in the landscape and in the people's minds is a political process comprising collectively enacted efforts of variously aligned social actors differently positioned vis-à-vis the centres of power. This thesis takes as its subject matter such political processes in which new collectively-built frameworks became objectified and legitimized through institutionalized state channels, and eventually proved consequential for people's psychologies, as well as brought visible change to the landscapes they live in.

The years of communist regime in Poland were abundant in violent transgressions of various intensity, particularly pointed at those who were politically opposing the pro-Soviet establishment. The structure of security police was created in order to immobilize those who imagined the state they lived in should have been different and who stood up for this belief. The methods used by the security forces involved harsh repressions, both physical and psychological. During the Stalinist period, the security forces used brutal methods of elimination, imprisonment, torture and psychological repressions. From the 1960s onwards, the invigilation of society became more discrete;

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[1] Marianowice is an invented name given to a real place. I chose to anonymize the place and the people. The historical sources used in the thesis are also anonymized so as not to reveal the identities.

yet, with every social upheaval, the communist party tightened up its control and often used violence against crowds and individuals. Eventually, in the winter of 1981, the newly-introduced martial law turned the social life of the country into a military-controlled project which lasted nearly 20 months. The changes in the global political order, the emergence of Solidarity, and the gradual dissolution of the Soviet bloc paved the way for the processes of political reconstruction. In 1989, the communist party leaders, the Solidarity activists and the members of the Catholic Church sat around one table to agree on the new direction for the nation. It was the first step towards a social and political transition.

This research, conducted nearly two decades after the collapse of a violent regime, was designed with the aim of reaching the current perspectives of those who worked in the repressive structures of the regime, and who are now undergoing symbolic processes of exclusion and condemnation, as well as those who performed acts of resistance during communism, and who are now involved in the moral modes of defining the past, present and their own position in the framework of national history[2]. These subjects and their involvement in the collectively realized actions are understood as oriented towards achieving a coherence of their life-worlds necessarily nested in the local landscape configuration which relies on the shifting power structures, semiotic and material resources, and individual psychologies. When designing the research, I believed that working with both groups, classified by the current state as heroes/victims and perpetrators, would allow the emergence of a more complete account of the symbolic and moral transition of a nation composed of various individual dramas. People who stood unevenly on different sides of the barricade in the past have been subjected to the moral practices of affirmation and denial in today's polity. I propose to view their fates as necessarily entangled and complementary, even if conflicting. If, while analyzing the acknowledged lives, one simultaneously looks into the denied ones, the picture gains a depth. One is able to see a background and the foreground at the same time, a perspective which is so easily abandoned, especially when the framing has a moral overtone. In one way, this thesis tells about the framework for collective imagining of the national community (Anderson 1991), which prevailed during 2006-2008. I will focus on the processes of emergence of this politicized and institutional framework and on the ways in which it played a role in the processes of construction of a coherent self among two categories of people as defined through the institutional channels.

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[2] Please see Appendices Two and Three to get to know the main characters of the chapters to follow in more detail.

The first part of the thesis speaks about the heroes/victims category, meaning those who were involved in anti-communist activity during the previous regime, and who were repressed for such engagements. This is a large pool of informants and in Marianowice thousands of people fall into it. In order to ground my work, I chose one association to work with closely – the Association of the Former Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice. The first five chapters should be read as a consequence of my engagement in the workings of this association. I visited the associational office on a weekly basis. I participated in the ritual and commemorative events with them. I read through the Security files concerning some subgroups in the association. Eventually, I undertook some more in-depth work with eighteen individuals. These were mostly the people repressed in the Stalinist period. I used here such methods as participant observation, recordings of naturally occurring conversations, recordings of commemorative events, written assignments, and historical records.

The second part of this study is concerned with the security officers. I managed to work extensively with a generation of functionaries who came to work in the Secret Political Police in the 1960s. I also reached a few individuals who worked for the regime at the outset of its life. I used a snowball effect to gain access to this category of informants. I conducted in-depth interviews with eight officers of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The most far-reaching material I gathered concerns an officer accused of committing a *communist crime*, and who underwent a trial during my fieldwork. I used the trial situation to gain a dual victim-perpetrator perspective on this particular case. I interviewed a couple of witnesses on both sides, and I also worked closely with the defendant and with the main prosecution witness. I attended most of the hearings and took field notes. The trial allowed me to gain access to the group of heroes/victims who belonged to the Solidarity movement, and who were repressed in the 1980s. Apart from the trial, I worked mostly with individuals, eliciting their life narratives and probing, through conversation, various topics connected to the past and to the present.

This thesis attempts to give a sense of the ways in which these two differently positioned groups of people belonging to the same nation/state – the former anti-communist activists repressed for their political involvements and the former officers of the communist security forces - try to collectively and internally negotiate a sense of justice and a coherent image of the communist past in the circumstances of the revival of memory politics and scattered projects of retributive justice in contemporary Poland. The thesis discusses the ways in which the two groups actively engaged themselves in interactive production of representations and claims concerning the communist past in

the present. Such a dual focus is used to flesh out local alliances and power politics informed by larger national and transnational discourses, as well as the cultural modes of expressions and their influence on individual subjects. Above all, the dual construction was meant to grant space for illustration of divergent perspectives and affective reactions to socially conditioned situatedness vis-à-vis one's past. The social position of each of these groups is a mirror image of the other. One used to be on the recognized and privileged side of the state pantheon and, with the transition, it moved into the sphere of excluded subjects; the other used to be repressed but is now gaining a momentum of recognition and affirmation. Both groups of people, though, have a strong sense of belonging to the same nation/state. Yet, they imagine this nation/state differently.

The title, *Landscapes of Memory,* is meant to suggest a complex approach to the topic of memory. The thesis attempts to pin down the notion on various levels of social reality – from legal aspects of the memory project to embodied experience of remembering. It views memory as a multidimensional figure the depth of which is given by social configurations of power, collective objectifying practices, diversity of historically established cultural vehicles, and individual life histories backed up by fantasies, fears and desires. The main aim of this research was to understand the phenomenological aspects of becoming a hero/victim and a perpetrator in today's Poland. The plural form of the noun 'landscape' in the title is to signal plurality of embodied interactive practices of memory, and their conflicting character. To fully shed light on microscopic details of such embodied experience, grasping of a larger frame is unavoidable.

Anthropology of the End

This ethnography draws upon Borneman's project of an 'Anthropology of the End in Political Authority' (2004), as it focuses on the historical moment of social reconfigurations in the Polish modes of self-representing as departed and having ended a specific regime of authority. The collapse of communism in Poland should be regarded as a local element of a larger process of dissolution of the Cold War system expressed through dismantling of the authoritative right-wing and left-wing regimes and assimilating a democratic and more humanistic political agenda. The emergence of the post-Cold War era judicial solutions, called by Bernard Schlink a period of "revolutionary justice", constituted a larger transcontinental process (cited after Borneman 1997:7). Such political transformations imply dealing with the wicked aspect of the collapsed state forms. Different localities and communities implemented various solutions for representing the violent past and accounting for it. The implemented solutions have been largely dependent on configurations of

power, the entitlement of various groups to power and their access to institutionalized tools of state control through which the politics of memory are shaped.

Ethnographies from around the world give examples of ways in which various societies have moved from violent regimes to more democratic political forms. Such processes imply defining the 'parameters of truth-seeking' (Madani 2000:177) and negotiating the representation of the past and various entitlements to it. Mendez (2000) and others point to the Nuremberg trials, at which high-ranking Nazi officers were judged for their involvement in the crimes committed during WWII, as the moment in which a contemporary understanding of crimes against humanity and their legal consequentiality were defined. The Nuremberg trials constitute a case in which the victors brought to justice perpetrators from other nations. However, most of the more recent cases of societal reconstruction after the collapse of violent regimes imply internal negotiation of the justice framework.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa is one of the best-researched examples of ways in which such transition has been managed. In this model, one dual body – the TRC - was divided into two: the Amnesty Committee focused on perpetrators, and the rest of the Commission was devoted to hearing the victims' testimonies. As an outcome of political compromise, the TRC was meant to give a balanced solution by exposing the truth to the broader public. This was to be achieved both through the perpetrators' and through the victims' testimonies. The special solution of amnesties granted to the perpetrators, who revealed the truth of their crimes, distinguishes this project from the others (Wilson 2000).

In the cases of the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the work of the war crimes tribunals focused on the perpetrators, and on fulfilling such functions as: naming crimes, blaming individual perpetrators, punishing the guilty, delivering reparations to survivors, reforming lawless societies, and recording what happened for history (Mertus 2000:145). However, these war crimes tribunals did not grant space for a victim's testimony, believed to be a necessary tool for regaining a subject position by a violated self (Scarry 1985). Mertus argued that these voices were not audible except as witnesses who help investigators and prosecutors make their case (Mertus 2000:143).

In Latin American states faced with accounting for the abuse of authority undertaken by military dictatorships, the impulse for defining and making justice happen came from civil society – the most famous case being constituted by the Argentinean mothers of the disappeared. In Argentina, a

National Commissions on the Disappeared (CONADEP) emerged so as to reveal the truth about the violent acts, and to prosecute members of three juntas responsible for disappearances and for murdering civilians. The so-called 'dirty war' was interpreted as a deliberate plan carried out by the military and intelligence forces closely supervised by the highest-ranking officers (Mendez 2000:129). This implied exemption from punishment for those who followed orders without being conscious of their illegality. The executions were not very effective mostly due to reconfigurations of power and changes in governments. Simultaneously, the victims of the repressions committed by the dictatorship were accorded reparations schemes, including into the framework of justice an element of compensation. Similarly to the Argentinean case, in the case of Chile, which deals with the crimes committed by the Pinochet dictatorship in the 1970s, the emphasis was put on revealing the truth about the crimes. With a few exceptions, the perpetrators have remained in the armed and security forces. Very few of them were convicted at trial. The main effort in the case of Chile was channelled into giving evidence and presenting the truth to the public. The Rettig Commission launched a report adapting a unique approach of documenting particular cases and giving a sense of 'individualized truth' as opposed to giving a structural picture of repressions (Mendez 2000:131).

So, in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the political transformation occurred, various models of settling the accounts with the past were implemented. Borneman (1997), who reviewed these processes in the Eastern European countries in the 1990s, classified the jural restructuring implemented in East-Central Europe after the collapse of communism into three basic types: radical regime change and some retributive justice, little regime change and little retributive justice, and radical regime change and extensive retributive justice. Radical regime change and some retributive justice appeared, according to him, in Poland, Hungary, The Czech Republic and Slovenia, and implied a fast and smooth change of the legal regime, some restitution for the victims of repressions, and no prosecution of the transgressions committed by the old regimes. The second type of transition, which implied legal regime change, minimal recognition for the victims and prosecution of wrongdoers, took place in Serbia, Croatia, Romania, Russia, and other Soviet Republics excluding the Baltic States. Bulgaria, Germany and Albania implemented the third type of transition in which the regime changed: the victims were reconstituted through compensations schemes, and the perpetrators were prosecuted on a large scale (Borneman 1997:9). This thesis intends to present a detailed ethnographic study of the Polish case understood through research grounded in one locality and conducted among specific groups of people involved in the memory and

retributive justice project, which surfaced with great force when the Law and Justice Party came into power in 2005.

How Polish Nation Remembers

My approach draws away from the classificatory models so as to underline the processual aspects and social complexity of dealing with the communist past in the Polish democratic state form. In my ethnography, I try to illustrate a continuous mode of production of representations of the past and the present which are to be understood as intrinsically intertwined and historically emergent. I find it important to highlight the fragility and inconsistency of the retributive justice project implemented in Poland, as conditioned by the mixed genealogy of the recent political elites consisting of the former communist apparatchiks, the divided circle of former anti-communist activists, and the non-involved. The discussion about ways in which to discontinue and account for the transgressions committed during communism was present already during the round-table talks in 1989. During the talks there prevailed an idea of 'forgiveness through oblivion' [*przebaczenie przez zapomnienie*] promoted by the former communist elites and some of the Solidarity activists (Roszkowski 2003:129). Consequentially, the first Prime Minister of the democratic Poland with a Solidarity genealogy, who took the post in 1989, pushed forward a program of a 'thick line' [*gruba kreska*], which implied that the new government would not take responsibility for the actions of the previous regime, and also that no retributive policy in the spirit of collective responsibility and vengeance would be supported. There appeared indecisive statements of symbolic condemnation and disownment of the previous state form, like the official condemnation of the marital law of the 1980s, passed in 1992. Numerous policies of compensation for the victims were also gradually implemented by the consecutive governments. In 1992, a first serious attempt at disclosure of the Bezpieka files, detailing the cooperation with the regime of the main opposition activists, took place. An Olszewski cabinet started what is known as the 'war about files' [*wojna o teczki*] or a 'wild lustration' [*dzika lustracja*] by disclosing a number of the secret security police files revealing the history of cooperation of some public figures with Bezpieka. This act of denunciation ended in the dismissal of the government. As a consequence, Polish public life witnessed the dissemination of constant acts of disclosure and accusations of cooperation with Bezpieka thrown against public figures. When the post-communists formed the government in 1993, they adapted a strategy of non-involvement in the retributive justice and lustration projects, and openly protected the privileges of the former communist functionaries, including the security officers. When the Solidarity Electoral Action [*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*] came into power in 1997, it pushed forward the project of lustration, bringing into life

the Institute of National Remembrance – The Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (IPN) - as well as fostering open access to the Security files. In 1999, the law establishing the IPN was passed. Its main function was management of the files created by the Bezpieka throughout the duration of the communist regime. The bill outlined the rules of lustration of the public functionaries in regard to their possible cooperation with the communist regime. It further defined the notion of the communist crime, providing the legal bases for the prosecution of the transgressions committed during communist times by the functionaries of the communist state. An educational and academic research branch was also created within the Institute with an aim of propagating knowledge of the recent history of the country. Eventually, access to the Bezpieka files was defined as open to every citizen of Poland. From the interviews with the IPN staff it was clear that the Institute has been sensitive to changes in governments and went through more and less intensive stages of work, depending on who was in power. The prosecution element of the Institute is widely recognized as ineffective, as very few trials actually ended with a conviction of the transgressors. The workings of the Institute became clearly invigorated during my fieldwork, when the Law and Justice Party gained decisive support in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The party openly stated that one of its aims was a clear historical policy of disclosure and education in a spirit of patriotism, as well as accounting for the communist crimes, reconstituting the true national heroes and compensating the victims for their suffering.

In line with the Manchester school (Gluckman 1956, 1967) heuristic, in this thesis, I propose to view Polish society as fractured and divided in terms of shifting alliances, diverse resources and symbolic repertoires available for different groupings' usage of the past in the present. I look at the processes of political inclusion and exclusion which have been taking place since the collapse of communism throughout the processes of defining the communist past. These processes were greatly dependent on who was in power, as well as on the progression of governments. On a very general level, Borneman's classification of Poland as a polity, which, in the post-communist condition, has undergone radical regime change, seen some restitution for the victims of repressions, but no prosecution of the transgressors, seems accurate. However, such classification does not do justice to the reality in which various political attempts at accounting for the past have been taken in the name of the nation. In 2005, when the nationalist Law and Justice Party came into power, implementing a program of retributive justice and accounting for the crimes of the previous political system, both victims and perpetrators felt something was changing. During the eighteenth months of my fieldwork, I observed how this party's government focused on the strengthening of the myth of the

continuous resistance of a heroic Polish nation against communism through incorporation and objectification of an image of a hero/victim, aiming at the same time at the conviction and marginalization of the perpetrators. The Law and Justice Party's governmental term constituted a historical moment in which the heroes/victims were given access to resources located at the centre of power and allowed full usage thereof in the processes of self-enactments and defining of the communist past in moral terms. At the same time, the former security officers experienced a growing sense of insecurity caused by an extensive public exposure of their work defined as morally flawed and evil.

National Bureaucracy and Centres of Semiosis

This analysis focuses on the institutional channels through which the meaning of the past is constructed. Within the Polish nation state, a number of institutions play a participatory role in the creation of values and meanings in reference to the communist past. The IPN is the main body. Yet, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Culture, the President, as well as local authorities, courts, schools, and museums all participate in the processes of objectification of the past. The Office for the Veterans and the Repressed Persons [*Urząd ds. Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych*] is, apart from the IPN, one of the main bodies which mediate individual processes of objectifying the self in reference to the communist past. The office is responsible for allocating identity cards, privileges, and rights to veterans and repressed persons; it is further responsible for propagating the tradition of the Polish fights for independence, as well as providing the veterans and the repressed people with honour, care, and protection. The ethnography of the association will shed more light on the ways in which institutionalized forms of objectification enter the interactional order of social life and become effective for people's perceptions.

Michael Herzfeld, in 'The Social Production of Indifference' (1992), coined a notion of *national bureaucracy* in order to highlight bureaucratic management of personal, social and national identities (1992:3). He proposed to view bureaucracy as ritual, understood as patterned and ordered sequences of acts, whose content and arrangement is characterized by formality, stereotype, condensation and redundancy (18). However, apart from the evident state rituals, he turned his attention to 'rituals of personal commitment' – 'practices that are sometimes less obviously ritualistic' (37), arguing that the efficacy of bureaucracy relies as much on grand collective acts, as on emotive personal practices revolving around them. He hence viewed state order as a narratively and systematically controlled symbolic system (38), while bureaucracy in this view is treated as a

management of taxonomy (39). The logic of the nation state implies defining 'who we are' (46), and such definitions necessarily imply defining the past in the light of the present. In this thesis, my main interest lies at the intersection of institutionally conventionalized aspects of the communist past and the individual modes of remembering that past undertaken by the political actors who were involved in it. At large, I look at the social processes of clustering of different groupings around the emergent institutional centres in which meaning is constructed, in order to realize their entitlements to the truth, and complement this picture with an analysis of the defensive attempts at distancing from guilt undertaken by the symbolically excluded security officers.

On a more general line, Michael Silverstein talks about 'wider-scale institutional orders of interactionality, historically contingent, yet structured' (2004:623) by which he means that there are historically emergent institutional orders which structure people's interactions and which influence the positions and values they express and believe in. The centres of value and creation of meaning influence the ways in which people interact, what they say to each other, and how they commit to various events and issues (623). The notion of sociality in his view should be understood as cultural beliefs and role-alignments which structure everyday interactions (627). In this thesis, I will use the terms 'centre(s) of semiosis', 'institutional centres', or 'national bureaucracy' to indicate the institutional structures in which meaning concerning the communist past is produced and disseminated through state technologies and rituals so as to influence subjectivities, their sense of belonging and modes of remembering.

My fieldwork material aims at giving a sense of the changing cultural form of memory and retributive justice politics emerging from within the collapsing communist regime, the clear manifestation of which surfaced along with the Law and Justice Party's political victory. The allied anti-communist social forces (The Law and Justice Party, the Catholic Church, those who were repressed by the communist apparatus) participated in the implementation of their version of the memory project, believing they were capable of evoking a new sense of moral order based on true patriotic values in society. Through access to the state 'institutions of boundary maintenance' (Wimmer 2002), like law, entitlements and state rituals, these actors joined together in an effort to frame the past and actual ideological conflict in moral terms. Such framing was enabled by the larger transnational processes, the past transgressions committed by the members of state institutions, and the experiences of humiliation and suffering of the heroes/victims, who served as a symbolic capital for the alliance, which simultaneously believed in the necessity of achieving a new moral quality on a societal level,

and realized its own political aims through engagement in the bureaucratized production of that particular cultural form. By analyzing the interactively produced cultural meanings, symbols, practices and discourses, which I call a *cultural form of memory politics*, I simultaneously focus on the process of experiencing the self which is conditioned by individual involvements in the process of production of implementation of this form. I do not see a need to extract the individual from the social and cultural. On the contrary, I perceive culture as both 'extrapersonal and intrapersonal' (Strauss and Quinn 1997:9), and always in the making.

Mageo and Knauft, in their introduction to a volume on power and subjectivity, claim that the political perspectives which do not engage with psychological theorizing are incomplete (2002). Political oppression or the workings of a modern national polity should not be read as abstracted from individual life-worlds, but should be experientially situated and analyzed from a point of view of their ability to affect people's psychologies and individual involvements in it. They should be regarded as humanly-constructed artefacts as opposed to abstracted powers with undefined sources. My ambition in this study was to give a sense of interconnectedness of transnational processes, grand social transitions, specific political projects, and individual psychologies. In order to achieve such an angle, I drew upon various theoretical perspectives. These perspectives influenced the choice of diversified methods of collecting the data applied in the field research.

Emic and Etic perspectives on history

The historically shifting social stance of my informants imposed on this study a diachronic perspective. I particularly wished to keep in the background of this thesis what Otto Brunner called the 'changes in long-term structures of social conditionality' so as to shed light on the processes of self-articulation performed by social groups who commit themselves to interpreting recent history (Koselleck 2002:22) and their sense of who they are. I believe the predominant tone of this study, characterized by anthropological attention to details of social life, would have remained flat had it not been complemented by the birds-eye view of what happened before the transition and what came after it.

The marriage of anthropology with history has a long tradition, and it seems that no anthropological study devoted to memory in particular could pass without treating *emic* perceptions of history seriously. In this ethnographic case historical works constitute one of the main modes in which people conceptualize and linguistically process the passage of time. It is especially so in cases of

those personally involved in political processes, as the bulk of Polish historical writings belongs to a *genre*[3] of political history. The recently written political history of communist Poland is hence treated in this thesis as one of the cultural tools used for defining the self and evoking the sense of national 'groupness'. I treat it as a legitimate technology of objectification of the past usable in the process of self-understanding and self-representation in Polish society. These forms of historical objectification are being used as instruments in the processes of implementation of memory politics, as well as serving as a conceptual basis for the construction of perceptions of the self and the world on a timescale. In this study, I use recent historical sources while introducing the depth of historical process and the histories of groups and institutions. Later on, I draw on the primary sources typically used by recent historians in their works on the communist past – that is the Security files. Both primary and secondary sources are also treated in this thesis as cultural forms used by individuals and institutions in their practices of defining and morally evaluating the past. I am particularly interested in the potential of historical sources and records for shaping individual processes of remembering and forgetting, and ways in which they become a crucial component of the individual encounter with the self.

Apart from the nature of the *emic* perspective, I owe the shape of my focus on history to some of the anthropological works, as well as to the literature, which emerged at the intersection of philosophy and history within the post-structuralist turn. Karaksidou (1997), Malkki (1995), Herzfeld (1991), Rosaldo (1980) and Shryock (1987), sensitive to the shape of their field, in their ethnographies approached the notion of history and historiography in divergent ways. In Greece as depicted by Karaksidou these were mostly socio-political changes; for Malkki, it was the processes of collective myth-making in the condition of the refugee; for Herzfeld, the two worlds of state and rural Greece were evolving on different timescales – monumental and social; for Rosaldo, who did fieldwork among Ilongots, history and memory were nested in places and nature; and eventually for Shryock, who worked among Bedouins in Jordan, memory was collectively constructed in various centres – that of state, and that of Bedouin families - and while these constructs were conflicting at times, they often built upon each other. All of the aforementioned ethnographies taught me how to capture some aspect of time, memory and history in this project. On the other hand, I was able to grasp the historical process as part of a larger structural condition thanks to White's (1973) and Koselleck's (2000) works, which present a view from above, revolutionizing understanding of modern

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[3] Throughout the thesis, I use here Bakhtinian definition of a genre understood as "typical forms of utterance associated with a particular sphere of communication (e.g. the workplace, the military, the sewing circle), which have therefore developed into *relatively stable types* in terms of thematic content, style and compositional structure" (Cited after Morris 1994:80).

historiography as a social endeavour always rooted in an ideological condition. My sensitivity to the eerie repeatability of historical condition characteristic of Eastern Europe emerged as a consequence of reading Istvan Rév's essays on recent Hungarian history (2005). His fascinating eye for unusual historical records and an ability to breathe life into these, allowing the past to become a real experience for the reader, helped me appreciate the possibility of work with the security files, already undertaken by Skultans in Latvia (2001). History and memory are closely intertwined. I believe that analysis undertaken in this thesis would have lost its depth had it not been complemented by brief historical sketches. For this reason, in the Appendix Four, the reader can reach for a shortcut through a political history of the groups, which constituted the main informants in this thesis.

Memory: a multidimensional figure

From the very outset this project was meant to be about memory. While exploring the literature on memory, I soon realized how complex and layered this concept became: difficult to grasp and capable of being many different things at the same time. It means both 'phenomenological ground of identity' and the modes of 'explicit identity construction' (Lambek and Antze 1996:XVII). It signifies commemorative practices (White 2006) and material signifiers (Bodnar 1992, Boyer 1984, Lowenthal 1985, Nora 1989, Winter 1995, Young 1993, 1997). It encompasses individual processes of remembrance (Baddeley 1997, Tulving 1972) and collective aspects of remembering and forgetting (Halbwachs 1992[1952]). The simultaneous functioning of the term in various disciplines, which stress different aspects of the phenomenon, made some scholars call for the bridging of seemingly contradictory perspectives in search of a more holistic approach (Bartlett 1995, Bloch 1989, Cole 2001, Stewart 2004). In order to tackle the links between individual and collective modes of remembering and forgetting, it became crucial to ask more questions about the relations between socio-cultural and political contexts and the mental states of the subjects who do the memory work and transmit knowledge of their past experience. This knowledge is used by the subjects to construct coherent representations of the self; it is also objectified so as to serve the symbolic politics of the state (Feldman 2004, Verdery 1999). This work should be understood as an endeavour aiming at grasping the phenomenon of memory from many different angles, which nonetheless belong to the same figure of a particular cultural time and semiotically transformed place. By linking the analysis of various institutional contexts in which the memory project is being produced with a careful micro-sociology of individual processes of self-management in time between communism and post-communism, I try to give a fuller sense of the phenomenological reality of the intense realization of

the Polish memory project in the 2000s. I identify with Neisser's call for *ecological validity,* i.e. for researching memory in detailed ways, as it operates in the real world, as opposed to undertaking laboratory studies (1982). This thesis, very much in line with the anthropological tradition, is a study of real world, real talk, real emotions and real experience of memory.

In terms of individual processes of remembering and forgetting, I advance Neisser's point taken from Gibson (Neisser 1986) stating that understanding ways in which the individual memory works requires at first an analysis of the information available to individual perception (Neisser 1986). Neisser pointed out that the moral aspects of experience are mental constructs. Yet, he moved beyond the cognitive psychology paradigm and claimed that the researcher's task was to understand the process of construction and its products (Neisser 1986:76) beyond laboratory tests. My task in this research was to locate the knowledge structures about the past that guide individual constructive retrievals from memory. I focused on the process of construction in which memory took a form of collective *moral practice* (Lambek 1996). The tensions in the constructive process of remembering should be understood as located at the intersection of processes of perception, development of self-schemata, group interaction, and collective instances of objectification and conventionalizing, which guide individual processes of remembering and constructing the self.

Kirmayer points to the moral function of memory to be located in its capacity to make people face up to what they would like to forget. He further argues for the memories to be fully evoked when they fit socially approved cultural forms; hence, he notices that it is society which must provide individuals with a range of narrative forms, which allow for construction of coherent stories of the selves (Kirmayer 1996:193). Memory projects like the one analyzed in this thesis fulfil a moral function of forcing people to go back to a difficult past and making it usable in the present. My ethnography describes a moment in time when various narrative, material and ritual forms are provided through state channels for the heroes/victims to support their effort to construct coherent stories of themselves. The production of such stories is simultaneously represented as a means of achieving unity on a national level. I argue, however, that such processes of achieving self-coherence through involvement in the institutionally legitimized cultural form are characterized by ambiguity and generate a sense of insecurity. The condition of coherence is to be achieved, and as such, it should be understood as a journey, which does not necessarily imply success. I mean here, in particular, the individual efforts to become the hero/victim within the framework of memory politics of the nation/state. On the other hand, in a situation where there are deep conflicts over the entitlement to

truth and opposed understandings of the notion of justice, the emergence of a story which grants a possibility of coherence to both sides of the conflict seems implausible. The chapters devoted to the security officers aim at illustrating ways in which the cultural form of memory politics in Poland has caused the disintegration of themselves, and feelings of national exclusion and condemnation. The main defensive reaction to this situation implied distancing from responsibility and guilt, and inability to comprehend this denial of belonging to the nation state, because of a strong belief that one served for this nation. Lambek proposed that 'the questions to ask of any given acts of memory are what is affirmed and what is denied' (1996:239). With such questions, one moves away from treating memory as 'neutral representation' towards understanding it as a dynamic social process involving a set of claims about the past (1996:239). This thesis illustrates conflicting claims to the past, one group of which is affirmed through the state channels, while the other one is denied.

The bulk of the literature on memory approaches it through its material manifestations, studying mnemonic devices or cultural products like commemorative forms (Nora 1989, Lowenthal 1985). Other work pays attention to narrative form understood as a linguistic objectification of the past which allows for achieving coherence – a sort of sense-making practice (Kirmayer 1996, 2003). Eventually, a cognitive psychology tradition views memory as both voluntary and an involuntary, internal psychological process. While in the field, I observed how each enactment of the memory project ignites memory work and objectifying practices on all of these levels, and how closely they are interlinked and interdependent. Pulling various threads from the literature, I tried to paint the multidimensional landscape of Polish memory – to move from the description of various manifestations of the emergent cultural form of memory politics towards the myriad interactive and imaginative modes of its appropriation and reproduction.

Trying to research all of these aspects of memory at once, I found Goodwin's theoretical stand on action and embodiment, understood as situated human interaction, the most helpful heuristic device for linking divergent elements in one perspective. His pragmatic approach takes as a starting point a notion of human action understood as conditioned by 'simultaneous deployment of a range of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (2000:1489). He argues that 'a theory of action must come to terms with both the details of language use and the way in which the social, cultural, material and sequential structure of the environment where action occurs figure into its organization' (2000:1498). According to this view, the action of remembering and forgetting should be understood within a context-dependent systematic framework which provides it with various semiotic resources.

The body which remembers, forgets, represents, and objectifies the past achieves such practices in a dynamic process of unfolding and is imagined as an 'interactively organized locus for the production and display of meaning and action' (2000:1490). The stress on the sequence resembles here Connerton's argument about the embodied repeatability of memory practices (1989). Linton (1982) argued that repetitions of similar events result in an emergence of schemata representing their properties, so that memory accesses schemata, rather than singular events. In this way, repetition generates a move from episodic to semantic memory in Tulving's terms (1972), which constitutes a sort of objectification and stereotyping process. The heroes/victims, through a repeatable ritual and everyday enactments of this self-representation, eventually develop a stable schema of the self. The first part of the thesis aims at showing this movement from participation to internalization of objectified self-representations. In particular, the institutionalized aspects of the memory projects are realized through a sequential structure and repeatability, which creates a sense of lasting assurance. This thesis therefore tries to show how institutionalization of memory generates a cultural form of self-perception, which relies on a sequential and repeatable possibility of experiencing the self in a collectively achieved framework of 'hero/victim' or 'perpetrator'. Consequently, I point to the significance of the social aspects of memory work for experiencing the self in time. I look at particular social aspects – ones linked with power and politics as they are realized through state channels. I hence preoccupy myself with ethnography of the processes of statization of memory, as they progress in various layers of social life.

Deriving from Silverstein, I locate the main institutions and channels which generate a "centre of semiosis" of the memory project during the Law and Justice Party term. I observe how meaning is generated, and links individuals with a larger myth of a nation in very subtle ways. I argue that such centres of semiosis 'exert a structuring, value-conferring influence on any particular event of discursive interaction with respect to the meanings and significance of the verbal and semiotic forms used in it' (Silverstein 2004:623). In fact, I go beyond the discursive and interactional effects and try to show how the centre of semiosis penetrates much deeper into the social fabric as it reaches the human emotional worlds, never fully objectified and realized. Importantly, in this thesis, the centres of semiosis are not treated as Foucauldian discourse (1979) which disciplines the bodies. More in line with Silverstein (2004) and Blommaert (2001, 2005), I understand it as an institutionalized, hence legitimated, source of semiotic resources emergent from the social action of allied interest groups, achieved through already established cultural tools. Such emergent resources are appropriated by

groups and individuals in their effort to obtain a sense of belonging, an internal coherence of their stories in accordance with a larger collective narrative.

I studied the centres of semiosis through the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, participant observation and analysis of materiality. During fieldwork, I first located such centres of semiosis while following my informants in their everyday lives. The state, historiography and the Church channels as well as mass media proved to be the most significant centres of value creation in regard to the communist past. Hence, I collected a number of texts, and recorded a number of discursive events, including natural conversations, which occurred in authoritative settings or in relation to the meanings generated in these centres. In the case of the heroes/victims, I followed them to commemorative events organized by the association of the heroes/victims, state officials, state institutions like the IPN, NGOs, and the Church. In terms of the security officers, the main materials for the discourse analysis were those of the mass media and the hearings during the trial of one of the officers.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach to language in which the focus is put on modes in which language interlinks with other elements of social life, and how the creation and negotiation of meanings and values play a role in the constitution and reproduction of relations of dominance and subjugation (Fairclough 2001:25). In this work, I treat language more broadly as a semiotic system encompassing not only linguistic manifestations, but also material culture and body language. Studying memory projects in a holistic way implies doing research which is sensitive to all aspects of semiosis, as people's phenomenological experiences are built through all the senses. Human modes of objectification of the past also stretch beyond narrative and encompass gestures and material forms.

Working on this thesis, I derived much inspiration from Wodak et al. (1997) and van Dijk's (1993) analyses of situated political discourse. This is visible in those parts of the thesis in which I analyse political texts, and talk about ways in which they map the communist past in the present. For developing an approach to the trial, I relied on the literature in the field of legal studies (Matoesian 1993), which put stress on the ideological and constructed character of legal categories, and are sensitive to the ways in which relations of power structure the interaction in the legal setting. A significant part of the analysis presents data of discursive interactions as I aimed to shed light on the ways in which such interactions are structured by centres of semiosis in which they occur. In such fragments, I relied mainly on the literature from the field of linguistics (Goodwin 2006) and symbolic

interactionism (Goodwin 2000), as these approaches seemed to me the most accurate and allowed access to the dynamic aspect of sociality taking place at the level of association. By deriving from these approaches, I meant to link the analysis of the meanings and values generated by national bureaucrats with the interactive appropriation of this framework. Eventually, I took one more methodological step and devoted parts of the fieldwork to reaching more personal attempts at appropriation of meaning.

"Culture is grounded in human body" (Csordas 1994)

The micro-level of this analysis is constituted by the focus on the individual body, as it experiences and interacts with larger processes of objectification of the past. Csordas argues that:

> "Objectification is the product of reflective, ideological knowledge, whether it be in the form of colonial Christianity, biological science, or consumer culture. Our lives are not always lived in objectified bodies, for our bodies are not originally objects to us. They are instead the ground of perceptual process that *ends* in objectification, and the play between preobjective and objectified bodies within our own culture is precisely what is at issue in many of the contemporary critiques" (Csordas 1994:7).

My ethnography takes as a case the processes of objectification of the past realized through the state channels – a product of reflective and ideological knowledge in the form of a memory and retributive justice project. The project should be understood as a complex historically enabled, momentary, collective endeavour. The heroes/victims have actively participated in the process of generating objectified forms of the past. Events like the unveiling of a monument should be understood as an end of a perceptual process objectified in a material form through a collective endeavour. In this sense, I aim at tracing "embodiment" understood as an 'immediate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and modes of presence and engagement' (Csordas 1994:11) of the heroes/victims and the perpetrators in the memory project.

In order to study the intersection of collective memory project and individual processes of remembering, I chose to work with a notion of self-schemata (Marcus 1977). In the cognitive psychology paradigm, self-schemata are explained as cognitive structures about the self, which organize, summarize, and explain one's behaviour. These schemata - generalizations about the self based on the experience of the past - work towards organizing information related to the self by

linking particular schemata with empirical referents. Marcus argued that self-schemata 'facilitate the processing of information about the self (judgements and decisions about the self), contain easily retrievable behavioural evidence, provide a basis for the confident self-prediction of behaviour on schema-related dimensions, and make individuals resistant to counterschematic information' (Marcus 1977:63). Conway complements this by explaining that memories are dynamic constructions of knowledge, and arguing that a memory consists of a steady schema for its activation established across the indices of long-term structures of autobiographical memory, as well as of the set of control processes which guide the construction of such schema. In a constructed view of autobiographical memory, self-schemata *ground the self*, meaning they limit the range of possible selves experienced and objectifiable by an individual (Conway 1997:5). In line with this literature, while analysing the heroes/victims, I tackled the processes of construction of memory involving the state institutions which ground the schemata, which make the heroes/victims resistant to counterschematic information about the self. I further analyzed security officers' interactions with manifestations of interpretative frameworks that emerged from the centres of semiosis.

For the perpetrators, internalization of the collectively constructed frameworks implies resisting it in the processes of reconstructing the self. Deriving inspiration from Argenti-Pillen's work on civil war-torn Sri-Lanka, I treat the Bezpieka officers' modes of communication as 'a form of micropolitical reorganization' in the context of persisting social tensions understood as a legacy of the authoritative regime (Argenti-Pillen 2002). What formed the security officers' memory frameworks and provided them with schemata for remembering in the past worked towards veiling their transgressions through rationalizing techniques which made them look legitimate and just, or merely insignificant. The knowledge structures disseminated through social practice in the past strengthened in them a set of self-constructs that are difficult to maintain in the context of memory politics fostered by the Law and Justice Party. The discrepancy between the frameworks now causes a sense of disorientation and activates a self-defence mechanism in the form of a language of distancing from responsibility, and feelings of shame and guilt. Guilt is characterized by an experienced sense of tension, remorse, and regret over transgression (Niedenthal et al. 1994:587), while shame involves self-evaluation implying the overwhelming feeling of being a bad person (Niedenthal et al. 1994:586). While the memory politics evoke a sense of shame in the security officers, they take semiotic measures to defend themselves from it, and in their narratives they are only rarely able to enact feelings of guilt, which are nonetheless veiled.

To analyze the self-constructs of the security officers, I had available only their stories, most commonly the life stories and evaluative narratives about the present – most of them given in a confessional style. Such limitations were dictated by the difficulty in accessing this group of informants, conditioned by their fear of talking about the past. They cared for their anonymity, and were only willing to meet face to face, in a 'comfortable' place, frequently asking for the recorder to be switched off. They lacked a clear network of support. The only social situations of affirmation I observed were informal and accidental meetings of two or more former security officers. I witnessed such meetings only three times, and my presence surely affected them in such a way that these events cannot be treated as naturally occurring conversations. Hence, methodologically, my records of discursive interactions of this group of informants are weak. Yet, I can point to the relevance of such contexts in the maintenance of resistance and defence strategies among the security officers in reaction to the memory project.

Because of the nature of the data I collected, in analysing the security officers, but also the heroes/victims, I have turned to narrative studies, with particular focus being put on the narrative of the self. I collected personal autobiographical stories of the security officers which appeared as a reaction to cultural forms that emerged during the transition. Hart and Fegley (In Callero 2003) point to narratives to constitute tools for dealing with situations of departure from legitimacy in the context of social change. In this sense, the self of the security officers is understood as a reflexive self, which can interpret and objectify the self in the condition of social change (Callero 2003:119). The officers reveal the universal human capacity to process knowledge in an interpretative way (Bruner 1991:8). The self-narratives, understood as reflexive processes, have a dynamic dimension. 'Being born out of experience' they simultaneously give shape to it (Ochs and Capps 1996:20). I treat the narratives of the security officers as generic despite their particularity. I treat them as tokens of broader types (Bruner 1991:6) conditioned by the centres of semiosis and their collective and individuated practices. The *genericness* of these narratives (Bruner 1991:14) should be recognized in the typical language of distancing, and the prevailing opacity of the accounts. The narratives are structured by the intention to defend oneself and maintain a self-coherence. They manifest the ambiguity of lived experience and allow for numerous possibilities of describing it. As Roy Harris put it, 'narratives are not unsponsored texts' (cited after Bruner 1991:10). Bruner argues that intention provides the basis for interpretation as well as for the ways in which the story is told (Bruner 1991:11). In this sense, the narratives of the security officers are understood as consequences of their current social position which threatens their well-established self-constructs, which are so

attractive and comforting that the officers make great efforts to maintain them. However, this turns out to be a particularly difficult task, since, as Bruner argued:

> *One of principal ways in which we work "mentally" in common, I would want to argue, is by the process of joint narrative accrual. Even our individual autobiographies, as I have argued elsewhere, depend on being placed within a continuity provided by a constructed and shared social history in which we locate our Selves and our individual continuities* (Bruner 1991:20).

Hence, the narratives of my informants are understood as a *narrative practice* meaning simultaneously 'the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told' (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:164). They are understood as 'storytellers engaged in the work of constructing coherence under the circumstances of storytelling' (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:164). Narrative practice is simultaneously a memory practice and a moral practice, as it constitutes a process of expressing one's entitlement to the truth about the past, which, at the same time, defines the self. Importantly, this memory practice is structured by social occasions for objectifying the past in the form of a narrative, but also in other forms of embodied social action. These occasions are differently structured for the heroes/victims and for the security officers. This thesis aims to demonstrate the contrast and explain the social mechanisms accounting for the shape of these two different generic types of self-narrative and embodied social action.

'[...] a full understanding of self-meanings, self-images, and self-concepts requires a broad conceptualization of context, one that extends beyond the immediate definition of the situation to include the historical and cultural settings where unarticulated assumptions about the nature of the person have their origin' (Callero 2003:121). The thesis is organized so as to sketch the social contexts of memory politics and give a sense of the resources provided by various centres of semiosis for memory practices. When data allow it, the analysis addresses interactive, locally grounded discursive events, so as to give a precise idea about the specific occasions for objectifying the self. Eventually, the ethnography reaches the level of the individual so as to focus on his/her internal struggle to be in this particular cultural context of remembering.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first five chapters describe the world in which the heroes/victims remember and forget. The sixth chapter, followed by three final chapters comprising the second part of the thesis, constitutes a transition towards the second part dealing with the ways in which the former security officers remember their past in the light of the intensive memory politics implemented by the Law and Justice Party government.

This first chapter proposes to view historical works as a component of a cultural form of memory politics – a technology of meaningful processing of the past, usable for pushing forward one's claims about the truth, as well as constituting a tool enabling a performance of a hero/victim self. In chapter two, by scrutinizing the workings of the Association of the Former Prisoners of the Communist Period, I argue for the bureaucratized processes of objectification of the hero/victim identity to be consequential for the individual processes of remembering and experiencing the self. I illustrate the way in which the state mediates the social practice of acquiring a subject position vis-à-vis one's past, which allows for achieving a sense of integrity and moral order. In chapter three, I propose a Critical Discourse Analysis of twelve sermons uttered during the "patriotic masses" organized for the heroes/victims on various nationally and locally relevant occasions. Sermons constitute another cultural vehicle through which the communist past is being objectified. They work towards the creation of a comfort zone which legitimizes and enables the experience of a hero/victim self. Chapter four moves us to the middle level of the analysis. It comprises an investigation into a conversation which occurred in the Association after the mass media had announced that one of the archbishops had cooperated with the security services. The event-centred conversation is analysed as a moral action through which the group integrates new contents into the myth which legitimizes them. The analysis reveals how cultural concepts grounded in the larger memory project are being put into practice, as well as focusing on ways in which the members of the association enact the hero/victim self during interaction. Chapter five focuses on the individual life story of the President of the Association. Here, I point to the space of ambiguity between the collectively enacted frameworks and the experience of the self in time. I trace ways in which an individual account of life takes shape when the new constellation of power relations emerges. The chapter focuses on the intersection of the individual interpretative efforts concerning the past and resources generated through the institutional channels of the state, usable for enacting the self in time.

The bridge between the first and the second part of the thesis is constituted by chapter six, which focuses on the collective commemorative practices involving the symbolic appropriation of the landscape. I follow the practices of acknowledgement and erasure legitimately performed through the state channels. I analyze the place of the heroes/victims, the security officers and the non-involved in reference to commemorative rituals which leave material marks on the landscape.

The second part of the thesis opens with chapter seven, which contains an analysis of the legal processes and Law and Justice Party's discourse concerning the security officers. It argues that the accusations set against the security officers constitute an element of the politically sensitive processes of clarifying and affirming social definitions in the aftermath of communism. It further introduces interpretative frameworks used by the security officers to deal with the past by presenting their narratives. Such juxtaposition is intended to reveal the discrepancy between the politically legitimized versions of the past disseminated and the modes of remembering and objectifying the past undertaken by the security officers. Chapter nine consists of an analysis of a trial of one of the Marianowice security officers accused of committing a communist crime. It focuses on ways in which an authoritative situation of a court case shapes people's modes of recalling and narrating the past. The main thread of the chapter is devoted to the modes of remembering and representing the self undertaken by the accused as fostered by the trial situation. The second part of the thesis closes with a chapter containing an analysis of two life narratives of security officers. In this final chapter, I point at the current situatedness of this group characterized by a sudden shift in social position and access to resources. I analyze their sense of disorientation and efforts to maintain a coherent image of the self. I point to the language of distancing as one of the defence mechanisms used by them in a situation of being publicly condemned.

Marianowice

Marianowice is a name given to a real town. I decided to anonymize the place and the names of my informants so as to allow myself the facility to move into very personal levels of analysis. For most of the time, I treated the material I dealt with as sensitive. While most of the heroes/victims were happy to reveal their identities and have their names put in the thesis, most of the security officers wanted to keep their anonymity. I believed that anonymity should be granted to all of the subjects in this study, as my analysis moves way beyond the stories consciously given to me. I dig into their words, search for the holes and uncanny loops, linking their accounts with knowledge I gained from other sources. I believe their names should not take the burden of my interpretation. Nor can the town be specified, as knowing its name is to be able to identify the people I write about.

Marianowice lies between four hills. A tiny river cuts through the city. The seasons are changeable there – with harsh winters and hot summers disconnected by mild springs and nostalgic autumns. Similarly, the big wars and foreign invasions which happened in that locality were fragmented by periods of peace, freedom and self-governance. When the last big war started, brothers and sisters

became involved in divergent political agendas and stood up against each other violently. After the war was over, the divisions which occurred on the national body deepened, and unforgettable scars were left on it by the implemented mode of governance. Many atrocities and humiliations of various magnitudes took place in the surrounding area in the last century. Now, some of the people of Marianowice have made an attempt at unravelling these and translating them into the collective myth to strengthen the spirit of imagined community. I was there to try and understand that endeavour.

Chapter One

The disambiguated language:

historiography as a technology of linguistic processing of the past

This chapter is centred on the nature and production process of the historical narrative itself. Following Hayden White and Reinhard Koselleck, I ask the questions: 'into what parts do historians split their subject matter, and which parts do they relate, and in what way, to each other? […] how do parts relate to the whole, which parts are singled out as representative […]? How are temporal continuities and discontinuities established?' (Koselleck 2002:40). I argue for the historical narrative to be characterized by a disambiguated language, which I understand as a result of historically shaped humiliations and power struggles, as well as an outcome of culturally persistent conceptualizations and *genres* disseminated throughout the authoritative channels of state, religion and family. Talking to me, the heroes/victims and former security officers have nested their life stories in a specific historical meta-narrative and, through reference to this narrative, they furnished their lives with meaning and a coherent framework. As a reaction to years of silencing, the recent historical representations of communism aspire to 'give voice to the victims', to 'reveal the truth', and eventually, to give a final moral judgement on communism. As such they have come to constitute a resource for the people who experienced that past - a cultural tool structuring individual life stories and making them meaningful beyond the temporal framework of a singular life form.

Historicizing Ethnography

Since, in modern societies, history writing came to constitute one of the most prominent technologies of representing the past, turning towards historical writing in a project concerned with the social modes of shaping the past in the present became unavoidable. When dealing with the entanglements of collective and individual memory practices, it is useful to remain sensitive to changes in historiographic representations since, often, it is through looking back in time that we are able to grasp the fragility of local hegemonies of remembering and forgetting, as well as an amazing cultural potential of certain collective representations which allow people to explain and order the past in the present. This part of the chapter means to flesh out what Otto Brunner called the 'changes in long-term structures of social conditionality' expressed through particular self-articulations of social groups and the history of their interpretation (Koselleck 2002:22). Along with the collapse of communism in Poland, the conditions for self-articulation have changed and new groups have started to influence the processes of interpretation of the past. This thesis complies with what Hirsch and Stewart called ethnographic investigations of *historicity,* with the historicity being understood as 'a social and performative condition rather than an objectively determinable aspect of historical descriptions' (Hirsch and Stewart 2005:262). Hence, historiography in this thesis is treated not only as a valuable resource for the construction of individual and collective self-images, but also

as a situated social system generating a particular kind of knowledge concerning the past (White 1973). As such, historiography is understood as a master narrative[4], necessarily nested in its particular context of the telling, fabricating potent and powerful representations of the past. Such representations have been disseminated through authoritative (institutional, state-sponsored) channels socializing people into the past imagined as common, creating the conditions for the socially situated appropriations of its representations.

Disambiguated Language

Recalling structuralist theory claiming that identities rely on relations of contrast and opposition, White argues for the oppositions to constitute a frame for creating and negotiating national identities in the making (White 2000:501). An omnipresent framework of us vs. them (*my* vs. *oni*) is a deeply-rooted conceptual metaphor determining ways in which Poles talk and think about communism and now. This framework organizes their actions, utterances and institutionalized interactions. The metaphor I am talking about can be traced back to such polarizations as occupier vs. nation (*okupant* vs. *naród*), and authority vs. society (*władza* vs. *społeczeństwo*), which has been recently transformed into communists and informers vs. us – indicating the anti-communists, who did not betray (*komuniści* and *kapusie* vs. *my*). Such a polarized view is often adopted in historical writing too, which predominantly reminds us of what Rév (2005) marked out as typical for the Central and Eastern Post-communist Europe – 'history of bad times'. Let's think through this fragment:

> *'The history of the communist security apparatus can be perceived from two points of view. On the one hand it is a history of crime, terror, betrayal and human meanness. […] On the other hand, state security files document cases of consummate heroism; they contain history of ordinary people, who in the name of fundamental values were ready to sacrifice a great deal, sometimes even their lives'* (K. Persak and Ł. Kamiński 2005:8).

This section comes from an introduction by the IPN historians to the *Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatuses in East Central Europe 1944-1989*. In a typical morally loaded language, obviously negative features are being ascribed to one (communist) side, and positive ones to the other (anti-communist). It seems to me that, in a social situation emergent from a

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[4] Narrative and language are treated in this thesis in a wider sense encompassing symbolic, visual and spatial representations and signifiers. Historical narratives are understood as "cultural tools" (Wertsch 2000), a particular kind of "cultural texts" including all media that "possess a particular normative and formative authority in the establishment of meaning and identity" (Assmann 2006). In the case of historiography, the distinctiveness is constituted by an institutionalized and professionalized mode of production and dissemination.

period of big and small humiliations, abuses and violence, it is particularly difficult to refrain from such moralistic and divisive language, which I understand as *reactive*. This is especially so when the two distinguished categories and their descendants still live their everyday lives face to face in a world which continues to be shaped by economic inequalities and political asymmetries.

Big Conceptual Orders

Recording the disambiguated language used in reference to the communist past, and frequently extended over to the present, I asked myself about sources and agents who disseminated and enhanced the social occurrences of such conceptualizations leading to their cultural persistence. In the case of Poland, both Catholicism merged with nationalism and communism have constituted such systems of knowledge and belief which frequently used extreme conceptual forms of disambiguation. These two cultural forms constitute the main ideological systems that Poles have been exposed to. Catholic philosophy, which clearly prescribes standards of behaviour, good and evil, remains an important component of the production and legitimation of the polarized representations of the past in the present[5]. The historical contingency decided upon a firm linkage between the Polish Catholic Church and nationalism. As, during WWII and its aftermath, Polish priests were involved in 'spiritual leading' of the resisting partisans, so today, the military has its chaplains, and the veterans have theirs. The fruit of such confluence will be illustrated by a chapter for which the main source of data was provided by the Catholic patriotic masses during which the merging of ideologies was put into practice. The focus on divisions as opposed to unity, a clear delineation of categories of 'us' and 'them' which endure beyond communism, are prevalent in the contemporary sermons for which the heroes/victims are the audience. The historically validated polarization has become a useful tool for establishing the position of the Church. The preaching fathers managed to interweave into the emergent Manichean picture of politics a religious component and ally themselves with the anti-communist political forces. As Kołakowski argued, 'for a number of historical reasons, religious and national identity in Poland have over a long period become almost indistinguishable' (1997:50). It has been widely believed that the 'rigidity of the Polish Catholic culture […] gave the country its power of resistance' (Kołakowski 1997:51). A large part of the current Polish political elite approaches Catholic tradition as an 'irreplaceable vehicle of

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[5] I do not mean to generalize here. The Catholic philosophy as such is being variously utilized in the processes of 'secondary' production (de Certeau 1988) by different streams within the Catholic Church. The priests who were involved in the patriotic masses I attended with my informants constitute just one faction within the Church – a more radical and nationalistic one. There are obviously more moderate and liberal voices coexisting within this institution. John Paul II – himself a very conservative mind - taught the merciful version of Polish post-communist nationalism (2005).

cultural continuity, the expression *par excellence*, of historical national identity, and the only reliable source of moral guidance' (Kołakowski 1997:56), fostered by a long history of territorial dismemberment (Michael Stewart: personal communication).

Looking further back into the past, the disambiguation and avoidance of polysemy was above all clearly present in the communist modes of governing. The resemblances between the Catholic religion and communism have been confusing for many. Davis (1999), for instance, argued that numerous features of the communist system can be traced back to the earlier phases of Polish history. In 'God's Playground' he wrote: 'the similarities can be traced between authoritarianism and lofty rhetoric of the Party and the traditional attitudes taken by the Catholic Church' (595). A related, yet more developed, conclusion appears in Marcin Kula's book entitled 'Religion-like Communism' (2003). Kula writes in reference to the historical philosophy of communism: 'The communist history of philosophy was built around the fight of good with evil. It represented a Manichean vision and constantly used a notion of secular Devil' (26). Communist propaganda loved to use sharp moralistic language, especially in reference to the past, and to delineate the 'enemy' zone. Eventually, these two ideologies – the national Catholicism and communism - have been persistently shaping Polish minds through minute cultural practices for decades. Conceptualizing and giving a disambiguated version of the past were always constituent parts of the applied teachings of the Church, intellectual elites and the Party. Consequentially, so were my informants producing a disambiguated reflection about the past.

Remaking of the Polarization

'Unforgettable July 1944…
At that time, everything was for the first time, everything was new, after 5 years of captivity, Polish again, and independent…
[…]
In journalistic dispatches and speeches delivered by politicians there emerged a new term 'People's Poland'. On a liberated from Germans piece of Polish land a new state was being born, a new Poland… the capital city of this land was Lublin' (Jadczak 1984:3).

These words, written and published in 1984, are unimaginable in 2008. More than that, they are discredited as an outcome of the communist propaganda. As much as the exaggerated tone does signal the communist line of interpretation of the past, it is worth highlighting that some people did appropriate such a perspective. From the conversations with people who lived through communism,

I can clearly see how, for some of them, the end of WWII and a possibility of building a new state generated enthusiasm, and how, for many of them, it genuinely constituted a realization of a *dream of belonging,* to use Bauman's term (1991). This dream tabooed the violations and wrongdoings of the regime.

In the 2000s, the written and published recollection of the early 1940s could be briefly represented by this fragment:

> *'For the understanding of history of "fixing of the People's authority", one ascertainment* is *pivotal, that in the process of construction of the system of power, the communists recognized as their opponent (enemy) the, entirely anticommunist, overwhelming majority of the society. They were conscious that the independent conspiracy and the forest troops were simply the most active part of the nation, enjoying an extensive support of wide circles of the Polish population. Fighting against these groups was an element of fight against the entire society – a first phase on the way towards its complete intimidation and subjugation to the imposed authority* (Korkuć 2005:373).

In both cases, when we talk about the initial us vs. them (*my* vs. *oni*), we talk about the politically involved minorities, leaving behind the bulk of war-traumatized, variously structured and positioned factions within Polish society. The usage of the terms society, nation or Polishness imply an appropriation of the collective agency by both communist and post-communist political discourses. Eventually, the experience and interpretative frameworks belonging to particular politically engaged groups have been presented as if belonging to the entire Polish society. While the official propaganda of the communist times claimed that the entrance of the Red Army onto Polish soil meant liberation, and that the new state – the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) was a truly Polish and modern formation, today's historians ponder whether this liberation and seizure of power could actually be called 'colonialism', while being quite certain that it should be called violent 'occupation' (IPN conference 2005).

Similarly to Hungarians, Poles after 1989 found themselves in 'a new world, living with a new past' (Rév 2005:7). The encroaching process of '*remaking'* (Rév 2005:7) meant that the past has been described anew, ordered by new taxonomic categories, by new patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Similarly to "Prehistory of Communism. Retroactive Justice" (Rév 2005), this study focuses on the

remake. Yet, as Rév revisited the dead and the cemeteries, I turn my sights towards the *remaking* performed by the living heroes, victims and perpetrators.

Emic perspective

My leaning towards history is not dictated exclusively by a methodological approach and a desire to provide a solid depth for the microanalysis, or by theoretical premises which form my ethnography. My preoccupation with history, for the most part, stems from my interaction with the *emic* constructions employed by the heroes/victims whom I met in the field.

'Being conscious of one's place in history' is a mode of being overtly present in the society I studied. Frances Pine, who walked analytically in rural and urban landscapes of Poland with those who dwell in them, expressed it in the following way: "If you take a walk through any urban space in Poland with a local inhabitant, you will be told not only what every building and every space is *now*, but also, what it *used* to be, before the war, during the occupation, after the bombardments, during communist time" (Pine 2007:104). Agnieszka Osiecka, in her diary for Adam Michnik (2008), described her conversations with a young foreigner who was astonished by the ways in which Poles always historicized themselves, how there was always a date, a historical event to refer to, and how a personal story was always contextualized through a reference to a political episode. Osiecka herself, in her conversation with the foreigner, claimed that nesting Polish experiences in history was a natural consequence of the difficult past the nation has been through.

The historicizing phobia could be read as a reaction to the former regime's *repression* of certain memories and facts – an attempt to rescue those from oblivion. It could be read as a reaction to the impossibility of expressing the politicized, yet very private, suffering of a group of people, which was never publicly acknowledged. It could finally be read as a reaction to a lack of truthful historiography, as communist historical writing was obviously selective, jargonized and full of lies.

Reflecting upon the complexities of memory-embedding in the lives of Polish families, Pine (2007) argued for the opposition between the public (exposed) and the private (entrusted) which characterized communist conditions to result in a particularly strong elaboration of "communicative memory"[6] (Assmann 2006). Kitchen table talks in her ethnographic descriptions index resistance to

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[6] Communicative memory is a term coined by Assmann to describe the social aspect of individual memory which grows out of interactions between people; hence, they are necessarily implying emotions. This type of memory is juxtaposed with a term, cultural memory, which is much wider time-wise as it encompasses cultural tradition (Assmann 2006:3).

the strictly delimited lines of public expression within which so little could have been articulated. In this view of memory, the tandem of an oppressive type of historical narrative, which was produced under the auspices of the state during communism in the name of 'inventing tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and 'imagining communities' (Anderson 1991), and the world of elaborated everyday stories about the past, necessarily fed each other, producing an effect of "hidden dialogicality" (Tulviste and Wertsch 1994). This thesis is concerned with a condition in which the hidden comes into the daylight, and those who expressed resistance to the silencing of their memories in the public sphere, possibly in a form of communicative memory, now gained the possibility to represent their experience through the authorized channels. The memories of their experience have become canonized and made available to the public. Bakhtin described dialogical ways in which narratives, and hence stories, are always tied together, reinforcing and provoking each other (Bakhtin 1994[1981]). It seems that the voices of the victims/heroes have been canonized in the post-communist condition through a process of 'explicit dialogicality' with the previous, communist memory politics which silenced them.

Even today, getting on the train at Warsaw central station, there is a son and a father sitting in my compartment. Fragments of their conversations that reach me tell of an uncle who was an anti-communist partisan and who, upon coming out of the forest in 1945, went back home to find that his wife had remarried, and that there was no life for him in the communist condition. The narrative was ordered by a usage of well-established historical definitions with which both the father and the son were familiar. In Pine's terms they are "something that everyone remembers" (Pine 2007). Such stories are nested in big events and they constitute *event-centred frames* (White 2004) which allow the two generations to orient themselves in the stream of time that remains beyond their lived experience. Despite the passage of time, small stories like this one puncture a contemporary Polish reality during the most casual conversations. It happens in the absence of, or, better to say, in the process of dissolution of the oppressive regime. It is now the revival and remaking of the repressed that animates the everyday talk, and a search for denied identities, which, like hidden treasure, fulfil kinship pasts, calling for a *gold rush*. In Poland, apart from communicative memory, it is mostly the strong tradition of historical texts that has provided people with a common language and historical imagery. It seems that strong nationalist orientation and tragic life stories carried within the family since communism are knotted with a language of detailed historical knowledge. Individual memories are subdued by the semantic memory encapsulated in recently emergent collective representations giving legitimacy to individual claims.

Historians constitute a part of the production side of the memory politics and, as such, they indirectly impose an order of memories, particularly on those who have no lived experience of the past in question. The communist past is represented to the young generations of Poles with an aim of evoking a sense of sentiment in them. Yet, historical representations are also used as a source for legitimating one's claims to a particular truth or identity, especially if history writing deals with those who are still alive[7]. Hence, this thesis will focus on a 'secondary production[8] hidden in the process of utilization' (de Certeau 1988:Xiii) of the historical representations as practised by those who lived through communism and who appeared in historical writings as agents. By turning towards oral history, Polish historians have entangled 'personal stories' of the heroes/victims into collective myths, giving the historiographic narrative an emotionally loaded dimension (White 1999). To refashion Linde's phrasing (2000), the process of 'narrative deduction' has taken place, during which a story was externalized from the self and absorbed and represented in a coherent temporal and teleological frame as belonging to a collective agency. Among those whose stories were being deducted, historical representations gained new meanings set alive in the course of social practice focused around production and maintenance of identities, alliances and versions negotiated away from the desk spaces arranged by historians. Their stories, their vignettes, came back to them in a new collectivized form with which they interact. The emergent politicized narrative has provoked, in people treated by the historical writings as agents of history, further elaborations concerning the place of the self in history, as well as animating emotions and feelings about the past and present selves, and revealing new possibilities of representing oneself in front of others[9].

Yet, the heroes/victims have also been, to some extent, the active co-authors of the historical texts. A strong tradition of oral transmission of personal historicized experience, repressive memory politics of the communist regime and the dreadful knowledge of repressions have been transformed into a need felt by the heroes/victims and their families to publish their memoirs, their researches, and their testimonies (for example: Krasiński 1996, anonymous source 2003, Olszewski 2003, Pawełczak 1997, Pietras and Prandota 2002) This need was driven by an institutionally-fostered imagery of suffering heroes envisaged as a treasure of the Polish nation – a treasure which was assassinated by the Soviets and communists, and which has constituted the only proper and truthful

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[7]This ethnography deals with people who became objects of historical inquiry while alive.

[8] Secondary production is a term coined by Michel de Certeau to point out the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization (1988).

[9] Chapter five of this thesis will be devoted to a case-study illustrating this phenomenon.

legacy of Poles[10]. Recognizable in other ethnographic examples (Kirmayer 1996), the global movement is now towards the empowerment of the victims and the institutionalizing of their position. The notion of collective recovery implies building a context for retelling understood as a healing process (Das et al. 2001). Such globally emerging themes take on a particularly local face in Poland. In my ethnographic case, institutionalizing the position of the heroes/victims has been mostly about giving testimony for the sake of a better future, which implies neither forgiveness nor personal resolution. For most of the people who were involved in the anti-communist activities during the Stalinist period and later, and whom I met during this fieldwork, the urgency was about rescuing the national memory and freezing it in historical writings and monumentalized landscape. The main intention was centred on shaping the consciousness and giving directions to the future generations. People who resisted communism in various forms are taken as a model of patriotism[11], so essential in a global world where a levelling sameness consumes national sentiments. Historical writing is imagined as a particularly crucial component of this project of rescuing the nation's past from oblivion, and shaping the minds of future generations.

Conceptual processing

The historical writings provide the heroes/victims with a conceptual apparatus and interpretative frames for dealing with the past in which they lived. In fact, historical writing became a peculiar agent of transformation from communism towards democracy, from 'I' situated in the communist times, to 'I' living after communism, as it has assimilated the past into the present through a regular linguistic processing, giving it a public dimension *[…] 'historical time again and again reproduces the tension between society and its transformation, on the one hand, and its linguistic processing and assimilation, on the other* (Koselleck 2002:24)*.* As linguistic processing and conceptual frameworks are never socially and politically neutral, so is the history writing in the post-communist Poland sensitive to complicated networks of dependency, ideology and power. As a reaction to years of silencing, the historical representations aspire to 'give voice', to 'reveal the truth', and eventually, to give a final moral judgement on communism. As the Law and Justice Party puts it: "The memory of those who fought for freedom and independence of Poland strengthens our obligation to formation of the public life in accordance with the imperatives of truth and justice" (Declaration "Memory and Responsibility"). The quote illustrates a strong urge felt by the majority of historians and politicians

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[10] The trope of a threat is further translated onto today's reality, making the past heroism and suffering relevant for the present. This allows for the fostering of the myth of continuation, as well as for the appropriation of the past for political ends.

[11] Just like the Fire-fighters, who worked in the WTC zone on 9/11, whom the "Advocates for a 9/11 Fallen Heroes Memorial" wish to appoint as role models "for the next generation who will protect us all" (White 2004:303)

to 'disclose' and represent the past in the name of the democratic future which is directed by certain national and patriotic values.

'White Stains'

1989 lifted the taboos, and the research into hitherto forbidden areas of history mushroomed. The work has often been undertaken by the victims themselves, as well as by their family members[12]. In recent historical writings, which deal predominantly with the victims of communism, their heroism and suffering, there appeared new 'white stains'. These stains do not result from a deliberate policy of silencing – rather, these absences are caused by a clear motivation which directs attention, as well as by the nature of sources. As the heroes/victims are treated as the most valuable members of society, who ought to be honoured after years of humiliation and repressions, they are the ones whose voice is persistently recorded and disseminated. Meanwhile, the voice of the 'perpetrators' is absent. The 'communists'[13] are being excluded from the representational realm and formed into 'the Other'. Furthermore, a social history of an average citizen of communist Poland remains marginal as a research topic. Even the commoditized nostalgia for communism apparent in other parts of Eastern Europe (Gallinat 2006) is condemned and transformed into nostalgia for the spirit of patriotic resistance[14].

Communist Poland is researched mainly through reliance on the files prepared by the communist security services. The emergence of the IPN, who took over these files and made them available to the public (the academic public in particular), set a direction for research by creating a ready-made pool of sources. Historical research concerning communism in Poland is constituted by an overtly politicized narrative - a narrative concerned with the anti-communist activists and those who hunted them. Locating the narrative about communism in the underground of the IPN archives is in itself problematic, as it ignores the existence of other forms of life under communism. The archival research is combined with oral history almost exclusively in cases of the heroes/victims, which render the historical accounts more persuasive on the basis of the emotional aspect of their content.

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[12] During a historical conference an IPN historian said – 'as my father, who was an AK soldier…' (Mazur 2002). Another historian mentioned to me: 'my uncle was in the underground'. The predominant sensation, which partially stems from the experience of the communist attempt at annihilation of persons and their stories, and partially from a kinship obligation felt by the relatives of those who were repressed, is that such knowledge is extremely fragile and should be taken care of particularly well.
[13] Interestingly, those communists who made their way towards political life after 1989 are treated as legitimate figures, who have the right to express their opinion. These are mostly the high-ranking party members, while the members of the Bezpieka apparatus are marginalized and their voice is denied any value.
[14] A famous journalist, Bronisław Wildstein, a former anti-communist activist who runs a program devoted to communism on a public TV station, devoted one of his programs to a theme of nostalgia after communism. The conclusion of the program was a condemnation of any such mode of remembrance of the regime in which any positive aspect of it could have been exposed. The message was that it is not politically correct to remember communism with nostalgia.

Here the victims/heroes' stories serve as *allegories of collectivity* (White 2000). They become icons and symbols of the structural. The insertion of their narratives into a historical account often resembles a *collectivity-in-person strategy* (White 2000). At the same time, the voice of the security officers is absent. Certainly, the perpetrators of repression would not be easy interlocutors in today's Poland, yet, as this thesis shows, their participation would not be impossible. However, since the bulk of good-quality research takes place in an institute which simultaneously acts as a prosecution commission for the communist crimes, the possibility of the IPN-led research based on oral history recorded among the officers of the security apparatus loses its grounds because of this simple structural condition. Hence, the research on the security services remains dry. No processes of 'narrative deduction' take place – apart from what the security officers have written in the files. The available data allow for drawing tables, using statistics, including discreditable quotes from the files, and building an image of a 'statistical investigative officer' (Poleszak 2005). As a rule, the security service's officers are believed to be 'liars' whose testimonies are 'charged with an error', as they wish to avoid punishment for the wrongdoings committed (personal communication with the IPN historians).

Split personality

The bulk of good-quality historical writing about communism takes place in a research institute which is a part of the IPN. The institute sucked in the majority of qualified and gifted contemporary historians, offering them strikingly better conditions of work than any history department at any Polish state university would[15]. A position of a historian in the Education Office of IPN is twofold. People working there oscillate between being a researcher and being a bureaucrat. They describe working there by a split personality (*rozdwojenie jaźni*) metaphor. This concept refers to working in two orders: administration – ruled by command, and research – guided by academic curiosity and rigour. The administrative component grants 'more or less formal pressures'. This 'pressure from the world of politics' is perceived as a 'threat for an autonomous position of research', yet, it is accepted as unavoidable. The historians both realize their independent projects and work on prescribed ones. It happens that what they prepare for the wider public is not exactly what they agree with. Yet, the tools, the possibility of realizing a historian's craft in a comfortable milieu, make up for that. The majority of the IPN research and educational projects are determined centrally on the basis of a so-called 'social demand'. Even though, theoretically, individual projects are granted with a large autonomous element, there may be little time left for their realization.

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[15] By better working conditions I mean higher salaries, privileged access to the files, good access to computers, books and an easier career advancement scheme.

When the 13th of December (a day when martial law was introduced by General Jaruzelski in 1981) approached, a 'social demand' was recognized as teaching the nation that:

> *'History forms our identity. Out of our most recent history, <u>no event has influenced the contemporary history more than the martial law</u>* [my emphasis]*. The experience of the wickedness of the communist authorities, and an incredibly wide resistance to the dictatorship is still alive'* (the IPN leaflet).

Similarly to Pearl Harbour or 9/11 from White's accounts, martial law in this case was constructed as an *event-centred frame*, a dramaturgical mode of representation. Such frames provide 'a lens that focuses storytelling on moments of violence and on the human dramas that unfolded around them' (White 2004:296).

Responsibility to educate

'Shall we consider the underground state as a monument only, or rather as an experience which is still alive in Polish consciousness, and finally, whether this legacy could be helpful in the process of constructing the pro-state attitudes?' – asked one of the IPN historians during a conference which took place in Marianowice (Wnuk 2002:46). The answer which followed unveils how a group of prominent historians, due to their values and feelings concerning national history, fits the scheme of the current memory politics. 'No nation shall reject what can be learned from the past. The history of the underground state is a particularly rich material for educating, both in national and in civic terms. [...] It is true that the youth has their own problems and fascinations [...] yet, it does not relieve us from a responsibility to educate' (Marszalec 2002:47).

Traditionally, one of the main institutional channels for shaping young generations' understanding of the past has been the schooling system and textbooks. The history textbooks - 'a necessary simplification of history', as one of the IPN historians puts it - are structured in such a way as to underlie a continuity of the present with the pre-communist history of 'the nation' which suffered frequent partitions, mostly from the German and Russian sides in the 18th century. The aim is to represent communism as 'foreign', 'forced' and 'the other'. It is enough to look at the organization of the chapters of a history textbook for gymnasium (Wendt 2007) to see the moralistic disambiguated discourse prevalent in the writings. The narrative is constructed as if Polish society comprised communists (led by Moscow) and the heroic anti-communists (the true Poles). The rest of society is

depicted as a victim of terror and bad policies[16]. More generally, the given representation of the communist Poland is built around violations, suffering, crises, and instances of national resistance. The lived memory gradually dissolves, and the knowledge of the past among the post-communist generations is being constructed in a way clearly detached from a lived experience, or rather attached to a particular sort of lived experience (or a narrative *genre* – a victim/hero's testimony), in the name of building a new patriot[17]. Politicians and journalists express alarm that the level of 'historical consciousness' is very low among young Poles. In 2008, on the anniversary of one of the main anti-government demonstrations, which took place in March 1968, 87 percent of young Polish patriots hadn't a clue what to associate the date with (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.3.2008).

Wretsch (2000), who compared the production side and the narrative content of the Soviet and post-soviet Russian history textbooks, argues for viewing these variously-positioned official historical accounts as emergent through a dialogic process, with the later ones constituting a response to the previous ones. A legendary *samizdat* publication, written as a reaction to the strict communist censorship, was titled "What is Missing from the History Textbooks". It was re-published in 1991. The editor's introductory words, 'in the free Poland – the Poland, in which the *white stains* produced by the communist system must be filled out' (Grochulski et al. 1991), suggest the dialogical process that Wretsch wrote about has taken place in my ethnographic context too. […] 'Many passages of the new history textbook seem to be so focused on countermanding what are considered to be the lies of Soviet history that there is no room for the appearance of new information from archives, eye witness, and so forth. The process is one of producing new narratives to respond to old ones' (Wretsch 2000). The historical narrative contained in communist and post-communist textbooks seems to have a feature of a *genre* which, as Bakhtin would put it, shall be understood as derived from a history of society and language and determined by the perception of the addressee (1994[1981]). A history textbook used by my nephew is not very different thematically and composition-wise from the books his father learned from. The narrative version of big structures moved by politically engaged agents remains a predominant style of writing. It does not acknowledge the *Annales School* nor the emergence of *Memory* in historical discourse (Klein 2000). The main difference is not stylistic or structural, although the new historical writing is clearly devoid of

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[16] The closing phrases of each subchapter in a chapter entitled 'Poland under the Communist Rule' are predominantly negative evaluative statements (see Appendix Five) aimed at cementing the dreadful image of the past.

[17] The Ministry of Education along with the Ministry of National Defence under the Law and Justice government prepared a project promoting 'new patriotism' which aimed at making the traditional patriotic values more accessible and applicable to the contemporary reality of the Polish youth. Moreover, the IPN has been cooperating with the Ministry of Education on a project in which children learn about the spaces of torture and repressions by bodily experience of specific reconstructed spaces, as well as by the tasks of acquiring information about the past from the 'living sources' – that is a specific hero/victim - given to individual pupils.

communist ideological jargon. What differentiates them is the structuring of alterity and ascription of recognition which happens in a dialogue with the previous mode of structuring.

For this research, I chose to work with groups of people intensively entangled in the current memory politics. This was not a random choice. I rather followed the most exposed sides of the 'memory and justice' knot that emerged from within the communist ruins. Hence, in this thesis, I follow a binary logic, which constitutes a culturally perpetuated *emic* perspective concerning the past, on the base of which some of my informants have built their sense of life, and from which others have tried to liberate themselves - unsuccessfully. In fact, this ethnography, in its subtext, should be read as a proposal of a personal insight into communism and post-communism. This perspective leaves the binary codes aside and instead closely observes the complex reality in the making - a reality the construction of which has been nonetheless based on the disambiguated language.

Chapter Two

The mediating role of the state

in a social practice of acquiring a hero/victim subject-position

People who were repressed by the communist regime, or who experienced what they interpreted as political repression under the communist regime, live in Poland, and find culturally informed ways for performing a hero/victim role, identity or sentiment in their social proximity. This may be in the form of a warm storytelling by a grandmother to a grandson; it may be in a flower silently brought by an old woman to a recently unveiled monument site commemorating anti-communist partisans, for her lover, who, through his heroism, extended the victimhood over her life after his death; it may be through annoyance felt by an ex-blue-collar worker who, despite his wife asking him not to, went on strike in the 1970s and in the 1980s. Now, watching the evening news and seeing another Solidarity activist, holding a high-ranking position, who has just escaped the consequences of a corruption scandal, he glances immediately at a pile of his unpaid bills stuck in a box situated next to the television set - this view generates in him a sense of injustice; it may be in the recollection of a passer-by who, in the winter of 1981, was dragging home a Christmas tree, when he saw two militia men beating up a teenager, and who intuitively turned back to take a side street - a day later, he wrote on a wall 'fuck the militia'. To this day, the wall and the street evoke in him a sense of humiliation. Among those, there are groups of people who take up such roles, identities and accompanying sentiments regularly through well-established spatially situated collective practices. These are named and legitimized by the state as anti-communist heroes/victims. For them, an identity of a hero/victim is not only based on sentiments evoked in everyday life. They hold similar experiences which are classifiable and objectifiable in the language and materiality of the state form.

This chapter aims at illustrating the ways in which the post-communist state form has mediated the experience of being a hero/victim. Focusing on the process of objectification of the hero/victim status, realized through bureaucratized and politicized channels, I argue for a statization of the hero/victim identity to be a decisive factor in the process of shaping individual modes of remembering the past political engagements in the present undertaken by the heroes/victims. Building on the ethnographic material collected during fieldwork undertaken in an Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice, this chapter demonstrates how associated heroes/victims are channelled into politicized practices in a search for a personal integrity and a sense of moral order.

Entering descriptively into the heroes/victims' office I search for their emergent sense of a hero/victim *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), which they have started to acquire and form in their sixties, seventies and eighties. I will situate the social production of this *habitus* in a lately emergent structural condition which gave a new point of view to the heroes/victims, along with the resources for establishing new relationships and performing their identity. The structural shift in conditions (collapse of communism), which allowed the heroes/victims to acquire this identity, has not lasted long enough to grant durability to transposable dispositions. This identity remains in the making, being teased by the governmental changes. It is a necessarily incomplete and ambiguous experience of a movement between incorporation and objectification which has not yet produced a sense of security and permanence. My questions here thus focus on the relation between social structure and the reconstruction of a subject-position in the process of transition implying emergence of a collective framework interpreting the communist past.

Trying to locate the *habitus* of a hero/victim, I take a performative angle on identity (Butler 1997)[18], and search for *a repertoire* (Blommaert 2006)[19] that the heroes/victims gained for self-enactments through associating. This repertoire I understand as structurally conditioned by transition, as well as by already-existent genres, styles and registers available for performing a hero/victim identity in Polish society[20]. As nested in practices of memory politics, authority of this identity is not constituted by a fact of past suffering or its telling. Instead, it is being actively acquired through institutionalized nesting of performances of this identity, as well as by its collective aspect. It is realized through obtaining semiotic resources legitimized through institutional channels, which are not purely linguistic in nature. In the case of Marianowice's association, narrative or a life story is only one possible form of inhabiting a hero/victim identity. Language is one of many possible tools for situating and delimiting this particular identity – not the only one, or rather not the one, which should be considered in isolation from other semiotic resources.

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[18] In her approach, Butler makes a distinction between a 'sovereign subject' and an 'agency'. She proposes that 'agency begins where sovereignty wanes.' The one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject), 'acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor, and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constrains from the outset' (1997:16). In this thesis, I focus rather on agency than on sovereign subject, positioning it in relation to institutionally and socially achieved cultural resources. My focus is beyond the linguistic field. In my analysis, I take under consideration the preference of naming after the Blommaert 'repertoire' (see a footnote below), or cultural resources, to avoid a negative connotation. Similarly to Butler, I analytically capture the agency in the processes and instances of its enactment. These instances of enactments I see as enabled and conditioned by the semiotic resources. In this ethnographic case, the agency simultaneously produces and perpetuates the available for the projection of the self-cultural repertoire.
[19] Blommaert focuses on the 'semiotic practices as the points where identities are produced' (Blommaert 2006:204). He argues for the identity to be constructed as 'forms of semiotic potential organized in repertoire' (207). In this approach, the repertoire of semiotic practices delimits identity performance.
[20] I see this repertoire as extending beyond narrative modes of identity formation discussed by Gallinat, in her study of former political prisoners of the German socialist state (2006), towards the entire repertoire of semiotic resources, which are simultaneously available to a subject.

The Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice came into being in the 1990s, through an initiative of a few people previously engaged in the workings of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of Marianowice's Castle. The emergent association was a unique event; yet, the repertoire for its existence was already there in the previous associational form, from within which the initiators decided to distinguish themselves[21]. The previous, still existent, association was established in 1969, bringing together victims of Nazi crimes committed in Marianowice's castle. Legitimized by the structures of the communist state, the association played its role in memory politics working towards the inscription of Nazi atrocities into Marianowice's commemorative landscape. Such inscriptions served to legitimize in turn the communist version of the 'liberation' of Poland from the occupying and enslaving Germans. With the collapse of the communist regime this frame became openly challenged. The memory politics of the communist era became demystified, and the suppressed voices of those who had been disgraced by the regime started to surface. The victims of Nazi atrocities became incorporated into a larger framework of the Polish nation's long suffering caused by foreign oppressions. When the communist regime became publicly classified as a 'second occupation', the new taxonomy generated the conditions for the emergence of a new category of anti-communist hero/victim performable in the public realm.

The idea of singling out the political prisoners of the communist period in a separate association was announced in 1990, during a get-together of the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Castle. The initiators originally wanted to organize a Marianowice branch of an already established Warsaw Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Stalinist Period; yet, there occurred dissent concerning the naming of the Association and the scope of inclusion. The Warsaw people did not want to grant membership to those from among the Marianowice candidates for heroes/victims who were repressed by the communist state agents, due to their participation in a religious miracle which had taken place in Marianowice's cathedral in the early 1950s. Marianowice initiators, in contrast to the Warsaw heroes/victims, believed that the people repressed for religious reasons should have been recognized as political prisoners, despite the fact that they were not clearly involved in the anti-communist struggle. This difference in perspectives on naming and defining led to the establishing of an independent association in Marianowice. In 1991, preceded by a Catholic mass carried out in a garrison church, the first convention of the association assembled in a chamber of a local authority building. Eventually, a broad conception of membership was forced through. The Marianowice people decided they should not confine themselves to the Stalinist period but that they

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[21] As Koselleck put it: 'What happens is always unique and new, but never so new that social conditions, which are pregiven over the long term, will not have made possible each unique event' (2002:30).

should approach the communist regime as a whole instead. After all, 'the communist repressions had ended only when the new Poland had been born – in 1989'. As a result, they distinguish among themselves a few groups of people:

▪ partisans involved in anti-Nazi and two anti-communist waves of conspiracy, and civil population who supported their struggle in the 1940s and 1950s,

▪ members of independence youth groups active in the 1950s,

▪ people repressed for their religious beliefs (participation in the miracle),

▪ prisoners of gulags in Soviet Russia in the 1940s and 1950s,

▪ internees during marital law in the 1980s.

Currently steadily decreasing, the membership reached its peak of 965 in the 1990s. At the initial stage of functioning its most important task involved acquiring and verifying members who, for the most part, wanted to join the association in order to gain veteran's entitlements, including war veteran disability pensions. According to an already established mechanism, the association operated as a go-between mediating and carrying out the authentication procedures linking individuals with tangible forms of state. Out of nearly one thousand people, a handful has been truly engaged in the workings of the association. This fieldwork was performed mostly among those involved in the associational meetings on a weekly basis. I consider this to be a group amounting to approximately twenty-five people. These are members of the association board who perform ascribed functions, and those who regularly visit the place, offering their help and involvement.

My fieldwork coincided with a term during which the strongest representation on the board consisted of a group of people who used to conspire together in their youth. This group clearly gave a shape to this research. Apart from this cluster, each Christmas and Easter, up to one hundred members gather at meetings organized by the board, which take place in a local authority building. Such meetings always include a priest, who gives a sermon before the supper starts. Some of this one hundred irregularly join in patriotic trips organized on the occasion of anniversaries, unveiling of monuments and official rituals. The rest of the members should be considered as a dormant group of heroes/victims, who pay their membership fees and derive benefits from the fact of belonging to the association but who do not participate in the social production of a *habitus* of a hero/victim in a culturally strict sense.

My dress and the photograph are a tiny part of a grand ceremony of affirmation, of commitment to a larger identity: a sense of national belonging.

From *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* by Annette Kuhn

Strathern pointed out that 'people objectify themselves to themselves in innumerable ways, but must always do so through assuming a specific form' (Strathern 1990:26). The heroes/victims at the outset of their associational involvement had to work out the ways of objectifying themselves. These ways acquired a specific form through their reliance on bureaucratic modes of representation controlled by the state. Bringing the association to life was just a first step in a dense network of objectification processes the heroes/victims have been performing since the 1990s. The members of the association appointed from among themselves a verification commission (*Komisja Weryfikacyjna*), who decided upon granting a membership or rejecting an application. The commission established a couple of genres suitable for the application procedure. A complete application included: a declaration (*deklaracja członkowska*), a life sketch (*życiorys*), an informational card (*karta informacyjna*) and necessary documents (*dokumentacja*). While declaration is a short piece of paper in which a person declares that he or she wishes to become a member (an element of conscious and voluntary decision), other papers are more elaborated.

In a life sketch, people focus selectively on those facts from their lives which could constitute them as heroes/victims. The plots of their life stories are centred on experiences of communist repressions. An exemplary life sketch written by Józef will help illustrate this:

I was born on the 6th of July 1934 in Potok. I graduated from a primary school (7grades) in Mlyn and I started a vocational training in Tarok, where I was arrested on the 20th of August 1954. I was under investigation for five months. After the investigation I was judged in a Marianowice court and, as an enemy of the People's Republic of Poland, I was sent to Silesia to work in a mine. After serving my sentence, I came back home and there a call-up was already waiting for me. After two days of being home, I was taken by a military escort to Silesia to another mine where I worked for two years as a soldier. In 1957, after I came back home, I wanted to finish the school but, as an enemy of communism, I was not allowed to. Caught in a deadlock, I finished a course for drivers, where I worked till I retired in 1982.

Even though the frame is context-dependent, it does not come up spontaneously. Normally, people inform each other regarding what a life sketch should look like and how to fill out the documents. To a certain extent, therefore, the application procedure should be understood as an interactive endeavour through which people's orientation towards prescribed practices of storytelling is achieved. The projection of the subject outwards is shaped by the interaction with others, who offer a frame and a genre. Such an arrangement generates a sense of community through acknowledgment of commonality of experience and similarity of life stories. The rules of authorization imposed by the grouping have entailed ascription of an iconic life story into the state-certified practices. Through structuring of a life story around individual encounters with the oppressive state form, a subject is nested in a politicized context, which provides him/her with meaning. At the same time, the processes of objectification applied by the association support a move towards a new moral condition and legitimize a new democratic and national order. As such, the iconic life stories and artefacts, which are produced in the process of verification and authentication of individual membership, constitute instruments through which the past is being socially controlled[22]. To a significant extent, this control is performed by the state institutions which have the final word in granting the status of a hero/victim. It is not only the story itself, but also an act of giving a story to the associational archive, and getting status and privileges from the state in response to this gift that normalizes and naturalizes the state form and the political, including past political actions of the heroes/victims. The heroes/victims, through the actions performed within the framework of the association, start to belong to the state as they simultaneously give it legitimacy and derive recognition from it.

The genre of a life sketch was more open-ended, in the extent to which it allowed for the expression of 'individual' ways of understanding the hero/victim aspects of one's story, than other documents. As the life sketch could be used to display a hero/victim perspective in a less prescribed way, in the informational card the board delimited more clearly who a victim/hero was by posing specific questions restricting the applicants to more rigid conditions of story-telling. This form was one of the first documents the initiators of the association invented collectively so as to foster their work. After the four first points, requiring name, date and place of birth, parents' names, and address, a fifth point opened a textual space of interrogation into the kernel of being a hero/victim as delimited by

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[22] Das and Kleinman noted that 'stories provide a cultural shape that has the potential to naturalize, normalize, and thereby order experience in terms of societal processes of social control' (2001:21). In fact they argue for all cultural representations to have the potential to naturalize and to order experience. This argument seems particularly relevant when applied to those cultural representations which deal with the past, the memories of which are sensitive to social modes of ordering. When the past becomes a political resource, implying that actors have access to state institutions, the channels for controlling the representations of it, and hence, the memories of it, expand.

the board. The questions started from date and place of arrest. After that insight, there occurred questions concerning: a date of release, a place of interrogation, duration of interrogation, a sentence ('what court, which penal code and articles'), a date when the sentence was announced and 'how many years' were given in a sentence, names of detention centres and camps in which one was kept, date and basis of release, whether the sentence was overruled, membership of clandestine organizations, an area of operation, rank and duties in the clandestine organizations, and finally a current military rank (The state currently recognizes the heroes/victims by giving them military ranks. For many of the heroes/victims, this form of recognition is a fulfilment of a dream they have carried since childhood – that of becoming a full-blooded soldier of the Polish nation.). These questions should be understood as a collective mode of shaping the identity of an anti-communist hero/victim of political repressions. Such identity is inscribed into specific places and practices of state terror. The associational practice of authentication is organized around the 'state-centred categories and narratives' (Coronil and Skurski 2006:2). These categories and narrative genres structure the collective modes of remembering violence and understanding the self. The state-form impacts upon the organization of meanings ascribed to past violence and, through mediating influence upon forms of representation, it extends the nationalist framework over the process of collectivized remembering of suffering. With such a move, it turns personal experience into a publicly potent identity. In this sense, the past violence turns into mediated representational form not only vis-à-vis an uninvolved audience, but even in relation to those who experienced that violence[23]. The modes into which the past experiences of political violence are being ordered socially in the present index ways in which secular state (both as a concept and as a practice) performs power over individual self-schemata[24]. Yet, it is equally important to note that these are the individual heroes/victims who actively participate in the reproduction of these constitutive structures of power. The post-communist state form became a condition within which heroes/victims have been able to perform their identities[25].

Theoretically, storytellers and their collaborators are no longer approached as capable of conveying their experiences in authentic and unmediated form (Scott 1995). Analytically, attention is more frequently given to *diverse authenticities* constituted by organizational and institutional contexts as

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[23] Coronil and Skurski underline the mediated aspect of violence in its aftermath. They claim that the difficult past 'is named, recognized and [re]experienced in terms of authorizing concepts' (Coronil and Skurski 2006:4). Such authorizing concepts disseminated through institutional channels index structures of power.

[24] In a broad sense, this ethnographic case supports Agamben's view of "bare life" versus "qualified life", as it exemplifies the ways in which law, through operations of inclusion and exclusion, exercises an influence over the subjects through state practices (Agamben 1998).

[25] An interesting ethnographic case illustrating similar processes of construction of symbolic group identity through historiography and politics is given by Chuengsatiansup describing the Kui people - an indigenous people residing in the ancient kingdom of Siam (Chuengsatiansup 2000:32).

relevant for achieving coherence of one's story (Gubrium and Holstein 1998). Narrative is being understood as a situated practice – *a narrative practice* (Gubrium and Holstein 1998), implying simultaneously 'the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told' (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:164). The experience of political violence and humiliation constituted a common experiential pond for those people who applied for membership of the association. The association provided them with auspices and tools for telling their stories in the form of a life sketch. The membership of the association imposed a genre typical for previous associational forms, characterized by a specific framework of storytelling, which focused on the experience of political violence and humiliation in an event-centred form. The practical circumstances of wanting to become a member have dictated a compliance and orientation towards a specific *composition* of a story dependent on *situated interpretative demands* (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:166).

The shape and workings of the association depend on a handful of people who meet regularly. Through the series of their interactions within the group and with the external structures of state, science, and religion, definitions of an association and a hero/victim have been achieved and the interaction of the grouping is now oriented towards the maintenance of this definition and its adjustment, when new information comes to light. In Goffman's terms, the association could be called 'a team', that is a set of individuals, who cooperate in order to achieve a definition of a common situation and who work towards maintenance of this definition (Goffman 1958:64). The association in Marianowice may be also regarded as an *emotive institution*[26] which has worked towards schematization of affective and cognitive understanding of history and identity. This schematization has been achieved through *routinization of context* (White 1999:527) established through interaction and by the usage of a stable repertoire of semiotic resources performable in regular, authorized contexts. The affective and cognitive understanding of the past gained by the heroes/victims is linked to the state form and its manifestations. One such potent manifestation is constituted by the Bezpieka files taken over by the IPN after the collapse of the regime.

Ambiguous location and empowering files

In fact, the anti-communist heroes/victims perform their identity in the space between two state forms and their material objectifications – the communist one and the democratic one. This position

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[26] White, analyzing the *Arizona* Memorial commemorating Pearl Harbour, focuses on the Pearl Harbour survivors' discourse performed in the context of memorial. He argues for survivors' stories and larger narratives of nation to co-constitute each other through an emotive performance of survivors' narratives, hence giving the institution an emotive undertone (1999).

is inherently ambiguous, as it requires the heroes/victims to simultaneously deny the communist form and derive legitimacy from its material remnants. On the other hand, the heroes/victims rely on the democratic state that objectifies them, while simultaneously they foster its existence. The communist state form is the alterity through which a new state form has been built. The heroes/victims provide a necessary linkage enabling a new state form to define its forerunner in moral terms.

In my ethnographic example, it is the societal justice in a form of associational structure that works towards cementing and freezing the individuated articulation about the past in politicized genres and rhetoric. This authoritative channel pulls the security files into the legitimizing repertoire. My study focuses on ways in which people get channelled into politicized practices in a search for internal integrity and a sense of moral order. Paradoxically, in this process, my informants, instead of distancing themselves from the language of the security files, are being tied to them in a search for legitimacy of their hero/victim status[27].

People who wish to gain a hero/victim status have to legitimize themselves by delivering copies of official documents certifying the act(s) of repressions committed against them. These would include: a sentence pronounced by a communist court (or alternatively, if the sentence was not given, an attestation issued by the court), the contemporary security office (UOP), or the IPN, concerning the existence of one's UB/SB files along with the protocols of interrogation. Hence, in fact, the security files became established as a source of legitimation for one's experience of political repressions, putting the heroes/victims in a position of having to conduct a necessary dialogue with the files, rather than giving them a possibility of their direct dismissal. The emergence of an institution especially devoted to archiving and studying these files (IPN) meant their symbolic and pragmatic recognition. The files attest the past violence and vicious methods of the communist regime. They are means for confirming one as eligible hero/victim. Such positioning of the files evokes uncanny sentiments in heroes/victims, who wish to see the files, and who feel disappointed if their files are not thick and substantial. They become attached to the idea of *Bezpieka's* interest in them expressed in the tangible forms of the files. An attraction to forms of objectification of their humiliation and

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[27] An interesting theme emerges in the literature concerning the cultural and social modes of interaction with the communist secret services' archives. Vieda Skultans, in her recent work on interaction of her Latvian informants with their KGB files, claims that the language of the files and the language of informants belong to different orders of purpose and allegiance. 'The allegiance of the language recorded in the archive is to social structures and institutions'; that of' [her] 'informants is to preserving a sense of moral and personal integrity' (Skultans 2001:323). Skultans interviewed her informants in relation to the KGB files collected about them. She discovered a need in her informants for challenging the files which bore no resemblance to the way people recollected their experiences. The challenge to the files was performed through personal narrative, which, as Skultans argued, constituted an authentically individuated moral practice in the face of 'a dishonest society' which did not provide justice in the aftermath of communism.

experienced political violence bear consequences for the ways in which they enact their hero/victim selves.

The files gathered in the IPN have been opened to the public. People who think they were repressed can ask to view their own files, if such exist. There is a special day during which an IPN reading room, normally occupied by academics or journalists, is reserved for people who wish to read their own files. Reading one's files is a big, almost ritualistic event, about which heroes/victims always talk. The files evoke the past again. Minute details of past situations are being discussed within a close circle of heroes/victims' friends. 'Why did they write this?', 'Who could that have been?', 'Do you remember such an officer?' – are exemplary questions which follow the reading of the files. By reporting to each other about what is in the files, the heroes/victims create a community of speakers who share competence in specialized knowledge. They know who interrogated each of them. They know how many days each of them spent in which cell. They look for details relevant for their personal story in the stories given by others. This way, they co-constitute each other. Since they are allowed to take copies of the files, they also lend such copies to each other. References to the files are numerous in the conversations among heroes/victims, particularly when they used to conspire together. The files both empower and legitimize one's claims to a hero/victim identity and they allow for outward expression of this identity. In the fragment below, Roman, who has recently looked into his files in the IPN, talks to Jan who has not yet received permission to 'view his files' (although he has read parts of them from different sources). Roman has been recently gossiped about in the association for 'cooperating'.

[1] Jan: He [referring to another hero/victim] is currently sitting in the IPN reading his files and he told me: 'imagine, fifty-eight pages!' So, I replied: 'fifty-eight pages is nothing!' [laughing].

[2] Roman: To produce such follies, it is a lot!

[3] Me: What interesting things did you see in the files?

[4] Roman: What interesting things?

[5] Jan: Interesting… that he has friends who are still alive, whom he treated with beer and vodka [laughing], and they in turn sneaked on him!

[6] Roman: Like that someone arrived – these sort of descriptions, about family, about people with whom I contacted, about that time when they arrived, and when Michal arrived

[7] Jan: Yet, nothing concerning me… when I visited you… because it was at night and they were sleeping [laughing].

Jan and Roman represent two different positions vis-à-vis the files. Roman takes a defensive stand trying to discredit the files. I explain such behaviour by the circulation of gossip about his cooperation. Clearly he had numerous conversations with the security officers, and this fact cast suspicion on him. Jan, on the contrary, aggrandizes the significance of the files. He seeks legitimacy in the files noting how the size of the files matters for a hero/victim's identity. By answering my question for Roman, he certifies his hero/victim status by suggesting people informed on him (being surrounded by snitches is one of the indicators of an authentic hero/victim condition). This strategy of alignment (Schiffrin 1994) is an expression of solidarity which binds heroes/victims. Eventually, Jan creates a 'participation framework'[28] (Schiffrin 1994) for himself, as he feels obliged to explain his absence in the files, even though no one spoke about it. Apparently, he feels disappointed by the absence of a mention of his visit to Roman's place in the files. By voicing his utterances, he takes the opportunity to represent his hero/victim self. He shifts the focus of the conversation from Roman to 'I', staying within the same framework of Roman's files, bringing into the conversation a sense of shared experience. In his representation of that absence, Jan highlights his own cleverness: it was not the case that he was not worthy of being mentioned in the files - he purposely came in the night to outwit *Bezpieka*, hence avoiding being observed.

[1] Jan: Indeed, Michal told me: 'You know how they bullied Roman so that he… this and that'

[2] Roman: When I came back, in 1986, the militia officer: 'You know, you should rehabilitate'[…].
        I told him that I had already taken responsibility for my blames and that I would not have
        wanted others to suffer like I had.

[3] Jan: Yes. Oh yes, your parole was over.

[4] Roman: And that [.] second lieutenant who so much picked on me

[5] Jan: From UB

[6] Roman: I then told him: 'You so and so, when will you finally get off me?'

[7] Jan: [laughter].

[8] Roman: 'Because I do not have anymore… man, how long am I explaining you that I will not
        be a snitch, you so and so', 'You will come to me on your knees to ask' and I am saying 'if I
        were to die, I would not ask you'. Only then it finally ended.

In this piece of Jan's conversation with Roman a view of a hero/victim concept is further uncovered. Jan imposes a frame of a hero/victim as 'bullied' by the security officer, creating a 'participatory

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[28] I draw here from Goffman's (1981) notion of the participation framework understood as a linguistic structure that organizes and is organized by talk and interaction in the making.

framework' for Roman within which Roman would be able to objectify himself. Jan legitimizes Roman's experiences before he represents them by quoting another hero/victim. By bringing Michal's words into the conversation, Jan creates a sense of commonality of heroes/victims' fate and experience. These words also convey a sense of solidarity among heroes/victims. Roman picks that frame up and represents himself so as to fit into it. He legitimizes his hero/victim self by quoting pieces of conversations he had with *Bezpieka* officers. In these conversations, he represents himself as resisting and opposing interlocutor, who is not willing to cooperate. By bringing in this past situation, he objectifies his victim condition (as he was 'bullied') in which he behaved as a hero (by refusing to cooperate and by uttering rude replies).

My informants react to official documents affectively[29], since they consider them as references for the truth and authenticity of their identity. Such cultural belief is strengthened by the state practices which authorize such an approach to the files[30]. The usage of the files produced by the agents of the communist state puts the heroes/victims in an ambiguous position. The files simultaneously speak for their suffering experienced under the regime; yet, the actual access to their content also constitutes an act of reinterpretation of their suffering under democratic conditions, which implies incorporation of their anguish into the notion of heroism relevant for a national myth. The first evokes rather gloomy sentiments, while the second provides instruments for overcoming their experiences.

The borders between 'us' and 'them' have been gradually institutionally redefined in the aftermath of 1989. The existent state mechanisms for organizing exclusion and inclusion have been used by a new alliance of social forces in their struggle for the establishment of a new pattern of recognition and memory politics. Under such historical conditions, the suffering of heroes/victims has undergone a process of *statization* (Cheungsatiansup 2001). Consequentially, the documents of the condemned state form were taken over by a new institutionalized form represented by the IPN. They came to legitimize one's sentiments, experiences and self-enactments as a hero/victim. Heroes/victims have been located in an ambiguous condition in which they continue to develop their affects for the past

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[29] Navaro-Yashin, in her study of official documents in Britain and Cyprus, suggested an interesting approach in which documents are studied as affectively loaded phenomena. She argues for the affectivity to be generated when documents are placed and circulated in a realm of specific social relations. It is not to say that the documents contain affectivity. Instead, 'they are perceived or experienced as affectively charged phenomena when produced and transacted in specific contexts of social relation' (81). The documents with which Navaro-Yashin preoccupied herself have been produced by legal forms of various statehoods (or states-to-be). These affectivities could be hence recognized (after Aretxaga 2005) as 'non-rational' underside of apparently rationalized state functions (84). In the Euro-American paradigm, and Polish culture apparently fits this paradigm, documents are considered as references for truth and authenticity (Navaro-Yashin 2007).

[30] The files are for instance used by the IPN and the court in 'lustration processes' which are to decide whether or not a public person cooperated in some form with the political police of the communist regime.

situations and institutions from which they suffered, simultaneously being tied through different affects to a new state form by a usage of the same documents, which now bear new stamps certifying their relocation and membership of a new era. Every usage of such documents is symbolic and constitutive for the making of a new order. The documents are more than instruments for maintaining hero/victim identity. They declare legitimacy of a new state form which has overwritten the communist one by marking and numbering anew its most secret and important documents – those of the security services. It is not only heroes/victims and their experiences that were turned into the symbolic capital of a new state. So were the security files. Among other channels, the security files are being incorporated into the body of societal practices through affectivities performed by the heroes/victims while interacting with the files or with the idea of the files. Their dissemination is a material sign of the demise of the previous regime. Secretly archived during communism, the files are now being gathered in private houses, filling the drawers of heroes/victims. The objectified political rhetoric has been incorporated by the heroes/victims who took a political name evocative of themselves, the nation, and particular values[31]. Through naming practices and the construction of genealogies undertaken by historians, politicians and priests, these practices have an ordering power over the memories of violence and humiliation.

[9]   Jan: I will see. I talked to Piotr and he said he would check what and why am I still waiting.
        After all, you waited one year only or less.

[10]   Roman: I did not wait.

[11]   Jan: You see, and I am waiting two years already!

[12]   Roman: Mhm

[13]   Me: But it is difficult

[14]   Jan: And I am saying 'why does he have access and I do not?'

[15]   Roman: No, you see, because there are eleven volumes.

[16]   Jan: I know, because I looked through these files carefully.

[17]   Roman: But in the 9th volume there is my file.

[18]   Jan: I know, I know.

[19]   Roman: And nobody else's. I was surprised there were no other files. Michal said

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[31] 'From a perspective of a name-giver it is almost as if the narrators have no choice other than realizing themselves in a name which is characteristic simultaneously of a nation and a community' – wrote Mehta and Chatterji in their work on instances of political violence in India (Mehta and Chatterji 2001:215). They describe ways in which national and sectarian names generate social boundaries, and fuel violence. Similarly, in this case, the naming, which happens through the authorized channels, proves important for the production of social boundaries.

[20] Jan: I do not know. Maybe they did not show you everything – damn it! Because it depends. For instance Jurek, he had a special file as a TW and they have completely different numeration and designation.

[21] Roman: Maybe…

What remains important for Jan is to 'be given access' - to physically sit in the IPN and read his files. 'To be given access' is another institutional component of being a hero/victim in the present. The fact of being pitted against one's files creates a situation in which the subject position of a hero/victim is situated and intensively lived. Yet, equally important may be the fact of being received by the IPN officials, who are perceived as an important circle on whom legitimacy of one's status depends. They are the people who create historiographic accounts. They are the ones who report to the administration about the 'cleanness' of one's files. Finally, the access to the files created a situation in which a hero/victim status turned into a condition of competition. Heroes/victims often regard themselves in the context of other heroes/victims. Statements like, in Jan's words, 'After all, you waited one year only or less' or 'why does he have access and I do not?', reveal the condition of constant positioning of heroes/victims' experience, which resulted from being legitimized by an authorized and bureaucratic machine. The performance of solidarity and collective spirit is coupled with a constant measurement of oneself vis-à-vis the other, who belongs to the same group. This condition is deepened by the issuance of various state documents verifying and acknowledging the hero/victim status.

Material forms of recognition

White argued for the national narratives to engender a sense of belonging and to acquire emotional valence for individual speakers through involvement of their self-narrative into national narrative (White 1999:507). However, such processes should not be reduced to a level of textual or spoken narrative only. Objectification processes which in turn shape practices of incorporation should be understood as a complex semiotic and emotional experience which is not coherently encapsulated in a narrative genre but which implies a wide range of interactions. The mistake to avoid is what Goodwin phrased as 'lumping everything that isn't language into the category of 'context'' (Goodwin 2000:1490). Analysis of human action and interaction should consider 'simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources by participants' (Goodwin 2000:1490). The heroes/victims have gained an access to an amazing pool of semiotic resources – material, textual, interactional - which enable their performances as heroes/victims.

Files are circulating among the heroes/victims. They are desired documents - in particular, easily readable and allowing for expositional photographs, which are often attached to individual dossiers compiled by Bezpieka. My informants are not very keen on giving their life stories to another person. They somehow prefer to objectify themselves through material and officially approved markers of their experiences. This is not only a linguistic repertoire that the heroes/victims gain through acts of associating. The whole world of materiality indexing their heroism and suffering is provided by the previous and current state forms, and the association works as an intermediary in the process of acquisition of various forms of acknowledgment which can then serve as indexes of one's past.

Medal giving in the Voivodeship Office.

Walking from one hero/victim's flat to another, I was always being welcomed with a cup of tea next to which there was a pile of files, copied, and waiting for me to look through. Official papers incorporated into the familial space give a sense of control over them, a sense of closure – the past, which was denied, finally returns and is owned by the violated individuals. Yet, their presence simultaneously awakens affects as the past is being brought into proximity again. In fact, domestication of this past forces its physical incorporation into the lived space. One autumnal evening, when I visited Andrzej, a member of the association, we looked through his files, as with everyone else. After we had gone through his family album and part of his life story, he started to search for one document 'I ought to see'. Eventually, he pulled out a piece of paper with a copy of an enlarged photograph of a male's face. Keeping it exposed for me, almost covering his own face with it, he informed me in a shaky voice 'this is my perpetrator' – a judge, who gave him a sentence. A

visual objectification of someone who was an antagonist in his broken life story made the inherently intimate experience of violence, which had long been veiled in secrecy, obvious.

On my first visits to the Association, people would not even give me an outline of a life sketch, but would instead put in front of me on the table an identity card, most usually more than one, which constituted a material proof of their status – this is how they presented themselves to a newcomer. One of the heroes/victims, Andrzej, seeing Stanisław pulling out his 'victim of repressions' ID and presenting it in front of me, swiftly approached me and started to announce with fervour that he had something better to show me. In a matter of seconds, he pulled out of his pocket a set of three black and white photographs printed out on a paper slip, and presented it as his trophy. I swiftly recognized an item typical of the content of the IPN files of the heroes/victims, namely a photograph of prisoner's vignettes taken by a security officer. These ones seemed original and, looking at them longer, I could have recognized Andrzej as a young boy with a scared face. 'It is me, a few hours after the imprisonment!', he said, partially with pride and partially with the joy of taking someone by surprise, enthusiastically pointing at the photo with his fingers. I did not know what to say, so I just stared at Andrzej in his teens and then at Andrzej in his seventies, nodded my head, murmured something like 'unbelievable' and moved on with the regular sort of IDs that Stanisław had to offer for viewing.

When I turned my eyes back to the table, three rectangular pieces of paper were already displayed in a relative order. Stanisław presented me with an ID of a 'repressed person', a certificate granting him combatant's privileges, and an ID proving his membership of the association. The first ID was issued by the Social Insurance Bureau in 2004. It indicated Stanisław's ID's and allowance's numbers as well as citing the medical opinion stating that Stanisław was 'partially' and 'permanently' disabled for work in connection with his engagement in an organization for independence and imprisonment between 1953-1956. As it was underlined once again by a stamp, this ID has been issued to Stanisław 'permanently'. 'Here, here' – said Stanisław, pointing at the fragment of medical opinion, 'they stated I was unable to work because of the anti-communist activity'. When I asked, 'but what are these disabilities?', Stanisław answered in a lower voice, 'oh, this and that'. When I insisted by asking once again, he first mentioned neurosis and balance impairment, and then swiftly moved on to all sorts of medicaments he was taking and stories of his recent visits to a doctor, mixing them together with the medical visits and health problems of his wife and mother-in-law. I kept looking at the second piece of paper issued by the Office for the Combatants and Repressed Persons which, similarly to the

previous one, had a number of stamps, ID number, Stanisław's photograph attached to it and his signature. This ID was issued in 1992 and its main purpose was to certify that Stanisław had been granted discounts and services as decided upon in one particular legal act concerning combatants, victims of war and post-war repressions. The last piece of paper seemed like a simulacrum of the ones already presented; it was issued and signed by Leszek (the president and a colleague from the clandestine anti-communist organization) and it certified Stanisław's membership of the association. Both proud of his three IDs and embarrassed to reveal in front of me their medical content, Stanisław was just about to say something when the dominating voice of Leszek reached us both: 'Ania, this is nothing, I will show you a real thing'; he threw on the table, as if not caring much, but retaining a sort of giggling grin of satisfaction, a silver piece of paper, of a similar size as those just presented by Stanisław, but that flipped 90 degrees. It looked more like an invitation. It had a logo on its front page, which made me recall a German war cross. There was a cross indeed, but it was a white-and-red flag formed in a shape with a black square placed in the middle filled with two letters: K and S. Stanisław became a bit sad. Other people sitting around our table were nodding their heads (a sign of recognition, I tend to think). I reached for the silver rectangle and opened it. 'ID number 33' – not quite like Stanisław's numbers: 489/04 or 016605/U-10445/92. I read: 'The Association of the Political Prisoners Sentenced to Death during the Communist Regime', then Leszek's photograph and a black stamp with the same logo (K and S standing for an abbreviation of an expression: *kara śmierci* - death sentence), the date of issue: '3/5/1995' and a poem:

'What a luck that this could not be lived to,
When they unveil your monument – oh, hero,
And a murderer puts flowers on a grave...'

Leszek's date and place of birth followed his full name which was then dramatically summed up by the capitalized letters: 'SENTENCED BY THE COMMUNISTS TO DEATH FOR A STRUGGLE IN THE NAME OF INDEPENDENT POLAND', again stamped and verified by signatures of a proper president and a secretary. 'Very few of these have been issued' – said Leszek somewhat sadly but with pleasure too. 'Very few of us are left' – he stated proudly, as if to indicate that there will be a day when he will become the oldest carrier of such an ID, as most of the people with death sentences issued by the communist courts were older than him. Leszek, playing out his carelessness, was simultaneously looking for something in his presidential drawer. As if doing it for the sake of a novice, he tossed a few other papers so as to give me a chance of increasing my knowledge and understanding. We

moved unexpectedly to medals, military ranks and honours – seemingly a step ahead in the ladder of recognition. Again, this step was established through a joint effort of both state officials and heroes/victims who, apart from the verification commission, set up another body 'Komisja Odznaczeń i Awansów' (Commission for Awards and Promotions). This commission proposes heroes/victims for awards and military promotions and discusses such possibilities with local officials.

When I looked inside a little booklet certifying Leszek's medal issued by the President of the Republic of Poland, Stanisław realized there was one more paper he had not shown me yet. A blue piece of paper he exposed before my eyes was telling about an award he was given by a secretary of state. Yet, meanwhile, Leszek pulled out another 'cross for the courageous' and 'pro memoria' medal certificates, clearly exposing a difference between himself and Stanisław - a difference which was indissoluble.

A wall in a hero/victim's flat.

Conclusion

Simultaneously with the emergence of the anti-communist heroes/victims' apprehensive practices of remembrance and associating, the state structures were being filled with the anti-communist politicians. A new cultural form of memory politics emerged from within the collapsing communist regime. The practices which have comprised it are believed by the allied anti-communist social forces to be capable of evoking a new sense of moral order in society. Through access to state 'institutions

of boundary maintenance' the actors are joined in an effort to frame the actual ideological and political conflict in moral terms. Such framing is enabled by the experiences of humiliation and suffering of the heroes/victims, who serve as a symbolic capital for the alliance, which simultaneously believes in the necessity of achieving a new moral quality on the societal level, and realizing its own political aims through engagement in the production of that particular *cultural form.*

Such a historical condition has a particular significance for the heroes/victims, who actively engage in the memory project. Through their participation in various commemorative and definitional practices, they have undergone a process of statization of their hero/victim identity. The institutional practices, in which the heroes/victims got involved, came to play a significant role in their individual processes of remembering the communist past. The process of statization of the hero/victim identity should be understood as a complex semiotic condition which provides a wide repertoire for identity performance, as well as enabling the actual performative practices.

Material signs of commemoration, material remnants of the past, and currently fabricated objects, which are used to certify the heroism or victimhood, work towards the ultimate attachment of the version of the communist past to the members of the association, gluing the social roles of heroes/victims to them[32], and cementing their identities, as they become nested in lasting networks and bonds of loyalty. As a reception of social recognition of the cultural reality of Marianowice happens through official and religious registers[33], the performances of these identities become authoritatively demandable. They generate a sense of obligation derived from being a hero/victim felt vis-à-vis the national and religious community, and the narrower circle of colleagues who participated in the anti-communist struggle. Due to being associated, heroes/victims do not extract any relief from a singular act of commemoration. They start to exist in a state-legitimized network of associations responsible for conspicuous proliferation of material marks in the memory landscape, including public and private spaces. Because they are recognized not as individuals, but as collective treasure of the nation, they feel obliged to keep performing their heroes/victims identity which at times generates in them ambiguous sentiments[34]. In fact, through the membership of the association, they take on a responsibility and carry an ongoing burden after remembering and

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[32] I draw here on Miller's argument claiming that the materiality may serve as a means through which people affiliate themselves with social roles (Miller 2005).
[33] The discussion on the religious register follows in the next chapter.
[34] I will discuss the topic of ambiguous position of a hero/victim more extensively in chapter five devoted to the figure of the president of the association.

commemorating themselves. In their case, the past turned into what Russo called, in reference to the French Vichy affair, 'a past which doesn't pass' (1991).

Chapter Three

Religious framework for embodied mutual orientation

A hero/victim experience situated in the Catholic Church

The love of servitude cannot be established except as the result of a deep, personal revolution in human minds and bodies.

Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*

'Strips of talk gain their power as social action via their placement within larger sequential structures, encompassing activities, social structural arrangements, and participation frameworks constituted through displays of mutual orientations made by actors' bodies' (Goodwin 2000:1492).

Opening of a patriotic mass.

In this chapter, I undertake a Critical Discourse Analysis of twelve sermons, which were delivered in various Catholic churches in Marianowice to the heroes/victims on the occasions of commemorative events co-organized by them. I will call these speeches *patriotic* sermons[35]. I complement the CDA of the sermons with an analysis of the material aspect of the rituals' experience as well as focusing on an exemplary image which fortifies the bond between the heroes/victims and the Catholic Church. I argue that these various layers of meaningful religious practice play a significant role in the heroes/victims' mode of self-understanding and interactive remembering and should be understood as having resulted from a structural mutual orientation of the religious institution and my informants. I chose to present this material because it gives a sense of ways in which the framework

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[35] I use the term *patriotic sermons* rephrasing the emic term – patriotic services (*msze patriotyczne*) used by Poles to indicate the Catholic masses containing nationalist and anti-communist messages. *Msze patriotyczne* constituted popular acts of resistance during communism. They were invigilated by Bezpieka officers who observed and registered the participants, as well as recording the sermons. The priests who organized masses with such content were repressed by the communist secret police. After the collapse of the regime, the heroes/victims still use this expression to name Catholic services organized today on the anti-communist commemorative occasions.

for remembering the communist past in the present applied by the heroes/victims in their individual processes of self-construction is being co-authored by Church agents.

The rule of elective affinity

The Catholic religion is a significant aspect of the heroes/victims' *lifeworlds*. The Church constitutes a special place for the heroes/victims as it provides them with a sense of continuity in contrast to the changing state forms. It is particularly important for them that the priests share their understanding of the past, and recognize, as well as give legitimacy and meaning to, their sense of victimhood and heroism. Hence, each commemorative event and each annual associational meeting are preceded by a mass and include priests on the guest list[36]. The ritual calendar of members of the association is well-organized in advance. Normally, it is prearranged in the voivode office, where the main national holidays and commemorative events performed locally are decided upon and agreed with an advisory board constituted by some of the heroes/victims. Throughout my fieldwork, all of the national holidays and commemorative events included in the calendar and attended by the heroes/victims were preceded by a Catholic mass. Big national rituals in Marianowice were either opened in a cathedral or in a church assigned to the military garrison (*kościół garnizonowy*). On such occasions, a church aisle is filled with two long rows of young soldiers with guns hanging tensely on their shoulders, used during the mass to fire a volley. If there is space in the main aisle, the old heroes gather in threes close to the altar, each group guarding a standard.

In this chapter, I scrutinize ways in which the Church agents legitimize the past actions and experiences of the heroes/victims and integrate them into a religious and nationalist framework. I analyze the sermons, rituals and images as acts of objectification of the heroes/victims' experience working towards its conventionalization. As much as institutionalized practices of the state have channelled the heroes/victims into the inherently political ways of experiencing their past actions, turning them into a decisive component of the contemporary self, the agents of the Church have synchronized with such efforts, providing a religious component. Members of the association move through two sorts of authoritative spaces – religious and those belonging to the state. In these spaces, functioning as *comfort zones*, an experience of a hero/victim self is enabled. The heroes/victims, through their participation in specially organized celebrations, experience remembering themselves as moral agents, as those who personify sacrifice. They become

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[36] The heroes/victims have their preferred, befriended priests, whom they can rely on and who will always provide them with a constructive, 'valuable' sermon. But when the commemorative event is organized by the national or local authorities it may happen that a priest does not convey the meaning that they identify with. At such occasions, some of them do not go to the celebrations, and others criticize the speech after it has been given.

experientially integrated into a religious myth rooted locally in Polish nationalism. Both forces, the Church (Catholicism) and the state (nationalism) are recognized in this thesis as potent institutional agents forming *memory practice* (Antze and Lambek 1996, White 2006) of the heroes/victims, co-producing a situated experience of a self. Looking at the ritualized religious experiences of heroes/victims situated in contemporary Marianowice, I argue that Church agents, through their practices, not only cement a model of a hero/victim envisaged as a Christ-like, yet nationally-oriented martyr, but also strengthen the bonds of loyalty binding the heroes/victims, state and religion together.

Repositioning of the Church

Religious institutions and ideologies impact upon institutionalization of *memory politics* and *politics of collective healing* by converging with other structures and values in various localities[37]. The Catholic Church in Poland[38], broadly represented and understood as a symbolic space of national resistance, emerged as a *natural* participant and provider of cultural forms and symbolic space for *memory practice* after 1989. To a large extent, it was perceived as such before 1989, when churches were animating people's imagination as places of resistance, while certain figures of priests, like Father Popiełuszko or Wojtyła, embodied courage and authenticity vis-à-vis the decayed communist authorities. At that time, it was a counter-memory that grew as a practice in religious space in opposition to the state-led memory politics. The Church was perceived as the only public space where certain truths could be spoken about. In the post-1989 context, the Church became an explicit collaborator in the project of *memory politics* orchestrated by the state and supported by the grass-root actors.

The Church's engagements in *memory practice* of communism hold in their subtext an effort of reconstituting and reorienting its public image in a new *democratic* and *globalized* reality. The performances of patriotic sermons constitute minute steps through which the institution asserts its adequacy for a *democratic* and *liberal* state form, simultaneously underlying its conservative stand on morally valuable forms of religious life threatened by the processes of globalization and liberalism. The fall of communism coupled with an influx of consumer goods and liberal values have been particularly challenging for the traditional religious institutions. The Catholic Church, which has

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[37] See Wilson (2000), for the case of South Africa, or Borneman, 1997, for the German example.
[38] This chapter will not do justice to the complex reality of the Catholic Church both during communism and in its aftermath. Neither during communism nor in its aftermath has the Catholic Church in Poland been a monolith speaking in unison. The sermons analyzed in this chapter, however, should be associated with the more conservative and nationalist members of the clergy, who eagerly orient themselves towards the heroes/victims, presenting views similar to their world-view.

enjoyed a particularly strong position in Polish society for centuries, has faced a need to struggle for its maintenance.

The repositioning process of the Church, however, implies not only orientation towards the present and the future, but also taking under consideration its past positions. The Church, despite constituting a symbol of resistance, has also been tainted by the cooperation of its agents with *Bezpieka.* The security apparatus created a special unit for dealing with religious institutions – monitoring them, recruiting for cooperation and controlling. This implied an ambiguous situatedness of the Church in post-communism; while constituting a sacred symbol of resistance best exemplified by Pope John Paul II, it became concurrently hallmarked by cooperation. The initial stand taken by the hierarchy implied avoidance of any public discussion of the topic. The Catholic clergy as a legal category was not subjected to the Polish *lustration laws*, which were quite extensive in terms of categories of people they encompass. Priests, unlike other, secular, public figures, were not required to declare publicly whether they had cooperated with the communist secret services. Following the rule of autonomy of the Church vis-à-vis the state, it was accepted that lustration should be an internal affair of this institution. Nonetheless, both the mass media and independent researchers showed lots of interest in the topic of priests' collaboration with the communist regime, discussing particular cases publicly. Under public pressure, the Catholic Church commenced what seemed like a more systematic settling of the accounts by establishing, in 2006, the *Kościelna Komisja Historyczna* (internal lustration commission) to investigate the cases of past cooperation. The commission established its regional counterparts, the members of which devoted their time to studying the files collected in the branches of the IPN. *Kościelna Komisja Historyczna* announced in its report that more than a dozen Polish bishops during communism were registered as engaging in some form of cooperation[39]. It implied that the files were seriously incomplete; thus, in numerous cases, they provided a chaotic and insufficient picture of individual contacts with *Bezpieka*. The question of 'voluntary cooperation' was further complicated by the fact that the priests had not been required to certify their cooperation with a signature. In fact, until very recently, the problem had not been consistently solved by the hierarchy, who, while building its public image based on the workings of the commission, in its internal dealings with the supporters of lustration, maintained that these were 'issues in which nobody has interest these days' (Isakowicz-Zaleski 2007:8). According to Father

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[39] The reports of the commission can be found on its official website: www.episkopat.pl.

Isakowicz-Zalewski, we can talk about a deliberate policy within the Catholic Church of avoiding lustration[40].

Exposed to attacks and accusations of past cooperation, the Church adopts a defensive stance, badly in need of an alliance in which its patriotic and anti-communist engagements could be exposed publicly. Involvement in the publicly visible *memory practice* together with the state officials and heroes/victims counterbalances destructive allegations of the Church's cooperation. The participation of the Church agents in *memory practices* legitimizes the status of the institution as morally valuable and anti-communist. It constitutes a resource, a possibility of a repeatable performance of such an image, additionally cementing the mutually legitimating bonds of loyalty, among others, through the practice of patriotic sermons.

The patriotic sermons[41]

The patriotic sermons constitute a necessary element of every commemorative ritual in which the heroes/victims participate. They carry important meanings for the construction of their self-schemata.

The country is the mother

During the patriotic sermons Poland is often being talked about in kinship metaphors (Verdery 1999, Gal and Kligman 2000), and represented in the fragments below by the kinship simile. Despite the fact that the word *ojczyzna* (fatherland/motherland) takes its etymology from a word *ojciec* (father), in patriotic sermons Poland is commonly depicted as a mother. Evocations, like the following, are omnipresent in patriotic sermons and often legitimized by references to Polish poetry or the well-established canon of national literature:

[…] Their remains are here forever, so as to attest to their love for the country (*ojczyzna*), for the mother, because the country is the mother.

[…] A kiss given to the Polish earth carries a particular significance – it is as though it were a kiss given to a mother.

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[40] Isakowicz-Zaleski, despite great difficulties, after years of struggle, managed to publish a controversial book concerning relations between the clergy and the secret services. While working on the manuscript, he was continuously advised by his superiors 'to let it go, for the sake of the wellbeing of the church' (Isakowicz-Zaleski 2007:8), as the publication involved, apart from names recognizable locally only, stories of cooperation concerning celebrated Church figures. The scandals involving bishops and archbishops continue to surface. Some more extreme sources claim that the hierarchy agreed with the communist authorities during the *roundtable talks* that the files produced by the *Bezpieka* department dealing with the Church should fade away.

[41] Please, see the Appendix Seven for an exemplary transcript of a full sermon.

Personified Poland brings into heroes/victims' minds affective kinship imageries in the form of personal recollections. Many of them told me that, during such sermons, they think of their parents and families. This way, the affect for one's own country is naturalized through reference to life experience. Love towards the motherland is represented as having a high value, the logic of which relies on other specific categories like sacrifice and servitude. The mother is represented as a 'special mother' who 'suffered' a lot continuously throughout history. Along these lines, the heroes are represented in the sermons as the children of the suffering motherland. They are described as very specific children – 'the faithful servants', the most magnificent ones, those ready for the uppermost sacrifice.

> One-hundred-and-eighty young people! Amongst them there were the leaders of the partisan troops – beautiful, magnificent heroes, who fought the German occupier for the motherland, to defend the country. And there came another occupier and this second one was joined by the Poles – some of the Poles, those with a black soul; and [they] were putting these glorious boys to death.

> Let the memory of these magnificent people – people who sacrificed their lives for the motherland, reach everywhere.

> Those, who are present in here, gave away their lives, the most valuable of the human values. So that we could live.

> Lonely […] Poland resisted fascism and communism. In accordance with the historical truth it should be said, and it should be remembered, that the soldiers of September 1939 were the protectors of not only the Polish freedom, but also the European one. 'No' has to be uttered, and a massive invasion aimed at cutting off the Christian roots of Europe shall be blocked.

A cultural hero/victim category

> What do I want to tell you, honourable combatants, veterans, on today's occasion – they are playing LARUM, heroes, martyrs of the concentration camps, soviet gulags, forests and the underground, martyrs of the communist system, they are playing LARUM for Poland, LARUM for such a Poland, which you dreamt of, for which generations were fighting and sacrificed their lives.

> Two brothers – patriots, defenders of the most valuable, defenders of the motherland, defenders of Polish culture, fighters for freedom. But are they the only ones? These shall be counted in thousands,

thousands. They were really surprised, really surprised… that formation, which since 1944 in such way [.] destroyed the prominent sons and daughters of the Polish land. For the blood and the sacrifice of the mentioned yesterday priest Popiełuszko […].

From this metaphorical language a certain cultural category of hero/victim emerges – a child of a sacred motherland. Such descriptions as 'prominent', 'honourable', 'soldiers', 'people who sacrificed their lives' point towards a group of people with a special status, people who will be 'recognized by God upon the final judgment as embodying goodness'. Through the interchangeable discursive blinking of a triptych mother: Mary: Poland and son: Christ: hero/victim, the connection is established, and a powerful version of an affective cultural form of a hero/victim emerges. These words 'heroes/victims' are equated with the most powerful martyrs of the Catholic Church – Jesus Christ, and the more localized priest Popiełuszko. These acts of recognition structure feelings of affinity and a sense of belonging in the listeners. They further give a sense of acceptance and admiration of their actions. As they are called 'the most prominent children of the motherland', they are also juxtaposed with 'the other' for whom a language of kinship is not ascribed.

The other

'That formation', 'another occupier', 'Poles with black souls' introduce 'the other' and give it an aura of exclusion, non-belonging, and evil powers. The agents of the communist state are externalized from the religious and national community and their nature is being essentialized as evil. The priests' words deal with them in the following manner:

These were the people who spoke Polish, but who were not Polish. They were foreign mercenaries.

[…] there were people who gave themselves up to the service of iniquity. I believe that one day there will be the grave, and the judgment, not by SB, God's judgment. Just one. The Final Judgment. And some will be parted from the others. Some will stand on the right side – 'come to my kingdom', the others on the left side [….]

The memory must be kept alive

The sermons draw a line of continuity in an effort to link pre-communist Poland, underground Poland embodied in the sacrifice of the heroes/victims during communism, and finally liberated Poland which, at last situated in a democratic condition, still needs nonetheless to protect its Polishness and faith. This historically informed vision is linguistically realized through statements like the following:

We did not have a state for ages. The Polish nation for a very long time, as we know, lived in a foreign country, in foreign countries during the partitions […]

It is worth looking into the words of the nation's prophets, who grew up in similar conditions and who carried the same sort of worry for the quality of the public life, and who were prepared for the highest sacrifice.

The struggle of heroes/victims is being legitimized through the representation of persistent repression of Polishness historically performed by successive foreign occupations and a long tradition of resistance in a form of 'sacrifice' which proves that the kernel of Polishness exists and that it is thanks to the sacrificial actions of this kernel that freedom can be now experienced by younger generations of Poles. The stress being put on 'suffering' and 'sacrifice' deepens the structures of affinity that heroes/victims feel in relation to the authority of the Church, further intensified by legitimation of a continuous need for exposure of suffering and testimony of heroes/victims. The following words uttered in the sermons produce such an effect of embracing the heroes/victims by building in them a sense of affinity, relevance and recognition:

Just as today's Gospel says – here a father of a family is extracting from his treasury both new and old things. He turns towards history, towards the past so as to search for an inspiration, also a spiritual strength for building the present and the future.

It is not enough to remember, respect and transmit the history of the motherland – this is important, but it shall not be the final aim. The blood of the martyrs, the monuments, the graves are demanding something more, […] they call for action. This blood was poured for us and our future generations so that we took care and co-created the new in today's world, the new together with God, who is our path of truth and life. The Catholics form the Church, and the same Catholics form the state. To tear this unity is to strike into the strength of a nation destroying its spirit.

The new Poland, in the form of its youth, needs to turn for inspiration to the victims/heroes who shall receive a special status of a living testimony functioning as a constant reminder about past oppressions and about a need for love for the country which can be realized only in the alliance with Christian values and religiosity. Commemorative practices are recognized here as an important aspect of intergenerational transmission of values and knowledge, as well as being seen as an expression of tribute paid to the victims/heroes.

Eventually, the past struggle is extended over the present condition, as it turns out that, despite the transition towards democracy, the threat is still present, and the need for vigilance is still valid and is hence put forward in a gospel. The threat is being announced thus:

> Here, let us feel like the patriots responsible for the dissemination of truth. Let's not allow the ideologically loaded version to be imposed on us.

> We have to defend ourselves! We have to tell the world the truth about our history!

> Simultaneously, we need to constantly remind the new generation about the essential differences, the essence of which, from today's perspective, not all of us can understand.

As perceived, the danger comes mostly from the newly emergent plurality of voices which threatens the monological authority of the Church to utter the final legitimate version of history. These others are identified and granted a post-communist life in the sermons in the following exemplary ways:

> If someone suggests that, in the processes of transition, the main role was played by the collaborators and traitors, it means that he/she has a private version of history, a history in which there is no place for respect for human effort, but instead he presents his private opinion with nonchalance. During the marital law we got used to the similar version of interpretation presented by the government. Today we can trace in the commentaries of some of the journalists and politicians a pathetic manifestation of the return to what we thought was pathological.

> Those who would necessarily want to represent the cradle of Solidarity as a muddy landscape, and those, who do not see a testimony of dignity, but instead are talking in a language typical for the spokesman of the PRL's government […]

And still, the imagery of the active 'other' is not only confined to the production of false history. In fact, there emerges a vision of an incomplete transformation, a vision in which the end of communism has not arrived yet as communist agents managed to ensure for themselves economic well-being and also escaped judgement for the repressions carried out against the Polish nation. Here, affinity is being built through reference to the mundane hardships of heroes/victims' lives and by contrasting them with a representation of the well-being of their 'perpetrators'. For people who have repeatedly felt that they could not afford to provide a proper future for their children (apart

from the physical and symbolic struggle for the liberation of the country which consigned them to an economic subjugation), the subsequent words of the priests hit an affective register:

> Priest: But has it changed totally? No. Not completely. Your torturers are doing very well in today's reality. The pensions, as is reported, are exorbitant. 5000 or 6000 is an average for them. And the victims? They have to make their pile, to live by on their wits, to think.
> Woman: There's no way!
> Priest: No! They are still influential, they have the mass media, they have the press, and they have propaganda.
> Woman: They have the money!
> Priest: And here you are right, they have the money. […] The guilt is. There is no question about it. But now, has a proportional punishment been imposed for this guilt?

This last fragment comes from a speech of a priest uttered in a City Hall's dining room on the occasion of the Easter meeting organized for the heroes/victims with the help of the local authorities. A less formal setting opened a space for interaction. Here a woman's voice, interacting with the speech of the priest, could be treated as proof of the effectiveness of the priest's speech act in terms of creating a feeling of affinity based on a common perception of transition. This imagery of transition works towards deepening the myopic, Manichean representations which order the past according to the ideological lines of division between the communists and the Catholics. Such visions are being further mapped onto the present day feeding the fantasy of a constant threat and a need for mobilization under Catholicism so as to stand up to it.

Divine time, time of history and Church masks

In the religious accounts of history uttered during the patriotic sermons, God plays skilfully with our fates. Life, in this version, becomes a test of souls, and should be sacrificed in order to achieve salvation. The relation between historical and divine time is thus announced in the following words:

> It is God (*Pan Bóg*) who is the rock. He is the Lord of history. He is the Father of Providence.

> For us – the followers, the world is but an everlasting project of God's realized in front of our eyes.

> […] it is an answer to the question concerning the actual meaning of our Catholic father, Christian faith, [it concerns] what we shall do in order to achieve redemption.

God the creator in his intentions furnished a human being in eternal life – this is the significance of the sacrifice, this is a significance of the honest life.

Onto such an ontology of human history, a more specific vision of the contemporary Polish history is mapped. Communism is described as: 'mud', 'pathology', 'sick psyche', 'tradition of distorting the truth', 'a wrong construction of the human being', 'a sinister ideology', 'evil', 'an ideology of hatred'. The aim of 'the communists' is to 'destroy the nation's memory' and suppress the 'real Poland'.

On the 1st of September 2007, the priest in a church in Marianowice spoke to the heroes/victims from an altar:

The memory of the tragic date the 17th of September 1939 survived thanks to the Church, to the most part, thanks to the brave priests, who, putting their lives at risk, spoke out loud the truth about the perfidious stab in the back, blown by the Soviet Union towards fighting Poland.

The silence filling the space in between the priest's words was piercing. The same piercing silence intensified the gravity of past calamities recalled by another priest, who spoke to the heroes/victims at an occasion for consecrating a commemorative plaque placed in one of Marianowice's churches on the 20th of October 2007.

In what name did the people who spoke the Polish language murder Father Popiełuszko? Yet, was it only him? […] And what of those many others murdered by unknown culprits? Why does a man kill another man? In the name of what? In the name of ideology? Ideology built upon hate, hatred of God and everything that relates to the belief in God.

The Church as an institution is represented in these sermons with a martyr's face – the priest Popiełuszko. The Church agents, in their speech, choose this mask while simultaneously silencing what some historians highlight – that at that time the hierarchy perceived Father Popiełuszko as a 'trouble-maker' (Majchrzak and Żaryn 2004). Repression could have been inflicted on the institution if it had not tamed the actions and words of such grassroots-oriented priests. Caught in an apparent deadlock, the hierarchy admonished and warned such priests. Possibly, they also warned Popiełuszko that his life was endangered (Majchrzak and Żaryn 2004). Today, these dead bodies of martyrs are

eagerly used to represent the Church as a repository of 'true Poland', the main site of resistance to communism.

In the post-communist condition 'infected' with liberal values, the voices of criticism have emerged which bring into the public discussion instances of priests' cooperation with the communist regime. The Church does not remain silent. In the official discourse of the hierarchy the priests' collaboration with the communist regime is blamed on their weak human nature, while the icons of the priests-martyrs are simultaneously evoked in sermons as saints who played along with the divine scenario. The Church is not represented as an institution run by a hierarchy which sat at the round table with the communists. Nor is there any mention of the Church's policy of favouring destruction of those secret security police files which proved the cooperation of the hierarchy with the regime. And in the patriotic sermons, the topic of lustration of the clergy is simply explained as a war.

On the 12th of January 2007, the heroes/victims got together at a post-Christmas gathering along with the representatives of the local authorities, and a priest, as well as with their honorary guests, to divide the wafer and celebrate the birth of the Christ. In relation to the most recent media scandal, the priest uttered the following words in his welcoming speech directed at the heroes/victims, giving a sense of his perception of a possible lustration of the priests:

> Yesterday, the bishops announced that they would undergo lustration. This reminds me of fighting a dragon. In reality, this dragon needs a constant sacrifice – when it swallows one victim, there will be another one. This way that they will not undergo lustration and it will then be over. No. The war is ongoing. Immense. For Christ. For Christianity.

> The archbishop's family feels hounded, tear-stained. They lost their willingness to live. Here, close by, his sister was living – Madam Marta – she is dead. His brother-in-law is dead. They must be happy that they are dead, that they did not live till this moment [.]. He signed. Was he the only one? Thousands did. Out of these thousands, we learned only one name.

Making of a new order

Cole, in her work on Madagascar, suggested that memory practice is a key site to observe how individual subjectivity links with larger projects of political struggle and social transformation over time (Cole 2001). The spaces of the church and the public squares are designed to make such connections possible. In these spaces, through a collective endeavour, a common version of the past

is being lived through. While personal narrative and history make each other up (White 1999), in order to be relevant for collective identity, representations of the past must connect to the present (White 2006:331). In the church, the past has been linked to the present in the form of an intentional gathering of social groups which share their current interests in delimiting lines of inclusion and exclusion from a symbolic landscape. The gatherings gained a ritualized form marked by established arrangements of sacred and profane authority. The heroes/victims in the church participate in (re)making of an order. The religious ritual in fact attends the social transformation and it should be understood in the context of power relations. In his work on the Indian festival of Aiyanar, Dirks argued for the anthropological writing to underplay the part of ritual which deals with the cultural construction of authority and the dramatic display of the social lineaments of power (Dirks 1993). This is a cultural model in which the ritual is about display and achievement of power, while power is 'an endless series of relations characterized by struggle' (Dirks 1993:501). What has happened in the churches of Marianowice during the patriotic masses which I attended had to do with a display of new configurations of power in the period after the collapse of the previous state form. These rituals constituted critical moments for public articulation of new definitions of collectivity in which visibility was granted to an alliance distinguished on the basis of its anti-communism. Importantly, though, the order of the heroes/victims, the Church and the state agents is just one of many orders emergent from various forms of social interactions in post-communist Poland. For the participants, however, the rituals generated a sense of timelessness and centrality of the experienced truth, as much as this truth validated their centrality in the new order.

Semiotic Fields of the Association

> *'If things mediate our historicity, we cannot be content to ask only what meanings people attribute to them now. And even of those meanings, we must be attentive to the ways in which they are (for the time being) regimented and brought into relation to other things – much of this being the task of social power'* (Keane 2005:193).

For Goodwin, social action should be understood as constructed in interaction through 'the temporally unfolding juxtaposition of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (Goodwin 2000:1490). Turning to the ethnographic material I gathered during the religious parts of commemorated events, I propose to view the experience of a hero/victim as a social practice established interactively, an important component of which is constituted by their orientation

towards religious semiotic resources. The commemorative rituals make the human body '[…] publicly visible as the site for a range of structurally different kinds of displays implicated in the constitution of the actions of the moment' (Goodwin 2000:1490). The aspect of display is crucial in the case of hero/victim experience since it converges with an inherently public aspect of this identity. The movement between objectification and internalization happens through a simultaneous interaction with various semiotic resources. In the religious context the speech and materiality represent juxtaposed kinds of resources with which heroes/victims interact. It is important to underline the repetitive aspect of 'patriotic sermons' and their relative frequency. The members of the association have a chance to participate in such religious encounters on average once a month. Often, they themselves initiate such occasions. Cultural vehicles expressed in ritualized and material forms help members of the association gain control over their past and their identities by limiting their zone of security and belonging, as well as by giving coherent meaning to their past actions. The practice of religious demarcation happens also in the association's office.

A tiny space where the members of the association gather is marked by numerous images and artefacts. In one room, filled out with desks and chairs, assigned to the association by the local authorities, next to national emblems and portraits of historical figures, a cross and a portrait of Holy Mary hang. The members of the association, while domesticating the offered space, filled it with symbols which articulate their *boundaries of the familiar* (Morgan 1998:10), their sense of belonging. The space of the association was turned into a *place* (Pred 1986) by exposing symbolic religious and national representations. Clearly, these are the markers of *security zones* in which the hero/victim self can be enacted, experiencing no resistance. The images work as cultural means of articulating the self and one's nesting in the world. These objects constitute symbols of the heroes/victims' devotion to Polishness. Eventually, hanging there in the association, being looked at each Thursday, they also make up a means of repetitive and constant practice of belief. The act of looking should be understood as an embodied form of cognition and collective memory practice enabled by material conditions of social being (Morgan 1998:4). As conditions of associating have been historically and culturally structured, they have also been co-produced by the heroes/victims, who themselves decorated the office with the pictures. Eventually, the specific arrangement of the space has worked towards maintenance of their sentiments, identities and alliances.

During the patriotic masses, heroes/victims lives were "lifted up" to another plane (Bloch 2002). This "lifting up" concerned an experience of recognition and display. On such occasions, materiality is

used as a channel for displaying one's affiliations, increasing one's visibility, indexing bonds of loyalties, and creating certain affects. Heroes/victims carefully ironing their white shirts and uniforms, taking out from their drawers white-and-red badges with names of their associations to be slipped on their sleeves, rushing to pick up the standards hidden in the office, carrying their military caps in plastic bags so as not to dirty them, to put them on clean when the moment comes – all of these little practices happening around artefacts marked the moment as special, and "lifted up" the experience of celebration moving the heroes/victims into the visible centre of it. These artefacts not only mediated the heroes/victims' experience of the celebration. They made a certain quality of this experience possible. As argued by Keane, clothing does not simply express identities. Clothing produces experience. In the case of the heroes/victims, it produces the experience of being recognized and that of belonging to a community which is not only ideational, but which finally tangibly exists (Keane 2005:192). For many of the heroes/victims, their anti-communist activities implied fighting for an idea of Poland. Thus, the model for their healing in the present involves experiencing the notion that the idea they fought for has finally been realized[42]. Their participation in the official rituals is to convey to them a sense of realization, an achievement of an independent Poland, a nation state which relies on a set of values they believe in. At the same time, the rituals create for them an occasion in which they become publicly visible. Walking in their uniforms, with standards and badges, they look proud and distinct. Their bodies may be read as pangs of conscience, as victory, as a ridiculous tradition or as a political masquerade. From the point of view of the contemporary state narrative, material signs mark them as a symbolic capital. Importantly, they feel safe and recognized walking in their uniforms only on specific days, when there is a national and Catholic ritual organized for them.

Because most of the heroes/victims "lost" significant parts of their lives and health during the fighting and in prison, in describing their lives, they often use the notions of 'wasted youth' (*zmarnowana młodość*) or 'blighted life chances' (*zmarnowane sznase*). Most of them do not feel they reached a decent economic or social status. They feel they live an average or below-average life. They clearly blame their anti-communist engagements for such a state of affairs. At the same time, what works as compensation (and explanation) for such a condition, is a sense of moral superiority connected to a notion of 'honest and righteous life' (*godne i prawe życie*), which they believe they led. Being anti-communist, honest and righteous is understood as a reason for lack of economic and

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[42] The heroes/victims often talked about the fulfilment they felt during the patriotic masses and official celebrations. This feeling was generated by the acts of recognition and sense given to their past actions, linking them in a causative relation with the present depicted in a positive light.

general success. At the same time, economic success is being understood as a fake success, an artificial success, a success which does not hold a real value, as the real value lies in the moral stance. As such, the possibility of taking part in state and religious rituals as the main symbolic subjects of such rituals is welcomed as a public recognition of righteousness, a confirmation of those virtues, which the heroes/victims believe they possess. Most of the heroes/victims are people with conservative views. They believe in authority, in a life ordered by rules. They respect elites – priests, state officials, and those who are educated. They are regular church-goers. They value reliability and the possibility of trusting someone; when such a condition of relationship is achieved, they perceive it as friendship. Many of the members of the association feel they are mutual friends. In fact, they are marked by a strong need for such a type of personal relationship, as they have a sense, greatly cultivated during communism, that their beliefs and life stories shall be carefully entrusted; that very few people share their values; that very few can actually understand their experiences, while many can betray, give away and disrespect. In this sense, the Church and priests have always been imagined as an anchor, a space where the heroes/victims could have entrusted their sorrows. A chronic grudge and sense of regret has found outlets in confessional type interactions, if not with Church agents, then silently with God in the form of a humble prayer.

The heroes/victims' sentiments and needs have been regimented through national and religious artefacts, in state and religious spaces, through interactions with state and Church agents. The memory practice in which all of these actors have been engaged is one semiotic field in which bodies orient themselves towards each other in an interactive reproduction and maintenance of statism, nationalism and institutionalized forms of religious life. The following image is an example of the orientation I talked about.

Martial Madonna.

'Language and vision, word and image, text and picture are in fact deeply enmeshed and collaborate powerfully in assembling our sense of the real' (Morgan 1998:9).
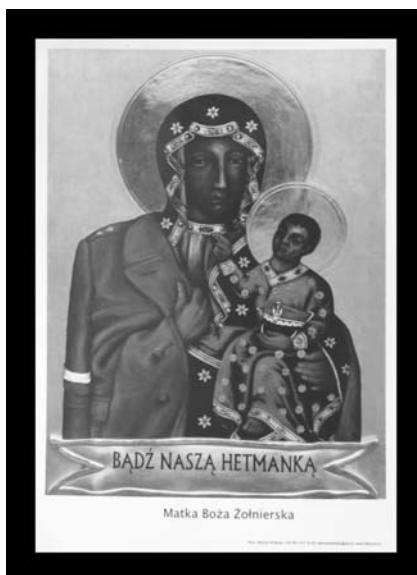
The Martial Madonna painting.

During one of the commemorative celebrations, small reprints of an interesting religious painting were sold to the heroes/victims by its author. The painting was sanctified by an archbishop during an unveiling of a monument and was assisted by an honorary campaign and a military orchestra on its way into a church on the altar of which it was centrally located. I wish to devote some space to this image, because it is a material manifestation of the alliance of the Church, nationalism and the heroes/victims, as well as empowering it by producing the conditions for its internalization and objectification.

The Martial Madonna took as its basis a famous holy image of Saint Mary and Jesus called the Black Madonna, which was placed in the most celebrated Polish pilgrimage site – the Częstochowa sanctuary. During the wars with the Swedes in the seventeenth century, the Black Madonna became a well-known symbol merging Catholic and patriotic values of *szlachta* (Polish nobility)[43]. A representation and, at the same time, a visual device of worship for the Holy Mary, widespread in Poland, the Black Madonna turned into a variously appropriated icon[44]. Its reproduction was proudly

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[43] *Polska szlachecka* is a recognized term in Polish political science and historiography referring to a political system which evolved in the Polish Kingdom [*Królestwo Polskie*] in the 15th and 16th centuries. It elevated Polish nobility – *szlachta* - in their rights, creating *democratic* standards by furnishing them with the power to elect the king. This period is often recalled in post-communist Poland, to point out that Poland has a democratic tradition reaching much further than those of other European countries. Polish nobility was further strongly connected with the Catholic Church. On these grounds, the symbolism characteristic for that time is being taken up again in contemporary Poland, as it holds a potential for continuing along the lines of democracy and Christianity.

[44] An interesting discussion on Holy Mary as a culturally grounded form can be found in Wolf. Wolf, in his study of Holy Mary of Guadalupa, suggested considering Holy Mary as a cultural form used by people connected by webs of social relations in their dealings with each other. He further argued for it to provide 'the cultural idiom of behavior, ideal representations through which different groups of the same society can put and manipulate their different fates within coordinated framework' (Wolf in Lambek:168).

worn by Lech Wałęsa during the Solidarity strikes in a form of a small badge pinned to his jacket – communicating his oppositional stance against the regime through an excessive demonstration of his religiosity[45]. Memories mediated by this religious symbol have been layered throughout various periods, resulting in a complex and potent resource for further signification practices. These layers are visible in various versions of the painting and its different forms of symbolic representation are put into practice. In the painting, the Holy Mary is dressed up in a military uniform with a white-and-red[46] band on her sleeve, while a little Jesus held by her carries a little military cap in his left hand. A piece of paper attached by the painter to the sold reproduction of the image explained the symbolic complexity of his work. As elucidated, the artist was inspired by memory of the people who opposed the oppressors of Poland in the most heroic ways and the act of painting constituted an act of paying homage to the heroes/victims. The painter further explicated that the Martial Madonna 'combines the heroism of combat with the spiritual entrusting to the Holy Mary, who, throughout the centuries, has continually accompanied Poles. She supported them and carried hope, she was a commander-in-chief of the Polish army'.

The painting of Military Madonna is a metaphor which relies on a series of analogies. It blends various meanings in order to create a new message. The *capacity of blending* is what characterizes metaphorical and analogical thinking (Kirmayer 2003). This commitment to *blending* achieved through metaphors and analogy expressed linguistically as well as through images tells about an *embodied mutual orientation* of the Catholic Church and the heroes/victims as it is repeatedly experienced through ritualized bodily practice (Connerton 1989). In the Martial Madonna painting, the artist juxtaposed symbolic representation of God (Mary and Jesus) with a symbolic representation of heroes (military clothing marking their resistance) – tying together the two types of subjects belonging to different orders (mundane and sacred)[47]. The Martial Madonna is a potent resource for metaphorical and analogical thinking. It may represent God, yet it may also represent a mother and, as a mother of heroes/victims, it may simultaneously signify Poland (the motherland), creating a condition for juxtaposing religious and national sentiments. Holding little Jesus, the Holy Mary may be read as an embodiment of care and protection. It is a suffering mother, as her son is to die crucified. As such it may point towards a divine protection extended over the fighting heroes

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[45] Wałęsa's legendary anti-communist stand has been undermined by a recent publication by two IPN historians who advanced in their monograph a thesis that Wałęsa was a security agent.

[46] White and red are the colours of the Polish flag.

[47] Sapir argued that 'the metaphoric process is not a simple game of substitution, but rather a creative game with the pregnant interplay of two disparate terms' (Sapir 1977:32). Such an approach is adapted in this analysis.

who, because of their suffering and devotion, are equated to Jesus – the ultimate symbol of Catholic martyrdom.

The Martial Madonna constitutes an example of a historically emergent cultural representation which exists as an element of a broader, dynamically enacted narrative concerning the Polish nation and its past expressed through, among other things, religious symbols and texts. The Catholic Church frames this narrative by granting a space where its maintenance, reproduction and growth takes place. The reproduction bought by one of the members of the association – Józef - the Martial Madonna hangs on a wall of his flat, on which his medals and photographs from the underground army also hang. The Martial Madonna, as appropriated by Józef, underlined his belonging to the religious and national zone in which his hero/victim identity can be easily displayed[48]. The image asserts that his anti-communist actions were not singular events but, on the contrary, were rooted in a long tradition of national suffering and heroism. It also acts as a reminder that the struggle has been oriented towards a common well-being, restating its importance for nowadays. Eventually, by placing the Martial Madonna on his wall, a member of the association revealed his loyalty bonds with the Church and with the new state form – a position which legitimizes him as a hero/victim in turn.

Structuring a condition of certainty

Cole, reflecting on Bartlett, called schemata *organized settings,* imagining them as 'densely organized networks of past association and experiences that constantly rearrange and modify themselves into *momentary settings* as new experiences confront old ones' (Cole 2001:25). I would argue that the way in which the schemata for memory practice takes root happens through the repeatable and systematic reappearance of what Goodwin called a *contextual configuration* (2000). By a *contextual configuration* Goodwin understands a particular, locally relevant range of semiotic resources around which participants evidently orient themselves. In this chapter, I focused on the semiotic resources available in a religious context: Christ's suffering, the mother-child relationship, the struggle between good and evil, sacrifice in order to redeem others – these are some of the scenarios available in various forms experienced by the heroes/victims in a religious space. What happens in the church is an interactive production of *conditions of meaning, meaningfulness, truth, and certainty* (Lambek 2002:9). In church, the heroes/victims can feel certain about their righteousness. They can feel safe in expressing their beliefs. After years of repressions, they seem to experience a particular difficulty

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[48] Csikszentmihalyi (cited after Morgan 1998:5) distinguished three ways in which artefacts empower the human self with a degree of objectivity: 'by displaying power and social status; by securing the continuity of the self over time in terms of focal points in the present, traces of the past, and indications of future expectations; and by providing material evidence of our position in the web of social relations'. Religious artefacts empower the heroes/victims in all of the mentioned ways.

in enlarging such a comfort zone. They lack self-confidence. When the authority speaks, doubts disappear for a moment, giving way to comfort in the form of a sense of belonging and understanding.

Chapter Four

The Church is not Archbishop!

Talk in the association as a collaborative moral action

They had pride, and were sorry for themselves: all this meaningless profusion into which they had poured their blood left them no room to move. If that was all the laborious years left behind, then away with it. But next day they would start all over again, repairing what could be repaired, and what was beyond repair they would replace in five or ten years' time, with a new, better version, just as nations do after war.

'The Case Worker' by George Konrad

A primordial locus for the occurrence of events that are usually glossed as remembering and forgetting is conversation, people talking to other people.

'Forgetfulness as an Interactive Resource' by Charles Goodwin

The news

It was early morning on December 2007 when 'Radio Maryja' announced the shocking news: one of the dailies had published the SB files concerning Archbishop Wielgus who was just about to be appointed by the Pope to the post of Warsaw metropolitan Archbishop. The voice of the Father Director echoed in the room: 'The journalists who manipulate the facts stand behind the attack upon the archbishop'. 'These people turned into a sort of death squadrons'. 'A battle over Warsaw is taking place'. 'A death sentence – a moral death, has been announced'. 'How many people have they already arranged (*załatwili*)[49] this way, how many priests, decent people…' (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). Throughout the following weeks, all the front pages were devoted to this case of cooperation. The accused Archbishop Wielgus who, in the 1970s, chose an alias 'Grey', and was registered under such a pseudonym by the SB, let the public discussion evolve without his voice.

The original publication contained photocopies of the selected SB files stored at the IPN. Nobody knew how the files had been taken out. The journalists of *Gazeta Polska*, who published the news first, did not reveal their source. The names of the SB officers 'leading' *Grey* were fully disclosed and their reports were cited:

'We agreed that all the costs borne by the TW [secret informer] in relation to execution of our tasks will be reimbursed during the first meeting. […] In connection with your [Archbishop's] trip

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[49] *Załatwili* is an expression bringing in an immediate association with criminal acts or SB secret operations. It implies arranging something in a semi-official way, beyond the law – for instance, committing a crime without traces, in a cold and fast manner. Used in this context, the expression works towards shaping the social imagery by suggesting the constant operation of the communist secret services in today's reality, aimed at weakening the Church and conservative elites.

abroad, basing on our previous conversations, we agree upon the following forms of cooperation: 1. in a full understanding of needs of the country, motivated by a patriotic and civic attitude, you will take actions, within the possibilities granted to you by the fact of a scholarly work abroad, in reference to the issues of interest to the PRL's secret police […] 3. Both parties, considering the common interest, and most of all the well-being of the country, commit themselves to keep in an absolute secret the fact of this cooperation' (Gazeta Wyborcza 4.01.2007).

The Historical Commission of the Church, brought into being as an answer to a wild lustration (*dzika lustracja*), publicly announced that 'there is no evidence that the Archbishop Wielgus cooperated' (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). In its official statement, the Commission reminded its readers that cooperation with *Bezpieka* was forbidden by the Episcopate at that time. Further, it announced that Archbishop Wielgus himself stated that he had not hurt anyone with his words or actions. Despite this statement, the Commission concluded that it was difficult to estimate whether the Archbishop had actually hurt anyone or not (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). A more revolutionary voice in the church belonging to the monks leaked into the press. Two of the monks made statements in a mood of a need for explanation of and confrontation with the problematic issues in the history of the Church: 'All of the Catholics deserve explanation now!' (Gazeta Wyborcza 4.01.2007). Historians, the newly emergent experts on the issue of the SB files' credibility, automatically focused on verifying the authenticity of the files and the fact that the documents did indicate the Archbishop's engagement in cooperation. 'For a person who looked through many similar documents, this is a model file of a secret informer' – claimed an IPN historian (Gazeta Wyborcza 4.01.2007). Priests from the Warsaw archdiocese, on the other hand, published a letter in which they wrote: 'Groundless allegations and accusations menace not only the Archbishop's affairs, but are aimed against the Church as much as against the nation' (Rzeczpospolita 5.01.2007).

One of the daily newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza,* published a poll announced by the title 'the Poles cross out the Archbishop Wielgus'. According to their findings, 41% of Poles thought that the Archbishop should withdraw from office, and 73% suspected he would not; hence, he should be discharged by the Vatican. 67% of the people agreed that those priests who had cooperated with the SB should not hold high office in the Church's hierarchy. 48% would not go to confess to a priest who had cooperated. 48% did not mind if the priest who baptized their children was an informer (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2009). Clearly, an event of this sort, through a nearly ritualistic mode of disclosure, produced a sense of community. Dissemination of mass media news, by providing a common topos has generated a sense of 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991), which fostered in people thoughts

and fantasies about the communist past and its relevance for the post-communist society. During the winter weeks, people in Marianowice often referred to the Archbishop's case – be it in jokes, in complaints, in comparisons, or in quarrels. While the theme of the Archbishop's cooperation was animating the whole country, I focused on ways in which the heroes/victims were making sense of the shocking news.

Talk in the Association

This chapter focuses on a fragment of conversation which occurred in the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in reaction to the news about the cooperation of Archbishop Wielgus with Bezpieka. A discussion on current political matters and mass media revelations is a commonly practiced *genre* in the association. Usually such conversations take place among a few interlocutors. Sometimes, more than one discussion takes place at the same time, and animated voices can be heard simultaneously in different corners of the office. Stable groups of interlocutors emerged within the association. This time, though, the conversation engaged everybody present in the office[50], either as speakers or as listeners. The active speakers in this case were men[51]. Of the speakers, the strongest participation status belonged to Leszek - the president of the association[52]. The men who were members of his clandestine organization[53] normally align with this voice, easily surrendering themselves to his authority. Other speakers try to push their opinions through and to take the position of a competent speaker capable of influencing his listeners. Disagreements frequently happen during politically engaged conversation. Eventually, though, there is a movement from fragmentation of opinions towards their consolidation. In the course of political discussions, members of the association enact their hero/victim identities and define their situatedness. The conversations usually involve the theme of the heroes/victims being endangered, which eventually moves the talk towards the consolidation. The consolidation happens through the emphasis of a common fate and identity which needs to be preserved by the group effort. The singular exchanges occurring within the association should be considered as conditioned by the larger institutional orders, which provide semiotic resources, direct the interactions and self-perceptions, and provide legitimacy for the claims expressed by the members of the association.

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[50] That day, ten people were present in the office – nine members of the association and me.
[51] Women hardly ever speak up on political matters. They are treated by men as less competent speakers. As a result, they stay silent during conversations engaging many speakers like this one, and get engaged in political discussions only among themselves, where they feel comfortable in expressing their views.
[52] Most of the members of the association can be classified as members of the youth conspiracy groups. Leszek displays his authoritative voice over such members. Only in relation to those members who took part in earlier forms of anti-communist activity (which implies most commonly the participation in the Underground Army) does Leszek act in a submissive way.
[53] Of the members of Leszek's clandestine group, only Marek takes part in this conversation.

The heroes/victims, who met in the office of the association on Thursday, were familiar with the news of the Archbishop's cooperation. The story constituted an incentive for moving between the past and present as if the time gap did not exist, and as if the past heroism, victimhood and betrayal belonged even more to the present day, and were to be treated as solvable issues calling for moral judgement which promises the final rest from uncomfortable anxieties produced by the past arrangements.

A talk in the association.

During the conversation, the use of certain words at a particular point in discursive real time indexes the speakers and denotes those who are spoken about as members of particular groups or categories (Silverstein 2004:633). The dynamic nature of the conversation results in complexity of evoked participation frameworks which are reconfigured during the conversation. Such frameworks and stereotyped meanings organize the interaction. They also repetitively reappear; hence they impact upon the structuring of schemata of remembrance. Yet, they do not imply uniformity of knowledge within the group. In fact, the analyzed conversation represents an interaction in which speakers were variously positioned in terms of knowledge and authority of voice. Members of the association are simultaneously members of other social groups and are variously aligned. As a result, they bring into the discursive event various sets of knowledge which clash during the conversation. I argue that the analyzed discursive event was not intended to bring a negotiation of these various sets of knowledge and positions to a consensus. Its primary function was to give a space for enacting a hero/victim identity through a moral practice oriented towards recalling the past in a conventionalized and

simultaneously highly affective fashion. Equally, despite differences in individual positions, the talk evoked a sense of groupness and confirmed the core values defining the community of heroes/victims.

The conversation to be analyzed was a type of free-flowing conversational interaction in which topics were not strictly predetermined and speaker turns were not pre-allocated[54], a good example of a *living narrative*[55]. The topic animated those who were present in the association that day.

[1] Marek: Well, I felt simply *woeful* [said in a sad voice], I was woeful and tears came into my eyes that such a man was accused of such *infamy* [said in a sad voice]. I felt woeful. And apart from that, as a member of an illegal [slightly laughing but rather with pride] scout organization, who was imprisoned for three years well… we do know their methods…

Marek follows my question with an emotional evocation. He clearly displays his affective affinity with the Archbishop [*such a man*], and, almost immediately, points towards a similarity in positionality of both the accused, and the members of the association. Through insertion of a fragment of a personal narrative [*as a member of an illegal…*], Marek gives an emphasis to his sense of belonging to a hero/victim category. In this narrative fragment, this category gains the coherence of a collective agent through a reference to the existence of another group – *Bezpieka* [*their methods*]. The pronoun *we* indicates imagined bonds of affinity linking all victims of the security services. Marek includes in this group Archbishop Wielgus. Here, language plays the role of a cultural instrument in a larger political process of the group formation, as it delimits the position of the group vis-à-vis other groups. Opening the discussion, Marek proposes a moral evaluation of Archbishop Wielgus's cooperation in which he refrains from focusing on the allegation, drawing instead on the similarity of the Archbishop's positionality to that of heroes/victims, underlining that both agents dealt with the security forces. Given Marek's feelings of respect for a member of a hierarchy [*such a man*], such juxtaposition simultaneously works towards a positive display of his hero/victim self as someone positioned similarly to an important figure belonging to spiritual and intellectual elites, serving as an index of eliteness[56].

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[54] I did not take the role of an interviewer, but was treated as a regular member of the group, who comes to the office on Thursdays, and who has a lower competence – a rather *unknowing recipient* interested in accessing the expert knowledge of heroes/victims. In fact, only at the beginning of the conversation was I treated as an addressee. With the turn taken by Marek (I begin the transcript with these utterances), my position as a speaker vanished.

[55] The *living narrative* is characterized by: multiple active co-tellers, moderately tellable account, relatively embedded in surrounding discourse and activity, non-linear temporal and causal organization, and uncertain, fluid moral stance (Ochs and Capps 2001:23).

[56] The majority of the heroes/victims I met in the association come from peasant or workers' families. Those among them who graduated from universities (and this group is not large) or who achieved high office are treated with great respect when compared with the rest. The

[2]   Adam[:] [speaking in a very low voice] The fact that he resigned from the office is unquestionable. And here, I wish to connect to what was said that, namely, that we know these methods. We know these methods, only that we, we know them from a different position [said as if giving a technical lecture]. We were imprisoned; we had no, ABSOLUTELY no rights. And at that time, to resist the pressures, it was a sort of… risk, because we could have borne enormous consequences. […] at that time it was an immense sacrifice to RESIST. And most of us approached these things in such manner […]. The priest Archbishop was in a different situation. He, by complying to a certain type of conversation, or even by signing something, he had some sort of personal gains resulting from it. Some of these gains concerned him personally, and some concerned the Church. In the later years, when he was a chancellor of the university, he gained benefits for the university. In this case, *in a sense*, I absolve him, but he should have tried to solve this issue *much earlier* [said with disappointment], not at the moment when he is accused of cooperation. [said as if rationally explaining a usual situation] […] He should have resigned earlier so that the Catholics, like *myself,* would not have had to feel embarrassed. […]

Adam shifts the *footing*[57] and repositions the heroes/victims vis-à-vis the Archbishop and *Bezpieka*. His sequence starts by confirming the hero/victim ingroup identity as reliant on common past experience of relations with the security forces. However, he at the same time points towards the asymmetry [*we know them from a different position*] between the Archbishop and the association members and builds his statement by focusing on this difference. Such orientation allows him to give a display of uniqueness of the hero/victim experience. In this narrative he points out *a conscious and pure sacrifice* that heroes/victims performed while resisting. In contrast with such a definition, Adam draws a picture of the Archbishop as situated outside this group due to his orientation towards *gains*. The discrediting notion of *gains* is further detailed by differentiation between *personal* and *public gains*. *Personal gains,* according to Adam, exclude one from a broadly understood community of heroes/victims, while *public gains* can save one's face and lead towards recognition of one's suffering. Still, Adam clearly defines a hero/victim identity by underlying a full commitment to a common good (*dobro wspólne*), a pure

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sense of subjugation felt by the heroes/victims stemming from their poor background is coupled with their trust in such values as education, authority and social position. Simultaneously, being an authorised hero/victim is their way of achieving social advancement.

[57] Goffman introduced the term *footing* so as to analytically highlight moments in communicative social situations when a speaker and/or a hearer shifts alignments in relation to the events at hand or to the subject matter of an exchange. A change in footing implies a change of interpretative frame used in reference to events or to subject matter. The footing depends on the production/reception format and participation status of the actors (Goffman 1981). In this conversation the frequent alteration of the footing is an expression of a relative instability of the heroes/victims' self-understanding and the sense of insecurity stemming from the lack of stability of a single representation of the communist past and democratic present. It is further caused by the fact that the version they support in their daily associational routine is often being undermined both in the mass media, as well as in their more private lives. This causes doubts in them and pushes them to find various venues of rationalization for the past events.

sacrifice (very similar to a model of Christ suffering). Eventually, Adam once again positions the Archbishop as an outcast, this time by referring to a community of Catholics. Adam proposes viewing the Archbishop as one who violated the norms of the Catholic community by his lack of commitment to *disclosure*, a notion quite close in meaning to *confession*. In this logic, if one violates the norms, one is required to admit it vis-à-vis one's community. The lack of such disclosure results in a double offence.

Heroes/victims' participation in the *memory politics* and *practices of recognition* positions them within a frame in which other competitors for a hero/victim status become highly visible[58]. Such agents can be either perceived as an ally, a resource (see Marek's utterances), or as a competitor (see Adam's utterance). In the first case, we observe a strategy of alignment while, in the other, the strategy of distancing is being used. Slowly emergent in the post-1989 conditions, *memory practices* imply interactive construction of a moral code encompassing, in a coherent framework, behaviours stretching out between the past and the present. Because new facts and allegations, as well as new possibilities for verification and recognition, constantly emerge, the engaged actors are faced with a constant need for moral positioning, which constitutes at the same time an opportunity to delimit one's position in the network of relational power. Importantly, context and talk stand in a *reflexive relationship* (Goodwin 1987:120)[59] in the case of the analyzed conversation. The talk evolves in the context of association, which impacts upon elaboration of relevant characteristics of the speakers and those spoken about. Importantly, the participants interact with each other regularly; hence, they adhere to and take for granted larger patterns of relationships that bind them together. At the same time, they reproduce emergent narrative orders. They use their social identities of heroes/victims to solve the local moral issue of the priest's cooperation. Such usage implies a maintenance work and enactment of such collectively elaborated identity.

[3]   Anna: What was this embarrassment about? […]

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[58] This chapter has been greatly influenced by Marjorie Goodwin's book on the construction of social difference and exclusion within schoolgirls' groups. Methodologically, Goodwin focused on the interaction understood as a complex semiotic act. Through her analysis, she depicted minute nuances of social interaction, which constituted larger mechanisms for defining the ingroup and outgroup of the girls' social world. Among other arguments presented by Goodwin, one seems particularly relevant in the context of the association. Analyzing girls' interactions, Goodwin revealed the tabooed aggressive underside of the girls' world. She claimed for the need for recognition and power to ignite competition and conflicts within the group (Goodwin 2006). Similarly, the conversation presented in this chapter should be read partially as an expression of competition and conflicts conditioned by the need for recognition, and partially as a tool for consolidating a unified hero/victim identity, which grants such recognition.

[59] Goodwin explains the idea of *a reflexive relationship* between talk and context in the following way: 'the talk invokes relevant contextual features that are then used for further elaboration of both the talk and the relevant characteristics of the participants involved in it' (Goodwin 1987:120).

[4]   Adam: It was surely about the behaviour of this man, that all of that appeared in a public context […] it is US who could have used such CROOKED ways -

[5]   Marek: During the interrogation, because it was our *right for defence, our right of defence* -

[6]   Adam: Or we stood with hands up facing the wall, they take you for an execution, and later on they are in stitches.

[7]   Marek: These are the forms of psychological breakage of a human being [as if reading a description under a photo].

Adam continues with the strategy of distancing by pointing at a difference between the Archbishop's public position implying responsibility vis-à-vis the Catholic believers, and heroes/victims' more anonymous situatedness. Both Marek and Adam convey highly personal narrative through classifying their experiences [*the forms of psychological breakage*] and recalling snapshots of it [*we stood with hands up…*]. These utterances constitute at the same time performatives of their hero/victim identity[60] vis-à-vis me, other heroes/victims and themselves. The possibility of publicly displaying one's identity through recalling experience without risking disapproval is an important component of being a hero/victim within an association. The highly personal fragments of narrative in fact decide upon the forming of memory schemata as they work towards a selection of memories which, through their frequent access and emotional loading, are fitted into larger politicized narratives. A conversation on political matters within the association always evokes pieces of personal narratives-memories innocently integrated into a talk on contemporary matters. The institutionalized construction of a hero/victim identity requires authentication of past experiences perceived as indisputable basis for 'being' a hero/victim. The context of the association hence naturally constitutes a place of display of this identity, turning a subtle recall of personal past events into instruments of one's self-validation directly or indirectly nested in doxa produced by Church, state, or academia. The cultural form of association works towards *nesting* of the autobiographical memories of its members. It happens through allowing for systematic and repeatable integration of personal memories into stable *frames* which connect one's experience with larger socio-political frameworks through acts of interactional interpretation of both past and contemporary events.

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[60] Following Austin, we shall consider words beyond their immediate meaning as *performatives*, seeing them as forms of social action (Austin 1976). Similarly to Butler (1997), I analytically capture the agency in the processes and instances of its enactment. These instances of enactments I see as enabled and conditioned by the semiotic resources. In this ethnographic case, the agency simultaneously produces and perpetuates the available for the projection of the self-cultural repertoire.

[8] Jerzy: So, I am thinking, looking at our society's profile, that still today we have such IDIOTS, who do not know how this world works. Because there are such, who at this moment can say not only 'let the communism be' [*bądź komuno*], or they *frankly adore Stalin – our Poles!* [as if he could not believe it] So I am thinking this way – he was young, when he started that cooperation -

[9] Adam: He was ten years older than we were. [said with a sort of satisfaction]

[10] Jerzy: Older than us, yes. Well, no older than me I suppose.

[11] Adam: He was ten years older than us when he started to cooperate!

[12] Jerzy: Perhaps he was -

[13] Adam: At that time older than us when we were facing [the trials] –

Jerzy shifts the footing of the conversation by introducing a negative comment on Polish society. He feels irritated that there exist people who recall communism with nostalgia. The offence [*such IDIOTS*] generates a form of exclusion which situates the heroes/victims above others, as those who have access to the right perspective, evoking again a sense of eliteness. The knowledge possessed by the heroes/victims is interpreted by Jerzy as a binder for the group identity, and its index. It also situates the group in a position to form moral judgments. After these general opening comments in which the position of heroes/victims is established, Jerzy turns to the Archbishop's case [*he was young when…*]. He opens a new line of defence by referring to the Archbishop's age. However, Adam powerfully resists such a footing by continuing the strategy of distancing through comparison. He insists on a framing in which heroes/victims are displayed collectively as those who shared experience of political violence at a very young age, much younger than the Archbishop's. Jerzy's sceptical remark exposing his possible separateness from the group is being powerfully dismissed by Adam, who reaffirms the coherence of the group through persisting in a usage of the pronoun *we*.

[14] Jerzy: We do not know these documents. It is difficult to… give a straightforward judgment, because we do not know THE FILES in details, what is written in them, what he could have done, whom he could have sneaked on, no?

[15] Adam: De facto, HE DID NOTHING.

Jerzy complies with a marker of a group identity, yet he shifts the footing by evoking a theme of files - another attempt at defending Archbishop Wielgus. The files in Jerzy's statement are represented as an ultimate proof of one's sin, as a means of verifying one's moral positionality. Turning to the topic of files indexes ways in which the macrosociological reality of institutional

centres, like the IPN, and previously, the Secret Security, impacts and forms microcontexts and everyday discursive events. The reference to that semiotic centre, in which files are being organized and interpreted, generates resources for forming judgements and alignments. Jerzy, by highlighting the lack of access to the files, blocks the process of definite exclusion of the Archbishop. In Adam's turn, he suddenly presents the Archbishop as innocent. After using the Archbishop's story for an excessive display of a hero/victim identity, Adam shifts the conversation by providing an interpretation of the Archbishop's cooperation as harmless.

[16] Jerzy: *Well, if he did nothing but signed only* if he did not hurt anyone… well, then it is difficult to judge, if he did not hurt anyone. Well, then he should have confessed – who could accuse him then? Well, I did it because I wanted to go abroad, or I wanted to study [said as if these were normal dilemmas] etc. It could have… It should be -

[17] Alojzy: Well that is what he said, that *for the Poles he did not do any harm* [said a bit nervously]. This is how he can be understood.

[18] Zygmunt: In my opinion, as a man he had an OPPORTUNITY – there was a POPE who WAS A POLE, he *could* have trusted him and he could have told him. Apart from that he was a PHILOSOPHER and an ETHICIST and he behaved as who? - a stupid peasant would not behave like this. He should have confessed. That he did something WRONG for POLAND or for the CHURCH, *I do not believe* [said very firmly]. He MUST HAVE done that so as to rescue the university. But *he did evil* [said with disappointment].

In this fragment, members of the association move away from treating the fact of cooperation as straightforwardly negative, inviting a differentiation between cooperation which brought harm to somebody, and the cooperation which did not, as well as advancing a notion of *confession* understood as a morally proper action in the aftermath of cooperation. On the one hand, the Archbishop's cooperation is being normalized [*Well, I did it because…* said in a regular tone], and even justified [*He MUST HAVE done that*]. In a group where many people were forced or persuaded to cooperate with *Bezpieka*, this strategy seems to create a necessary space of inclusion for those who seem obvious outcasts, but who nonetheless are the core members of the group. Such space is being delineated through detailing the seemingly shocking notion of betrayal. Distinguishing its various forms makes some of them more acceptable. Among the heroes/victims, various forms of cooperation could be traced from the files. There were already some cases of disclosure within the group. The members of the association have been working out a mode of accepting the acts of cooperation with Bezpieka committed by their colleagues.

The most valued is a confession undertaken in front of the group in a tone asking for pardon and giving explanations. People who are known to have betrayed are accepted within the group, yet they are not allowed to hold official positions in the association, as they are not believed to be morally disposed. Still, it happens that these people are proposed for medals or a military promotion, which would suggest that the confession of betrayal turns into a group secret not exposed even vis-à-vis the members of the memory alliance. The notion of public confession has been worked out as a morally valid solution for being accepted as a hero/victim despite one's past deeds. However, the associational engagement in the state-authorized structures of recognition feeds the competition and ignites ingroup conflicts. As there exist numerous factions and groupings within the association, conflicts do emerge based on the various treatment of cases of betrayal, and acquiring recognition by the people who cooperated.

Once the fact of cooperation is discovered, what matters is what one does with it in reference to one's own community. In the fragment above, the heroes/victims index their and the Archbishop's belonging to both Poland and the Catholic Church, and they argue that Archbishop Wielgus has violated the well-being of these communities. By discussing the necessity for confession in the Archbishop's case, and condemning the lack of it, the heroes/victims collaboratively establish a moral code for their ingroup. Zygmunt, through insults [*like a stupid peasant*], draws a distinction between the educated elites and regular poorly educated people, further implying that the acts of cooperation should be regarded as more permissible among the heroes/victims, and highly condemnable among the elites which rule the country.

[19] Zygmunt: In reference to bishop M. [another priest], as I know this case well – that the bishop M. together with a director aka bloody MAMA […], and during her term, three professors were poisoned, so, during her term this house for the priests on the other side of the street was built. It was ONLY THANKS TO HER, and she later became a Minister of Education -

[20] Adam: Vice-minister -

[21] Zygmunt: Minister… vice-minister? Well, before she was chief of propaganda in the voivodeship office, and then a school headmaster -

[22] Adam: I know her personally -

[23] Zygmunt: (you know, this women)

[24] Adam: (I held a control) over the dentist surgeries and (that's how I know her)

[25] Zygmunt: (and already at that time), they were accusing bishop M. for a friendship with her, for sipping *coffees together, for this and that*… well, it is difficult to say… As for myself, I do

not know. I think that if it had not been for these sorts of close relations, then for sure that building… […]

[26] Jerzy: Well, that they maintained these sort of relationships, I think that these were NECCESARY, because, certain kind of issues... –

Introduced by Zygmunt, this new story of bishop M.'s relations with a communist official builds a new possibility of acceptance of instances of cooperation between the Church and the agents of communism. This acceptance is based on a notion of *gain* implying benefits earned for a religious community [*that building*]. This fragment works towards the normalization of Archbishop Wielgus's contacts with *Bezpieka*, and its acceptance from a position of a member of a religious community.

[27] Leszek: But Zygmunt, there is a different issue in here, because I know the story of a church-building in Palot. Priest G. […] you should have seen how he was travelling around and arranging. Only that he was always taking a bottle of good cognac and a bar of chocolate, well, more than one. First, he was talking to the secretary at the voivodeship committee, and through her, he had an entry to the proper authorities. He was travelling around and meeting the chiefs of construction sites, because the architects were working for free... but this does NOT MEAN that he had to sign something.

[28] Zygmunt: *I am saying the same thing.*

[29] Leszek: And we should not confuse one thing: if they write in black and white [his finger tapping on the table], if a miss journalist is reading to me on the Polish Radio saying that I have it in the Internet so, indeed, because the TV have shown the signature of his. This is not all, because here is an important thing, [.], that he, as a secret informant signed the commitment to THE INTELLIGENCE service – this is unit – not 4, but 1! The *most filthy*! [with indignation].

[30] Zygmunt: *So, this is what I am saying* [said as if to confirm that was what he meant previously].

Leszek joins the conversation with a new story in reply to Zygmunt's story. This story, seemingly similar to Zygmunt's [*I am saying the same thing*], performs a very different function. Leszek depicts a canny priest who, during communism, was able to arrange, through informal contacts with the communist authorities, the building of a church – an unquestionable benefit for the believers. He shifts the footing, though, by furnishing the story with an unexpected conclusion, which links back to Archbishop Wielgus' case [*but this does NOT MEAN that he had to sign*

something]. Leszek intuitively elevates the significance of the files and signatures as unquestionable proof of commitments which are not acceptable in moral terms [*he, as a secret informant signed the commitment*]. In so doing, he suggests that the rules which create a possibility of a firm moral condemnation in the light of actions are blurred and difficult to categorize. He points towards traces that are impossible to deny, the exposal of which simultaneously indexes Leszek's alliance with the bureaucratic actions of his oppressors, the existence of the IPN, and the state-like forms of defining a hero/victim identity.

[31] Leszek: It would be all fine. Now, the priest C. or the priest H. were all saying – we were, that was not true! Adam! We are looking through our papers, I have not managed yet, but my colleague from the trial – Roman, and a colleague over here, they have these documents and THERE, there is A PILE OF DENUNCIATIONS [as if revealing the most important thing].

[32] Igor: *Yeah*. [sighing with disappointment]

[33] Leszek: And now, let someone tell me that these denunciations were IRRELEVANT! What does that mean they were irrelevant? Because, if we had such, as Cardinal Wojtyła! His file is there, but his file is *clear* in this regard! [said with satisfaction but also in a very official-like manner] […] And all of a sudden the Archbishop 'breaks' and till THE LAST MOMENT he is saying 'no', he denies.

[34] Zygmunt: *So this is exactly what I was saying!*

[35] Leszek: And only from then on, the case reached the Vatican, and, I know, because he admitted it, that there were pressures coming from the government, but HE admitted only when the gun was pointed at *his head*. And I do not believe that he resigned himself but that he simply was DISMISSED BY THE VATICAN -

[36] Zygmunt: *Oh, of (course that this was the case!)*

[37] Jerzy: (THAT'S WHAT IT WAS!)

The attachment to the documents produced by the security forces is caused by the fact that these files have been experienced by the heroes/victims as effective instruments legitimating their hero/victim identity in authoritative spaces [*there is A PILE OF DENUNCIATIONS*]. Leszek inserts fragments of his and his colleagues' personal experience to again denounce the Archbishop and to simultaneously display his and his colleagues' hero/victim identity. Using the notion of *denunciation* he equates Archbishop Wielgus with the informants who surrounded the heroes/victims in the prisons and in their everyday lives during the communist period. To sharpen the moral tone, he brings in the story of John Paul II and his *clear* files. This story functions as a comparison and an example of proper moral behaviour. Clearly, Leszek exposes

the similarity of the heroes/victims with the Pope and excludes from this moral community Archbishop Wielgus, who not only cooperated, but also denied this cooperation, thus failing to commit himself to a purifying act of communal confession.

[38] Leszek: (And all of this happened in the last moment. We) had a different example given by our colleague – we know whom I am talking about, right, he confessed, he is! *I believe, because* [as if talking about a close friend] in his activity it was a tiny matter! A different thing when a metropolitan Archbishop…

Again, Leszek delineates rules of moral behaviour by referring to a story of a member of the association who confessed to his colleagues that he cooperated. This act granted him the acceptance [*he confessed, he is!*] of his close circle of friends. At the same time, though, Leszek continues to construct Archbishop Wielgus as deviant, by displaying the difference in positionality of their colleague and the Archbishop, who holds *a position*.

[39] Zygmunt: The ethicist

[40] Leszek: A future PRIMATE! Well, (*my beloved people!*) [with indignation]

[41] Adam: (and a CARDINAL) in the near future, as he was already foreseen […] -

[42] Leszek: And it is not about… there is no operational file, because these operational files, we know, thanks to Mr. Kuroń, Mr. Michnik etc. [his fingers tapping on the table] all this circle of *so-called people of honour* [irritated], these files were burned.

[43] Marek: 95% of the files were burned!

[44] Leszek: NO, not 95%. It depended on which voivodeship office they belonged to, where they managed to burn. And this is the point! And FOR ME, I do not *see a connection with the Church!* [very convinced] After all, knowing a little bit of history, we had a primate, he was called primate S. […], who did all sorts of tricks with Russians, because it was exactly the period before the partitions! […] we know – t*he Kościuszko upheaval – we know how the bishop was treated – he was hanged!* [nervously] […]

[45] Jerzy: Yeah!

[46] Adam: The (Warsaw one.)

[47] Leszek: (Yeah!) -

[48] Jerzy: Yes.

Zygmunt and Adam join Leszek in a moral action of discrediting Archbishop Wielgus on the grounds of his positionality in structures of power. As a person of high social status, he is believed

to be more exposed to moral demands. For heroes/victims, the notion of *an office* is associated with authority, and authority is understood as necessarily morally faultless. Leszek shifts the footings again, though, by going back to the subject of files. The performative function of his utterances is, for the most part, about display of competence and knowledge. The files are exposed this time as a scarce resource, which was put in danger by immoral agents who burned most of them, concealing the truth. In the same turn, Leszek brings a strong conclusion to the conversation with which other members of the association align. He introduces a clear differentiation between the Church and the actions of its agents [*I do not see a connection with the Church*]. Confusing this line of argumentations, he brings in a new story reaching back to the 18th century, which is to display the Church's continuous opposition to Russian oppression, proving that the Church is encompassed as ingroup following the same unchanging moral code based on resistance to foreign oppression.

[49] Leszek: BUT HAS THE CHURCH COLLAPSED? (NO!)

[50] Zygmunt: (No) *and it will not collapse!*

[51] Leszek: THE CHURCH IS NOT Archbishop that… what's his name…!

[52] Me: Wielgus

[53] Leszek: Wielgus.

Eventually, the position of Archbishop Wielgus is negotiated as deviant,yet comprehensible and, under certain circumstances, permissible, while the heroes/victims' alignment with the Church is being confirmed by distinguishing between the Church and its sinful agent. Most importantly, though, the conversation worked towards an interactive and affective display of a hero/victim identity involving personal narratives and recollections, as well as highly evaluative judgements which indirectly granted recognition to the members of the association.

The conversation focusing on Archbishop Wielgus's cooperation constituted the interlocutors' combined efforts to afford consistency between their identity and the mass-mediated event conflicting with the myth which legitimized them. Its emergence in the associational context clearly strengthened the orientation of the speakers towards display of their hero/victim identity during the conversation. Equally, it is this context that enabled such talk. The sequential order of the conversation was granted by the interlocutors' mutual commitment to production of a social moral order binding the members of the association. Turns taken by the speakers comprised a negotiation

process simultaneously functioning as a confirmation of their social status and collective identity. The stories emergent within the association were often momentarily transformed into narratives of personal experience. The practice of interrupting the story formed by the conversation is considered by the speakers as an appropriate continuation of a prior discourse, even when a straightforward connection is not obvious to a recipient of the utterance or to a wider audience. These interruptions to the story, though, function as crucial vehicles allowing the exposure of one's personal experience as a hero/victim and receiving feedback confirming that this experience is recognized as an integral part of the group's story[61].

Talking, as a situated and embodied action, is one of the forms of social behaviour through which cultural norms are established, maintained or renegotiated. Through a conversation on the news concerning Archbishop Wielgus, the heroes/victims positioned themselves vis-à-vis the priests' cooperation, claimed their moral situatedness through comparison, and delineated the lines of moral action by situating some agents in the *ingroup* and others as outcasts. The uncertain and fluid character of the conversation indicated how, within an association, members display various perspectives regarding such borders. The talk hence represented *morality* in the making, a negotiation of judgements decisive for social alignments born out of a mental and verbal movement between past and present accomplished interactively.

Among other forms, enactments of hero/victim identity take on the structure of talk. Participants engaged in the association orient themselves towards each other, among other practices, through naming, judging and delimiting sameness and otherness[62]. The analysed conversation is understood here as a 'dynamic of assuming and transforming relational stances' (Silverstein 2004:631). Through a number of footings and shifts, it constituted a collective tool for expressing, defining, and adjusting. Discourse identities (for instance knowing/unknowing speaker/recipient) bring into play larger social identities (like a hero/victim), as they overlap with 'a range of social arrangements involving entitlement to knowledge' (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:293) such as archiving and disclosing the security files. An average member of the association holds an extensive knowledge concerning the Bezpieka files, which allows him to act out the discursive identity of a knowing speaker. Yet, a larger hero/victim identity is simultaneously enacted, as every reference to the Security files simultaneously

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[61] Ochs and Capps define *relatively embedded narratives of personal experience* as being 'recounted over turns of variable length, remaining thematically relevant to topic under discussion or activity under way'. Personal narratives may perform various social actions. They may 'illustrate a point, make a comparison, support an argument, or otherwise elaborate a focus of concern' (Ochs and Capps 2001:37).

[62] See Goodwin and Heritage for a detailed explanation of *discursive identities* (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:293) and ways in which action of speaking involves embodied categorization of both speaker and recipient.

points towards the hero/victim identity definable through the files. The social arrangements of the democratic condition of memory politics not only entitle the heroes/victims to knowledge, but they simultaneously legitimize the authority of their voices over certain matters.

Silverstein argued for the existence of historically contingent, yet structured, 'wider-scale institutional orders of interactionality' functioning as 'centres of semiosis' which structure discursive events with respect to meanings and significance of the verbal and other semiotic forms used in it (2004:623). Throughout previous chapters, I have focused on elucidating the importance of the IPN, historiography, the Catholic Church and various materializations of state as crucial *centres of semiosis* creating the conditions for experiencing a hero/victim identity in contemporary Marianowice. The analyzed centres of semiosis are considered in this thesis as having a structuring effect over the interactions which take place within the association, as well as over individual self-perceptions. In this chapter, I focused on a single discursive event which I perceive as structured by the speakers' alignment with and orientation towards the mentioned *centres of semiosis*. The relation between the institutional orders, the group, and the individuals is complex, reciprocal and open. As noticed by Blommeart, the cultural conceptualizations generated in such centres should not be treated as randomly attributed (Blommeart 2005:73), as they are conditioned by larger structures. On the other hand, though, following Silverstein, it is important not to abstract such conceptualizations from the dimension of interactionality (Silverstein 2004) in the course of the analysis. This chapter, through its analytical focus on the *real* talk, and through the positioning of this material after the analysis of the institutionalized orders, aimed at capturing the structural order in the interactional making.

Members of the association, through their lives, have moved within historically emergent structures of signification which are positioned towards each other in a bi-polar way. The conditions arising from the democratic state, with its new institutions implementing the memory project, enabled the members of the association as actors. Blommaert pointed out that speakers reveal various abilities to perform certain discourse functions on the basis of available and accessible resources (Blommaert 2005:71). Members of the association should be regarded as those who hold access to legitimated forms of being a hero/victim, which enabled them as social actors. This access should be regarded as a consequence of historical change. As a result, the heroes/victims have strong abilities to perform a moral talk over the communist past. The association works here as a *contextual space* (Blommaert 2005:76) – that is, a space in which meanings are being ratified, where forms acquire specific functions. A form of discussion about contemporary political mass-mediated news has become one

of the main genres used by the members of the group within the context of the association. This genre enables the heroes/victims to enact their identities, to create a sense of recognition and importance of the past in the present, and to ratify new taxonomies. Since people experience *differential access to forms* and *contextual spaces* (Blommaert 2005), they hold a differential capacity to accomplish certain functions and to interpret the past in the present. The members of the association deal with an abundance of well-established cultural resources which enable them to realise the conventionalized identity of a hero/victim and which orient their interpretative efforts and affective modes of remembering. Being active in the association means being particularly exposed to cultural concepts associable with values, and gaining an interactive field in which value judgements and interpretations of the past can be performed. The association functions as a site in which schema of value authorised in institutional centres are interactionally achieved by a group (Silverstein 2004:639).

This chapter consisted of an analysis of the heroes/victims' modes of interactive maintenance of their local social order through a conversation performed within the association. The association was presented as a formalized ideational and material context for group interaction in the framework of which its members worked out a relatively stable repertoire for self-enactments. The analyzed conversation had stemmed from a reaction to the mass media revelation of a Catholic Archbishop's cooperation with the communist security services. It had taken a form of a *genre,* commonly practised in the organization, of a joined discussion on current political matters. The chapter argued that, through this talk, the heroes/victims rescued the image, threatened by the Archbishop's cooperation, of their alliance with the Catholic Church. The conversation served as a means for collective display of the hero/victim identity and social positioning through negotiating an interpreting of *the other*. This chapter argued for this conversational *genre* to constitute a form of moral practice through which the boundaries of the group and alliance were (re)defined in a reaction to the news threatening the sense of conventionalized order, as described in the previous chapter. This order should not be understood as static or self-validating but as prone to alterations. The minute types of interaction should be recognized as crucial for the maintenance of its coherence and adjustment to the changing conditions of its social durability. The notion of order implies a version of the past understood in the light of the present and future. In reference to the notion of memory, the chapter discussed exemplary interactive modes of integration of the past events into morally loaded frameworks which structure autobiographical memories and practices of recall, linking them with larger collective myths and norms.

It was 6th of December 2007 and it was snowing. My husband drove us into a church where we had got married a few months earlier. He thought we would have walked up the hill, entered an empty building and sat there together recalling. Yet, as we climbed the stairs, it became evident that there was a mass being conducted in the church. He wanted to go back to the car but I dragged him into the middle of the ceremony. The crowd stole the oxygen with every single breath and it was difficult to find a space to stand. We hugged and had no other sight but the winter clothing of the people surrounding us and, occasionally, their faces. One of the authoritative voices explained the special occasion and introduced special guests. The church was named after Saint Nicolas, and it was Saint Nicolas' Day in the Catholic calendar. It was my birthday and here came my present. One of the special guests co-conducting the mass was Archbishop Wielgus himself. He never spoke a word. Yet, he was often spoken about. Consecutive authoritative speakers thanked him for arriving and underlined his recent suffering and courageous, dignified, struggle with evil powers. Animated by his presence, I tried to reach a view of him. I thought he could have been an important and revelatory contributor to this narrative, but he had never agreed to talk to me. That very day, placed at the centre of attention of the faithful, who knew how to forgive (the forgiveness apparently being limited to the borders of one's own community), the Archbishop looked happy. He not only belonged. He was admired.

After the mass, we walked out of the church, pushed by the crowd, and walked a little bit to one side towards a back door. Some people started to gather around there in an ambient of excited expectation, as if waiting for celebrities to come out. Numerous priests were to walk out of that door and pass to another building where they were to dine together along with some chosen ones from among the flock. A woman in her fifties walking impatiently in front of the door approached us and asked in an impatient and anxious voice 'has the Archbishop come out yet?'… 'I gotta kiss his holy hand'. And here he came with a smile on his face and his hand well habituated to the kisses of the worshippers.

Chapter Five

The Space of Ambiguity:
between the collectively enacted frames and the experience of the self in time

This everyday life was arranged […] then it was restored […] perhaps just because of an amateur
artistic impulse that the facts of life should be nicely arranged – it sprang up in the gaps, in the
mistakes, in the method itself, touchingly authentic and alive.

From *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* by Dubravka Ugresic

Individual appropriation of collectively achieved frameworks

Frequently during my fieldwork I asked myself about the impact the public commemorative events and the politics of retributive justice had on its most prominent subjects – the heroes/victims. The longer I spent in the field, the more attention I paid to the feebleness of the authorized version of the communist past and the uncertainties its enactment evoked in those of the heroes/victims, whom I met in the association. The bulk of the literature on trauma focuses on the role of the collective modes of legitimization and narrativization of the traumatic past, arguing for the larger memory projects to lead towards the successful individual incorporation of the difficult past from the position of a victim. This chapter highlights the ambiguity of the life experience and difficulties with remembering communism from an authoritatively defined position of a hero/victim. I turn my attention towards the heroes/victims' thoughts and affects which proved discordant with their feelings of gratification derived from the condition of belated authorized recognition. The distinctiveness of this ethnographic case is constituted by the condition of belatedness of the memory project as experienced by those of the heroes/victims who lived through repressions during the Stalinist period. For most of the members of the association, the institutionalized recognition came after many years, during which they and their relatives had to work out ways to integrate the difficult experience into the interactively negotiated and stable knowledge structures. Their experience had been variously externalized and symbolized, as social relations and resources for interpreting the past experience were differently structured.

This section deals with a man who, back in the 1950s, formed a clandestine anti-communist group of teenagers the members of which were arrested after the murder of a state official. During the investigation and trials, the boys were treated as traitors and public enemies. Despite obtaining emotional support from their families, they were often assured by their relatives and significant others that their behaviour was irresponsible. Sentiments of resentfulness cumulated both within the families and among the group members themselves, who "lost" a few years of their young lives in jail. In a few of the cases, encounters with Bezpieka implied testimonies and actions which implicated

denunciations or open cooperation, which generated a sense of guilt and repugnance towards the self. For most of the group members the political involvement meant little chance for social advancement in an adult life lived under the communist system.

A historical moment of transition from one state form to another meant a significant change in the condition for the heroes/victims' self-understanding and recalling of the communist past. The transition constituted a moment in which a life story of a hero/victim turned into a resource for communal healing and political reordering. As such it became standardized and incorporated into a larger collective myth, in part constituted by the historical accounts, in part by the commemorative events authorized by the state and the Church, and in part by the excess of material signifiers meant to define and represent the patriotic struggle of the nation against communism. Importantly, the heroes/victims have been actively involved in the production of the collective myth defining the path from communism towards post-communism. This paper argues that the participation in the institutionalized forms of remembrance and the defining of the communist past had an impact on the heroes/victims' self-perceptions and ways of remembering the communist past in the present. The access to the semiotic resources enabled by the emergence of the authorized myth pushed them towards a re-working of the images of the self and of the communist past in reference to their engagements with this frame. Their involvement in the memory project carried significant implications for the individual autobiographical memories of the heroes/victims and ordering of self-schemata. In this chapter, I aim at illustrating a moment of change in an individual life – when the emergence of a new constellation of power relations has given birth to new resources, which have fed individual interpretative efforts and fostered the restructuring of self-understanding situated in time.

Making the self in time and context

Cognitive psychologists understand the self as a system of constructs (schemata) treating about the self. Pervin defined schemata as a knowledge structure responsible for organizing information (Pervin and John 2002:532). Such knowledge structures determine the ways in which people perceive and react to the new information. Within knowledge structures Markus distinguished self-schemata responsible for processing and selecting the information relating to the self. These schemata influence the intensity of interest in new material related to the self, the ways it is related to the past, the ways in which it activates the memories, as well as ways in which it structures expectations about the future (Marcus 1977). The knowledge structures related to the self provide an individual

with a sense of coherence of the self over time, as well as with an understanding of one's relations with the world. They further condition the interpretation of the new information, fitting it into the existing interpretative frameworks.

The previous chapters comprised the analysis of social contexts in which various actors orient themselves towards accomplishment of the memory and retributive justice projects. These contexts are highly relevant for the reconstruction of the autobiographical memory of a hero/victim, as they create the condition of repeatability and provide legitimacy for the memory framework into which personal material is fitted. Autobiographical memory constitutes an important part of the self-schemata, as it organizes the self-referential knowledge derived from the experience which happened in the past. Cognitive psychology defines autobiographical memory as a way of organizing self-referential material based on the individual experience stretched out in time, as well as on the individual frameworks of self-perception. Memories are said to be 'nested' (Neisser 1994) in particular social situations which guide their recall and rehearsal. This means that individual memory constructs are context-dependent. Past situations are selectively recalled and fitted into a particular image of the self as well as shaped according to the social circumstances of recall. Conway argued for autobiographical memory to be highly flexible, pointing out that different methods of access may lead to sets of memories with different properties (Conway 1990:45). The heroes/victims in their associational context have interactively formed methods for producing memories with particular properties. Through repeatability of the social contexts constituted by the associational meetings, commemorative events and patriotic masses, a model image of a hero/victim has been established. These repeatable contexts of memory politics shall be understood as methods of access leading to a set of memories which are similarly structured.

Examples from psychotherapy of the PTSD reveal how 'suggestibility of the context' can influence the constructs of individual memory (Conway 1997:7). Most of the literature treats human memories as intrinsically incomplete, inaccurate and prone to distortion (Schacter 1995). Nonetheless, the issues of memory distortions and the constructed character of all kinds of memories, stretching between individual and social worlds, are rarely raised in the context of memory politics. The emphasis is put on the healing aspect of individual and collective morale in the aftermath of genocide or a repressive regime. It is worth underlining, though, that a sense of self-integrity is achievable through the process of ordering and selecting, which implies distortion and categorization. The large memory

projects comprise the politics of representation which defines the interpretative frameworks partially comforting particular agents.

Since Halbwachs ([1925]1992), the memory studies literature has understood individual memories as intrinsically social. The approaches differ in ways in which their authors define the social and the individual and the ongoing dynamics between the two. For the purpose of this chapter, I propose to rely on Schudson's approach to the social aspect of individual memories. Schudson argues for the social aspects of individual memories to imply that: '(a) they operate through the supra-individual cultural construction of language[63]; (b) they generally come into play in response to social stimulation, rehearsal, or social cues employed for social purposes, and even enacted by cooperative activity; (c) there are socially structured patterns of recall' (Schudson 1995:347). Individual participation in the institutionalized and public processes of commemorating the communist past hence implies the heroes/victims' exposure and active appropriation of the semiotic constructions which define the communist past, the democratic present and the agents of change. The heroes/victims' involvement in the memory project is partially an involvement in the process of essentializing the representations applying to themselves, implying the emergence of new conceptualizations, and hence, fostering reformulations of the already established self-schemata. Their engagement in the associational activity created a condition for the excessive exposure to cues and stimuli for recollection in relation to the socially constructed frameworks, as well as for a frequent usage of these frameworks in the process of remembering the past. As a result, recalling the past in the association should be considered an interactively achieved action oriented towards ends, like achieving an individual sense of belonging, or a sense of retribution, or a reception of a special veteran pension – all crucial for an individual sense of comfort. As the availability of the past is socially structured (Schudson 1995:359), individual acts of remembering performed by those heroes/victims who have participated in the memory project have been structured according to a conventionalized scheme partially enabled by material objects. Monuments, official documents, images, historical records, films and books function as 'repositories' (Schudson 1995:351) which direct ways in which the members of the association remember the communist past and construct self-images. Because the current memory project emphasizes the individual choice and heroism, as well as the dignity and significance of individual suffering, the heroes/victims' processes of remembering of the communist past in the context of involvement in the memory project are highly self-referential. This self-referentiality implies recognizing oneself and one's deeds as crucial for the larger collectivity and as morally superior. On a psychological level, they imply intensive work in the

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[63] Consequently, I propose to treat language as a larger system of signification including body language, organization of the space, visual representations and materiality.

sphere of organizing the self-knowledge. Participation in the memory project hence provokes some levels of reordering of the self-schemes. The new framework is not always complementary to the previously-used frames. It demands from the heroes/victims that they focus on the past-selves and make these self-images relevant and fitting in the present-day context.

Following the four chapters in which I analyzed the collective enactments of memory politics and ways in which the heroes/victims have been engaged in the memory project, chapter five is devoted to the analysis of an individual case of a hero/victim and the consequences of his involvement in the commemorative project for his perception of the self and his processes of remembering. Such an angle will allow for the analytical exposure of space between the collectively achieved meanings and representations and the process of their individual appropriation. For, as noted by Callero, the most informative analyses 'are often those that link together historical shifts in the political economy, changes in particular social settings, and critical alterations in self-experience' (Callero 2003:122).

Leszek

Leszek, a president of the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice, was born in the small village of Koluszki in 1936. His mother was brought up in a peasant family, as was his father. After they got married, in the late 30s, his father took a job as a worker in a metallurgy industry in a newly-born industrial town, Statek, built up in the middle of a forest. This is where a sister of Leszek was born and where the Second World War found them. Back in the 1950s, as a teenager, Leszek formed an anti-communist group of young boys fascinated with scouting and armed forces. The organization evolved from an innocent children's game into the more serious planning of actions of sabotage and killings. Following the murder of a state official in Leszek's village, the group was uncovered by *Bezpieka*. A thorough investigation drew most of the members of the clandestine group into tricky interrogations. Teenagers were sentenced to years of imprisonment in show trials and sent to detention centres. As a group leader, Leszek was sentenced to death. He spent fifteen years in jail, exposed to numerous investigations and extremely harsh conditions of detention. After being released, he worked among the technical staff at the state railway company. He attempted to reintegrate with his clandestine group. Yet, never again during communism did he get involved in a serious anti-communist activity. Echoes of Leszek's past activity surfaced unexpectedly every now and then in the realm of intimate social relations. A pretty girl's father did not allow her to date Leszek. A colleague in a bureau treated him oddly after Bezpieka phoned him in the office. Despite numerous love affairs, Leszek never got married. Through the

years, he worked in the same company making technical drawings in a bureau. He now lives in a small town, in a tiny flat which he used to share with his mother before she died. Leszek's dearest relationship has been the one with his sister, who nonetheless has her own family and cannot devote much time to cherishing their friendship. After retirement, he devoted most of his time to reliving his youth and coming back to the old fascinations. This process of intensive reliving of his youth was enabled by his engagement in the associational form, emergent in the post-communist condition memory politics. In the situation of a lack of family life, he has been spending most of his time recording documentary films dealing with the Second World War and its aftermath, and collecting materials about his own trial and other people's encounters with the repressive communist system.

I chose to write about Leszek since, out of my heroes/victims informants, he was the one I had a chance to get to know in the greatest depth. The theoretical perspective and reoccurring questions which I present in this chapter were fostered by the intensive and laborious friendship between Leszek and myself. My focus on the ambiguity and uncertain impact the memory politics have had on an individual hero/victim came as a result of an admission to hidden affects and doubts that Leszek has carried and developed throughout his life. Concurrently, this perspective was encouraged by my choice of methodology which relied on mixed sources of data. I learned about Leszek through his long life story narratives recorded during our numerous meetings. I juxtaposed this knowledge with my readings of his security files, observation of his work in the association, conversations I had with his colleagues, trips I made with him to various locations, and examination of assignments I gave him during my fieldwork. The research practice based on mixed sources allowed me to work out a broad perspective on Leszek's life and his ways of self-management in the time between communism and post-communism.

The Railway Tracks

On the 8th of April 1953 at 9 am a woman testified at the Koluszki militia station:

> On the 8th of April 1953 around 5 in the morning I was going to work [intelligible words]. Passing the rail tracks, I have noticed a railway guard lying in a ditch, while his cap was lying at the road, nearby the tracks. There came out a stationmaster, and tugged him by a coat's sleeve so that he stood up. I hoped he was drunk. [Source: IPN]

The man was dead nonetheless. Three witnesses testified hearing two shots on the 7th of April around 9 pm, one following the other at an interval of 2 minutes. The police doctor found 2 cuts, 1 stab wound and 3 contused wounds to the head of the deceased, and three stab wounds and 4 bullet wounds to his chest. The doctor declared that these were definitely caused by an external action of a stranger(s) [Source: IPN]. Since the murder involved a state functionary, the case became of interest to the regional secret political police unit. Only after a few months did they accidentally find a trace which led them to the sixteen-year-old Leszek. When asked by the interrogator about his knowledge concerning the murder of a railway guard in April 1953 in Koluszki, he gave a long and detailed testimony:

As a founder of an illegal organization […] which in 1953-1954 turned into an armed military group[64], there came up a question posed by me about acquiring firearms so as to arm the organization. Sometime around 16 of March 1953, at one of our general meetings, in the presence of the members of our organization [he names them], I posed the question of acquiring firearms [.], even if it was by a murder of a militia functionary, relatively, by a murder committed on railway guards in Koluszki. At that time Staszek and Jurek got an order from me to check, at the rail tracks near Koluszki, at what time are the railway guards passing through there heading towards the stand guard at the bridge on the river Bug, approximately one kilometer from Koluszki. The next day Staszek and Jurek went close by the railway station in Koluszki and noted that, around 8.30-9 pm, the guards in full arms were heading towards the stand guard at the bridge on the river Bug, and they gave me a full report about it. Afterwards, Staszek and Jurek went a couple of times more to check the punctuality of the guards […]. One day before the murder, on the 6th of April 1953, Jurek and I went to the rail tracks 1 kilometer far-off from the Koluszki station. We walked towards the railway bridge. It was an evening around 8.30. We were armed with a P38 gun, which I owned. We were going to check in person whether these were the hours around which the guards where coming on duty. […] Since on that day, we did not meet a railway guard […] after waiting for some time, we left for home. Walking back, we met the guard at the railway tracks. However, Jurek, as he later confessed to me, purposefully turned away my attention from the guard, because he did not want me to attempt at disarming him in his presence. On the next day, and I remember it in details since this date – the 7th of April 1953 - got imprinted on my memory very well, during the afternoon, I set a meeting with a member of our

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[64] The difficulty with using the Security files as sources, especially the ones which constitute the transcripts from interrogations, is connected to the act of rephrasing people's testimonies while noting their words. As much as this issue is typical for a situation of interrogation in any political system, during communism, the security services also worked towards politicizing and jargonizing many innocent contexts. In the transcript from Leszek's interrogation an uncertain authorship is visible from the very beginning. 'As a founder of an illegal organization' is most probably a phrase either learned by Leszek during the interrogations, or imposed by the officer, who interrogated him during re-phrasing of Leszek's words. In the heroes/victims' files, such examples are reoccurring in more and less subtle forms.

illegal organization – Miron. We were to meet at 8 pm that day on Koluszki railway station and we were to assassinate the railway guard heading towards the guard stand at the Bug river. At that time, we talked over our ground plan, meaning that I would take a P38 gun owned by me, and he would take a knife, a so-called sheath knife, which could be of a use in case of an expected defence on the guard's side. Exactly at 8 pm we met with Miron at Koluszki railway station and, both of us armed – myself with a gun, he with a sheath knife - we moved on above the track lines from the station towards the bridge on Bug river. […] On the left-hand side of the railway tracks, nearby the level crossing, we hid in the spruces close to the tracks, with a purpose of camouflage, and at the same time in order to get away from the rain. We were waiting in the spruces, and not long from then there arrived to the Koluszki station a slow train […] which arrives at 8.30 pm. When the slow train from the Koluszki station left towards Statek, we went out from the hide and walked towards the Koluszki station along the rails. Afterwards, we stopped between the third and the second level crossing – counting from the Koluszki station - and there we stopped next to the rails on a path. At a certain point there arrived from the direction of Statek a goods carriage heading towards Koluszki station, and it stopped in front of the semaphore, not arriving at the station, so that the last cars of this train stopped just in front of us. At that moment we walked at a slow pace towards the railway station and, I, on our way, checked the gun, to see whether there was a cartridge loaded in the barrel. When we were approaching the second level crossing […], at that moment, a delayed train from Matrok towards Statek started. At the same time, and even simultaneously, the train which stopped in front of the semaphore started and was entering the Koluszki railway station so that both these trains were passing in front of us […]. When these two trains were passing each other, at the same time, an armed railway guard was passing through the second level crossing at which we were standing. He was heading towards the bridge from the Koluszki direction. Then, I turned to that guard face to face, simultaneously, I threatened him with a gun owned by me, and yelled 'hands up!' The guard answered to my call 'I am one of yours'. The guard, seeing my gun aimed at him, which I did not release for a second, clutched his machinegun and, while loading a cartridge into the barrel, he was trying to point it at us, so as to force us back. At this moment, I fired towards the guard who was standing in front of us aiming at his chest. When I tried to fire again, to the already staggering guard, the gun did not fire. I heard the mentioned guard was groaning with pain staggering. Being afraid that the guard, after one gunshot, can be still alive and able to recognize us, I grabbed his machinegun and pulled it out from his hands, giving back, at the same time, my gun to the conniving in a murder – Miron. When I was pulling out the machinegun from the guard's hands, Miron stroke him a blow in a head with the gun, as well as he wounded his head and back with a knife. These blows brought the guard to the ground level, yet, still without losing consciousness. At that moment, using the collected machinegun, I fired towards the kneeling guard, aiming at his chest. When we committed that murder, we started to run away

taken by the fear of meeting someone. […] That evening, I did not leave the house for a second as I was taken by the panic trepidation caused by the committed crime [Source: IPN][65].
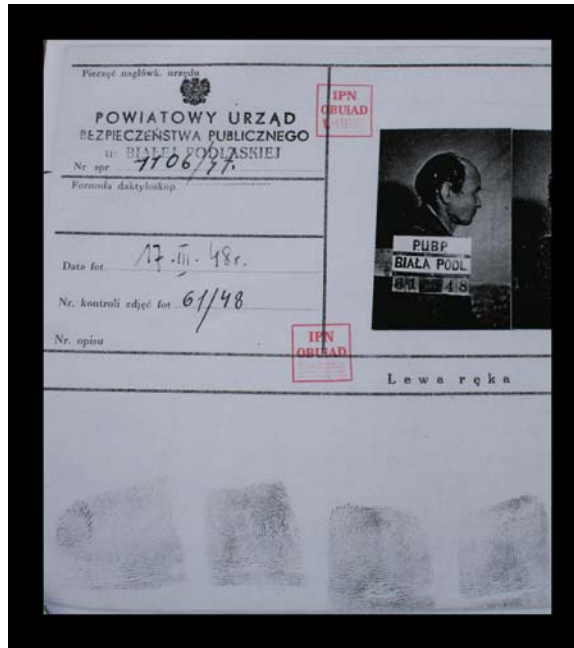
Fingerprints recorded by Bezpieka (source: IPN).

Although this account was given by young Leszek to the Security organization, well-known for its harsh methods of interviewing, the description of the murder as included in the files is very similar to what was passed on to me in the fragments of Leszek's and his colleagues' stories. After over fifty years, Leszek remembers each detail of that event. Rather than accessing a veridical account, however, it seems more plausible that he keeps repeating the version of these events, which he rehearsed so many times during the interrogations and during the trial. The recoverability of this version has been strengthened by the possibility of access to the Security files gained by the heroes/victims along with the establishment of the IPN. In the case of Leszek, the institute created the conditions for reinforcing the individual memory constructs in accordance with the ways the past was recorded in the files. The files have been read through and discussed by Leszek and his group of friends. They have been copied, distributed and hidden in the drawers in their flats. Finally, the files have been used as a source of legitimacy, telling about the political aspect of the murder and its

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[65] It is important to note while reading the interrogation material that Leszek does not speak here completely in his own words. The most striking example is the expression 'the conniving in a murder – Miron', which most certainly resulted from an official situation of noting down Leszek's words by the investigative officer.

significance[66]. In fact, the murder was most of the time omitted in the accounts given to me by the members of the clandestine group. The emphasis was being put on the anti-communist activity which did not involve physical violence but symbolic actions of resistance. As a visitor to the association and the interviewer, I had to wait a few months before I gained access to the dispersed and fragmented narratives dealing with that event. I believe that the reason for tabooing the murder within the heroes/victims' group has been conditioned, apart from the sense of uncertainty about which I wrote in the previous chapters, by the formerly available frameworks for interpreting that event. These frameworks were discordant with the new framework of memory politics. Back in the fifties, none of the group members lived through that event and its consequences in a straightforward manner as if it had been pure heroism and a conscious sacrifice. The teenagers lived through a trauma of murdering a man and, eventually, they were condemned by the Security, the village and the school environment they lived in, and marked as the local and national community's enemies who needed to be punished. The testimonies given in front of Bezpieka were obtained through thorough interrogative methods. The enemies of the "new" Poland were needed for propaganda purposes and this group constituted great material for the front pages. Such conditions strongly influenced the ways in which the members of the group interpreted their actions. The investigation, the trial, and the reception of their activity in the social surroundings cast doubts on the purposefulness of their actions.

During the fieldwork, I found it peculiar that people in the association were not eager to give me a straightforward account of their political engagements. This was the case despite the milieu of authorized recognition which surrounded them. During the first months of my visits to the association, the members of Leszek's clandestine group at first answered my questions by showing me their veteran's IDs or by giving me book references. Later on, I started hearing iconic stories of youth resistance and sabotage. Meanwhile, I read the security files concerning the organization and investigation of the murder. Eventually, after a few months of associational meetings, I started to get a clearer picture of what had happened in the past, and what sort of ambiguous feelings the murder and its consequences evoked in people who had belonged to Leszek's conspiracy group. In the beginning, I learned that it was an important conspiracy group which fought for big ideals. Week by week though, a mysterious story about a murder started to reach me. As much as the first and only murder committed by an organized group may produce feelings of uncertainty in its members, in the case of Leszek's group the emotions and relationships became further complicated by the

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[66] It is worth realizing that, if Leszek's group had not been uncovered by Bezpieka, there would have been no possibility for its members to gain a hero/victim status in the post-communist Poland.

circumstances of the arrests and abuse committed by the Security. It became clear to me that my fieldwork covered a moment of deep transformation of an interpretative script which these people used in reference to the past events they had been engaged in. The memory project demanded from them that they build their hero/victim selves based on that past event, which evoked in them equivocal feelings. The new script unified them around the common story emergent in the relationship with the larger national and historical narrative. By focusing on Leszek's case, I shall try and bring to light the socially conditioned, individual, emotional and semiotic journey between the variously conditioned past and the present.

The war. The fascination. The imaginary.

"Post-German" was the term we used for everything the Germans had left behind: furniture, books, houses, streets. My childhood was full of it. I lived in a small village called Glebokie near Szczecin. A walk to the woods could yield a whole range of fascinating objects: mines, guns, pistols, grenades. They were my childhood toys.

From *Post-German, Post-Jewish* by Leszek Szaruga
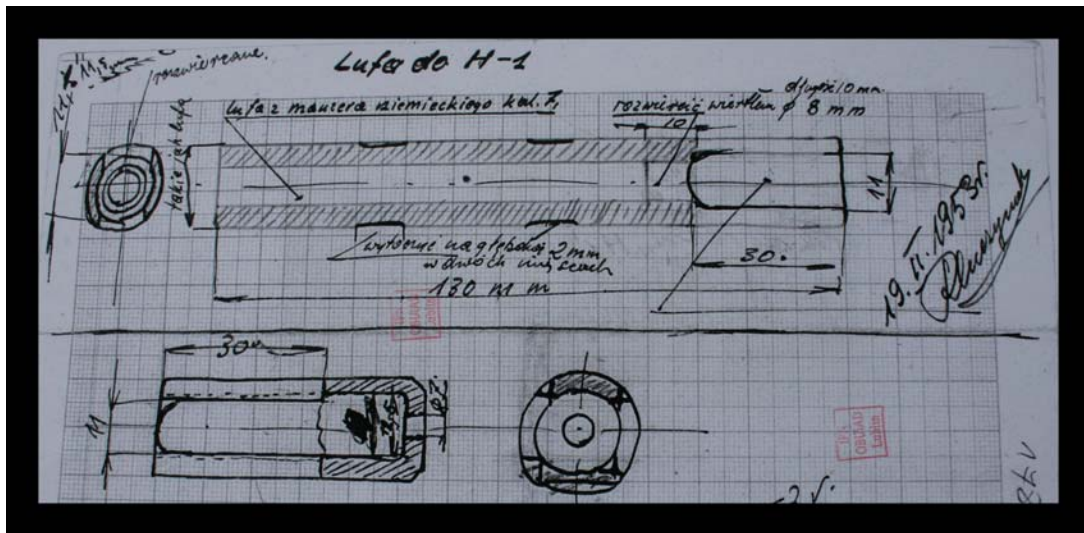
A drawing of a gun mechanism by Szymon (source: IPN).

The Second World War had an immense impact upon children's imagination and the shaping of their normative notions. Tylor explained social imaginary as 'the way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the

expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (Tylor 2004:23). This section aims at bringing to light the way in which the conditions of war shaped the social imaginary of Leszek's group. I believe these conditions made possible common understanding, practices and a shared, by the members of the group, sense of legitimacy for their actions. The tangible scenery of war drew the contours of normalcy and the realizable in the young boys' minds. I sketch this picture in order to show a contrast with concise historical accounts on which Leszek and his colleagues based the reconstructing work in the realm of the self.

The fascination with ammunition was normal among boys of Leszek's age, who lived in his village. I came across one of the most evocative representations of this fascination in a *Bezpieka* collection of files devoted to Leszek's anti-communist conspiracy group. Szymon, a member of this group, wrote in his diary in the 1940s at the age of fourteen:

> I was born in a village of Roztop […] on the 30th of January 1934. My father worked at railways. In 1935, I left together with my family for Santok, where my little brother Mark was born. In 1936, we left for Koluszki where I am still today. Here, I started to attend a primary school. During the German occupation dad was still working at the railways, while I was pleasantly spending my childhood. In 1939, our little sister Wanda was born. When the war broke out in 1934[67], together with my family, I had to run away to a village of Torsk next to Skawin, where we waited for the front to move, and after that, we came back home. Everything we found was in chaos and disordered. That evening, together with my brother, we went for a stroll and to check the damages. It was full of German corpses, draught and domestic animals were everywhere. The old headquarters of Gestapo as well as the ghetto were full of ammo and firearms and hand-grenades. In a couple of spots there were trashed tanks and tankietki left and on the railway tracks there stood carriages. One day, together with my brother, during a stroll through the tracks and carriages, we found a car full of riffle cartridges. I started to bring them home. I managed to bring in a lot of that, yet, in vain, since my father, once he noticed it, took it away and tidied it up. However, Stefan, my colleague, had also brought this ammo and buried it in a cartridge-case, behind the cellar, not far from my house. At the end of the summer, when the things got settled, my friend Stefan found a shell, fortunately without a head and he started to disarm it at my, my brother's and my little sister's presence. Out of a sudden an explosion was hearable, and when the smoke went up, I saw my little sister without legs. Immediately, some people and doctors arrived. The army provided with a car and she was taken to a hospital in

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[67] Of course the date is mistaken. The war broke out in 1939.

Suran, where she died during surgery. She was four and half years old. After that, life went on in a routine manner. […] I was commuting to school together with my colleagues. At that time, I started to think about ways in which Soviet Union, pretending it wished to consciously bring in peace […] was actually gradually taking over the power[68] [Source: IPN3].
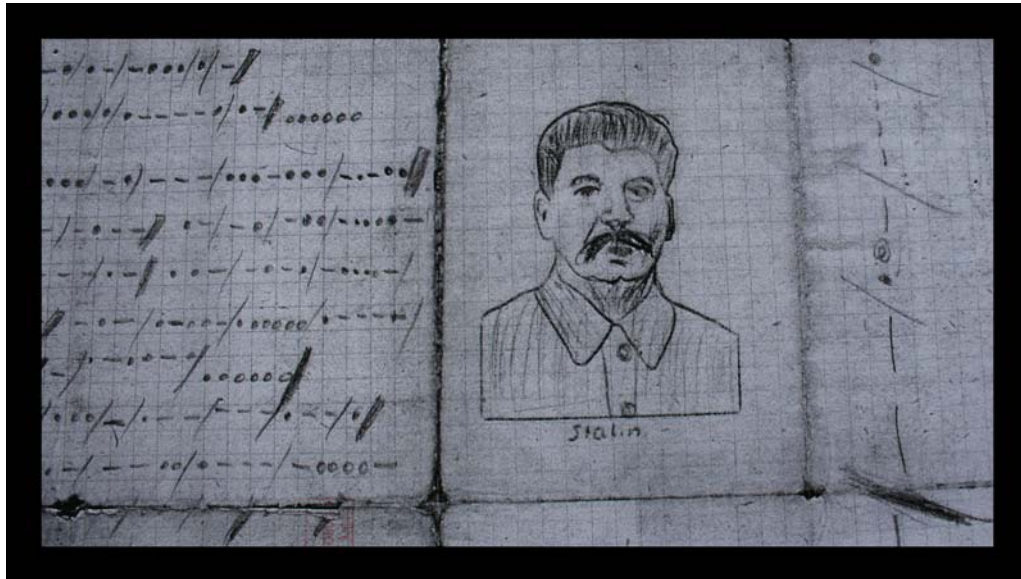
A fragment of Szymon's diary (source: IPN).

This terrifying story of a tragic death of a young family relative was narrated in a bone-dry style. The manner of narrating the event is particularly striking if we consider that the story was recorded in a personal diary hidden from other people's eyes. Actually, nothing indicates that the intention of the author was to reflect upon the sister's death. The event was marginalized and incorporated into a larger reflection and a set of recollections about the war and its aftermath. Another important factor that the story highlights is the author's exposure to the politicized discourse at a fairly early age. The last phrase of the fragment – 'At that time, I started to think about…', points out the strong internalization of the circulating and mass-mediated politicized contents, the fragments of which were also overheard from the adult world of that time. From this and other life narratives of members of Leszek's conspiracy group it was clear to me that there had been no parental support for their clandestine organization. Instead, there was fear and resistance to it on the part of the family members. The drastic example of Szymon's sister's death was not an isolated case of great family suffering brought about by the boys' involvement in the clandestine organization and games played

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[68] The text is a fragment of a diary confiscated from Szymon's family house by the Security. It was secured as investigative material used during interrogations and for the final formulation of the charges. Currently, it is located in the IPN archive in Szymon's file, accessible to academics, journalists, and Szymon himself.

with the ammunition. After years of war, the overwhelming mood within the society could be summed up as a craving for normalcy[69]. For Leszek's group's members' families, the boys' organizational involvement meant the prolonging of emotional instability. In fact, all of these boys, now the aging heroes, carry in themselves sentiments of resentfulness over their heroic deeds and a sense of guilt towards their families for the suffering they brought about. These feelings are tabooed nonetheless. Within the families, the years of their imprisonment have not been perceived as heroism, but as a real loss and pain, which had little logic apart from the children's irrational games. Most of the members of the group were brought up in poor peasant families, who had been counting on their sons' ability to support the households. This lack of responsibility was what families reproached their belatedly politically engaged sons for.

The boys' involvement began as a game and gradually evolved into a more serious organizational endeavour. It did not start from a conscious patriotic stance aimed at halting the communist expansion, but from a fascination with the war and its manly, military aspects. Even today, most of Leszek's stories of WWII sound like adventures of a young boy mesmerized by what was happening around him. Leszek holds very scenic recollections of the war. Clearly, what was happening fascinated him. The lack of a thread indicating feelings of fear in this story reveals a sort of immunity to the war conditions which, despite their dreadfulness, brought about excitement. The intensity of the war experience was a pivotal factor shaping Leszek's personality, fostering his craving for adventures.

> And the Soviets entered Koluszki… there is such a story to be told. Koluszki, the level crossing… railways… […] and I am walking along that consignment, along those rail tracks, through the goods vans, and I am looking around. I am searching for ammunition of a sort, but there was only the artillery one, and I was not interested in that, since I was not able to carry it under my armpit. Anyhow, this one is not safe… […] the trucks are running along the sort of embankment, so I walked down to it, and, I will tell you, it is also a sort of sensation… I look, and there are two cross-bones till the knees here [pointing at his knees] covered with a sort of suck – a body, torn feet. He looks as if he was roasted. And then, you know, I was only walking further, I did not stop… […] and then, to that camp. It was also nearby, so it was like a must to peep into there together with my colleagues. We were hanging out together, since it was a holiday. The school

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[69] Documentary films of that era are good at illustrating the post-war attitudes and moods within society. The recent history books are rather focused on representing the nation through iconic heroes/victims' figures and their perpetrators, compressing society, which adapted its everyday life to the communist conditions.

started quite late - at the end of September… I only saw that they were driving American and Canadian cars [Leszek 1.1 min 42].

The paths of young boys in Koluszki run through the forests, ditches, and railway tracks. What motivated them was ammunition, which they collected. Each piece they treated like a trophy. The more they brought and showed in front of their colleagues'[70] eyes, the more esteem they received. The encounters with the drastically maimed bodies were being reported in front of the group. Telling about them lessened their sweeping impact upon the young psyche, as these stories simultaneously aggrandized the weight of the trophy. Today, in the associational office, the men sometimes excitedly recall 'bags filled with ammo', which they carried on the trains, coming back from faraway forests visited after school. The materiality of the war, which organized their boyish time, stretched beyond the military remnants. The boys bore actual witness to large-scale atrocities, as they lived in proximity to the concentration camp. The place elicited curiosity in them. Again though, in the case of Leszek, the driving force seemed to be curiosity for the objects and not for the suffering people.

> In 1943, in October, there was a tragedy, you know, because they shot down the whole personnel of the camp. I know it from the story-telling. Seemingly, they set the music, the megaphones at the full blast… the road was blanked, the warning was given – if someone looked into, he was immediately shot. I do not know how long did it take, since there were over one hundred thousand people in there. They were shot in the sort of vast pits. Part of those Jews were taken out by them and burned on sort of scaffoldings. Seemingly, it was a tragedy, since when the wind blown towards the village, you know, in crematoria there is a very high temperature, and there, you know… and I know it from story-telling only, and anyhow, Sobibór was at that time, because it was already a time of liquidation of those ugly affairs.

'Ugly affairs' sounds like an euphemism. I believe, though, that Leszek's resilience to what was happening in the camp to the Jews was shaped by the ways in which the camp was related to his surroundings. The reasoning he presents in the above fragment is striking. The killings committed in the camp are presented as a tragedy for the village because of the unbearable smell, which paralyzed the lives of the village's inhabitants. In this fragment, Leszek passes on to me what I believe constituted a collective memory about the camp. The emphasis put in the iconic stories about the

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[70] The heroes/victims, when addressing each other, use a word 'colleague' (*kolega, koleżanka*). In Polish, the word has a wide connotation implying acquaintance. It also brings an association with a word 'comrade' implying being united in a common purpose, yet not being in the nature of a very close friendship.

camp is on the lives of the people outside the camp, as well as on the unusual wealth which was collected by the Germans, having confiscated the Jews' possessions.

> And if one of the barracks was shot, they took Poles for cleaning. And then, carts... I remember one such cart, as it arrived at the neighbours' – [exclaimed] such a beautiful collection of stamps[71]... such a treasure... and there were sort of diamonds hidden in the lipsticks... people were rescuing themselves, so, perhaps these would be of a use... there was a tolerance. They[72] did not repress.

Fascinated by the war and its military aspects, Leszek often talked about war as if it were an 'immense project' involving many people and amazing technical solutions. Leszek developed a militaristic way of thinking about the war. He still collects anything that connects with the history of the WWII western countries' navy. He knows a great deal about the armaments and various armies that took part in that war. In his tiny flat, there are drawers of books. There are just a few titles separate from the main collection of the history of WWII and its aftermath. The space of the association allows him to display this knowledge. The display of this knowledge grants him the esteem of his fellows.

Leszek's youth was marked by a lack of father, who was murdered by the Germans[73], as well as by the marvels of war which captured his imagination. The actions taken in his youth followed a particular line of evolution, and were recently iconized into an image of patriotic contribution to national liberation - the image incorporated by the majority of the group members who are still alive, and who belong to the association.

The emergence, in the small Polish village of Koluszki, of this youth conspiracy group coloured with political agendas was gradual, and had no direct and clear external incentive. The idea was born in teenage minds and started up quite innocently from the fascination with armed forces emerging from the predominant and overwhelming landscape of war. No direct transmission of patriotic traditions took place within families, or at school[74]. The pivotal place in the performance of the group

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[71] Leszek became a stamp collector when he was imprisoned.
[72] 'They' implies Germans, who tolerated the plundering of the Jewish belongings.
[73] Despite this fact, Leszek reveals a great deal of fascination with Germans and their military style.
[74] During the investigation Leszek allocated a great deal of responsibility for the emergence of his group to his history teacher, who was clearly anti-communist in her views. From his and his colleagues' present day accounts; however, it is clear that she had no idea about their clandestine operations. The Security officers directed Leszek to testify against her – to blame her for propagating anti-communist ideology among the youth. She was imprisoned, and her health deteriorated in jail. Ironically, today's historiographic discourse again turns the teacher into someone co-responsible for the actions of the group. Teachers like this one are essentialized in historiographic

belonged to Leszek's personality and his search for adventures and distinction. It was a matter of historical contingency that the resources he used for self-realization had an anti-communist overtone. As a little boy, he looked up to German soldiers, who took him for rides on their motorbikes. A soldier became his male role model.

Leszek worked out the directions for the actions of the group. He kept his teenage members convinced that there was a vast organizational structure above them the orders of which they were required to carry out. Copying various operational and organizational strategies, about which Leszek read in books, he gradually surrounded himself with items on the ground (notebooks, books, maps) and under it (arms, ammunition hidden in various lairs), bringing his mother worries whenever she found one of these. His performance at school worsened as he devoted most of his time to the creation of his secret squad and to leading it. The list of books and notebooks which were confiscated from Leszek by the Security give an idea of the activities Leszek and his group were involved in[75]. It illustrates ways in which Leszek oriented his everyday actions, as well as ideas and material objects which moulded his desires. What speaks to me from these data is not a conscious collective and patriotic struggle for independence, but an individual desire to live through something ground-breaking and becoming a frontman translated into a group action. It further sheds light on the cultural resources available to young people at that time for their self-realization.

Representations of a hero/victim

When the Marianowice branch of the IPN organized an exhibition devoted to the theme of repressions committed by Bezpieka on the members of the anti-communist partisan groups, a few last panels were dedicated to the wave of youth conspiracy which surfaced after the war. After a number of panels devoted to the underground army soldiers who, as a part of a large political structure, were repressed and violently eliminated by the communists, two other panels could be viewed, which represented youth clandestine organizations lacking a larger organizational umbrella. A group of four young boys posing for a photo with a machine gun and a supply of ammunition was presented on one of the black and white photos in the exhibition room. Another panel included a photo of a young man in a scout uniform, a photo of him taken by Bezpieka for a police profile, anti-

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representations as the carriers of real national spirit, like those silently revolting against the communist occupation by propagating the real Polish values in everyday life. This time, the co-responsibility brings about recognition. Leszek facilitates this version by propagating the teacher's pivotal role in his political engagement. I believe involving the history teacher into a grand national narrative is, for Leszek, a way of recovering from a heavy sense of guilt he has felt for her unjustly broken life, which, in his eyes, he had caused. The grand narrative of communism allows Leszek to gradually depart from this sense of guilt. It is so, because this interpretative scheme is shared by his colleagues, who previously felt that their teacher was an innocent victim of Leszek's testimony. Currently, they reinterpret the facts in the light of purposefulness of the past actions.

[75] See Appendix Nine to read about the materials confiscated from Leszek during the investigation.

communist inscriptions on a wall, and an anti-communist leaflet. The phenomenon of the youth anti-communist activities taking place in the post-war conditions was represented as a natural continuation of a conscious fight for independence and freedom. Simultaneously, the photos representing young conspirators were to render visible the cruelty of the communist system, which repressed children.

When I talked to Leszek about the exhibition, his overriding reaction was to mention a photo of himself that he had in his drawer at home. In that photograph, Leszek holds a machine gun, and Miron, a boy from Leszek's group, who participated in the murder of the railway guard, holds a pistol. The photo was taken by Bezpieka. The boys were given the weapon and asked to pose for a photograph. 'Just like that photo at the exhibition' – Leszek explained to me, revealing a sense of legitimacy he derived from the IPN display by associating the photo placed on the panel with the one in his private archive. In more informal talks, Leszek has been told by one of the IPN historians that such photos were taken when Bezpieka had planned a show trial for a youth group, and that such photos had provided a back-up for the political propaganda. The passing of this information which, in Leszek's case, worked towards strengthening the heroic image of the self proved that Leszek's clandestine activity was not marginal. Such self-referential messages derived from the authoritative sources have helped Leszek depart from the image of himself, evoked in the past, as irrational, selfish, childish, mistaken, or a bandit.

At some point during our meetings Leszek gave me as a souvenir a recently published book consisting of biographical notes portraying the members of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice. Leszek was introduced in the book in the following words:

> Son of Jan and Weronika from the Marzec House born on the 4th of July 1936 in Koluszki. A founder and a member of an organization fighting for independence named 'the Secret Association of Polish Scouting' in which he was actively engaged from March 1950 till when he was arrested by the Secret Political Police [UB] in Jedlno on the 8th of July 1953. He was a group leader alias 'Emperor' [...]. After a six-months-long investigation led by the secret political police [UB] in Marianowice, he was accused [here come 3 lines of relevant paragraphs and codes[76]] [...] and sentenced to death by the verdict of a court [...]. The death sentence was changed into 15

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[76] There are a few codes and paragraphs typically used by judges during the Stalinist period and enacted especially for prosecuting people holding different political views. The trials were often staged giving its participants a sense of absurdity. Members of the Association of the Political Prisoners of the Communist Period know these by heart and do not have to use full names for explaining the charges. They know who among them fell under what paragraph. In a sense they are all experts in knowledge of the apparatus of repression created by the previous regime and in the legal cases along with their sentences.

years of imprisonment in 1954 […]. In 1956, due to the amnesty, his prison term was diminished to 10 years […]. He got conditionally released in 1959 […]. He is currently holding a presidency of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice[77].

Leszek's biographical note included in the book became the most important script about the self that Leszek had available, when I met him. The book became one of the cultural vehicles which furnished a fragment of Leszek's past with a political significance relevant for today's reality, encouraging his devotion to the image of a hero/victim self. The representation of Leszek's life story as given in a book is characterized by a specific distribution of the emphasis and the logic of selection of facts which feeds a national grand narrative. Bruner argued for the mere facts not to be considered viable until they are categorized, while the live facts ought not to be probative until they can be shown to be relevant to some sort of theory or story dealing with something more general (Bruner 1998:18). The narrative has a power to govern the selection of facts and, by the same token, to shape these facts, as they are selected (Bruner 1998:22). By bringing together the vignettes of the people who suffered political repressions during communism, the publication meant to underlie a collective aspect of repressions and the immense value the suffering of the people described in the book carries for the entire national community. This representation is necessarily concise and rigid, as its aim is to represent various life stories as if they constituted slightly different versions of the same script. As Bruner puts it, 'something's verisimilitude is the mark of whether the illusion of reality is working' (Bruner 1998:24).

In a succinct manner, the vignette describes some facts scattered during 9 years of Leszek's life. The information given focuses on his anti-communist activity and the repressions he experienced due to his involvement in organizing and running a youth conspiracy group. The emphasis in this representation is being put on citing the legal codes and files, which constituted an authorized decision about Leszek's repressions. The murder of a state official, which was the reason for Leszek's arrest, was omitted. The main thread of the vignette was constituted by Leszek's anti-communist activity and the repressions. The main aim of the book was to present the heroes/victims by their names, photographs, type of anti-communist activity they had been involved in, and repressions they had experienced during communism. The concise form of representing Leszek's life is employed to

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[77] This vignette constitutes an example of a cultural form adapted by the association for the purpose of representing its members. Its structure was established by a historian, who is a member of the association, in cooperation with other members of the association. The vignette introduces members of the association through their political involvement, preferably an active engagement in an anti-communist formation, and a mention of their experience of communist repressions certifiable by some sort of official steps taken against these people.

serve the needs of the national myth. Bruner urged 'that we not be too easily tempted into thinking that there is an oppositional contrast between logos and mythos, the grammar of experience and the grammar of myth[78]. For each complements the other […]' (Bruner 1959:349). As much as the national myth has provided models for moulding the images of the hero/victim selves, we should recognize the role of the heroes/victims in the preparation of the material used for the composition of these particular vignettes and other publications. In fact, the book was made possible thanks to the data collected and stored in the internal filing system of the association. In this sense, the myth has been experienced and the experience has been mythologized.

One of the most crucial messages such volumes carry for the heroes/victims is a demonstration of the collective aspect of their individual experience of resistance to communism and suffering. This sense was lacking at the time of their anti-communist involvement. The number of entries in the book proves that the experience of the individual hero/victim was not isolated. Yet, the choice of representing each individual separately is meant at the same time to underline personal courage and exceptionality. The focus on the bureaucratized aspect of the repressions in a form of fixated presentation of sentences, paragraphs, and detention centres serves to expose the deliberate and inhumane policy of the communist regime against the courageous ones. However, it simultaneously strips off the fact that 'experiences attended by powerful social institutions are likely to be better preserved' (Schudson 1995:359), and are widely represented through authorized channels. Such publications work towards strengthening of the bonds between the heroes/victims, who learn each others' biographical notes by heart and cultivate a sense of commonality of their experience. Yet, they also become cultural artefacts from which generations, who did not experience the communist past, will fabricate an image of it.

Another important publication based on the data collected by Leszek's association and on the interviews with the heroes/victims, including Leszek, was written by a local historian, a hero/victim and a member of the association himself. The book serves as a study of the anti-communist youth organizations formed in the Stalinist period in the Marianowice region. The main thesis of the book claims that there was a noteworthy anti-communist youth movement in the 1940s and 1950s, which should be understood as a conscious fight against the Soviet occupation – a fight which was at the same time an exposure of hidden dreams of the entire nation, and an embodiment of 'pure patriotism'. This youth movement, according to the author of the book, should be understood as a

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[78] Alex Argenti-Pillen complements that the two are further enmeshed with the 'grammar of affect' (Argenti-Pillen: personal communication).

continuation of the Polish tradition of the fight for independence and an unchanging spirit of resistance to foreign oppression. The author enumerated the origins of the movement, in which he included: national traditions, values transmitted through family, school and the Catholic Church, conversion of the traditional scouting into the communist pioneers' groups, as well as the all-encompassing hypocrisy of the communist system. As the author put it: "This generation of young, beyond average, magnificent people of those years marked their place in history of their beloved Fatherland in the most beautiful manner possible. Since, what could have been a more beautiful sacrifice than giving one's life for a Fatherland, or devoting to it one's most beautiful years of life, completely lost" (Anonymous source).

The book became one of the most important sources for Leszek and his colleagues in terms of the processes of reconstruction of their image as a group, history of its formation, and its relevance for the history of the nation. Two modes of representation of the youth conspiracy during communism played a role for the heroes/victims who were involved in it: the argument that the youth conspiracy was a nationally significant movement, and the emphasis on the continuation of the anti-communist struggle of the underground army undertaken by the young Poles after the war. The members of Leszek's clandestine group have not always been sure of themselves regarding the purposefulness of their engagements in the clandestine organization. Nor have they always been convinced about the righteousness of their cause. The sources supporting the argument for the existence of a large youth movement have been particularly significant for Leszek who, in his desire for leadership and adventure, kept lying to his young colleagues back in the 1940s, pretending there had been a huge organizational structure above them from which Leszek had been secretly getting orders, which the rest of the group was obliged to carry out. Among such orders was the murder of a railway guard eventually carried out by Leszek and Miron[79]. Eventually, after the arrests, the teenage members of the group felt regret and sometimes carried feelings of resentment towards Leszek. As Leszek's colleague told me in a conversation "Leszek nonetheless turned out to be a genius. He had a much wider horizon than the rest of us. While we doubted in his righteousness". What is now presented as a conscious patriotic deed, back in the past was surrounded by a range of emotions and interpretations, which do not fit the current framework. The murder, and the subsequent arrests, interrogations, trials and sentences initiated a multifaceted grudge against Leszek among his conspiracy group and the families of its members. It was shocking news for the village which, almost

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[79] Miron went through a serious breakdown during the interrogations and while in jail. This led him to co-operate with Bezpieka for which he was despised by the group members. Leszek, who has been insisting on recognition of his heroism, visibly feels guilty for what Miron lived through. Leszek's pressure for official recognition of Miron has faced criticism within the association.

in its entirety, condemned the group and wanted to isolate it so as not to "contaminate" the rest of the youth[80]. Leszek himself, during the interrogation and during the trial, had a few regrettable moments of weakness. One of his most regrettable decisions was that of putting blame on his dear history teacher, who was eventually arrested and sentenced. This move was one of the reasons for which being a hero/victim is not so straightforward for Leszek.

The book in which Leszek's vignette is included, is titled: "The Adamant Soldiers". The quite suggestive dedication which Leszek wrote for me on the very first page: "For Miss Ania, from a soldier who has not managed to be adamant at all times", reflects his internal hesitation between discrepant images of the past-self and a struggle to build a coherent image out of the two.

Coherence beyond the self in time

The memory project as described in this thesis was organized so as to bring an interpretative closure to the communist past on a societal level. For individual heroes/victims, getting involved in the memory project meant an opportunity for achieving a legitimate closure to one's story of political involvement. The interactively achieved plot (ordering of events and establishment of causal relationships between them) of brave national struggle for liberation organized into a coherent storyline stretched between the past and the present implied "grasping together" scattered individual stories and events, schematizing, and ordering them (Ricoeur 1984:x). The memory project, as it has evolved since 1989 in Poland, should be recognized as a collective sense-making process. The master signifying framework has offered a fairly comforting solution to the perplexing and confusing past events, yet it has simultaneously flattened human experience by avoiding those elements which did not make sense within the prevailing storyline. Dealing with the incongruous elements has been left to individuals who have had to re-work interpretations of the self in accordance with a larger frame, which they have been co-producing. This interpretative work implied re-ordering of memories and assimilating them into the new, prevailing schemata[81].

Individual desire for integrity and a need to achieve a coherent image of the self implies that the self may work towards the creation of memories which are self-consistent rather then veridical (Conway

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[80] Still today, Leszek's group is remembered in the village as irresponsible banditry. The instances in which Leszek faced negative hints concerning his past from the village inhabitants always evoked in him emotional upheavals. The members of his group do not expect that their monument will be erected in the village after they die.

[81] I do not want to give an impression that the memory framework emergent after 1989 was a completely new agenda. It certainly built upon previously achieved cultural resources and symbols. However, in terms of the people engaged in the realization of the new memory project, the access to the interpretative resources has been variously structured. The case I am describing in this chapter provides an example of a person for whom the memory project constituted a new quality for interpreting his life.

1990:88). It implies that description of the past may reflect what a person believes he should know about the past rather than what the past actually was. Hence, the memory constructs ground the self in such a way that an experience of conventionalized representations constrains the range of possible self-knowledges held by the individual self (Conway 1997:5). A full understanding of ways in which self-knowledge is structured requires a broad conceptualization of context which extends beyond immediate social situation and encompasses larger historical and cultural settings (Callero 121). In the case of heroes/victims, the transition from one state form to another implied a change in the social and political condition for interpretation of the self and one's past actions in the light of the present. The political change opened up a process of appropriation of cultural tools for understanding the self in the new political context

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Reflexive subject doubts

Yet, as much as the curving of individual self-conceptions and images of the self are structured by larger historical forces and power relations, remembering the self is also a reflexive interpretative labour which should not be understood as a simple consequence of historically specific discourses and disciplinary practices (Foucault 1979). This chapter deals with the process of re-ordering one's memories understood as the consequence of involvement in the politicized memory project and about the difficulties in dealing with a situation in which the new, strongly desired, framework (a heroic self) proved discordant with the previously available frameworks for interpreting (an irresponsible self) the past and the self. It focuses on individual attempts at reworking the self-stories in accordance with the new cultural frames. Such effort is understood as a reflexive process focused on sustaining a sense of stability (Brunner in Callero 2003) and coherence of the self and world. Among other forms, this effort manifests itself through narrative (Ochs and Capps 2001).The study presented in this chapter focused selectively on a few elements of Leszek's life narrative and their entanglement with larger socio-historical processes of memory politics and historical records.

Methodologically, I used Leszek's life narrative in order to analyze a moment in time when his painful experience was integrated into a grand national narrative legitimating his past actions after years of their authorized disapproval. Analytically, I approached narrative as an instrument serving the processes of construction and display of the sense of self (Schiffrin 168). The remaining section of this chapter will serve to give a sense of individual moves between the traumatizing events, the description of which had already been nested and systematically rehearsed in various past social situations, and their belated integration into a grand national narrative. Previous frameworks for interpreting the event caused, in Leszek, a sense of guilt and uncertainty regarding the righteousness

of the self. While the memory project has worked towards the production of "unstigmatized identities" (Lambek and Antze 1996:147), Leszek has oriented his efforts towards eliminating the stigma from his self-schemes and to fully incorporating new frameworks based on retrospective attribution of causality which displace guilt and responsibility (Lambek and Antze 1996:147). The historical transformation generated inconsistencies in the realm of Leszek's self-knowledge. According to Kelly, the incoherent system of constructs makes individual functioning difficult, as it generates negative emotional states like instability and anxiety (Kelly 1991). At this point in his life, Leszek's system of self-constructs is characterized by inconsistencies, which generate in him depressing affects.

Verbalizing ambiguity

The 'accident with the railway guard' – as Leszek calls it, meant the end for the thriving group of brave teenagers. This bizarre wording, the usage of a noun 'accident' in relation to what is now recognized as a clearly political and brave action, points at other, still active, interpretative frameworks available to Leszek for understanding his past activity. One late afternoon during my visit to his place, Leszek confessed after a moment of reflexive silence:

Leszek: The question is, damn you! Why did you fire for the second time? I also have been reflecting upon it. Ania, it was an impulse… it was an impulse, it was something, what a human, you know, you can't… this is how I have been imagining it. It was an impulse. A sort of self-preservation instinct, devil knows. And you know, this gunshot – totally pointless, because the guy would live […]. It could have been one way or the other, since they could have got a hold of us…

Me: Did you have pangs of conscience?

Leszek: Well, I surely had, Ania, and till this day it is a sort of ambiguous situation. I mean, you see, there is one thing – it was a combat. This is how I, how we understood it. At least I lived through it and understood it this way. There is one book which had an incredible influence on, I have it in here […] written by a Russian author… it is a story of a Russian colonel, an NKWD squadron leader. This squadron was defending Moscow […]. You know, it is fantastically described. Because it is about contemporaneity, a man, when he reads it, he is uncritical. This is good in Soviet army, these methods of conduct, but not… in a regular life. I realized it only later. And you know, it was written in there that, well, a combat is a combat, an order is an order, an adversary is an adversary and you need to destroy him, irrevocably, you know. A lot… because the lawyer [he is talking about his lawyer] […] so it was also him who highlighted, because it was being said in there about books, what books… and this book, I am not saying, but this book,

perhaps it had an influence, I do not know, on my behaviour, you know, a sort of reaction towards various issues and colleagues – because it was connected to the case. And here, you see, how one can, himself, how to say it, get oneself up. Afterwards, a young man can easily be moulded. Here is an example to follow, because we [he refers to Polish nation] have been always losing, always losing, we never could have gained what was needed, we got something for twenty years and we lost it. And here, you know, something made me rebel… that [he smacks] it went on somehow flabbily, that we are afraid of fighting openly, well, the history of France, of Russia, of England, where all those things were conducted ruthlessly, there, you know, they went on all lengths. […]

This narrative fragment illustrates Leszek's search for justification. It is difficult for him to classify the killing of a railway guard as a heroic deed. By talking about the books he has read, and about his uncritical reception of their content, he brings into the narrative an interpretative framework used by his lawyer as a defence strategy during the trial. Apparently he often used this framework while reflecting upon his own past. Yet, following the expression 'Here is an example to follow', Leszek drops the previous framework so as to switch into the recently available framework in which his actions can be interpreted as a heroic, patriotic fight for the freedom of the oppressed nation.

Me: And when did you start to have doubts?

Leszek: Well, you know, initially I had no doubts. I thought it was well done, there is nothing to worry about, it is a war […]. Only later I started to reflect upon it. I think that after I was released. After I was released. In the prison, it did not happen that colleagues, who were in a real partisan combat, like on this photo in here [he points at a picture of a partisan group] […] no, it did not happen ever that I was said, that something immoral or so. It was fully accepted. Only as I said, then, during the investigation, but this was a snitch, you know. He did disturb my confidence.

Me: About what?

Leszek: About my premise, my belief that I did it well. But this was a snitch, you see.

Me: But you did not know it at that time…

Leszek: Oh no! Not at all. Ania, I only learned it in 2000! [Said as if it was unbelievable] Well, I, simply, did not suspect, I was rather surprised by that reaction. I was amazed by his reaction concerning me. I after all very well knew that the Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (NSZ) did not handle either Germans or Russians with kid gloves, since they were in danger themselves.

Me: But he somehow caused doubts…

Leszek: Yes, doubts which were very negative, in terms of their influence on the investigation.

In the fragment above, Leszek recalls a long-term relationship with his co-prisoner, whom he admired for his political involvement. As it turned out recently, the anti-communist colonel was an informant cooperating with Bezpieka to discover the truth about Leszek. Their long conversations in the cell made Leszek doubt the righteousness of his actions. They strengthened in him an image of himself as irrational and his past actions as having nothing to do with a serious political engagement. Reading the security files has helped him depart from this framework and to view the colonel as a traitor, who aimed at breaking him[82].

> Leszek: Just one more thing that for about 15 or 20 years after my release well… I had those… anyhow, it is normal after all, dreams… I have weapon, I hide it and the secret political police finds it and I go to jail again. […]They are of a sort that, I know, for the whole day long, not that I felt a great fear, but I did feel it somehow, you know. And these are very realistic dreams, so that I exactly felt every detail of it […]. And the plot goes concretely, in a slow way […]. I am sleeping, in here I am sleeping. I am waking up, it is gloomy, well it is getting clearer and I see two people at the balcony and I am saying: hey, Gentlemen, how did you get in here? Do you want to steal something from me? It turns out that they are muggers. And you know, I constantly feel the tip of the gun on me, I see, I am talking to them and I am helpless, you know, and this helplessness, that I am helpless here, I cannot do anything, I cannot yell, and they begin to turn the things over, they are looking for money. I indeed have 1000 zlotych in here [laughing – he refers to a real situation]. Ania, will they find or will they not find? But I am seeing these gobs, the sort of criminal gobs, which I could only have seen in the prison… […] and when I woke up I felt as if these two men were in here. […] well, a man has a sort of injury and it will stay, there is no way out…
>
> Me: It is also normal to have these sorts of dreams…
>
> Leszek: But you see, the weapon and… [he smacks] I am saying, it is just a dream and damn it! I am not dreaming, I do have weapon hidden in here. Damn it the bloody UB [secret police] you know…

Among other ways, Leszek's distress manifests itself in dreams. His feelings of uncertainty about his past deeds have been evoked by the processes of reformulation of his interpretative scripts. Clearly,

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[82] Leszek's words, indicating that the reactions of the co-prisoner had had negative effects in the investigation, might refer to those moments in which Leszek snapped. Files stored in the IPN cellars contain two letters written by Leszek in which he ascribes major guilt for his actions to his female teacher, who was eventually sentenced to prison for a couple of years. He further expressed his regret for hurting the Great Socialist Poland. Eventually though, he learned that he was actually betrayed by a person who represented the myth most precious to him. The NSZ officer, as one of the researchers looking into Leszek's files in the IPN informed him (by bringing him copies of denunciation letters), was a snitch. The secret police's methods of breaking people for the purpose of the investigation continue to produce consequences in terms of psychological states, even after so many years. It is perhaps the disclosure of these materials, still semi-secret and fragmentary, that played an important role, as it provoked the unfolding of difficult emotions and redefined subjectivities along new discursive patterns.

the murder of the guard, the investigations, the imprisonment and the life lived with the stigma of being called a bandit generated many negative scripts about the self. Re-working these scripts at the age of seventy has been coupled with a strong emotional distress, and it has also implied the re-living of the sense of guilt and activation of old negative scripts. Eventually, it has also provoked a more reflexive attempt to justify the new positive scripts. Last year Leszek felt proud when an invitation from the presidential palace reached him. At the same time though, he feared attending these high-ranking official celebrations. His doubts made his legs go cold and unable to move the night before. His dreams made him tired and nervous. His desire for resolving his sense of guilt, and his dream of belonging made him go. After the event, he interpreted his fears as a legacy of the repressions he went through.

The authorship

It is because of its haziness that Leszek's case fascinates me. It speaks about the political action involving killing, the legitimacy of which swings back and forth depending on social situation and historical context. It provokes questions regarding circumstances under which political violence or killing is justifiable and effective in a sense that it leaves no traces in people's psyche in terms of pangs of conscience and uncertainty about the correctness of one's deeds[83].

Uncannily, the investigation and the trial recovered in the new authoritative form of the IPN served as the strongest post-factum legitimacy possible for reworking Leszek's self-schemata. The communist state agents sought to use Leszek's case for the purposes of propaganda, so they dealt with it in a chillingly serious manner, sentencing Leszek's childish fantasies to death. This sentence produced the ambiguity of Leszek's changing condition. On the one hand, it made people treat him with prejudice and distance in the past. Yet, on the other hand, it has been the actual encounter with the gloomy communist apparatus of repression marked by bureaucratic traces that granted him esteem and recognition in the present. Obtaining extreme responses to his actions, Leszek had to deal with the discrepant interpretative frameworks applied to his behaviour. I believe that the complexity of his historical condition generated emotional unrest in Leszek.

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[83] It would be interesting to systematically compare people like Leszek – who belonged to the youth conspiracy - and the actual AK soldiers. While interviewing the AK soldiers, I did not see moments of hesitation, or doubts about the purposefulness of committing political violence. I believe that their lack of doubts was caused by the fact that the social conditions for their actions were different too. They had a large organizational structure behind them and they were not in a position of giving orders, instead, they were carrying them out with high frequency. They also fought in a clear war situation (the doubts came often to those who fought in the aftermath of WWII).

Leszek felt surprised by the depth of this project and my insistence on getting into as many details of his life as possible and spending very long hours together. He seemed very honest in his almost confessional style of talking. It remained unsaid though, what he expected from my work. It was more apparent that he was keen on me being his companion and listener. During these hours of talking, it was his honesty that struck me. I believe he remained honest because he needed to be, because the emerging representations of his political life remained so compressed and incapable of containing his ambivalent emotions and thoughts. On the other hand, though, I sense that he only wanted to express and narrate his life, thoughts and anxieties. I believe he would not have liked all of his words to be interpreted and set forward with a stress being put on the least *significant*. My attempts at explaining to him that the core of my interest lay in the under-represented sphere of his life and thoughts always failed. I sense that, unlike most of the people in the association who, on the occasion of Christmas Eve, by a great majority wished me to *finally write the truth*, which meant revealing their suffering and heroism and the immorality of the communist system, he knew that I will depart from this wish. His silent agreement did not mean, however, that my making sense of his past would not actually irritate him. He never actually wanted to know what I thought. He never made an effort to listen to me, to get to know me. I hold respect not for his *heroic oppositional activity* but for the sincerity and openness with which he approached me, despite being conscious of becoming naked in front of my eyes – stripped of the glory which has given meaning to his whole life at the age of seventy. In a sense, I would never want him to read this piece. Equally strongly, though, I believe that my version sheds new light on an issue larger than Leszek's life, and should be given a voice. I owe this voice to Leszek nonetheless.

Chapter Six

Between Acknowledgement and Erasure:
Social dynamics behind the production of political identities
materialized in the public space of Marianowice

And I am sure that, as all pendulums reverse their swing, so eventually will the swollen cities rupture like dehiscent wombs and disperse their children back to the countryside.

From *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck

There is [...] hardly a square in Europe whose secret structure was not profaned and impaired over the course of the nineteenth century by an introduction of a monument.

From *Moscow Diaries* by Walter Benjamin

Inflation and erasure of memory

In Marianowice, the *inflation of memory*[84] (Huyssen 1996) is visible in the growing amount of commemorative forms. As argued by Hanakes et al., the revival of monumentalization is an expression of those voices violated during communism and currently engaged in the process of complex reintegration into a symbolic public space (Hankanes, Kaneff and Pine 2004). Emergent memorials, as suggested by Young (1993), concretize particular historical interpretations. Yet, the tendency for an increase in commemorative forms is coupled with equally complex processes of erasure, which also concretize particular historical interpretations. As Rowlands and Tilly (2005) noted, 'widespread destruction of a previously unwanted past is particularly a feature of postsocialist states in Eastern Europe and Russia'[85] (2005:504). What Rowlands and Tilly call 'disgraced monuments' (2005) constitute remnants of earlier memory projects, which are often wrecked in order to grant invisibility to the adverse versions of the past, commemorated anew, and to underline a deliberated sense of discontinuity. This chapter aims at capturing, anthropologically, a historical moment characterized by the *inflation of memory* and its accompanying *processes of erasure*.

For this chapter, I undertook the fieldwork in a local council, recording opinions about commemorative projects. I conducted a visual and archival research into past and existent commemorative forms, as well as participating in numerous unveilings of monuments. I further followed stories of 'disgraced monuments' which I came across while talking to the *communist agents*, collecting voices concerned about their erasure.

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[84] Compare Lambek's notion of *defrosting of memory* used in reference to European revival of remembrance of WW2 which is coupled with the transition to second-hand memory (Lambek 2005).
[85] Viktoriya Sereda working on memory landscape of Lviv and Donetsk proposes a different view regarding the attitudes towards the communist commemorative forms in the region. She talks about replacement, overlapping and hybridization (Conference paper on the conference *The socialist past today* organized in 2008 by New Castle University).

A move towards big monuments

With the collapse of communism, and a change in the political climate, the state channels gradually opened up for the inclusion of the anti-communist heroes/victims into the memory project. At first, small groups of heroes/victims gathered around places that were significant for them; typically, these were the graves of their colleagues, in front of which they expressed their grief, anguish, and respect. The associations formed in connection with places of torture helped the heroes/victims realize they were numerous enough to be able to imprint on the landscape visible representations of their heroism and suffering. Eventually, when the post-Solidarity elites came to power, an institutionalized demand was placed on the symbolic recognition of the heroes/victims and appropriation of their story by a politicized national narrative. The conservative politicians and heroes/victims formed a memory alliance which tied them together through bonds of loyalty and obligation.

One of the biggest monuments in Marianowice commemorating the heroes/victims was unveiled in October 2003 in front of the castle, which used to be a prison and a place of torture. Foundation 'We Remember' [*Pamiętamy*][86], responsible for initiating the placing of monuments of the greatest underground commanders throughout Poland, had contacted Waldemar – a former underground soldier - jointly with a local politician now belonging to the Law and Justice Party. They sowed in him a dream of creating a life-size monument, clearly visible in Marianowice's landscape, in memory of his commander and colleagues from the underground army, including two of his brothers. Till that moment, he could have only afforded to fix a wooden cross in a forest, or to place a metal plaque in a church. The new possibilities made him walk the city for days thinking of a possible location for the memorial. He thought that the most symbolically significant site was the one which used to be inhabited by a huge Bierut statue, the erasure of which produced a political rupture, offering nothing in its place. An empty square on the outskirts of the old town would allow for a monumental design and, through sequential appropriation of the landscape, the victory of the anti-communist heroes would be underlined with a sublime subtext. Alas, walking around, Waldemar noticed a plate with a newly-given name of the square. It was a Jewish name. Hence, with a sentiment of embitterment, Waldemar turned his eyes to the castle, and suggested that the memorial be located in its proximity.

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[86] Foundation was established in the 1990s. It propagates and documents the knowledge about the history of the Polish struggle for independence. The official website of the foundation: http://lotowor.webpark.pl/fundacja.html .

A few years after the unveiling, a local politician, who was running for a post in local elections under the Law and Justice flag, called Waldemar, asking for a favour. In a leaflet presenting himself to the local electorate, the politician announced: '*I actively participated in numerous initiatives in the Marianowice area, among others, supporting and helping the veterans and soldiers of the underground. I am proud to underline that I was an initiator of the unveiling of a monument of commander Sowa in front of the castle*'. The last page of the leaflet quotes Waldemar (a symbolic resource), who confirms this engagement.

This politician exemplifies what heroes/victims call 'our man' (*nasz człowiek*). 'Our man' is most often a politician who supports the idea of the memory project in which the heroes/victims and their past struggle are given honours. Such a person recognizes which political agents of the past represented the correct attitude. The reciprocal recognition practices index the alliance and a network of loyalties and support gradually built up between anti-communist heroes/victims and local conservative politicians. This network of loyalties facilitated changes in the commemorative landscape of Marianowice. For the shape of the commemorative landscape of the city, it was particularly important that 'our men' filled one body - the Council for the Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*), which decides upon the commemorative landscape of the voivodeship.

Let's call a spade a spade

The Council is responsible for the "initiation and coordination of the activities concerned with the commemoration of the historical events, places, and figures belonging to the history of the struggle and suffering of the Polish Nation, both in Poland and abroad, as well as places close to the Polish Nation of combat and suffering of other nations on the territory of the Republic of Poland" (The Act of 1988). The membership in this body remains dependent on politically sensitive appointments. Locally, the councils include the voivode and its proxy, as well as chosen representatives of authorities (including military, police or firefighters), the IPN employees, and members of social organizations like combatant circles, museums, associations of victims and the like. Hence, some of the heroes/victims also hold membership of the Council. The Council gathers periodically to discuss the commemorative calendar of the region, to give formal 'advice' in regard to projects of commemorative forms, as well as to discuss who deserves personal forms of recognition, like medals. The membership in the council has been gradually changing and this change could be described as a

long process of pushing out the communist heroes and replacing them with the anti-communist heroes/victims.

The council's meetings constitute important moments of recognition and acknowledgement for Marianowice's heroes/victims. Those who were selected to represent their circles in the assembly, by their sheer presence in the gatherings, feel they have an influence over the shape of the memory project. Clearly, the participants in the council are conscious of their stakes and mission of giving 'proper' names to historical processes. The past struggle had shifted into a symbolic space of commemoration perceived by the heroes/victims as the sphere in which the anti-communist truth could be rescued from oblivion and propagated. It is their backstage work; the local state officials select what they call the 'proper' members of the council (*właściwi ludzie*), giving an expression of their ideological and political alignments.

According to law, a proposal for a new commemoration or renovation of an old one must be presented to the council for examination. During the assembly its participants orient their actions towards 'naming' the past and determining the societal acts of remembrance through affective demanding of a clear demarcation of guilt and freezing of the moral judgements in the discussed monumental forms. The meetings constitute an open-ended process of (re)articulation of the past. An example[87] from the Council's meeting should give a sense of the open-endedness and dynamism of memory politics, as well as the conflicting and moral character of performed evaluations[88].

Authorities in one of Marianowice's districts sent to the Council a proposal to renovate a monument erected in memory of the inhabitants of one village who died, or were murdered, between 1939 and 1945 by the Hitlerites (*hitlerowcy*). The monument was unveiled by 'the local authorities and the society' in 1986 on the anniversary of a policing operation performed in the village. A nervous voice could be heard at some point in the discussion: 'My beloved ones, but who did pacify[89]!?' 'Germans! Germans!' – someone replied. 'It is written there' – another voice came in support. A former proxy took the stage protesting against using the word *hitlerowcy*: 'Not *hitlerowcy* but Germans!' 'Let's call a spade a spade' – someone else uttered. A hero/victim sitting next to me admitted that it was a valid remark because *hitlerowcy* was a term coined in the 60s – meaning it was made up for

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[87] One more example is enclosed in the Appendix Eight.
[88] An interesting study in conflicting memories of one historical event in Poland is David Morgan's *Konflikt Pamięci. Narracje Radomskiego Czerwca 1976.*
[89] Pacification (pacyfikacja) is a word used to signify the usage of a military force to suppress resistance. In Polish, it is most often used in reference to the German actions performed against the Polish population.

propaganda purposes. Another hero/victim sitting next to me whispered sadly: 'In those years, many such monuments were unveiled, so that you did not know whom they meant!' – referring to memory politics led by the communist regime in which Nazi violence was juxtaposed with Soviet friendship and liberation, silencing atrocities committed by the communists. Another hero/victim sitting at the back uttered decisively: 'Some things require changes, it is obvious! It will soon appear that it was us who murdered them' – the ghosts of past allegations and still-unexplained murders surfaced, mobilizing the heroes/victims to stand up for their secure position[90]. Gradually, it became clear that some people at the table thought that, in that region in these years, it was not only *hitlerowcy* that could have pacified, but also the Soviets (*Sowieci*), and that it was a safe assumption to claim that both aggressors should be blamed for the deaths imprinted on this specific inscription. The IPN historian intervened, proposing a solution: 'We can establish the names and the cause'. Another hero/victim sitting at the back (one of the very few with a communist background who was still participating in the meetings) protested against changing original inscriptions: 'They should have it the way they wanted'. The proxy, taking a position of negotiator, explained that they would only make a suggestion and that the district authorities would decide on their own. Still, since this monument commemorated an anonymous group of people, he suggested, it was a good idea for the IPN to help to make their names known. With such a conclusion the issue was closed.

Attention given to commemorative engagements reveals how the history of communism is still in the making, far from reaching a clear-cut narrative defining aims and consequences of the series of violent political confrontations. It further shows the urge the heroes/victims feel for securing their version of memory, revealing their sense of uncertainty and vulnerability. The closure of communism in Poland has happened in a condition resembling that of American attempts to deal with the Vietnam War (Sturken 1991). Its distinctive features comprise divisions, ambiguity, and failures which have been recently strangely translated into the myth of success and unity – a myth of a democratic Poland emergent from the ashes of WW2 and communism. The value placed by the heroes/victims on naming the transgressors is rooted in their feelings of being violated, as much as it has to do with their sense that a clear definition of the past is relevant for the future generations, so as to help them orient themselves in the stream of historical events. This version needs to be imprinted on the landscape in order to endure. Commemorative projects approved by the council are turned into commemorative forms around which commemorative practices take place. I shall now move to an

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[90] The anti-communist agents did commit many violent acts during WWII and the early years of communism. Some of the partisan groups are alleged to have committed crimes against the civilian population. Particularly controversial are the partisan actions taken against the Ukrainian civilian population which inhabited the Eastern borderlands of Poland.

example of a monument of the last partisan and the practices of commemoration which took place in front of it. Like all other monuments, this commemorative form had to gain the approval of the Council.

Monumentalizing the Hero/Victim

Dead bodies have a long and widespread history of being politically used, especially in moments of societal transformations (see: Robben 1996, Rév 2005, Verdery 1999). They were turned into a resource also on the Polish path towards democracy.

In the summer of 2006, I attended an unveiling of a monument of an underground soldier near Marianowice. The monument constituted a part of the larger project led by the Foundation 'We Remember', which initiated the commemoration of the main anti-communist partisan commanders who had led their troops in a hopeless fight against the Soviets and communists throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and up to the 1960s. The foundation has realized the potential of the dead bodies of partisans for the production of a national iconography by compressing complex life stories into symbolic carriers of political meanings. The project gained much support from the Law and Justice Party's government and the heroes/victims. Each unveiling was turned into a patriotic event of national significance. A few of these monuments were unveiled in Poland in the 2000s, evoking controversy at times[91].

During my fieldwork, I participated in two rituals of unveiling of partisans' monuments initiated by the Foundation *Pamiętamy* in different parts of Poland. These rituals were preceded by a Catholic mass, followed by an official ceremony of unveiling taking place in town centres. At both occasions, the cooperation with local authorities was a decisive factor, and the importance of the state agents was accredited by their spatial situatedness, direct evocations of gratitude and acknowledgement, guaranteed space for their speech acts and their central role in the actual acts of unveiling. Looking into the crowd gathered at both occasions brought an association with Winter's description of the post-war commemorative rituals at the organization of which a 'mixed cast of characters' was engaged, namely, public officials and those who came there for personal reasons (1995:86). In the Polish context, the organizational effort was additionally supported by Church officials and by people working for non-profit foundations and institutions dealing with various aspects of 'memory' and its production (foundations, museums, research institutes etc.). A large group of journalists was also

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[91] The biggest controversy surrounded the unveiling of a monument of a partisan commander from the Highlands, whose episodes of cooperation with the Security as well as his violent actions seemed well-documented.

present on those occasions. The heroes/victims came to these events in buses rented by the local authorities and in private cars, dressed up for the occasion, carrying standards and tiny cameras.

Designing the commemorative plaque.

This chapter deals with the unveiling of a monument of a figure called, by both the heroes/victims and the Security officers, *the last partisan*. This man hid underground till the late 60s when he was shot by an SB officer. He grew into a legend impeded with divergent meanings, evoking disparate feelings. In this analysis, I will focus on those who were performing the commemorative ceremony, and those who joined the spectacle just to observe, out of a Sunday boredom, as well as on one security officer, who was thinking affectively about the event that day. By focusing on these actors and their orientation towards the commemorative practices taking place around the monument of the last partisan, I wish to present the contested and conflicting aspect of the inflating memory forms.

Poland continued and discontinued

A number of Marianowice state officials spoke at the cemetery after the son of the partisan and the Marshal of the Voivodeship placed an ash urn behind the monument. These speech acts were very similar in content and structure to other speech acts uttered on such occasions. Treating them as a genre, I will call them *anti-communist commemorative addresses*. In such speech acts, the anti-communist partisan is treated as a symbol of the entire anti-communist struggle. The communist secret services and their methods, on the other hand, are used as a referent signifying the entirety of

communism and its malevolence. Such a pair of synecdoches is a common linguistic trope revealing a social imagination characteristic of the memory alliance in question. These tropes effectively compress time and complexities of the social world so as to build necessary continuities between past, present and future. These continuities justify the common effort and give direction for the newly-situated struggle. Such speech acts are also characterized by a display of competence in recent history presented by evocation of numerous names of places of tortures and oppressions, during which no differentiation is being made between places of crimes committed by the NKWD or the UB/SB – merging the Polish agents of communism of different eras with the Soviet actors. Reaching for the recent historiography legitimates one's words. Specific dates, names and other details build up a dramaturgy and a sense of the *real*. The speeches break the long-lasting silence about the crimes committed during communism and acknowledge the heroes/victims. Such evocations index 'the knowledge' and 'remembrance' performed by the younger generations of politicians, who take upon themselves a duty to 'pay the debts' to those who 'gave their lives and who spilled their blood' for this country, providing them at the same time with a sense of security, as the memory of their deeds now seems protected. The very partisan whose monument is being unveiled is at the same time treated as every anti-communist partisan (in particular he is those partisans who served under his command). Yet, this very partisan and his anti-communist actions are further indicative of 'the objection of the entire Polish society against this political and social system introduced through coercion' by the Soviet occupation. A synecdoche chain builds up an illusion of togetherness and common orientation to an aim. It helps to paint the picture of the communist Poland as colonised, a Poland in which everyone lived with secret anti-communist thoughts, in which a few were on the wrong side. The partisan who hid for over a dozen years under an existing communist state form, spending many years in a tiny bunker dug out of the ground in a peasant yard, is imagined as the one who 'never agreed with the communist system' to the extent that he preferred to live underground. The question is never posed in such speeches: whether it was a real 'choice' the 'last partisans' had or rather an ideological, psychological and socio-political 'trap' – a dead historical end which for some meant compliance, for others torture or suicide, and, for the very few, forest and underground as long as possible. As Poland during communism is imagined as a step back into the forests, secretively breathing under mother earth, waiting for liberation, those of the partisans who resisted in these places are turned into the ultimate symbol of this country, its genuine suffering and heroism.

With standards at the commemorative ritual.

Dramaturgy of kinship

Close kin participate in the unveilings of the monuments commemorating the anti-communist partisans. Their sheer presence proves the 'real' aspect of the past repression and suffering, pushing the official part of the ritual towards the highly personal 'dramaturgical modes of representation' (White 2004). Their presence and evocations mark the continuous suffering, a long-lasting effect of the past policies of the violent regime, underlying the interruption of the very intimate universe of kinship, which, as it is believed, should exist securely. Like authentic historical artefacts, the bereaved family's presence gives a sense of immediacy, 'naturalizing particular versions of the past' (Young 1993:127). As people respond more directly to objects than to the text (Young 1993:132), they also react with a more immediate reflex to a bereaved family's company than to the *anti-communist commemorative addresses*, which slowly turn into a convention.

During the unveiling of the last partisan, his son was sitting on a white plastic chair in front of the prominent politicians, Church agents and veterans. Dressed in a suit and tie, he sat there seemingly in a reflective mood, waiting for his turn to speak. When all the other speeches had passed, he took his turn, saying in a moved voice:

> 'I am the son of the last partisan. I do not remember my father. He died when I was ten. I only remember hands sticking out from the cereals and a disappearing in the forest figure. I – the son of the bandit, of a partisan – I lived through numerous humiliations and stress. When I was

growing up and my mother and my father's family were telling me about the father buried in a nameless grave at night by his murderers, decapitated… as a child, I did not understand it. But now I know that my father's murderers fell into ruins of humiliation, while he comes back; he comes back as the one who… [he cries] as… a symbol of endurance in an enslaved Poland'.

Such re-evocations of descriptive pictures invite imagination, which both produces empathy and takes us back to cultural representation of an ideal family in which the father should be with his son and wife. Again, the fact of his absence and the deterioration of family bonds are straightforwardly associated with the acts of security, which killed the man, as well as with his conscious sacrifice for the wellbeing of a larger community. During this speech, whispers could be heard: 'this is his son' – uttered somewhere in the backstage of the ritual. After the unveiling, the heroes/victims who dispersed to their daily lives told their fellows in the association who did not attend the events: 'and his son was there, he hardly remembers his father', 'he was so little when his father was murdered'. Such stories embodied by real people become signifiers and reminders of the communist past. Some traces of it (communist versions) must be erased, but some other traces, like this story, need to circulate and remind.

The ritual in the service of making the transformation happen

Unveilings of monuments are social rituals of remembrance. Dirks (1994), similarly to Comaroff (1985), looks at rituals' potential as a medium through which 'the values and structures of a contradictory world may be addressed and manipulated' interpreting rituals as both 'expressive and pragmatic, for they aim to change the real world by inducing transformations in the world of symbol and rite' (Comaroff 1985:196 cited in Dirks 1994:487). Such a vision of social rites moves away from Durkheimian and functionalist-structuralist interpretations towards a more dynamic, always re-emerging vision of ritual conditioned by power relations. Dirk argued that, as rituals serve as critical moments of definition for collectivities, these moments should not be perceived as final – an expression of a stable structure - but as provisional, always potent with possibilities of conflict emerging from politics of representation and misrepresentation. In his interpretation, the ritual is about display and achievement of power – power understood as an endless series of relations characterized by struggle and alignments (Dirks 1994).

Dirk's view of ritual is particularly fruitful for the analysis of rituals taking place at the periods of transformation. The commemorative ritual organized on the occasion of the unveiling of the partisan

monument, by a joint effort of the Marianowice authorities, the Church, and the heroes/victims, aimed at transforming the national community, its self-understanding and self-representation. The unveiling happened before a relatively narrow circle of people to whom the voivodeship proxy sent the invitations, or who happened to get to know about it through other 'memory networks'. The addresses and names written by his secretaries on the envelopes added up to a scaffolding of a local memory alliance bringing together people who share a common imagery of historical and symbolic representation of communism and its significance for the present. Such rituals do not simply commemorate heroes/victims. In the light of the dismantling of the communist power structures, they are minute steps in the constitution of new authority reliant on specific alliances. The engagement of actors in the memory project is dictated by a consciousness of precariousness of the state of 'being in power' which allows for realization of their vision of national community emergent from the past, as much as it is dictated by an experience of long years of subjugation and suffering.

For many people, who do not belong to the narrow circle tightly packed at the local cemetery where the unveiling took place, the version of history evoked during the unveiling feels like 'misrepresentation' or just a 'representation'. In this sense, the performative acts and their material remnants are pregnant with conflicts over meaning.

From an indigenous point of view

The unveiling of the monument of the last partisan took place in a small town located in the Marianowice region. Since the church in which the celebrations commenced was remote from the cemetery where the monument was located, a time was allocated in the schedule for the ritual participants to solemnly cover the distance. Because the church seemed to be filled out with faces which I knew belonged elsewhere – mostly to the city of Marianowice - I took my chance to walk through the town and see what its inhabitants were preoccupying themselves with. When I was taking a photo of a street, a man in his forties walked out from his house, stopped in front of my camera, smiling and giving me a pose to be fixed in an image. Naturally, we started to talk about 'the event' to which his first reaction was 'let me show you something'. While leading me to an empty space in the square, he pointed towards a building which 'used to be a bank' during the communist time. 'This bank was robbed by the partisan whose monument was just about to be unveiled', he explained. During this action, a few militia men were killed and the empty spot in the square he was pointing at now used to be filled with a monument devoted to those lives lost 'on duty' in the name of the 'people's authority'.

An empty spot in the square.

The square on which we stood was located opposite the cemetery. The two were divided by a two-lane street. As we were looking towards the other side of the street, where a few men in suits and uniforms were impatiently taking up their positions, my new acquaintance stated: 'I do not know how long this monument will last'. Some minutes later he told a story of a recently unveiled 'monument of Jews' consecrated by the Marianowice archbishop[92] a few years ago, which had been demolished not long ago. I looked around just in time to realize that the fragment of the town in which stage two of the celebrations was to take place was strangely appropriated by variously marked bodies. This situatedness implied a division along the lines of inclusion and exclusion. The local population gathered on one side of the street, while the direct participants in the commemorative ritual assembled on the other side.

While the police officers in uniform were gradually taking over the street by diverting the traffic away from the memory politics towards the smaller streets of the town, the heroes/victims dressed in military clothing, official authorities in suits, the clergy in cassocks, and other people dressed 'for the occasion', gathered to commemorate the great partisan, were slowly forming a column in front of the church ready to walk towards the cemetery. The locals, on the other hand, congregated at the edge of the main square situated opposite the cemetery. Grouped in threes or fours, emerging like

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[92] The Marianowice archbishop is considered by the heroes/victims to be a 'liberal'. The term is being used pejoratively and it derives from the archbishop's ecumenical teachings. In terms of his stand on the question of memory politics, this translated into acts of inclusion of Jews into the commemorative landscape of Marianowice, as well as an objection to lustration laws – particularly those pointed at the verification of the Catholic Church's past. It has been recently announced by the mass media that the archbishop himself was cooperating with the Security. The archbishop denies this, claiming there was no evidence to make such an accusation.

phantoms from within the square, the locals stared at the cemetery, occasionally commenting on the progress of the event. Whenever I approached someone, the commentaries halted. When I sat next to two men in their seventies and asked why they were sitting on this side of the street, one of them swiftly replied, laughing, 'because we are unwanted guests, we have to observe from the far side' [*a my tu nieproszone goście, my z daleka my tu musim obserwować*]. When I asked about the partisan and their attitude to his monumentalization, one of them said: 'What do I care? He neither helped me nor did he harm me. What does it disturb me?' [*A co mnie tam. Ani mi nie pomógł, ani mi zaszkodził. Co mi to przeszkadza?*]. I stood up and moved a bit further, taking photographs and looking for some more interlocutors. An old man sitting on a bench replied 'yes' to my question 'Have you known him [the partisan]?'. When I asked him how he had been [the partisan], he answered 'How was he? He was good. He was good to me. He did not beat me, so, what… And how do you say?' [*A dobry był… dla mnie, nie bił mnie, to co… A co Pani powie*?]. I said I was not there to know him and played the question back: 'What is being said about him in here?'. The man stated: 'Oh, different things, one says this, one says that' [*A różnie gadają. Jeden tak, drugi tak.*]. I wanted to know whether he remembered the monument which was no longer there and as he confirmed this I asked whose monument it was. He evoked a typical Polish family name – Wójcik - as if it was clear who Wójcik was. When I asked him 'who was Wojcik?', he said 'He was a communist' – a name which sounded different from 'those who were killed on duty' uttered by the self-proclaimed local expert on history some minutes ago. Approaching the cemetery, a military orchestra filled my short conversations with a sound of authority announcing the actual beginning of the second stage of the commemorative ritual. I started to move towards the other side of the street, leaving behind those whose everyday lives were filled with versions of that particular life story which sounded different from the textbook's and the heroes/victims' accounts. Variously aligned voices - 'he beat me', 'he did not beat me', 'what do I care' - were now occupying one space of the town, clearly peripheral to the central politics of the new state which brought the monument into it. For them, the memory politics was an easily graspable term. They gathered there to watch a political spectacle. Experiencing the changing memory landscape did not evoke an emotion in them. It rather reminded them of the arbitrariness of the political craft to which they felt subjected if not subjugated. This spectacle gave them an occasion to complain about great sums of money being wasted on such events, while they represented themselves as being continuously forced to tighten their belts. In the commentaries of these people, the national memory project conflicted with the everyday wellbeing of the nation.

Locals gathering on the opposite side of the street.

Recollections of the Security Officer

One person for whom this unveiling was particularly important did not participate in it. It was Janek, a former Bezpieka officer who became an orphan at the age of three in the 1940s. His father, a local communist functionary, was shot in his house located in a village close to the one in which the unveiling was now taking place. He was shot in front of his wife and his son (Janek's eyes covered by his mother) by the partisan, the celebration of whose monument I am describing here. During one of our phone conversations, which took place some weeks before the unveiling, he mentioned to me that such a ceremony was to take place, and that we should have gone there together. This idea was of concern for me, as it was difficult to imagine how I could actually be there with the Security officer at a celebration at which the heroes/victims I chose to work with were taking part. It turned out, though, that he would not have been able to attend the ceremony, as he was busy with a court case in which he was accused of a 'communist crime'. When I met him a day earlier, he told me he had a dream in which he set fire to this monument. He rephrased swiftly, 'I would set fire to this monument'.

Janek was agitated by the event and he kept coming back to it during our meetings. In one of the conversations we had together with another security officer, he recalled the last partisan and the unveiling. The other security officer knew about Janek's life story. In response, he expressed his regret at not getting the files of Janek's father from the main security archive, suggesting this would have provided proof of the last partisan's responsibility for the cruel murder of his father. Janek,

however, had his special proof, which he had shown me during one of our previous meetings. It was a tiny booklet – his mother's ID - proving her membership in a peasants' collective. Evoking touching memories of his mother, whose life was broken, but who nonetheless did all she could have done for Janek, this proof was particularly effective. Randomly, on the margins of pages, notes of dates and initials were taken in pencil. According to Janek, these were his mother's hand-written notes documenting the visits of the last partisan to their house after the murder of his father. 'For the money he was coming. She had so little'.
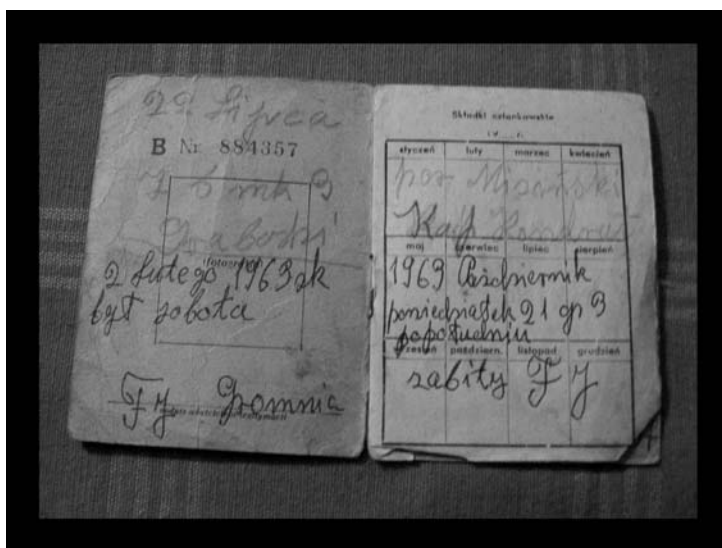
An ID belonging to Janek's mother.

In contrast to the heroes/victims, Janek had no officially approved documents to cling to while imagining his family's past. There was no big narrative in which to nest his pieces of information. There was the communist narrative proclaiming the partisans to be the enemies of the state. However, it lost its authority with the collapse of the regime. He tried to make his memories exist in the new framework of the IPN and the democratic state form, asking the IPN employees to give him access to his father's files. To his annoyance though, he is still waiting. Unable to situate his processes of remembrance in an authoritative register, Janek was restricted to cultivating them in a kinship context. The kinship register seems most effective when it comes to processes of memory formation as it is capable of evoking strong emotions which feed memories. In the Polish cultural model of kinship, ties, which link together family members, due to their cultural loading and immediacy, produce the abundance of affects. These emotions are based on expectations and values differently associated with behaviours of family members, adding up to ambivalent sentiments of which the

most disturbing is the sense of guilt or regret, often surfacing upon the death of a close relative (Witeska 2003). Such sentiments grant the processes of remembrance their persistence, even in the condition of the lack of a grand narrative into which particular recollections could be fitted. They motivate younger generations to fabricate out of available resources what Hirsh calls *postmemory*.

> 'Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that proceeded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created' (Hirsh 1996:659).

Hirsh coined the term *postmemory* in reference to creative acts of young Jewish artists unsettled by their parents' and grandparents' past. Deprived of a direct access to that past, they clearly bred original forms of remembering relying on a narrative which came out of a generation with a common experience of being violated. Despite being a security officer and not an artist, Janek's processes of remembrance could be understood through the lens of the postmemory concept. His type of imaginative investment stemmed from his former profession of an investigative officer. His imagination does not work towards creation of art works representing suffering, but towards linking tiny pieces of information together to form a hypothesis, to imagine the motifs, the behaviours, the violent acts, and to make a coherent story out of it. The story of the murder of his father surfaced at that point of his life for a reason. Accused of a communist crime and undergoing a trial, Janek not only looked for the tools of defence, but also genuinely wanted a coherent explanation of himself. Furnished with limited resources for achieving coherence, he remained attached to the story of his childhood, turning it into a resource highly relevant for his self-narrative.

Feldman argued that 'Formulaic and ideological depiction can leave vast realms of experience unnarrated and dehistorized […] making them inaccessible to a society as a cultural resource' (2003:61). Janek's story does not seem to hold a potential for becoming a cultural resource under the present condition of a memory project in Poland. He did not mention this story during the trial, leaving its power of defence for himself alone. He believed it used to be a resource when Bezpieka offered him a position, claiming that his father's murder was the reason why he was recruited. Yet,

now, the story sounded rather absurd. Throughout this fieldwork such tiny absurd stories helped me understand the illusory quality of grand narratives.

Erasure

Razed to the ground

The grand narrative created through the memory project in question is not only about constructing. The memory project implies erasing the communist forms of remembrance understood as fake and improper. Apart from being a sign of a societal need for reconstruction, the process of erasure strengthens the stability of the new memory project furnishing the new commemorative forms with a sense of indisputability. In Marianowice, in the first place, Bierut's monument and The Monument of the Soviet Soldiers were erected. Many communist commemorative forms, however, spread among the cemeteries and in the public spaces, not touched by the crowds overthrowing the system, still wait to be noticed and removed through bureaucratic channels. The bureaucratic management of the memory landscape in Marianowice depends on the local configurations of power and grassroots initiatives. During my fieldwork, the alliance of the conservative politicians and anti-communist heroes/victims influenced this bureaucratic management.

Upon a visit to the voivodeship office I was given a file called the 'state of memory' which included those commemorative inscriptions and monuments which had been unveiled in Marianowice since 1989. Asking for a list of the communist commemorative forms which were erected I got an answer - 'This is not recorded'. The official I talked to admitted that, by the time he had taken his office, most of the communist sites of commemoration had been already 'razed to the ground' [*wykoszone*]. 'They were razed to the ground just after 1989 and no one recorded it'. He also mentioned, though, that there were remnants, mostly remote from Marianowice and his office. Since 2005, he wrote letters to approximately forty municipalities officially asking for the removal of the commemorative plaques which honoured the communist agents. Apparently, there existed a correlation between the pace of erasure and the location of a commemorative form. The more centrally located the monument, the more probable its rapid disappearance.

'Graves are something quite different' – said the proxy, when I told him about my walk through a local cemetery where a long row of graves, fitted into one neat line, seemingly uniform, displayed the internal contradictions of the commemorative landscape to a careful viewer. A couple of graves of the 'fixing agents of the people's authority' and 'SB' and 'MO' officers, who were buried under

grey tombstones without symbols, opened a row which was then closed by the 'innocent' white group of crosses decorated with white and red flowers and national emblems – a row of graves marking the revived memory of anti-communist underground fighters. In the middle of the cemetery, a tall obelisk-like statue for the 'heroes of liberty', unveiled during communism, overshadowed a big cross recently devoted to the memory of the victims of the Katyń crime. The Pine cemetery near Marianowice demarcates the historically difficult landscape in a similar spatial arrangement. There, a 'Russian tank'[93] surrounded by the graves of the unknown Soviet soldiers is clearly visible from the Katyń monument naming all the victims of the infamous mass murder inscribed under a large metal cross. The anti-communist fighters also lie buried in proximity. All of these politically distinct and significant bodies are in turn surrounded by less significant singular graves of people with politically irrelevant names. 'If it comes to graves, a far-reaching delicacy ought to be applied' – said the proxy. His secretary followed by stating 'Everybody has the right to a burial'. 'However' – the proxy continued – 'some of the graves should be deprived of a status of a war grave'. Such status implies the obligation of the state to take care of a grave or a monument. In fact, those graves commemorating the 'fixing agents of the people's authority' were deprived of the state's protection and care last year. The proxy explained to me how this slower track of erasure would eventually happen: 'after a while, the graves which are not taken care of can be ploughed'. A Catholic rule of respect for the dead requires the process to look as if it were natural, the naturalness being achieved through abandonment. This process grows in opposition to intervention into the 'secular' spaces marking state authority where the state agents acting in the name of democracy and historical justice interfere and remove the 'shameful' acts of commemoration. As they remove the 'outdated in today's reality memory', they simultaneously unveil the new one.

I will now move to the story of the erasure of a plaque located at the peripheries of Marianowice's memory politics. Through the story of the plaque, I introduce the position of the second group of informants with whom I worked during the fieldwork in the memory project – the security officers.

The straightening of the history

One winter's afternoon, while interviewing a retired officer of the citizen militia, I heard a story of a memorial plaque which was hung and was taken down so as to be hung and taken down again. He

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[93] In Marianowice, Russian 'liberators' are monumentalized in a form of a tank into which one can walk. During the communist time, kindergarten and school trips would visit that place on All Saints Day, lighting up candles. Then, with the transformation, the tank was abandoned. For a couple of years there were almost no candles lit up in the proximity of it, while the Katyń cross had its shadow made out of candles left by the people on the ground in front of it. Last year, the tank became illuminated again, and the number of candles left in its proximity and in front of the Katyń commemorative cross became comparable.

told the story with a sentiment of compassion for the people who wanted to hang the plaque and disappointment with the political condition of the local and state politics. After that interview I met with Jerzy - a President of the Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Republic of Poland in one of Marianowice's districts - who initiated renovation of the plaque. It turned out that Jerzy was very frugal in giving his own account. He narrated the story, constantly referring to a pile of papers he had gathered to document the whole 'scandal', repeating 'it is all written here, it is all written here!', pointing at the pile of copies of local mass media reports, official correspondence, and his own papers. He sat there with me in one room of his cold flat decorated with hunting trophies, very silent and empty, looking at me calmly and hardly ever speaking, at one point reaching for his heart pills, at a few points visibly moved, stifling his emotions, and fixing his wet eyes on one point.

Empty wall left after taking down the plaque.

The renovated plaque was hung on the wall of the local police office in the summer of 2005 by an initiative of the Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. It was unveiled with the approval of the local police office, voivodeship police headquarters and the Marianowice voivodeship office. The plaque was also sanctified by a priest allocated to the local garrison – his presence indexing an ambiguous return of 'the ex-functionaries of the communist state' to the Church after 1989. One of Jerzy's colleagues uttered solemnly the following words before the unveiling:

Today's ceremony commemorates the history of this district. It is an expression of remembering the functionaries associated with a service for the Ministry of Interior Affairs, who, during years of 1944-1947, fell in the tragic circumstances while on duty for our district[94]. It is a statement of a historical truth [prawda historyczna] concerning post-war, complicated history of our nation. Memory and history are not interpretations of events and no one can say today whether this death was justified or not.

The expression 'functionaries associated with a service' and a usage of an official name of the ministry which sounds the same today are examples of a language of distantiation which ambiguates the ex-officers of militia and secret services' belonging to the communist state form, thus distancing them from the ascription of guilt for its crimes. Their version of a commemorative event is more than a commemoration. It is a desperate call for coherence. Through renovation of the plaque and changes made to the inscription, the former functionaries aimed at bringing the communist past together with the democratic present in order to grant themselves continuity and unchangeable recognition. They expect to be respected. Their understanding of transformation and democracy does not include punishment, but a right to one's voice and version. The plaque, which hung on the wall of the local police office, was one material sign of the shift towards a blurred language of distantiation from communism adopted by the functionaries, who searched for a safe place in democratic Poland.

The plaque, 'renovated' on Jerzy's initiative, was hung for the first time on the same wall in 1959. At that time, it carried the following inscription:

'In memory of the fallen functionaries of the M.O. [civic militia] in the fights with the bandits [*bandy*][95] [...] for the People's Poland [*Polska Ludowa*] [...] for the fifteenth anniversary of the M.O. – the society'.

The inscription on a new plaque had a different formula:

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[94] The reading of the plaque demands historical knowledge. 'Communist functionaries' who died between 1944-1947 on duty, were most probably involved in fights with local anti-communist partisans.
[95] A 'name' commonly used by the communist functionaries to call the anti-communist partisans pointing at the criminal and illegal aspects of their deeds.

'To the fallen on duty between 1944-1947 functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior Affairs of Marianowice district - The Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Marianowice District'.

A slight but significant change in language indicates that 'the ex-communist functionaries' hoped that they could keep being recognized in the new state form simply by 'straightening' the linguistic nuances. The move from the 'M.O.' towards the 'Functionaries of the Ministry…' points towards the communist agents' insistence on continuity of the Polish state form, which could grant them acknowledgement. The renovated plaque, officially approved, lasted until the beginning of 2006. In 2006, after the Law and Justice Party came to power in the autumn of 2005, the Marianowice Voivode Proxy for the Veterans' Affairs and Heritage wrote a letter to the Chief of the Voivodeship Police Office, politely asking for the removal of the plaque in question. Authorities of the district, and the local heroes/victims, took a firm position: 'The plaque must be removed', 'These were murderers'. A seemingly impartial passer-by gave his opinion to a local journalist: 'I do not think that these militia guys should be commemorated, but I got used to this plaque' – expressing an indifference. The proxy of the voivode stated authoritatively: 'I think the fate of this sort of plaque is determined', 'such plaques are falsifiers of history'. The voivode of Marianowice stated: 'Exposing in the independent Poland commemorations glorifying formations which served the communist regime, and which are negatively evaluated by history, depreciate the public image of the state sector'. Meanwhile, Jerzy lamented: 'I am surprised by the action of the Marianowice Voivodeship Office. The Militia officers fought for the law and order [*ład i porządek*] in this country, doesn't this count? […]We will protest and we will write about it to wherever it is possible [*pisać w tej sprawie gdzie się da*[96]]. Such straightening of history [*prostowanie historii*] has no sense'.

This weird formulation 'strengthening of history' carries much depth of expression for the historical position of people like Jerzy. They hold an intimate knowledge of the past violence, in which they were often personally involved. At the same time, the 'new version', which was never evoked with such strength before, left them with no space of social understanding of their past and present positions, no space for defence, denying them the right to complex situatedness and human suffering. During our meeting, Jerzy heaved a sigh and said: 'I lived through things in life. I have been delegated to Warsaw. […] I have never seen such hatred as today, REALLY!. […] Nothing is done for the *wellbeing of the people'*. He talked about the kids who have no food and beg, about

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[96] Writing to places, numerous appeals uncannily remind me of letters found in the IPN archives written by mothers of the repressed. The ultimate letter was always a letter to Bierut, who had a power of 'pardon'.

incommensurable crimes characterizing today's reality, a moral decay, and summed it up: 'things do not work in here'. Then, he fixed his gaze on a photo of a plaque and recalled a group of children who, on their way from school, stopped to leave flowers and light a candle in front of it – as if this image was to legitimate its present existence, an image which most probably belonged to a faraway past, if not to Jerzy's pure imagination, as contemporary kids do not gather under the memory plaques on their own initiative to commemorate the old functionaries.

The Chief of the Marianowice Police informed Jerzy in an official letter with authoritative stamps that, despite the proper legal regulations, 'the commemorative plaques which are out of date [*nieaktualne*] in today's reality' cannot be destroyed. Hence the former plaque – out of date in today's reality - lies in the cellar of the district police office, while the second one is somewhere in Marianowice Police headquarters, and the wall is left empty. Yet, since it has not been repainted, a sign of absence signifies no illusion of 'common memory'.

When I asked the proxy how it was possible for the plaque to have been hung and unveiled he explained that it happened because, at that time, a different voivode was in office. The proxy described the four-year term (2000-2004) of the previous voivode as a 'red terror'. The 'red terror' meant that a few people engaged in the 'correct' memory politics faced 'mortifications' (namely they were fired). The point was that 'the old voivode supported the Security' said the proxy, immediately correcting his slip of the tongue[97] - 'the voivode supported the communist veteran circles and their commemorations'. So when the voivode changed, 'more representative' circles were invited to the commission – here he named a few, articulating their names as if naming legendary heroes, mentioning among them some members of the association I worked with. These people opted for the plaque to be removed.

The pace

The pace of inflation and erasure of the communist forms of commemoration in Marianowice depended on the local power relations understood in terms of the ideological genealogy of the post-communists and the post-anti-communists. It further depended on the centre-periphery model with the cities being inflated and purified much faster than the rural districts surrounding them. Only the cemeteries turned into spaces of refuge for the 'outdated' inscriptions and monuments. Commemorative acts and acts of erasure constitute historically specific forms that political action has

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[97] It is obvious that representatives of the secret services would not sit in such bodies; nonetheless it is very common that other people are placed under such a commonsense label, which gradually starts to encapsulate the definite meaning of communism.

taken in both communist and post-communist Poland. A pendulum swings, reversing the locations of specific heroes/victims and perpetrators. The chapters to follow provide a closer look at the position of the communist perpetrators in the new polity.

Chapter Seven

The Factory of Pathologies:

collectivized imageries about the former security officers under the democratic state

The results, as I observed them in the laboratory, are disturbing. They raised the possibility that human nature cannot be counted on to insulate men from brutality and inhumane treatment under the direction of malevolent authority. A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do irrespective of the content of the act, and without limitations of conscience, as long, as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority. If in this study, an anonymous experimenter could successfully command adults to subdue a fifty year old man, and force on him painful electric shocks against his protests, one can only wonder what government with its vastly greater authority and prestige can command of its subjects.

From a film *Obedience* by Stanley Milgram (1965)

Demonization of a banal evil

In its entirety, this thesis consists of an analysis of the processes of formation of political subjectivities in the context of the memory and retributive justice project employed in the post-socialist Poland. The subjects I am interested in are those who were politically involved during communism, either on the regime's side or acting against it. The processes of formation of political subjectivities I focus on are those which evolve as a consequence of interactions within authoritative, institutional settings. This chapter opens a discussion concerning the people who worked as employees of the communist state in the security forces and as such are legally and politically recognized today in the authoritative representations and interactions (legal acts, public performances, rituals). With this ethnography, I follow the symbolic journey of the former security officers through 'democratic transition' undertaking the analysis of their personal accounts of change, which are given from the standpoint of the publicly stigmatized wrong-doers. Their predominant feeling is that they are hunted like witches, recognizing the events occurring in public life as a collective phobia for punishing them. The publicly emergent representations of the past prove divergent with their memories and versions.

During socialism, the Security officers were part of an 'invisible' cast of the powerful, enjoying high prestige based on fear and an image of omnipotence. They lived their lives in bizarre isolation from the rest of society. Society constituted the subject of their work, from which, for methodological reasons, they had to be secluded. Beginning in the early 1990s, the processes of separation from the rest of society continued – this time in a symbolic form, and in a reversed normative order. A number of legal acts as well as mass media coverage started to normatively define them as 'perpetrators' and essentialize them as 'morally wrong'. The middle-ranking former officers of the Secret Police gradually entered a stage of ambiguity and disorientation which reached its peak when the Law and

Justice Party came to power in 2005. In this part of the thesis, I am concerned with the experience of inadequacy and displacement involved in being represented as evil in the post-socialist Poland.

The transition which has taken place in Poland should be read as 'more than a technical process – of introducing democratic procedures and methods of electioneering, of forming political parties and nongovernmental organizations, and so on. The "something more" includes meanings, feelings, the sacred ideas of morality, the nonrational – all ingredients of "legitimacy" or "regime consolidation" (that dry phrase) yet far broader than what analyses employing those terms usually provide' (Verdery 1999:25). The aspects of the transition I am interested in concern socio-political mechanisms mediating experiential realities of individuals engaged in personal quests for meaning. I scrutinize the memory politics, an important element of which is constituted by demonization and heroization/victimization of the actors belonging to the commemorated and judged past. Apart from commemorative and recognition practices, the project consisted of the 'practices of accusation and accountability' (Feuchtwang 2000:60) through which certain groups of people have come to be marked as evil and have thus been pushed into liminal social positions and disoriented after falling down from the top of the communist iceberg. Taussig argued that demonization emerges from within cultures of rumour, fantasy and terror (Taussig 1987). This part of the thesis adds another component to this argument. In Poland, demonization is also fed by the condition in which dialogue and direct exchange are blocked by fixed and demonized representations in compliance with which people take actions and interpret their past and present lives. These commonly staged demonization practices which essentialize agents of the repressive regimes simultaneously conceal the *banality of evil* (Arendt 1963) and prevent its deconstruction.

In this part of the thesis, I look at a recent attempt to establish a hegemonic discourse defining the communist past undertaken by the Law and Justice Party in Poland. This political formation, highly devoted to national and Catholic ideas, worked towards the production of a coherent narrative about the communist past, promoting an image of essentialized, unitary identities, chargeable and awardable for an image of the past, legitimated in the present. The technology of state power enables state agents to pursue *the politics of past identities* intertwined with the possibilities of producing the authoritative interpretations of the past events. The national and religious metaphors, institutional discourses and commemorative politics expressed through monumentalization of the past, as described in the first part of the thesis, worked towards an authoritative closure of the communist past in the present. For the former officers of Security, though, the emergent version was

clearly foreign, provoking reformulations of one's self-schemata or stronger adherence to one's beliefs.

The Accusations

Anthropologists who studied witchcraft have traditionally focused on the social contexts which activated waves of accusations. La Fontaine argues for the social contexts fostering accusations to be those involving some kind of conflict (La Fontaine 1998:13). In the post-1989 Poland, the conflict over meaning and interpretation of the communist past has been emerging as one of the insoluble issues. Variously positioned political players perceived the problem differently. The struggle over the attitude of the new polity towards its old and troublesome face became enmeshed in the issues of growing social and economic inequalities fed by the capitalist logic of reforms. Many segments of Polish society suffered economic and moral hardship during the initial years of transition. La Fontaine and others illustrate how 'witch-finding movements' arise 'from a general sense of social unease, a public view that there is an escalation of misfortune, indicating that witches are increasing in number and that their actions are affecting everyone' (La Fontaine 1998:16). The first decades of the transition, which most of the people imagined would lead towards a total well-being, negatively verified this myth. The huge restructuring of industry and privatization led to high levels of unemployment. The older generations brought up in the communist condition found the process of adaptation to the new competitive market economy very frustrating and humiliating at times. The disenchanted and unsuccessful parts of society comprised the electorate of the populist parties and the Law and Justice Party, which offered a clear explanation for the present state of affairs and provided a coherent image of those responsible for it.

In 2005, in Poland, with the electoral victory of the Law and Justice Party, an umbrella of protection was withdrawn from the post-communist elites who, after a series of scandals, became widely recognized as corruptive and unjustly privileged. A wave of accusations stretching between the communist past and the post-communist present emerged as a reaction to what was understood by a large part of society as the anomalous position of advantage for the post-communist circles. That year, many people came to recognize the ambiguity of transition, which left the relations between communism and post-communist Poland unregulated. The newly emergent discourse helped them name what they felt to be so deeply disturbing in everyday life: in the aftermath of the transition, the post-communist elites abused their privileged position and, through illegal channels involving mafia and former security officers, robbed the nation. Since the Law and Justice Party formed a

government and achieved a significant majority in the Parliament, the issue of *dekomunizacja* was revitalized through institutional channels of the state, which granted its effective implementation.

The newly-emergent political discourse disseminated by the Law and Justice Party's members and supporters represented the Round Table Agreement as a *deal* in which the agents of the communist past were granted untouchable status. According to this view, supported by serious sociological studies (Staniszkis 2001), the shelter for the communist functionaries was constituted by the silent move of the communist agents from politics towards economics, as well as by the agreed retreat from the idea of lustration, and limited interference in the matters of the Secret Political Police (Mazowiecki's so-called *thick line*). The Law and Justice Party endorsed a *belated* programme of punishment and elimination in reference to the communist past and its various forms of contemporary persistence*.* By using the notion of a *deal*, the Law and Justice Party extended the earlier communist *betrayal of patriotic* values and extreme violence performed by the communist regime over the *acts of illegality* that *contaminated the newborn* post-1989 *Poland.* The responsibility for these past and present transgressions was ascribed to the conscious agents involved in the workings of communism, with particular stress being put on the Secret Services, a form of power imagined as mysterious and polluted by violence and soviet servitude, and its eyes – that is the secret informers (TW) who happened to reside silently among the righteous ones, that is, the opposition.

> *[…] but to tell the truth, […] what happened before 1989 is not the most central, though, it is also very important; still, the most crucial is what took place after. It is pivotal to describe the shape of our public life and – let's assume – also its economic aspect, in the light of the actions (I am talking about the pathological actions, not the legal, authorized ones) taken by the secret services. […] this sort of knowledge must be shown, because it must be revealed to the people in what sort of world they lived, and primarily, this world must be eliminated, meaning that we have to create a new, better Poland, where this sort of mechanisms – the extremely pathological, incredibly harmful […] will not function* (Jarosław Kaczyński, The Prime Minister of Poland, cited after Polish Radio One, 18 October 2006).*

> *Lustration is part of the project of bringing back the correct apprehension of the post-war history of Poland – it is an element of a historical memory. It should be demonstrated – who stood at the side of a liberated Poland, and who guarded that system. In this context, the TW problem is just one side of the story. Another side of the coin concerns the accountability of the functionaries of*

the PRL's secret services. I think that both problems should be resolved as soon as possible. […]
That is why […] I signed the imperfect act on lustration […]. That is why I also plan to present in
the Parliament an act which denies the functionaries of the communist regime their unmerited
privileges (President of Poland cited after Rzeczpospolita 12 January 2007).

A series of accusations that vigorously filled Polish public life in 2005-2007 targeted the two main categories recognized as 'impure' and deserving exclusion: the 'functionaries of the communist state' – especially the former officers of the Secret Police - and their secret informants marked as 'cooperators' (współpracownicy). Such labelling constitutes a *dividing practice* (Foucault 1982) realized through the symbols invented to mark collectivities (Merry 1992) aimed at objectifying and fixing the past. This part of the thesis proposes to view the numerous instances of allegations, which saturated Polish public life, as a means of clarifying the ambiguous state of past relationships and transition, as well as solving the questions of responsibility - both for communism and for what came after it. Because of the fact that the present Polish political scene has relied on the same actors who were in conflict during communism, the project of retributive justice should be understood as a negotiation process between variously positioned groups.

Law and ordering the past

The key words describing the Law and Justice program related to the communist past are: remembering, preventing amnesia, disclosure, historical truth, purification, and justice. Two examples of discursive performance by the main politician from the Law and Justice Party briefly illustrate the described political programme:

The Polish Prime Minister, Jarosław Kaczyński, said, on the 7th of October 2006, during the political gathering of the Law and Justice Party's supporters:

We are not afraid of <u>the knowledge concerning the past</u> *and the present. We want to* <u>disclose</u> *it*
with all the force and consequences, still, in a responsible manner. […] in our national life, the
truth concerning the past and the present of last 17 years is important; is crucial. We endorse the
<u>*unequivocal disclosure*</u> (Cited after Gazeta Wyborcza 07.10.2006).

On the 18th of October 2006 during the radio interview, he stated about the communist and post-communist past:

[…]<u>this knowledge must be shown</u>*, because* <u>it must be revealed</u> *to the people in what sort of*
world they lived, and primarily, <u>this world must be eliminated</u>*, meaning that we have to create a*

new, better Poland, where this sort of mechanisms – the extremely pathological, incredibly
harmful […] will not function (Cited after the Polish Radio Program One)*.*

Creating an image of the past as pathological provides resources to talk about radical changes and helps to build up one's own missionary identity based on the contrast with such a past and the people who are pigeonholed as authors and co-producers of that time. As often underlined by the current Polish President, the changes in *the lawful state* are being achieved through the creation of normative and punitive codes. Legality is the key concept and point of reference in the policy-making of today. In the next chapter, describing the trial of a security officer, I will focus on the potential of law for describing the past and shaping the present, as well as on the connections between the regimes of legality and the psyche of the actors involved in its performance.

The post-1989 legal framework *in status nascendi* that concerns the past regime consists of a few components. On the 18th of December 1998 the Polish parliament established the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation - which institutionally embraces most of the current policies concerning the communist past. The IPN is a triple body. It collects, preserves and discloses the files assembled by the Polish secret security apparatus from the period of 22nd of July 1944 till 31st of December 1989[98], thus serving as an archive. It forms a research and educational centre for propagating the newly (re)interpreted history. And finally, it works as a prosecution commission that investigates the crimes against the Polish nation from the Nazi and communist periods as well bringing the actual charges into court. The institute became additionally involved in the process of lustration – which implies an obligation on the legally defined public figures to make an official testimony in regard to their past cooperation with the communist secret security apparatus.

Apart from the Act on the IPN, the interpretative discourse on the communist time comprises a number of scattered acts concerning various aspects of that past and its remnants. There is a numerously amended act stating the obligation of disclosing one's cooperation or work for the secret security services between 1944 and 1990 that binds widely defined public figures. There are acts defining such categories as veterans, and victims of oppressions, along with their privileges and rights. There is a project defining the category of a communist functionary which aims at depriving

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[98] These dates indicate the life of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL).

people falling into this category of their privileges and status. There exist legal acts concerning medals, official rituals, and commemorative practices.

The Chief of the Chancellery of the current Polish President who spoke in the Parliament on the 11th of January 2007 evoked the following sentences while closing his speech:

> [...] there exists an obvious need to extend the catalogue of functions and professions, which are to be granted to <u>the trustful ones</u>, whose past is free of incidents which speak for their conscious cooperation with the secret security services of the communist state. [...] conscious support given to the bodies which were hostile to the Polish nation should equal <u>loss of the elementary moral qualifications</u> for the realization of the duties and professions that are crucial from the standpoint of the social life as well as for the correct functioning of the <u>structures of the democratic state</u> *(From the Presidential website)*.

Such legal order is formulated in a peculiar eclectic genre characterizing the post-socialist geographies. Legal pluralism implies here the reliance on and continuity with the legacy of the previous system, with its simultaneous selective denial. This denial is achieved, among other measures, through the insertion of democratising discourse and other transnational discursive flows like the one concerning universal Human Rights or supremacy of the European legal order. It is important to note, for instance, that the deployment of the Human Rights discourse in the legal frameworks concerning the authoritarian and repressive past does differ locally. As much as Human Rights may seem universal and global, the actual contextualization and legal utilization of such discourse may bring different outcomes and take on different meanings. As opposed to democratising societies of Africa - and the South African Republic serves as a good example here - where the human rights discourse is used to guide 'the population away from punitive retribution […] turning the notion of reconciliation into the 'discursive linchpin' of the post-authoritarian governments' (Wilson 2000:78), in today's Poland, the centralizing political project focuses on amnesia prevention, purification and punitive retribution which completely dim the possibility of reconciliation. Such an approach to the issue of settling the accounts with the past results in constant attempts by the security officers to distance themselves from guilt.

If a man works in a cesspool, he must dirty himself a little

The Security officers in their narratives talk about the past in a radically different way. This part of the chapter provides a context for and an introduction to the analysis of acts of distantiation

performed by the security officers in reaction to their symbolic exclusion from the polity. It sheds light on ways in which the security officers interpret the past events, and on ways in which this interpretation differs from what the memory project authorizes.

Andrzej, who was a volunteer in the Internal Security Corpus, narrates the first years of communism in the following way:

> Andrzej: The government itself ran away through Romania[99] and here, there was nothing left, well, the kind of groups – those, supposedly partisans, who were having fun and, most of the time, were administered by the priests. When there was a mass going on in the church, or something of this sort, evensong, he [the priest] sent the women back home and told the men to stay.
>
> Me: And what did he say?
>
> Andrzej: Oh, and he was saying [irritated], well, he instigated them against the communism, that they [the communists] do not believe in God and so on. To take the weapon and fight when they [the communists] would come, well… so the priests, half of them were *volksdeutsche*. And they now dare to accuse those, who were coming to Bezpieka. But about those, who were *volksdeutsche*, they say no word. One day people went to confess. The day after the military policeman took them away. So all of this is concealed, they are lying about everything.

This fragment of Andrzej's narrative provides a point of access to the interpretative frameworks which have enabled Andrzej to understand the world and to direct his actions in the past. In this narrative section, he focuses on the clarification of position and features of the political agents, who are being glorified today, and whom he fought against in the past. He discredits the Polish government of the interwar period by presenting its evacuation as 'running away', implying a lack of responsibility for the country on their part. He moves on to the nationalist partisans, whom he introduces in a dismissive manner by using the adverb 'supposedly' or by telling about their military actions using the euphemism 'having fun'. By telling a story of a priest sending the women back home, Andrzej points to the anti-communist alliance linking the partisan groups and the Church. Eventually, he mirrors the naming strategy used today towards the security services and describes the priests and, indirectly, the partisans as traitors who worked for the German occupiers. In his narrative, Andrzej uses the themes characteristic of the interpretative framework strengthened and disseminated through the communist propaganda apparatus. Through such stories he tells and

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[99] Andrzej refers to the evacuation of the Polish government to Romania upon the German occupation in 1939.

performs a moral evaluation of the present reality. His preoccupation with the past is context-dependent and comes as a reaction to the growing visibility of the heroes/victims, whom he used to understand as a threat. It is further strengthened by a condition of intimidation felt by Andrzej due to his past active involvement in the organization, which is now considered as criminal. The telling of a story understood as a moral action functions as a defence mechanism. The possibility of externalizing the moral delimitation and description of the politically engaged agents gives Andrzej a sense of security. Such a sense of security was enabled by the situation of an interview in which I, as an interlocutor, practically did not intervene in Andrzej's stream of utterances, evoking in him a sense of approval.

> Andrzej: I remember, I remember everything. I remember how, let's say, the most important thing, how people were being murdered. They killed thirty thousand people. […] There were these… AKowce[100], and there were Banderowce-Akowce. But our government concealed it. These were not Akowce, they were regular bandits – Banderwoce-Akowce, that's how they were called. There was also Ukraine. So, now, they changed it the way that they conferred the Banderowce to Ukraine. And this is not true, the Ukrainians were Burbowce[101], and these ones were Banderowce. And they were walking through the night in platoons, and they were surrounding houses, they were walking into the flats and they were shooting these people – thirty thousand of them they killed[102].

The moral tone of Andrzej's narrative is reinforced by the inclusion of a story of a mass murder. He represents the grand-scale killings of the Polish civilian population as performed by the anti-communist agents belonging to the Church and the underground army alliance. He makes claims about the forged nature of the contemporary historical accounts, treating them as naturally influenced by the new constellation of power. He ascribes the responsibility for the killings performed by the Ukrainian Insurgence Army to the Polish partisans, stating that the two groups were mixed up so as to confuse people and conceal the true nature of the Polish partisan groups. Such an interpretative framework has been partially produced by the communist propaganda to which Andrzej, as a soldier of the KBW and a communist activist, was exposed. Another fragment of his narrative hints at the material remnants of the communist propaganda, the artefacts of which still

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[100] He refers here to the AK soldiers – that is the Polish underground insurgency army.

[101] I was able to find a political group under this name.

[102] Andrzej most probably refers to the assault on the Polish settlements which began in 1942. The Ukrainian nationalists attacked, at night, Polish villages in the Eastern part of Poland, butchering Poles, regardless of sex and age. Named as the Volhynian slaughter, the killings are considered a massive ethnic cleansing operation performed in an Eastern region of Poland between 1942 and 1945 during the German occupation of this region. The action was coordinated by the Ukrainian Insurgence Army together with local Ukrainian peasants. Thousands of Poles were murdered and many others fled the area in fear of further massacres.

constitute the source of legitimacy for Andrzej's claims, as well as serving as interpretative devices for classifying the present events in political terms.

> Me: And during the [German] occupation, was there a different sort of AK?
> Andrzej: AK was created in 1942. It was created in 1942. Before, there were the Peasants' Battalions - and this was a proper party, there I do not have[103] that those from the Peasants' Battalions killed a man. All of the names belong to AKowce and I have all of that, every single group. Like the one who killed that man… - that Wislak, he killed 170 people and now they are giving a service to him[104] [slightly laughing]. So that one, he wrote that letter and they sued him to the court[105].

In this fragment, Andrzej classifies the now glorified underground soldiers as murderers by referring to the source, reliable in his eyes – a book published by the History Institute of the Communist Party in 1970. This object, a relic of the previous regime, is uncritically used by Andrzej as an objective record of facts. His recent affectively-loaded involvement in resisting the current memory politics, which has denied the legitimacy of the interpretative framework he has been using, manifests itself in notes taken by Andrzej in pencil and pen in the margins of the book next to the names of the people he knew or heard of. On the illustration below, he indicated the pseudonym of a partisan, who, as he believes, killed the person, whom he knew well.

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[103]By 'I do not have', Andrzej refers to a book titled 'Those, who died fighting for the People's Authority', the cover, and a fragment of a page of which are shown on the illustration above. The book lists the communist agents who died in an active fight in the name of the communist statehood. By saying 'I do not have', Andrzej means that the names of the soldiers from BCh are not mentioned in his book on the side of the perpetrators. Note the similarity of the construction of the book to the one published by the members of the heroes/victims' association listing the vignettes of the heroes/victims, presented in a more expanded version, scrupulously backed up by the state documents.

[104]Andrzej refers here to the last partisan the unveiling of whose monument was described in chapter six.

[105] The last phrase in this fragment 'So that one, he wrote that letter and they sued him to the court' refers to the story of Janek – the security officer belonging to the younger generation, who recently faced a trial accused of committing a communist crime, and whose father – an agent of communism - had been shot by an underground army group in the 1940s. Janek's trial is a theme of the next chapter. What is interesting in this fragment is the logic with which Andrzej links and interprets the facts from Janek's life. He met Janek three times in his life. Once, they met in front of the IPN, where they accidentally realized the commonality of their position – they came to demand from the IPN access to some files. Janek wanted to see his father's files, so did Andrzej. According to both men's knowledge, their fathers were murdered by the partisans. Janek took an address from Andrzej and went to visit him once. Andrzej showed Janek a book in which his father's name was listed among other victims of partisan violent actions. The second time they met was when Janek suggested that Andrzej could be a relevant informant for me and he drove me to his place. Janek told Andrzej about a letter he wrote to the IPN protesting against falsifying history and making his access to his father's files difficult. Independently of this event, Janek was accused of committing a communist crime and faced a trial. Andrzej links both events causatively, thinking that the letter sent to the IPN caused the accusation.
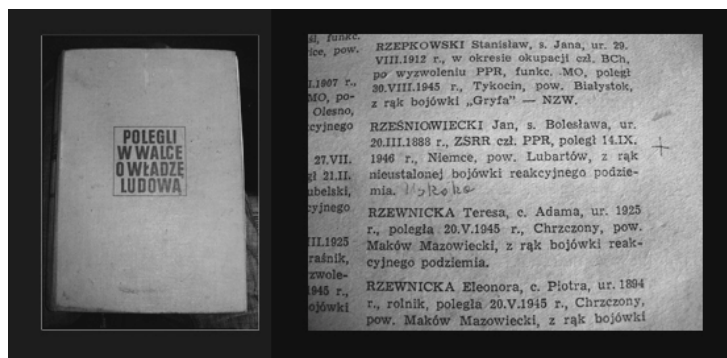
A history book from the communist period used by Andrzej.

Similarly to the first generation of Bezpieka officers, the second generation of Security employees worked out an image of the political opposition and the political reality in which their actions as officers were justified. They further elaborated a vision of their own role in maintaining social order.

> Stefan: Mainly, I think that people found in their illegal actions a sort of light adrenaline. Meaning, you know, I cannot really say that it was so ideologically definite. It could have relied on emotions. So we did feel emotional, since it is difficult not to feel emotions when something is going on.

In this fragment one of the officers from the second generation communicates ways in which he imagined the oppositionists. This imagery of the adversaries, as those who found excitement in the oppositional activity and who were not fully-fledged idealists devoted to a particular political program, indirectly functions as a strategy of justification and distancing from one's own responsibility for committed transgressions. Further, by talking in the plural about the security officers as human beings, who also feel emotions, Stefan makes an attempt at breaking the image, which he believes to be prevalent in society, of the security officers being violent and ruthless.

> Me: Do you think that the repressions [in the 1980s] were too weak?
> Franek: No. Ania, the repressions were not too weak. I think that it is fortunate that they were as they were since, if these were the sort of repressions you are thinking about and I am guessing, in such a case now, I will tell you Ania, it would be… at this moment, all of these miserable constrained oppositionists and so on; because they were constrained indeed. It would not look the way it goes now; all that boasting now. If there was plenty of evidence for a brutal behaviour and so on. I am telling you, it is better it was the way it was. I do not consider that it was so brutal.

[…]

And I will underline one thing – those who wanted to cooperate, cooperated. Those who were forced, firstly, they did not have to get forced. And if they wanted to gain something this way, well, it is hard luck.

Franek, another second generation officer, expresses through his narrative a belief that the repressions committed by the institution he worked for were not as severe as is being represented today. He perceives the lack of decisive steps taken against the security officers, who are so widely accused of committing serious repressions at the moment, as evidence for the lack of severe transgressions committed by Bezpieka. He further distances himself and the security apparatus as a whole from taking responsibility by highlighting the voluntarily aspect of the cooperation or gains derived by the informers from acts of cooperation.

Me: Why did this job make sense to you?

Mirek: It made sense to me. The reasoning behind the existence of the secret services – as these sorts of services were, are and will be… was in reconnaissance, in anticipation of what can happen – I saw there was a point in it and this is what I tried to do. Because as I said – these sorts of services were, are and will be. The fact that the job isn't always clean… perhaps we could talk about the ethics, but that does not mean that the people who work in such services around the world are evil people. Simply, if a man works in a cesspool, he must dirty himself a little. And if it comes to the methods of work – there were various methods. One side wanted to outwit the other.

Mirek: […] The opposition was very deeply sussed out thanks to the operational methods – mostly thanks to OZI. You cannot imagine who and on which level… no technical solutions… technical solutions can confirm something, yet, you cannot replace a good, well-positioned agent with technology. This device cannot replace a man because it can register what we are talking about, but to ask me a question, or to provoke a situation, make someone do something…

Mirek justifies his past activities by pointing to other nations' secret police forces, which are an inseparable aspect of statehood. The existence of similar structures in other localities or in different historical periods, under different systems, normalizes the past actions and makes their justification easier. On the other hand Mirek allows himself some moral considerations. However, these considerations are very easily overshadowed by a reference to the immense scale of cooperation of the civilian population with Bezpieka, even among the core members of the opposition. This

collaboration leads towards a sense of impunity, as the opposition is considered by the security officers as a snake that ate its own tail by reporting each other.

> Henryk: Each employee of the Security had someone. And that someone knew something. But it was not the way they announce it now, since they took a hold of the files of the snitches. This is not the truth, this is a lie. Each employee had his own person with whom he normally met. He named 'this one and that one, this and that' – normally, it went without recording. There were no files, there was nothing.

Henryk, a member of the first generation of security officers, recalls that the contacts between the security and the informants were a question of individual skills and that they were not usually recorded in the files. The files records seem to be a part of the professionalization process which was gradual and implemented to a fuller degree by the second generation of officers.

The style of cooperation with the agents further depended on the sort of people one worked with, and the purpose of the cooperation. Stefan worked in the Department responsible for 'the education'. He thus 'took care' of the university employees in Marianowice:

> Stefan: Our room was very cosy, just like at home.
> Me: Did you prepare tea and coffee in the room or was there a separate kitchen?
> Stefan: We were preparing coffee in the rooms.
> Me: Immersion heater?
> Stefan: We had the… the electric pots. Each of us had a glass. Actually, more… we had a full set, because it happened that we invited someone over for this coffee… or even when during conversations, because we had to talk in that building, we were treating the interlocutors with coffee. Our own coffee!
> […]
> Of course, I achieved what I wanted to achieve, without getting into any sort of tussling or brawls. Just like with you now – the desk, someone is putting forward his credo, I say mine [.]. Questions. I persuaded those, whom it was possible to persuade, who could have been straightened up let's say. Those who were impossible, were impossible.

Stefan holds almost pleasant memories of the conversations he had with the university employees. He even represented himself as a hospitable security officer, who shares his own coffee with the

people whom he invited over for a talk. As much as Stefan's recollections through talking is a clearly selective process, as Stefan did commit a number of transgressions including mostly psychological abuses but also physical ones, the fact that many of the informants did develop a 'quality' sort of relationship with their officers was evident for me, especially in the case of the second generation of the officers.

As an institution, *Bezpieka* has its own history. It brought up two generations of officers and furnished them with frameworks for interpreting Polish history. It offered them a sense of belonging to a national community – in fact, a special position in this community – that of guardians. Yet, when the communist system collapsed, the framework and the national community were reformulated. Forcibly, the position of the security officers also changed.

Verification without verification

The issue of restoring justice in the Polish post-communist condition has a two-dimensional structure mirrored in this thesis. Firstly, it implies the symbolic recognition of the heroes and victims who suffered under communism. This has happened both through honouring them with a place in a pantheon of national heroes, and also through more straightforward compensations like special pensions. The second component of settling the accounts has dealt with the question of the perpetrators – their actual and symbolic punishment. Here, the focus was on the security officers, who were gradually being excluded from the polity through legal and discursive measures.

One of the measures taken was to discontinue the veterans' pension privileges admitted to the communist soldiers and agents by the communist authorities. Below is a fragment of a transcript of a conversation which occurred between Andrzej, a communist agent active during the Stalinist period, and Janek, an officer belonging to the second generation. Janek asked Andrzej about the pension in my presence so as to show me the injustice embedded in the current project of retributive justice.

> Jan: And you, because they took away this pension from you, didn't they? The veteran pension… recently
> Andrzej: They decreased it [irritated]… they took it away as if it was normal! For being 'a fixer of the People's Republic of Poland' [*utrwalacz władzy ludowej*].
> Jan: So they took away that which you already got?
> Andrzej: I have the pension only from my work, and the veteran pension they stopped.

Jan: What year did they do it to you? The Ducks[106]?

Andrzej: Well, it is already four years.

Jan: Then, the Ducks must have done it! [with satisfaction]

Andrzej: Yes! Yes!... No!

Jan: Well, not the Ducks, because…

Andrzej: Now, mostly at that time…

Jan: Most probably it was Krzaklewski, who was ruling at that time

Andrzej: At that time… it was at that time when that *volksdeutsche* Płażyński… Because I wrote

that *volksdeutsche*, because, it is even written in a book that Płażyński – so I wrote this way that

Jan: Well, so this was the term of the AWS

Andrzej: Yes! The Jews! The Jews!

Jan: The AWS – Krzaklewski

Andrzej: I went to ZBoWiD. I went to ZBoWiD in Marianowice and I said 'They took it away', […].
'Who took it away from you?'. 'The Jews!'. 'Sir, this is not nice, do not say like this'. 'What am I
saying? I will shout! Who did take it away from me? The Jews! A normal thing!'

This short fragment of conversation illustrates how, during an interaction, the two people who used
to be involved in strengthening the power of the communist regime interactively reinforce today a
sense of togetherness vis-à-vis the others, who are defined by their post-Solidarity background.
Through talking, they established a collective frame for an experience of a sense of injustice and
witch-hunting directed at them – the Bezpieka officers. Andrzej's closing story of a visit to the
veterans association, in which he accuses Jews of taking away his pension, illustrates a sense of rage
and emotional reaction to the processes of exclusion and condemnation. Naming the post-Solidarity
activists *volksdeutsche* and Jews could be read as the legacy of complex and conflicted history of the
country.

It was only in April 1990, after the PZPR was officially dissolved, that the Sejm (Polish lower
parliamentary chamber) passed a law which led to the restructuring of the state apparatus. The law
implied the transformation of the Citizen's Militia into the Police, while the Security Service became
the State Protection Office (UOP). Significantly, the new head of the UOP was an editor of a Catholic
weekly. Soon, he took the post of the Minister of Internal Affairs and started the process of 'vetting'
among the security agents (Dudek i Paczkowski 2005:232). The employees of the Security had to
reapply for their positions. The applications were considered by a commission, the membership of

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[106] The Ducks (Kaczki) is a disrespectful nickname used for the Kaczyńscy brothers running the Law and Justice Party.

which, in the case of Marianowice, included oppositional activists repressed by the Bezpieka officers in the 1980s. The commission analyzed the applications without physical contact with an applicant. The decision was sent via post and a right of appeal was granted. However, the appeal procedure was carried out in the same way, by the same commission, through the post.

> Franek: There is a vetting procedure. It is 1992. It was a very nasty formula in my opinion, because, I got a piece of paper […]. This is how the verification was made. Verification without verification. Meaning, nobody called you to stand in front of a commission, even though, there was a commission – the verification commission. And out of this commission, I knew its president very well, because, by chance, he used to be an object of interest to my department. So, he was presiding over this commission and I got this sort of trite paper fitted into A4; 'bla-bla' and in the last paragraph it was written in a very ugly style […] 'he does not fulfil the requirements, he does not hold moral qualifications to work in the Ministry of Interior Affairs'.

In Franek's view, ninety per cent of the Bezpieka employees were deprived of their posts and had to look for other ways to secure their earnings[107]. Their life paths cannot be generalized. In the chapters to follow, I will introduce three people who worked in different departments and who found themselves in very divergent positions in the 2000s. All of them perceived the vetting procedure as humiliating. The second-generation officers perceive themselves as professionals. Hence, the denial of their qualifications during the vetting procedure seemed a sign of political revenge. According to their opinion, there was nobody in the country who was better trained in the kind of work the secret police should carry out.

Recapitulation

The Law and Justice Party agenda of retributive justice implemented through the state channels significantly impacted upon the security officers' modes of recalling the past and interpreting it in the present. Clearly, their modes of remembering the past diverge from the politicized versions disseminated by the Law and Justice Party, and they differ from historical accounts, which flattened their experience by categorizing it in a canonical image of the institution of terror researched on the basis of files. The people I worked with spent a number of hours in that institution. They felt at home there. They hold many pleasant memories of it. Yet, they also remember their own fears and

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[107] Once deprived of their authorized position, the security officers kept their contact networks, which often implied business and criminal connections. Eliminating them from the state structures opened up the way for them to use previously secret knowledge as well as what used to be professional contacts for their own purposes. The mass media also announced that the security officers stole piles of files and earned money blackmailing those who cooperated with disclosure of the materials.

humiliations. They remember being abused by their superiors or being sent for the first time into the protesting crowd.

Keeping in mind that visions of good and evil are very personal and thus ambiguous as opposed to unambiguous visions embedded in the narratives of nation-states (Lambek 2005), I wish to turn now to the ethnography of such uncertain and deeply personal engagements of the SB officers with the emergent hegemonic discourse. The main feature of the security officers' narratives is a tendency to distantiation from responsibility and guilt, as well as expressing the sense of injustice felt by them under the current political conditions. In fact, this language very much depends on the audience. In the legal setting that I describe in the next chapter, the distancing talk prevails. In the long and lonely interviews I had with the security officers they undertook a sort of personal journey in which they made sense of the past and tried to achieve a digestible self-image constructed in reaction to the dominant discourse.

Chapter Eight

Excavating memories of political violence in a 'lawful' state: a case-study of a security officer's trial

Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; it does more than

represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.

Toni Morrison, The Nobel Prize Lecture 1993

This part of the thesis centres around the epistemological condition of disorientation felt among the middle-ranking security officers in the aftermath of communism and, in particular, during the Law and Justice Party's term. This condition of disorientation manifests itself most strongly in the prevalent language of distantiation, which characterizes the officers' narratives. In this chapter, I focus on a trial understood as an essential institutional trigger in the processes of disorientation of one secret security officer accused of committing a 'communist crime'. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the selected instances of interactions which took place in the courtroom so as to give a sense of a narrative styles of the heroes/victims and the security officers conditioned by the legal setting. The second part of the analysis centres around the position of a judge and his power to influence and represent the trial. The last part takes a closer look at the accused outside the courtroom in order to study ways in which the trial impacted upon his memory and self-constructs.

Oppressive language

Settling the accounts with the abusive regimes of power, which inhabited many countries during the Cold War era, is seen as an element of the processes of democratization and reconstruction (Borneman 1997). The contemporary model of accounting for the large-scale political violence is through legal solutions which centre on the restoration of the victims' sense of dignity and justice through establishing a forum for their voices, as well as through successful integration of their story into a larger narrative. Specific projects of commemoration and retributive justice shape the ways in which past violence is narrated and experienced in the present. However, and here I follow Wilson's argument, such projects tend to 'reduce the diversity and specificity of accounts of violation' (Wilson 2003:267).

While the bulk of the literature on trauma focuses on ways in which narrative helps people to restructure their selves in reference to a disturbing past, the studies of interactions in legal settings tend to argue that legal discourse constrains and flattens people's experience, turning their narrative into legal jargon deprived of a link with the sense of real experience (Conley and O'Barr 1998). This case-study describes an ethnographic account of a legal setting in which the victims get the

opportunity for an affective enactment of their stories, while the security officers are constrained in their acts of narrating the past. In this chapter, the court is approached as a forum for speaking about violence, enabled by the memory project. The memory project is constructed so as to symbolically exclude the security officers from the new, democratic polity. The courtroom is one of the authoritative spaces in which this process of exclusion has the biggest hold on the subjects subdued by it. With Jan's story, I wish to show the processes of gradual loss of consistency of one's frameworks built over a lifetime, which order information about the self and the world.

The post-communist Polish state has been generating knowledge about the political violence committed by the previous regime. However, through its politicized and limited language it has been performing acts of simplification, often grotesque in their nature, over the acts of violence it claimed to judge. For this reason, I I call the language of the memory project an 'oppressive language' in Morrison's terms. In the conditions of testimony emergent in the Polish post-communist state, we can learn a lot about humiliation and suffering, yet very little about the cultures of violence from the perpetrators' point of view.

The trial as an enactment of the framework of retroactive justice

In this chapter, I focus on one aspect of the policy of 'purification' and 'disclosure' as represented by the actions of a section of the IPN dedicated to prosecutions. I look at a particular legal intervention of this department – a trial of an ex-officer of the Secret Police charged with committing 'a communist crime'. The IPN's prosecution department has been investigating crimes for which the statute of limitations was abolished or prolonged. These are crimes committed against Polish nationals and Polish citizens of other nationalities, and they are named 'Nazi', 'communist' and 'other crimes'. I deal with the second category – a 'communist crime' defined by the Act on the IPN as:

'Acts committed by functionaries of the communist state in the period between 17 September 1939 and 31 December 1989,

*   consisting in the use of repressive measures or other violations of human rights,
*   or in connection with their use with respect to individuals or groups of people,
*   or acts which already constituted crimes in the understanding of the Polish Penal Act in force at the time of the preparation of the crime' (Act on the IPN 1997).

During my fieldwork year, in Marianowice, only two cases were completed in the court of the first resort – both with a jail sentence for the ex-functionaries of the Secret Police for committing a 'communist crime'. The infrequency of such trials contributed to the *bad luck* paradigm amongst their 'victims.'

The people directly subjected to the current complex policy of 'disclosure' and 'purification' read it as an arbitrary project that may turn out to be personally momentous. This is one reason why the victims/heroes reveal a strong tendency for an excessive performance of their identity, while the 'impure' subjects display an anxiety over their fate and adapt a strategy of silently waiting things out and distancing themselves from responsibility. When an 'impure' subject happens to face a trial, both he and his colleagues perceive it as a result of bad luck.

'Have you heard what a horrible misfortune happened to Janek?' - one of his colleagues asked me over the phone after Janek's sentence was announced. 'Janek is a victim of settling of the past. The dramaturgy of these events escapes reality in all kinds of ways' – another of his colleagues explained to me while sipping coffee in a café house. Janek, who could not make sense of the fact that it was he who was accused rather than his superiors or prosecutors of that time, would have undoubtedly agreed with these words.

The IPN employees admit themselves that investigations into particular cases are more arbitrary than systematic due to the gaps in historical knowledge on the prosecutors' side, and because of the kilometres of Secret Police files that are still waiting to be arranged by the archivists. The ex-officers of the Secret Police add that they destroyed many files in the 90s, often on their superiors' orders but also on their own initiative. Hence, a reliable reconstruction of some events is, according to them, impossible. Consequently, the indictments that are being produced by the prosecution department are sometimes perceived by the accused as random and weakly-based.

Disambiguated language and identity performance

The trial I am to talk about concerns a few individuals who, according to the current law, have acquired a new legal status either as *former functionaries of the communist state*, or as *grieved parties*. It is important to note that the legal categories I am talking about are constructed in a polarized way. In moral terms, the linguistic potential for describing the past that is given through the new legal frame points at such a landscape of the previous historical period which is simple and

contrasting. The heroes/victims, the legal officials, and the security officers all act in accordance with the disambiguated language while experiencing the legal situation.

Janek was accused of exceeding his sphere of competence while interrogating an opposition activist, Tomasz, by threatening him with violence in order to obtain his testimony during the 1980s. The IPN prosecuting attorney classified what happened during the interrogations of Tomasz as *via compulsiva,* that is, a prohibited method of obtaining evidence through influencing the accused either by threats or promises. In a new post-socialist legal language, it can be called a *communist crime*. What used to be an individual act gained a collective face. In communist times it was a crime but the statute of limitation would forbid a prosecution. The new law made the retroactive justice possible, hence the court case I have been observing.

That the disambiguated mode of classifying the past in the present prevailed among the testifying witnesses was presented to me before one of the hearings. The witness, an ex-oppositionist, was waiting outside the courtroom until he was asked to come in. I took my chance to approach him and introduced myself as an anthropologist who worked on the topic of perception of the communist past in the present. His extremely swift reply sounded quite typical: *are you writing about us or about them?* The transcripts below follow the same line of logic.

This fragment comes from a testimony of a grieved party – an opposition activist who acted quite emotionally at the trials. He perceived the trial as a possibility to express his heroic and victimized self, which had not received any other official recognition. He belongs to the 'lost' part of the Solidarity activists, who neither walked into a political life, nor experienced social advancement. I suggest paying attention to his usage of personal pronouns which delimit social and political belonging.

[1]   The Court: How do you estimate the role of Tomasz in the opposition?
[2]   Michal: <u>We</u> did not know how to deal with <u>these people</u>. Such *esbek*[108] was given a reply 'I refuse to answer'. This is what Tomasz taught <u>us</u>. You mustn't talk to <u>them</u>, because <u>they</u> are ready to use everything. Mr. Janek knows how it was with the passport [he looks at Janek]. You [plural], <u>you</u>

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[108] A colloquial way of referring to the secret security officers taken from the abbreviation of the official name of the institution – SB.

messieurs[109] [looking at Janek], you locked me in the room. [The judge smiles]. The metropolitan archbishop did not know how to behave[110]. I have to come back to it. […]

This Sunday, we had an opportunity to see how SB broke people's lives. […] We really do not want to come back to it.

[…]

Could we have suspected the collapse of this system? How could we have taken revenge? To drop a leaflet was the most we could have done.

To begin with, what clearly stands out from the hearings is that the current legal framework allows for expressing and fostering the kind of narratives in which the division lines are drawn between adversaries in the past and extending this conflict into the present time. I illustrate it by underlining the usage of personal pronouns in the context of the hearings. The grieved parties overtly use the personal pronoun *we* as opposed to *I* during their speech acts in the court. They also abundantly use *them* as opposed to *you* when referring to the former secret security officers. I interpret this linguistic strategy as an expression of, firstly, a strong identification with the whole oppositional circle that provides the raison d'être for the status of a grieved party of particular actors[111]. Secondly, despite the fact that the trial I have been observing concerns the possible criminal acts of one person, during the speech acts of the grieved parties, the responsibility was repeatedly extended beyond the single case. The notion of their collective responsibility comes back and forth in the words of the grieved parties and, as will be visible later, such a position is also taken by the judge. I would argue that the current legal and memory framework as well as its intensive consumption via the mass media encourages such speech acts which, further on, strengthen the antagonistic perception of the social reality.

The security officers, in their testimonies, are less focused on exposing the 'groupness', and more attuned to separating themselves from the collective label of evil communist agents. For this purpose they use what I call a language of distantiation. In this fragment, a former secret security officer who participated in the search of Tomasz's house testifies. I suggest paying attention to his repeatedly indirect answers to the initial question of the judge. Until he is pushed to answer precisely, he goes

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[109] From what I found out, Janek did not participate in this event.

[110] He refers to a famous case of the newly appointed archbishop, who was accused of being an SB collaborator described in chapter four.

[111] It is so despite the fact that the former oppositional circle is extremely divided and full of hidden grudges. Michal is an example of a loser who fought for freedom yet gained nothing out of it. During interviews I conducted with him, he recurrently came back to the theme of the wily Solidarity activists, who managed to enhance their lives thanks to their access to power. He juxtaposed this image with that of his own life, namely, no money, no career, yet honesty and righteousness.

on with indirection. In the second part of the transcript, I underlined his involuntary and recurring statements diminishing his involvement in the workings of the secret services apparatus.

[1]   The Court: Where did you work, what sort of function did you act out in this period […]?

[2]   Damian: <u>I was admitted to work</u> on the 16 of December 1979.

[3]   Court: You were admitted to work where?

[4]   Damian: At that time it was still <u>a voivodeship headquarters</u>.

[5]   Court: During these years - 1983-1984?

[6]   Damian: Yes, I was <u>a regular functionary</u>.

[7]   Court: A functionary of what?

[8]   Damian: <u>Of the Department 3 of the Secret Security Services</u>.

[9]   Court: Were any actions taken against Tomasz during this period? The court is interested only in Tomasz.

[10]   Damian: There were, but these were not criminal cases, as this one. He was not called in. It was an operational case.

[11]   Court: Did you interrogate or have any direct contact with Tomasz?

[12]   Damian: I did not interrogate. I am not an investigating officer, <u>I do not know how to do it</u>. Still, I do not exclude, however, I do not remember, that I was present during such activities. <u>I do not remember</u>.

[13]   […]

[14]   Damian: <u>I was an operational officer and I did not deal with the investigations</u>.

[15]   Court: But how did it happen, because you said… [she refers to the fact of Damian being present at the search at Tomasz's place - as reported by the accused]

[16]   Damian: Precisely, as <u>part of the duties</u> which I performed at that time, <u>obviously as ordered by my superior, because I would not have gone by myself</u>, <u>we</u> were going for some actions.

[17]   Court: But regarding the interrogation…

[18]   Damian: No. Anyhow […] I had been in service for four years at that time, <u>honestly, I did not know much</u>. […] <u>I always had a senior colleague next to me</u> […] I was too young an officer. […] And, I wanted to add, that it often looked this way – let the young one go, he shall learn something.

Damian, through the use of indirection, communicates his lack of identification with the institution he worked for. He uses a common strategy of diminishing his responsibility and involvement by presenting himself as a low-ranking employee who simply followed orders[112]. The strategy of distancing and transferring of responsibility is common among the former security officers today. This strategy intensifies proportionately to the person's involvement in the legal procedure. Janek uses the strategy of distancing himself from guilt to a much larger extent than Damian. This clearly

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[112] Other security officers remember Damian differently.

results from the fact that he undergoes an actual trial as an accused, which forces him to reconfigure his conceptual schemata. His linguistic instances of distancing himself from guilt come out also as a consequence of the proceedings in the court. Here is an example of that:

The grieved party called Michal testified in the court. As a grieved party, Michal had an opportunity to look into the IPN archives and read the documents which the secret services had collected in regard to his person. As a grieved party he also had a chance to ask for the names of those of his friends or other people around him at that time who gave information concerning him to the secret services, meaning that they cooperated. In this fragment Michal explains where the contradiction in his statements to the court might have come from. He testified previously that Tomasz had told him that Janek had beaten him. Tomasz, though, maintains that Janek did not beat him but only threatened him with the possible use of violence.

[1]   The Court: Can you take a position on that?

[2]   Michal: Well, it is difficult to take a position in regard to that concerning how many years have passed, but there was a common acquaintance of ours – Maria, and she said 'Listen, Tomasz was beaten'. […]

[3]   Janek: You said during the hearing that you heard from Tomasz that I hit him. Do you sustain this statement?

[4]   Michal: Yes, I could have said it, I sustain this. But it was over 20 years ago. She could have come to me… only that now, [turning to the court], I can say that I know, that Maria was your [turning to Janek] secret informer aka Ania. Perhaps this way she was trying to authenticate herself. It was 5 months that you kept her in jail.

[5]   Janek: Why did you say…

[6]   Michal: Because this is how I remembered that. Later she left for America.

[…]

[7]   Janek: So if you are convinced that Maria was an informer, do you still believe in her words?

[8]   Michal: Indeed, I do not believe her at all. Not even in her arrest do I believe.

What grew in Janek's mind out of this short exchange I learned just after the hearings, when I left the court together with him and walked the main street of the city. In such moments, he usually produces a stream of words that are very emotionally loaded. This time he said the following: 'yeah, that had been the initiative of my bosses, they had spread the gossip concerning me, it immediately started to circulate in the city… that Janek hit Tomasz, yeah'. When I asked him why they would have done it, he replied: 'because I often disagreed with them' – an argumentation that he used in a more

extensive manner during our first meeting to introduce himself as an independent thinker, who was capable of critical opinion in regard to the institution he worked for. At that get-together, while talking about his job in the security services, he focused in detail on three stories of incidents in which he had helped some people and at the same time had shown resistance to his superiors. These stories played a very important part in the presented narrative of the self, as they were intended to authenticate and prove his distinction from the institution. The testimony of Michal will surely strengthen this self-image of separateness and non-identification which Janek has been gradually working out in response to the instances of legality that concerned him as an officer. Interestingly, he could have dismissed Michal's words by classifying them as lies – as he often did in regard to the words of witnesses. However, at that point Janek reoriented himself and was attuned to the selection of cues, which would allow him to represent himself as fitting more comfortably into the present conditions, under which the security apparatus is highly criticized.

The trial I observed served as a stage on which the grieved parties had a chance to perform their feelings of moral self-righteousness which are formative for their subjectivities, and a sense of justice. Yet, those grieved parties who testified and who did not hold the status of the main accuser, thus performing only auxiliary functions, might have found this experience insufficient for their need of compensation for their sufferings. It is crucial to note that some such witnesses, while testifying, took the opportunity to act out their own stories, which were often irrelevant to the case. This granted them a tiny symbolic relief, especially so, since many of them feel unjustly treated. On the other hand, those individuals who came to court as former communist functionaries happened to develop strong feelings of subjugation when, in numerous speech acts, they were being held responsible for the entire wrongdoings of the communist system. Such an approach to their alleged acts of transgressions evoked in them a sense of injustice, degradation and fear. In the situation of the trial, the former security officers intuitively took linguistic measures in order to push away the possible responsibility, even if nothing directly pointed to them as the responsible ones. These observations lead to a question concerning the efficacy of this particular model of *retroactive justice* in which the retribution can be executed only individually, while, at the same time, the legal discourse closes the past in categories which point towards the collective agency and responsibility.

The voice of the judge

Focusing on an ethnographic example of one trial, I suggest an approach to law which treats it as an instrument of political influence, holding a potential to generate conceptual categories. Legally

generated categories are applied in the course of the social acts of justice, hence working towards the normative defining of the past. Santos treated law as a system of signs which, just like a map, represent and distort reality through application of mechanisms of scaling, projection and symbolization (cited in Merry 1992:358). Talking about law, I propose to distinguish two levels: the production process and the usage of legal acts in order to discursively and normatively situate a particular guilt. Deriving from Merry's approach to law, I treat a court case as a social situation of a high ideological loading, which serves the maintenance of power through the legitimate use of defined categories and semiotic systems in the institutional setting.

The court case material is treated in this chapter according to the rules of ethnopragmatic accounts (Duranti 1994). The ethnopragmatic account combines a linguistic analysis of political texts (as I treat the Act on the IPN) with an ethnographic account of a given political situation (as I treat the analyzed court case). The underlying assumption is that the meaning and the efficacy of the semantic choices undertaken in the given socio-historical community depends on an ability of the social actors to negotiate, revise and improvise some of the aspects of this political representation (Duranti 1994:37). This example reveals that the opportunities for the security officers to negotiate in this historical and discursive condition are very limited, while the judge and the victims hold a decisive influence over the emergent political representation of the past.

In this part of the chapter I analyze the acts of the judge as an institutionalized political representation of the dominant discourse concerning the communist past. I approach them as the elements of the process of political authority exercised in the sphere of representation of the past. Using Bakhtin's approach to language, I interpret the judge's utterances as more than a subjective, psychological decision, finding in them an expression of elements of well-established relations between the speakers and listeners present in the court. Hence, in the analysis of the judge's utterances, I recognize such elements as follows: available legal and political construction providing the judge with a language and a logic for carrying out the procedure; the historically conditioned and defined relations of position and role in the courtroom; and a social situation, in which the given political instruments are used by various actors towards their ends.

The historically conditioned institutional and legal solutions delimiting the position of the judge simultaneously provide her/him with instruments of control over the interactions and linguistic exchanges taking place in the court, as well as over a final representation of those in a form of

transcripts and verdicts. Through her/his leadership in the trial and the right to formulation of a sentence, the judge operationalizes the legal acts in relation to the social situation in question. This implementation is always interpretative in its nature. The independent court is not able to be politically neutral, as each microsocial act placed in an institutionalized context gains a political potential and is an expression of the structures of power relations in a given locality. The acts of justice, despite the fact that they rely on the same set of acts, produce various political representations. Psychological research points towards an existence of individual differences in the ways people attribute guilt and pass judgements. These differences are dependent on the level of empathy felt towards the particular category of victims as well as on one's own convictions (Wiener et. al. 1989). According to this argument, a sentence given by a judge whose relative was severely repressed during communism would be different from one given by a supporter of the *thick line* policy.

Keeping in mind the proposed understanding of the judge's voice, I propose an analysis of the transcripts created during the trial. The creation of these transcripts should be understood as an articulation of the judge's voice. The transcripts are physically typed up by a secretary present at each court meeting. Yet, the exact words to be typed into the transcript are dictated by the judge, who paraphrases for the secretary what has just happened in the courtroom. The judge exercises the authority over the interpretation and selection of words, behaviours, and emotions of those present in the court.

Burcholtz pointed out that the process of transcription is simultaneously an interpretative and representational process. While, on the interpretative level, the question that emerges concerns what to include in the transcript, on the representational level the question is about how to transcribe what was happening (Burcholtz 2000: 1441). According to Burcholtz, the transcription process is an act of authorship (Burcholtz 2000: 1461). Making transcripts implies shaping their form and content. Such actions are consequential for the social reality and people's processes of self-management.

I will move now to two social situations which occurred in the courtroom during Janek's trial. The participants in the exchange are: the judge, Sławek (a witness and a victim of repressions), Tomasz (the opposition activist), and the prosecuting lawyer. The fragments are presented to illustrate the

process of emergence of a transcript and the approach of the judge to the security officers as manifested in the courtroom.

[1] The judge: What can you tell about the style of interrogations?

[2] Sławek: The interrogations greatly varied in style depending on, how we say it – esbeks, and the period of time. That interrogation, which I remember.

[3] The judge: Was it the accused who interrogated?

[4] Sławek: Yes, yes. He first asked me to void my pockets, he put the gun on the table. What stuck in my memory is an image of a concocted spike with its jaws wide open which lay on the table. And during the interrogations, the accused turned these jaws towards me, and started to ask about my contacts with the underground, the phone numbers, my occupation […]

[5] The judge: What influence did the gun have on you?

[6] Sławek: Sometimes a man would prefer to get hit in the face – if he deserved, instead of being psychologically abused this way.

[7] The judge: Did the judge understand well namely that turning of a spike and taking out of a weapon was a form of psychological abuse for you?

[8] Sławek: Yes.

[9] The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] 'I treated turning of the spike and taking away of a weapon as a psychological abuse'. How many times during the interrogations did the person who interrogated you take out the weapon and put in on the table?

[10] Sławek: I cannot say.

[11] The judge: Meaning you do not remember or others did not do it?

[12] Sławek: They were using rather different methods.

[13] The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] Other functionaries did not use such methods.

[14] Sławek: I mean, they were using different methods.

[15] The judge: This is what the judge meant. They did not use this method. And how did you feel, because this is such… After all, the man is frightened.

[16] The judge: This is exactly what the judge wanted to hear […]

[…]

[17] The prosecuting lawyer: Was the accused a well-known functionary, was he talked about?

[18] Sławek: Yes, he was one of the most active ones.

[19] The judge: What do you understand by 'the most active'?

[20] Sławek: I mean that they were talked about more.

[21] The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] The accused was more often talked about than other officers. And what sort of fame was it?

[22] Sławek: Similar to the colonel Janusz.

[23] The judge: The judge does not know him, so, if you could tell

[24] Sławek: So the colonel Janusz, on the Marszałkowska street, in the voivodeship police headquarters was actively engaged in the interrogations of many oppositional activists, including myself.

[25] The judge: What does it mean actively?

[26] Sławek: It means that he was talked about.

[27] The judge: What does it mean? Did he scream? Did he hit?

The transcripts of this trial hardly ever include questions posed. They give an impression of a spontaneous narration of a testifying person. From time to time there is a mention as to whose question the testifying person is answering, yet, it is extremely rare that such a question is registered in the protocol [see line 9 of the transcript for example]. As a consequence, the transcript gives a vague idea about the social dynamics of the court case. The manipulation of the phrasings made by the judge is not visible. As seen from the fragments of court exchanges introduced above, the judge, while paraphrasing the exchange, often transforms the meaning of the testimony. For the illustration of this point I chose the examples of changes in the protocols, which significantly distort the testimonies and make a significant contribution to the process of construction of the relationship between the evidence and the version of truth in this particular case. A question posed to the witness is meant to discover the truth about the exceptional cruelty of the accused. The judge asks for a comparison of the accused with other officers. By paraphrasing the testimony the judge uses a hyperbole. As a consequence, the accused is represented as a conscious, distinctively cruel officer with a bad character. The characteristics of the accused are magnified.

Another issue arising from this fragment of a transcript is that the judge's mode of leading the court case implied posing such questions, which suggested answers to those who testified [see lines 11-15 of the transcript for example]. Perhaps this kind of behaviour of a judge in a court case implies her/his emotional involvement in the case. The fragment suggests that the judge had a clear inclination about the attribution of guilt throughout the court case and that the judge was imposing this inclination on other people through her authoritative position. While questioning another security officer, the judge implicitly classified him as an accessory in the process of violation of legal norms. Such behaviour may suggest the judge's belief in the criminal character of the entire institution and the evil character of all the officers. Taking a decision about a particular guilt, having

in mind such an assumption, seems convergent with a legal framework prepared for the handling of this kind of case.

Janek: the imaginative model of remembering

Found guilty of a 'communist crime', Janek was sentenced in an IPN trial to one year and two months imprisonment. More precisely, he was found guilty, as a 'functionary of the communist state', of conducting interrogations during which he had repeatedly threatened an arrested opposition activist with violence and also insulted him in order to force a confession. The prosecutor and the judge interpreted the alleged behaviour of Janek as forms of political repression acted out towards the opposition activist, which formed a part of a series of actions taken by the Secret Political Police in that town. The judge described Janek as a conscious agent who had known what sort of state he worked for. Janek did not confess to the crime. Neither did he express regret in his final statement. He does not accept this trial as a symbolic act of justice condemning violations of human rights committed by the communist regime; neither does he deny the existence of such violations. According to him, the prosecution hits out randomly rather than systematically. He sees his trial as a step in the political career of the judge, who enacts the will of the ruling party and, with insufficient evidence, nonetheless brings about his bad luck.

I met Janek regularly throughout the duration of the trial, working towards a more personal contact based on trust. With time he presented himself as a politically non-engaged, good officer, dutifully implementing the law, and now a victim of an illogical witch-hunt. Very early on in our acquaintance, as if woken up and kept sentient by the trial, Janek transmitted to me his family story already introduced in chapter six. The story of his father and his murderer, who now became monumentalized, ultimately turned into a sort of overtly repeated refrain scratched by mounting irritants, revealing a sense of injustice felt by Janek.

Most often, when narrating the past, Janek used the language of distantiation from responsibility and guilt, common to the security officers, which also works through transference of guilt and responsibility to other actors, or to a collective entity, like the institution:

> *Our department was an embracing one […] the only official department in which each employee, on each single document, must have put a signature, must have given credentials, must have prepared a report. The operational employees were incognito. When they were attending the investigation officer in a*

search […] they were nowhere mentioned. This is… well, this is a sort of comfort of theirs. Perhaps they did more evil but since they did not introduce themselves, well […] Meanwhile, it is the easiest to attack those who did introduce themselves and who signed something.

Such interpretation of the past acts would not have emerged if not for the new institutional context in which Janek found himself as an accused person quite recently. It is not the case that the operational employees made no signature and left no traces in the archive. Janek picks up a situation of 'a search' to build up a general statement that extends the rule of anonymity over all of the activities of operational employees. This is one of the techniques in which Janek not only distances himself, but also takes upon himself an identity of a victim. With this part of the chapter, I theorize about Janek's modes of remembering as being irritated by the institutional and legal solutions brought about by the post-1989 transformations. The necessity to defend one's raison d'être distorts the modes in which the past is being narrated in the present. In the context of institutionally exercised *retroactive justice,* Janek had almost no opportunity to defend himself. Remaining silent in the courtroom for most of the time, he travelled through the 'elsewhere' speech acts and imagined interpretations of the past events to create the relations of truth and evidence between then and now that would allow him to defend what has been brought into question.

In this part of the thesis, I present the process of memory-making as random and resourceful since it is affectively dependent on the character of the social situations that provoke it. In the natural setting of a human life, well-established personal schema for ordering the past may be undermined by accidental social situations or larger political projects. The transmission and re-ordering of the past hold a tremendous potential resulting from seemingly infinite possibilities of forms of social communication. In this paper, I scrutinize one type of social communication under the influence of which my *villain* lost the coherence of the self and has undertaken a labour of reconstructing his memories. I want to stress the reliance of this reconstructive process on microscopic details of social interactions in which statements are often unfinished and left to be completed in the inner thoughts of the participants. Jan went through the investigation and a trial lasting over two years. He was sentenced to two years of suspended imprisonment. After the appeal pursued by both sides – the IPN prosecutor and Janek himself, as he had no lawyer[113] - the Court of Appeal annulled the previous decision of the court as procedurally faulty.

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[113] As an ex-officer of an investigation unit he found his knowledge of law sufficient, hence, he hired no lawyer for the trial.

During one of the hearings, Jan made an attempt to present the opposition activist Tomasz within the same legal category as he found himself. Jan pointed out that Tomasz was a former member of the communist party, and asked the judge to treat him too as a functionary of the communist state. Trying to reveal a legal paradox, he argued that a functionary of a communist state could not have committed a communist crime against another such functionary. The judge concurred with the Prosecutor's and Tomasz's version which suggested that quitting a high position in the party increased the credibility and merit of the opposition activist. In fact, Tomasz did not explain his motives for this move. His statement on this matter was short; yet, he did remark on his suspicion that his retreat from the Party must have been particularly irritating for Jan, whom he presented as an overzealous communist ideologist. The judge did not ask questions which could have revealed more details of this metamorphosis, apparently finding no grounds for questioning the legitimacy of the opposition activist's victimhood. Jan read this as political bias from the judge. He started to excavate from his memory more facts confirming the time-serving orientation of the opposition activist. He undertook some archival research and also questioned his colleagues so as to fill in the gaps that were left blank by the exchanges during the hearings. In this way he built up an image of the opposition activist as an opportunist. Nonetheless, the judge found these moves of Janek unacceptable.

Another of Jan's defence strategies implied that it was Tomasz who behaved aggressively during the first interrogation. 'He said - I will not talk with Gestapo' – Janek recalled with exasperation, believing he knew why the opposition activist behaved in this way. He had never thought about this before the trial, but now he slowly reconstructed events with the precision of an investigative officer. He came to the conclusion that Tomasz must have been exhausted by the operational officers, who had taken a few hours to prepare him – that is, to 'soften him up' - before the actual interrogations. Jan tried to present this knowledge by evoking past events while questioning the witnesses. When he asked the opposition activist about such a prelude to his interrogation the judge overruled the question immediately, saying it lay outside the court's area of interest. Then an ex-functionary, called by Janek, came to testify, but he only vaguely remembered. In accordance with a distantiation strategy, this man took the chance to underline his own non-involvement rather than discuss the case. The judge was not interested in the supposed prelude to the interrogations. For his part, Janek showed understanding for his colleague even though, while talking to me, he expressed much disdain.

There were many such moments during the hearings when the judge blocked Janek's attempt to construct a version of events, and made a direct exchange between the parties impossible. The feelings of subjugation and hopelessness gradually increased Janek's inner need for imaginative reconstructions.

Once, when talking with me after the hearings, he mimicked the judge's words directed to him: 'The time has changed - she said' – he recalled all of a sudden. I saw in this nothing more but a comment on her ideological engagement. Janek, however, returned to these words after some minutes during the bus ride to his house. 'Have I told you about that event in the bank, when that woman slapped me in the face and peed on the armchair?' A rather nasty story narrated in a bizarre style came back to me. Yes, I had heard about a woman who had behaved aggressively towards Janek while he had worked as a credit assessor in a bank. 'When the judge said that, it was as if I heard this before! – The time has changed' – he said tensely. Amazed, I tried to follow what would come out of his reconstructions and associations. I finally learned that he thought the two women involved might be mother and daughter. And, consequently, there existed in his mind the possibility for persistently imagining his trial as an extension of somebody's hatred. I realized that the road might have been much longer than the association of these two events when he hinted, while retelling the story from the bank, that he may have interrogated the woman's husband. His style of narrative is very difficult and confusing due to its multivocality. His switching between indirect and direct speech into free indirect speech and reported speech may indicate his affective state, yet it may also point towards his more imaginative style of reporting. He plays the past out in a performative way and, in this performance, he moves into different roles and characters in the play.

> Janek: Well now, well, there was a pressure when I started to work in the bank. They were springing in – these obsessed people. I am not sure whether I told you that story – one [*woman*] hit me in the face 'why are they employing the *ubowiec?*' [*a colloquial negative way of saying a secret police officer*]. And the boss said that he cared nothing for that, that he knew me as an excellent...
>
> Me: And why did she hit you in the face?
>
> Janek: Well because… hmm… she was one of those credit-takers, but they did not pay back the rates. I was getting the reports, the print-out of the missing payments, so the rule was that once the third rate was not paid, I was being informed. And it was the Skoda I guess… well, I don't know, whether it was some Skoda like Oktawia, or it was called, no, Oktawia was not being produced at that time yet… it was surely 1992, it could have been because I had the office, a

room still… well, and, and because out of that [*the reports and print-outs*] it was clear that they had not been paying the rates, so a paper was being sent to call them into the office to explain the reasons, in case they wanted some sort of revision of the rates or perhaps someone had a harsher period of time at the moment, perhaps he/she had some expenditures. My job was to decide on that – to delay something, to allow to momentarily pay only the interests, or rates or everything… this was what my task was more or less about, plus I was in charge of those teams that were working outside [*he means people who were working as bailiffs*], plus the whole department of accountancy. And there was one… I don't have this note but it is filed in the bank's archive, because if I needed it for something… so it happened the way that she came. No, she got the letter calling her in for a talk and I was signing such letters with my last and first names. So, she did not come to my office, but straight to the vice-president of the bank instead – M. was his name. She went to say, yes, she got [*the letter*], so now I am saying [*the vice-president of the bank is saying*] 'so go to the chief' [*this is how Janek's function was labelled*], no she wants here, 'Do you know vice-president, whom did you employ? This is *ubowiec*'. The vice-president says: 'It doesn't bother me, I know where did he come from' – he says, 'another year, from scratch' [here he switches into the first person that indicates himself] when I had taken my office, I had firstly organized the security department for them, because the bank had just been established, and later I was organizing the department of vindication. Firstly, the department was constituted by me only, and later I was putting the team together. And this one [*by using 'one' to talk about her he expresses his disdain and disgust*] was seeing that she was not going to achieve anything. She had even fetched flowers. She had expected that the vice-president would listen to her and say 'yes', so he would throw him [him refers to Janek] out in a second. 'No, I am saying no, I will not thank you, take these flowers with you, there is no need, please go to clean up your files with the chief' [these seem to be the words of vice-president]. And I don't know whether she was walking through a corridor towards my room – after all it was in the other end of it, or she was just running out of this one. I was approaching from the other direction. I did not see the face, I did not recognize who, meaning, I knew how she looked like, and that people are being sent [*probably he means from the vice-president office she would most probably go to his one*]. And this one stopped in front of me 'yes, yes, yes… and you' [*here, he changes the intonation to imitate her hysterical voice*] – so furious, and she smacked me in the face on the spot. And she wanted to run away just after that. Oh, and it was at the time when the sheepskins were already being worn, it must have been around wintertime. But she did not manage to run away. I caught her by the sleeve, and this sleeve was torn down, but she did not escape… only slightly it was torn. Since she wanted to run away, I stopped her and took her into that room, there were my employees, I'm saying 'guard her here, I will go to the vice-president' I'm saying 'there was such an incident'. I went to the vice-president and I said 'Mr. vice-president, you are not paying me for being smacked in the face'. 'What happened?' I'm saying 'this idiot was at your place' I said 'and

she hit me on the corridor'. 'Well, you know, this [*this is to replace she*] is a stupid one, it ['*it' also replaces 'she' so as to emphasize and express the disdain*] came to ask to fire you, because you know that you were that [*that is to indicate his professional past*]. 'And what did you answer?' He says 'Mr., Mr. Janek, what are you saying, who… well, I say, you know…', and the vice-president says the following 'I did not see that smacking itself, I can testify on paper if you would like to sue her to the court, I can testify that she came over here, that she was heated and what did she requested from me'. I say 'we will see'. I came back to this one, oh, and the vice-president also said 'come back later after you talk to her'. So I came back to the room, and she wants to pee, and I say to one of my man 'go with the lady, but wait in front of the toilet there'. So, she does not want anymore [*indignantly*]. And later she peed on the armchair, because it was made out of fabric. Well, this armchair was wet, it was wet. The sort of old armchairs these were, the wooden hands they had like this… well… So I… I said something to her… and, I say 'perhaps, I will see, I will think whether we will meet in the court or not'. Oh no, finally I see… she does not pay. She did not even touch upon the issue of payment and so on. I say 'take from them…' – and this was my right to decide in cases when the three rates were not paid to take away the item for which the loan had been taken. I say to Marek – 'take' I say 'go there in the evening, go there, you have that case, but firstly go here, observe. Somehow' I say 'it seems to me…'. And they did as I said. They say that those [*again instead of they or the last name he uses these disdainfully*] were packing the luggage into the car, most probably they were going on a holiday. And they went out, all the papers were signed, everything, 'there will be no ride, the car [said by his employee in a diminutive, very provocative way] goes to the bank's parking slot'. 'How come no?'. 'No'. They took the car, and this one [about her], I don't know whether she visited the vice-president for the second time or what… in any case, the car and the vice-president later on, I think she visited him, because the vice-president was coming to me. 'Mr. Janek, I am not going to push you, but what do you think, are they going to pay the rates or not? I am not saying… because perhaps you could give them back this car.' 'Mr. vice-president, so give it back to them yourself. You write it and you order to give it back.' 'Oh no' he says 'I didn't come here to' he says 'just like this'. I say 'Mr. vice-president – 3 rates, interests, if she brings the proofs of payment we will give her back the car. She can continue paying back the rates and can get out from here'. And, I am not sure, probably he repeated the same thing, that these did not believe that he has no influence on me – but he did not have. Because I say 'so please, do so yourself'. So, in a matter of 4 days she paid all 3 rates, interests and then she got a paper, she went to the parking to pick up the car, she paid for the 3 days of parking a couple of thousands zlotys… so, like this it was.

So, as I say, this, this sort of unpleasant pressure from… because she foresaw that what, that he fires me, and because 'you know Sir that Jan, he interrogated my husband'. The vice-president asks 'did he beat him?'. 'No, he only interrogated him'. 'Well' he says 'when the case was

happening you should have' [.] He saw it was not going towards the right direction. [.] This was the vice-president.

Jan's narrative carries a tone of disdain and disgust – indicated through intonation, through linguistic operations, as well as through the organization of the story. He is the only righteous person in this story. He has rules to obey, he does his job, and he is compromising with nobody. The narrative is very difficult to read because Jan often performs the words of other people without clearly indicating it, and often invents them. I thought, though, that bringing an example of his naturally occurring narrative in which he tried to link events spread out in time in one logical story is important, as it illustrates his emotional upheavals and is an ethnographic example of the minute ways in which he constructs himself.

The ambiguous and imaginative character of his story is best illustrated in the last four sentences. He never mentioned that he had interrogated the women's husband except at the very end and in a way that suggested it was completely irrelevant, perhaps an unconscious slip of his imagination of a conversation the vice-president had with the lady. Then, the questions that he is ascribing to the vice-president are like a mirror reflection of his reservations regarding the law case in which he plays the accused. The person accusing was consecutively interrogated by Janek and claims to have been abused by him. Other witnesses have confessed that they had heard that Janek was beating and threatening that person with a gun during the interrogations. Janek – whenever we talk about the trial – underlines that the person whom he had interrogated himself never confirmed that he had beaten him. These last few phrases seem as if they were his thoughts on the trial situation but put into the vice-president's mouth and extended to another situation in which he indirectly encounters the ghosts of his interrogations – which he openly represents as a job well-conducted.

However, with the closing of the case in the first instance and the disappearance of the judge from the interactive horizon this thread was abandoned and Janek never again mentioned this story to me.

I have chosen the above pieces of ethnography to illustrate the ways in which Janek has been reworking what cognitive psychologists call autobiographical memory – that is, the memory responsible for ordering information concerning the self. Janek's self-constructs became strongly destabilized by the trial, calling for intensive work in the realm of autobiographical memory. Conway
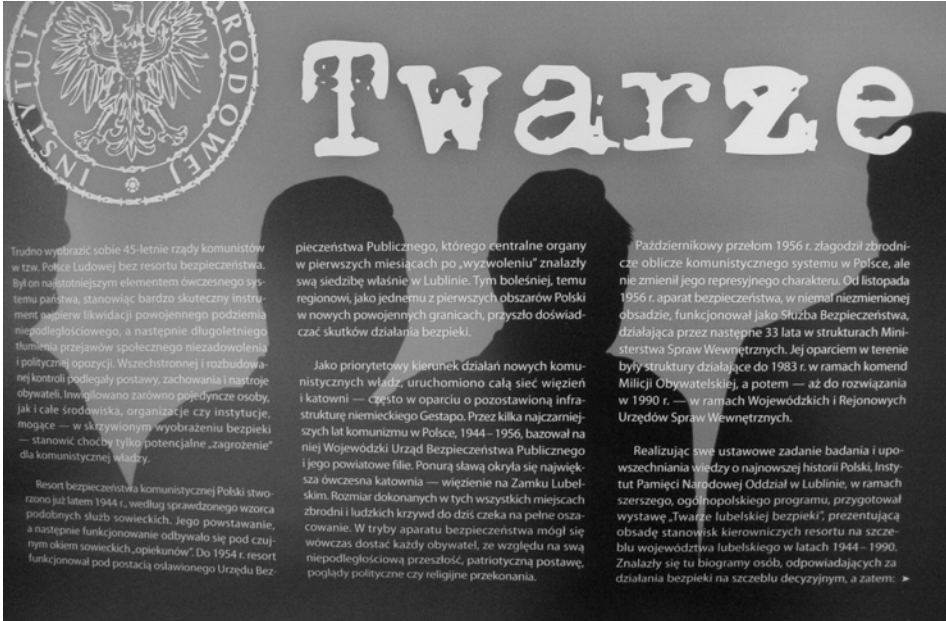
(1990) argues that autobiographical memories do not constitute veridical records of experienced events but rather interpretations of events which are partially based on actual occurrences and partially on some form of cognitive integration of events. Neisser (1982) introduced a nested view of autobiographical memory stressing the potential for multiple levels of description of any event. He suggests such descriptions are highly dependent on the social context in which they are evoked. I argue that the retributive model of justice, as executed by the judge hearing Janek's case, shaped the modes of memory-making of the accused by inviting lots of imaginative reconstructions aimed at balancing his impaired public aspect of the self. Such imaginative reconstruction was granted unusual intensity by the indirectness and incompleteness of authoritatively transmitted knowledge concerning the past. This particular experience of retributive justice allowed for a perpetuation of a sense of *victimhood* felt by the alleged *perpetrator*. At the end of the trial, in the second instance, Janek's case was recognized as procedurally faulty. This decision opened for Janek a way to interpret the entire event as absurd. He escaped at the same time an effort of acknowledging his role in the suffering of other people.

The presented observations and analysis of the speech acts uttered by the actors involved in one trial support an argument in which the legal framework of the retroactive justice as implemented in Poland is described as ambiguous and inconsequential. The haziness of it results from the specificity of the post-communist locality and the dual character of the legal framework oscillating between the concept of collective and individual guilt. At the same time, though, the ambiguity is reinforced and perpetuated by the performances of the people involved in the trial, making the outcome of the trial dependent on their ideological inclinations. The processes of (re)construction of personal memory and the self, as well as formation of the current perceptions of the past, to a great extent materialize in response to the instances of implementation of the new normative order. I shall now move to the analysis of the life narratives - conditioned by the memory project - of the former security-officers.

Chapter Nine

Resolving disorientation through narrative:

two case-studies

After 50 years, communism brought up a human kind known over there as a security employee. At lower levels, it is indeed a mechanized creature, implemented into an automatic reception of an order and its execution without the slightest contribution on the side of the psychic functions. Uncountable jokes circulate about him (Tyrmand 1985:191)*.*

Referring to the gaps in the literature dealing with communism, Hollander noted:

We have limited knowledge of how the attitudes of the people in the coercive apparatus differed from the attitudes of those in other positions of power. Did they fall back on different rationalizations for their activities? Did they succeed in convincing themselves that the very unpleasantness of the tasks they understood was proof of their dedication and moral rectitude, and, if so, for how long? It is hard to know what proportion of them were idealists and what proportion were attracted primarily by the elite status and the perks of these positions (Hollander 1999:93).

In this chapter, I focus on the ways in which two former security officers rationalize their past involvement in the oppressive institution through narrating their past in the present. Importantly, these are portraits of the security officers who joined the institution after the Stalinist era. Looking at two life stories, I focus on the phase of entrance into the institution of both men. I scrutinize ways in which they came to function in Bezpieka and ways in which they have been rationalizing their job. By bringing in extensive passages of their narratives, I make an attempt to understand which aspects of the life-world of a security officer gave them enjoyment, tying them to the occupation. It should not be assumed that all of the security officers were 'blind commies', or that their ideological involvement was a constant[114]. In fact, many of them were not ideologists and, throughout their careers, they went through various stages of involvement and interpretation of the system and their work place.

The case of Franek constitutes a portrait of an ideologically involved person. The case of Mirek is a story of ideological non-involvement. The social background of the two was different. They came to carry out different kinds of tasks in the 'firm'. Eventually, their modes of disorientation in the current political condition took a very different shape. I chose to work with only two narratives so as to focus

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[114] See the work of Hollander (1999).

on biographical details and very idiosyncratic shades of enjoyment, interpretation, and distancing from the work carried out by the two men in Bezpieka.

Ochs and Capps noted that:

> *Narrative is born out of such tension in that narrative activity seeks to bridge a self that felt and acted in the past, a self that feels and acts in the present, and an anticipated and hypothetical self that is projected to feel and act in some as yet unrealized moment – any one of which may be alienated for the other* (Ochs and Capps 1996:29).

Franek's and Mirek's narratives should be understood as attempts at resolving the tensions and resentments irritated by the transition from communism to democracy. What used to be a desired and well-recognized image of the self during communism became publicly condemned in the present. The bubble of protection burst all of a sudden. External circumstances and intensive acts of evaluations put the security officers in a position of disorientation, challenging their past self-schemata and undermining the rationale of their construction. The former security officers' engagement in this anthropological project constituted their personal effort oriented towards achieving coherence of the self in time. Ochs and Capps argued that 'silencing is part of the fabric of culture in that it is critical to socializing prevailing ideologies' (1996:33). As with all narratives, the narratives given by the security officers distort the past, silencing some of its aspects. I propose to view this silencing as an integral part of the fabric of contemporary Polish public culture. The strategies of distantiation and rationalizing of their involvement in the workings of the repressive institution constitute a part of the socialization process of the former security officers into the prevailing ideology of purification from the sins of the past regime implemented by the Law and Justice Party.

The way I present the two portraits is meant to faithfully convey their social journeys from full inclusion towards symbolic exclusion. It is also meant to stress the human and *banal* factor of these "demons". I present the cases independently, using extensive quotes, and refrain from much commentary while presenting their lives and the ways in which they perceive them. I tried to stay as close as possible to the narrative structure of their own representations as well as to their modes of thinking. I am consciously giving a voice to the perpetrators, who are deprived of it through a collective endeavour.

I got in touch with Mirek through another former security officer. In contrast to the others, he did not hesitate and swiftly agreed to meet me. Our meetings lasted long hours and had a stable scenario. I came to pick him and his dog up from a street near his house. We drove to the peripheries of the town, where his mother-in-law had an allotment. We sat in the sun on the patio. He talked and gradually got drunk. After a few hours, when his testimony started to disintegrate due to too much alcohol, I suggested driving back home.

Mirek was born in Marianowice in 1950. His father worked as a lathe hand and the most important value he wanted to teach his sons was to find honest and engaged employment. Mirek's mother was a housewife. Three sons came out of this marriage at five-year intervals. Eventually, all three of them became Bezpieka officers. As the middle brother, Mirek followed the professional path of the eldest. In turn, the youngest was persuaded to join the services by Mirek. As an officer of the secret services, Mirek worked in three different units. He started in the early 1970s at district-level, 'taking care of' a couple of big state enterprises. In 1975, he moved to the voivodeship unit 'T' and worked in a section dealing with bugging. Eventually, in 1985, he was moved to section 3, which dealt with the 'superstructure' and 'took care' of the juridical circles. He was negatively verified in 1990 and was made a pensioner. He worked on the black market both in Poland and abroad during the first years of transition. Yet, since the 2000s, he has lived on his pension only, occasionally supporting his wife in her business of selling cheap clothing at various markets in Marianowice. They have no children. They live in a tiny flat in a run-down neighbourhood.

A street kid

Mirek grew up in a working-class neighbourhood on one of the more infamous streets in Marianowice. The majority of his backyard peers became men with criminal records and an alcohol problem. He built his narrative to contrast with a male biography typical for his street, presenting himself as a person who achieved something unaided. At the same time, he ascribed most of his successes to his talent and smartness, as opposed to dull hard work or a well-off and well-networked father. He talked about most of the schools he had attended as well as professional things he had accomplished as if they were very selective, competitive and prestigious. As he graduated from the technical college, he went on to do his military service. There, he found out about a military academy

that trained pilots. He started to fly. One day, he landed without the undercarriage down and suffered concussion. The test results did not reveal abnormalities so it was proposed that Mirek continue his pilot's training. Yet, since, for reasons of romance, he wanted to go back to Marianowice, he faked a psychological disturbance, saying it rendered him incapable of flying, and he left the army. Back in Marianowice, his eldest brother suggested that Mirek join the Secret Services.

> Mirek: If I had gone to the building industry after the army, I could have counted on maximum 1200 zlotych […], here [He means security services], my first salary was 2880 zlotych. […]
> Me: Did you know what the job was about?
> Mirek: No, I had no clue. My brother did not tell me. Since I was a building technician, I was to take care of all of the building enterprises in the district, which were a lot… […] it was called 'looking after' these enterprises. […] It was a unit III of the SB, corresponding with the department III in the Ministry. After 6 months of work, well, not quite six… after less than a year of work, I inherited from my brother the remaining ones.

Mirek applied for the job as if it were a regular kind of employment, albeit one that was better-paid. He had in mind a sort of life story that would make him distinct from his backyard peers; moreover, as he was planning to get married, he thought a good standard of living would be desirable as, with his wife-to-be, thus far, he could have afforded some privacy only during walks. Otherwise, they lived in different one-room flats in which a tiny space was shared with a couple of family members. In Mirek's account there is no sign of recognizing the institution as awkward or eerie. 'What repressions?' – he often asked. At that time, the crimes of the Stalinist period were over, and the turbulent 1980s had not announced themselves yet; thus, nothing made him question the ethics of the new workplace. The regime was well-established and nothing could have made him think it would collapse during the spine of his career. Actually, Mirek was not greatly interested in taking a political stand. Today, he defends his institution out of spite, in response to the overwhelming demonization of the secret security services of which he was a part. For him it was a workplace like any other.

The "Oldboy"

> *Gisu initiation rituals seem to divide males into two distinct classes: the immature boys, whose lack of independent authority is indicated by their exclusion from public affairs, and the initiated: public affairs are the concern of the second class. This is the image projected by the ritual, which*

creates a clear distinction between those who have experienced circumcision and who have not (La Fontaine 1985:141)*.*

It was early in his career that he experienced the so-called 'old partisans' – that is, the officers of the UB, well-known for using brutal methods in eliminating the political opposition. This encounter with this 'other' however, is interpreted by him as an indication of a passage of time as opposed to a generic feature of the institutional life he joined – the interpretation fostered by the memory project discourse.

> Our bosses were the former UB people… let's say like my first superior – lieutenant-colonel Matiuk – a simple fellow indeed. […] For the colonel Matiuk, there was no problem with acquiring [he means convincing people to cooperate]. We [younger officers] were telling him that the time had changed, people were different, and the standards… for one of the acquiring conversations I brought him a man from Statek – a holder of a university degree, an engineer, a young man, whom I already had in my pocket, he only had to sign a commitment. Yet, since I was a young employee, the boss wanted to be present at that conversation. And his manner of behaviour was… *he sat behind this desk of his* [laughter], tapped the table with his fingers [he taps], he referred to *me comrade Mireslaw* [mispronouncing Mirek's name – Mirek refers here to his 'uneducated' way of speaking] […] and after this conversation my client withdrew. It was a difference of conduct. The old boy [colonel Matiuk] used to say that we [younger officers] were too soft, because when it was needed to acquire a bandit [a language used by the UB officers and official propaganda for talking about the partisans who kept fighting against communists after 1945], they put a bag on his head, led him out into the forest, placed a gun next to his head and he had to sign a commitment. Well, I would have most probably signed it too, but we were not in the same conditions.

The 'old boy' in turn wrote, in 1974, in a report concerning Mirek: 'not trained […] He possesses three TW (one acquired with my help) and a few KO. […] His moral conduct - without reservation, which does not mean he is not in need of care and control on the side of the collective. He should also increase the level of self-control. Not a party member, but reveals a crystallized worldview and, in the near future, he intends to apply to join a body of our party candidates[115]' [Source: IPN]. One year later, colonel Matiuk assessed: 'he currently guides five TW (two acquired with my help) […]. Some progress can be noticed in terms of operational skills, especially reconnaissance, yet, these are still

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[115] In order to join the party, you first had to apply for candidacy. Being a candidate for a party membership could extend up to one year – a common topic for jokes among the officers of the secret security services.

meagre and insufficient in comparison with needs. In everyday work, Mirek faces serious difficulties like lack of experience and theoretical knowledge. The difficulties are accumulating when he is made responsible for carrying out independent tasks. […] Throughout the time subject to assessment, breakdowns were noticed; corporal Mirek drank tiny amounts of alcohol. […] As he testified, this was caused by the troubles in his marriage' [Source IPN][116].

In his narrative, Mirek gives a sense of a gap existent between the old boys, whose primarily aim was to establish the regime by eliminating the political opposition, and the newcomers of the late 60s and 70s, who were meant to work towards the stabilization and maintenance of the regime. Young officers were treated as green and inexperienced by the old partisans, who developed the ethos of those who took part in a real fight. Mirek and other officers of his generation tended to look down on, and distinguish themselves from, the old boys. The first generation of officers was generally viewed by the younger ones as old-school, uneducated and crude. The presence of the old boys called for self-defining on the part of the newcomers in reference to them. A first-hand knowledge about the brutal methods applied by the old boys in Stalinist Poland acquired through daily interactions with them as superiors was deepened by the young officers' access to the old operational files about which they talked amongst themselves. Interestingly, this access did not result in an emphasis being put on institutionalized brutality and transgressions committed by the old boys but on the fact of a true struggle that was going on at that time.

The 1940s and 1950s were perceived by most of the younger officers as a civil war. A notion of civil war, as well as a particular interpretation of oppositional partisans' actions, worked towards the normalization of committed brutalities. They thus managed to externalize the brutal methods commonly associated with the institution itself by ascribing these to the old boys and by seeing the old boys as typical figures of the period which was seen as a civil war. By this sort of reasoning, they created a possibility of brutal action legitimized and performed by the supervisors who belonged to a different era, and who happened to use 'different methods'.

> Mirek: At the UB times, various things happened. At that time, it was actually a civil war and it should be approached differently – both sides were like this, and later on… I feel like laughing thinking about those times because… those post-war combatants, let's say – those from NSZ, who are alive… I had a friend, a very good friend in the unit C […] and when Sylwek moved into

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[116] These fragments of the superior's opinion shed a little bit of light on the vast amount of control exercised over the employees in Bezpieka. The major spheres of control implied ideological orientation, devotion and efficacy of work, as well as personal life.

there, they were just preparing documents in terms of doing the microfilm copies […] and they were picking up the files from the 40s and 50s. So, I am saying, and I dare to say that *around 80-70% of these people who are still alive, or have recently died – those well-deserved combatants* [sighed] *they were army's and UB's agents* [said as if this was a scandal and revelation at the same time]. I saw papers of the people who were sentenced to death and let's say Świerczewski changed their death sentences into life sentences, and then, after 10 years of imprisonment, such a person was released, but after he was sentenced, instead of his name, an alias is registered. I am not taken aback, these were young boys, many of them did not reach their 20s and it is needed to imagine being in their shoes and indeed – it is either an execution or you cooperate and -

Me: - And in this image which you are calling 'a civil war', would you lean towards the rationale of any of the parties?

Mirek: A very difficult question… this is. No, I would not. I would, I would […] draw a thick line – it was – these were such times.

Defining the 40s and 50s as a civil war is quite common among the people who worked as state agents in the numerous branches of the PRL Ministry of Interior Affairs. The two sides in the conflict are being imagined as equally brutal and determined. The fact that the communists managed to eventually use an institutionalized apparatus of repression is perceived as a failure of the opposition to seize power. In Mirek's narrative, the parties in the civil war are also deprived of independence – as one of the sides was supported by the Soviets, and the other was backed up by the West – only that the West withdrew its support due to an agreement reached with the Soviets at Yalta. Thus, there is a mode of imagining the post-war Poland as a field of struggle between two parties: one is pragmatic and follows communist ideals, while the other is naïve, conservative and chooses the wrong political partner. This imagery is further complemented by elevating geopolitics into the position of almost divine forces which determine people's loyalty. An individual like Mirek had no vision of meaningful oppositional action in the 40s and 50s – these sufferings appeared to him as naivety and lives lost in vain. The breaking down of the oppositionists does not allow for valuing them as heroes. If someone is attracting Mirek's respectful gaze, these are the wily colonels from the UB, who won.

Without a bag

Very important for Mirek was a particular ethos of masculinity. The ethos of manhood he believed in implied being unbreakable, self-reliant, intelligent, professional, brave, self-controlled, gallant, and

independent. His life as a security officer was constructed around these values. He grasped the meaning of his professional life based on a notion of service.

> I think […] that I was a kind of Western professional army officer – this is what they are paying for, somebody trained me into it and this is simply my duty, I do not condescend to anyone.

The sense of duty meant for him an absolute availability and devotion. Yet, this was not a complete adherence to a particular superior or political fraction. He thought of himself as a second lieutenant - and such he was.

> When a dignitary arrived, some sort of head of state, and protection was needed ,then, I am saying, it may have been the Pope, Gorbachev or Kohl, I am saying, all of them were approached in the same way because [.] because we knew that *we were there in order to protect and that was it*.

For Mirek, the notion of service and duty was coupled with political non-engagement.

> And when there was a party gathering, and when there was a 'comrade', because at our place the 'comrade' was a custom not a 'citizen', so when there was the 'comrade, how is it with the party?', I was saying that 'I, comrades', oh, because most of them were asking why didn't I sign up'… 'you can sign up for a rosary, here you can join, and in order to join I need a consciousness, and I think that I am not keen enough for a party membership, that I still do not understand, that these ideas are too majestic for me'. They had no hook on me – I did not say anything wrong…

Since the Bezpieka leader meant to obtain nearly 100% party membership, stories about avoiding membership or becoming a member unwillingly have been frequently evoked by the lower-ranking officers. They are usually tinged with irony. Being able to stay out of the party membership grew into an almost heroic deed. Mirek talked about his non-membership in order to legitimate his 'service-like' attitude, as well as to further create a distinction between himself and the others. He does not distance himself from the institution itself, or from the idea of secret security services or even from socialism or communism. He is critical, though, about certain attitudes and ways of conduct that were present in the past. Similarly to the ways in which he spoke about the old boys, he differentiated other categories of state agents that he disliked. Naturally, he placed himself in

opposition to the scorned features of other characters whom he passed on the corridors of 'the firm' daily and nightly when it was needed.

> There was a group of people – *typical lickspittles* [with disgust]. There was a group who did not realize they were on duty, but thought they had a regular post. […] There were people who were busy with their own interests, because if you had wanted, you could have had a lot of time, right. The operational positions were about being as little as possible at the office and as much as possible in the area – in the enterprises which we took care of, working with agents – and some of the people did that, while some – there were people like that – had pieces of land, they were building up at that time, there were those who went to collect fruits if it was the season.

He talks extensively about concrete examples of people who displayed a sort of wrong attitude to the service. While describing greedy types, he recalls his official visits to greenhouses. On one such occasion a local party secretary stuck by him. It turned out that when the occasion arose, the local dignitary packed as many cucumbers as possible into his suitcase.

> And I did not have a bag. Some of the people were laughing at me that I am the only inspector in the region without a bag. Well, I did not have any bag, *anyhow, I would not take, damn! This is not my way* [said with an emphasis indicating honesty and distance from other sorts of behaviour].

Another time he told about a black Volga's visits to a factory which he took care of. An arrival of the black Volga meant that, for whatever reason, some dignitaries were packing the car with the goods produced in that very enterprise. Still, Mirek had called the old boy – colonel Matiuk - and had reported the incident. Talking to me, he imitated the old boy's answer with disdain ridiculing him '*let through Mirek, let through, these are the party secretaries, let through*' [said imitating the voice, which was made to sound ridiculous and funny]. So he let them through that day, but the image of the black Volga stayed in his mind and, when asked by me about PRL, he stated briefly 'it was Poland of fellows', meaning that a very small group of people 'made a pile' in that era. Still, on the other hand, 'there was a sense of security and stability – both in terms of work and in terms of safety'; he followed up this statement almost immediately, 'and the average was different' – meaning more equal. He felt that he guarded that security, providing society with a sense of stability.

Just as he had no bag, he also had no friends in high positions.

These sorts of people were numerous. Simply, a father was pulling a son. Because, if I was an outsider in the firm, *who was to support me?* [said with a sense of injustice] If a father was a colonel, working as a chief of the unit – this facilitated promotion.

It was because of the colonel's son that Mirek had to leave his beloved unit T and move back to the unit III and take care of lawyers. Eventually, he says, in contrast to most other units, unit T had been mostly positively verified in 1990.

The last category of functionaries whom Mirek disapproved of consisted of those who, similarly to colonel Matiuk, lacked intelligence. Jokes and stories concerning such, mostly young (perhaps a mark of another generational change) officers are common among the state agents. Lacking one's own sense of things, one's own judgement tends to discredit. Mirek repeatedly gave me a story of a man who was asked to divide a pile of 33 illegal leaflets and send half to the Ministry and leave the other half in the Marianowice archives. The guy had a hard nut to crack as, each time he tried to create two piles, there was always one leaflet left and he could not figure out what to do with it. Mirek was different – he was independent and whenever he found some order dim and possible to omit, he would neglect it. He learned this from his partner (newcomers always joined a more experienced officer in order to learn applied knowledge faster), whom he respected for his 'soundness'. The instances of this soundness are often recalled by the officers as they deepened the distance between themselves and the party or their superiors, whom they often depict as ridiculous or wrong.

These were the last years – I did not like, as I say, I had to be convinced that what I was doing had sense, had an aim, and these last years [the late 1980s] looked like that – there arrived a message from Warsaw and everyone wanted to be holier-than-thou and to have results, so they were driving us away into that main square, I do not understand to what purpose, since if they had not sent us there, the people would have perished themselves anyhow… so, on such occasions, I did not go there. I had a mate in the subway between Krakowska and Chopina Street - there was a small souvenir shop in the subway. Karol was 'officiating' there. So when we were ordered for protection of the main square […] we were sitting together with Karol in the undercut – which was strategically situated, the station was on, so, I knew what was going on at the square, I knew what was going on at the university. In between two snifters I was reporting what was going on at the square [without seeing it], saying how many people are walking in the demonstration. Everybody was satisfied – so was I.

It was in the 1980s that Mirek started to find himself at a crossroads from time to time. The above story tells about orders, nonsensical according to him, to send the secret security agents to secure the demonstrations and display the power of the shaken regime to the people. He did not think it was what he should have been doing – facing the crowds. He was a *secret* security agent, not a public one. Besides, these orders were unwisely given by his supervisor.

The Solidarity movement intensified in the 1980s and this growth was coupled with an escalation in the tasks assigned to the unit T. Here, again, Mirek felt more unease, when ordering the planting of bugs became very popular.

> I had [moral unease] in regards to the bug installation itself… when it started to mushroom and reached a large scale. I mean here mainly the flats belonging to opposition. […] it went all the way and in many cases, it was, in my opinion *it was not, it was not justified* [said with disgust]. […] I did not find it reasonable because the opposition was sussed out fairly well with operational methods, thanks to OZIs [Osobowe Źródła Informacji – all sorts of agents who provided information]. *You do not realize who and on what sort of top levels…!* [as if talking about a deep secret that was shocking] No technology. Technology can only confirm something, but no technology can replace a well-situated agent. It cannot replace it, because a device can register what we are talking about, but you cannot set it to ask a question, or to provoke a situation, to do something. So, it should not have happened, in my opinion, being extravagant with technology. […] it was a sort of entering into people's lives, into their very private matters, very intimate, and this was not needed.

Mirek felt things got out of control in the late 1980s. He was calm though, as he perceived himself as completely distinct from those at the top, who gave orders and obtained benefits. Stories about medals given to superiors who did not even move from their offices, for jobs done by regular officers, are common. For him, these signified a 'Poland of fellows' and deepened the distance between the greedy superiors and himself – a regular officer on duty who kept his dignity.

> There was one such job in Marianowice, it does not matter what building, as I said before, *there are things which I will not say* [conveying a sense of secrecy and professionalism] […] and I got a silver order of merit for it, and there were two of us working in that building – one guy from Warsaw camouflaged, and I was joining him at nights only, and my superior – Tadeusz Maron – A SLOUCH, he got for it a so-called 'porcelain' [one of the highest medals]. Basically for sitting and

drinking vodka and doing nothing. He stayed in the outreach of the radio station. That's all. And I was coming back with a bleeding forehead. For that job, also a vice-chief got…

A job done well brought Mirek no real favours at that time. He understood hierarchy and even though he disliked it, he focused on his job.

Like many officers, he left himself one more gate open – the gate of help. Helping others is a recurrent theme in the former officers' narratives. Stories of using one's privileged position to get people out of trouble always appeared during the interviews. These stories pop up every now and then in order to counteract the public narrative which demonizes the secret security services, and to show an underside, which is silenced. At those times, these were simple favours – acts of reciprocity or signifying practices of fraternity, some of them forced – since people asked for help, imagining a regular officer was omnipotent. Mirek's examples of helping were stories of rescuing some of his old backyard peers from awkward situations. These rescue operations where always staged in a spectacular manner the logic of which relied on Mirek's cynical and insolent abuse of power, situating him at a distance from the security structures. This power was made real through people's slavishness acted out whenever an ID or the word 'SB' appeared.

> Mirek: I helped a couple of people. […] On my backyard, there was a guy, my peer, he is dead – a very good football player – Mark Smolar, only he took to drink. He was a painter.
> Me: An artist?
> Mirek: *A decorator* [laughing]. So, once I gave him a summons because he had a hitch at work, because he did not go to work – they called him […] so I wrote him down, that as a witness I called him into for such and such case […] and it was accepted. Yet, after some time, his mate came over, also a great fellow, and he said 'damn! They are going to fire Mark, because today, it is the third day that he is not at work'. So, what sort of business is that for me? To help some fellow from my street… yet, whom I did not keep in touch with, but we knew each other, we were from the same street. I called. It was a sort of cooperative. 'With the director please'. I said on the phone whom I was and that I will pay him a visit shortly. I took a new Volga – we got the new one, black. I told someone to drive me in there, and that was a flurry, because a barrack like that, and there comes a car like this, *a spiel*. The director is standing in the doorway '*good morning Mr inspector!*' [somewhat with disdain]. I am saying 'Mr director, there is a business. Smolar was at our place. We are keeping him in and we are going to keep him still today. He is not guilty, but he is knowledgeable about people whom we are planning to suss out. So, he is not going to be at work still today. I did not ask. *I was simply saying* [said as if he disapproved of the

director's behaviour]. Fine, Mr inspector, whatever. I said 'Do not make any sort of fuss about it at work'. 'Of course, anything'.

Enjoyment

'Taking care' of other people in the industry, often referred to by Mirek as 'playing around', was not the kind of job that he fancied. The real thing started when the Ministry was reorganized and he was moved into the voivodeship level to the unit 'T'[117]. Throughout our meetings, the moments in which I could always observe his engagement and pleasure of recalling and talking were when he spoke about his bugging jobs. His attention to the tiny details of such jobs and the pet names used for the bugging equipment, uttered in an affectionate manner, worked as signifiers of the enjoyment he had found in doing his work.

> In the unit T there were sections [he means the voivodeship level], in the department there were units [he means the level of ministry]. Like in our unit the section 1 was responsible for the installations. There were two sections for the listening-in – PP [bugging] and PT [tapping], there was a photography section and that of clandestine entries – […], and there was a section for the equipment maintenance. […] And I was working there [in the section 1 of the unit T] for many years. Because it happened that as a young employee of this section I was at one 'job' [robota] – that is how we called it, it was a big work, let's say a hotel-type of job meaning that many rooms were bugged – you can read about it in books, it is not a sort of… [estimating how much he can say]. […] And I went for one job like this with our boys [he means colleagues from Marianowice unit T] and I did quite well and when the request was sent from Warsaw, because it happened from time to time, they needed employees for some sort of a grand job, simply the manpower in Warsaw did not suffice, so they collected people from other regions. So, I went. I was living very nicely in Warsaw, in Bristol hotel, it looked differently than it is now […] *out of those big Warsaw hotels I know practically all* [proudly]. […] And I came back from there with a very good reputation.

Mirek enjoyed placing bugs in various places because it was a kind of job that required technical skills, good ideas, reflexes and flair – the sort of things that he valued highly. The jobs he was performing were often demanding and challenging. Thus, he felt satisfaction after doing them well. There was no hint of crude ideological work in what he was doing. Once he had reached the top team responsible for installations, he worked on the big cases of espionage. His sort of job, directed

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[117] "T" as in tapping.

against the people from other secret services, implied no questions of morality for Mirek. Instead, there was a feeling of satisfaction from performing a demanding task in conditions of high risk, sometimes physically hard, which required some very well-synchronized teamwork. He enjoyed being a part of a team. And the technical team was of a particular sort according to Mirek's perception.

> The technical unit – the department could not have been hired by any police officer or any SB employee, because this is what occurred to him, because he had some problems with a client or for clearing up the case… so the technology guys would come, place the ear [colloquial for a bug] and all would be fine.

The technology peers came into the picture when important cases were pursued. In terms of backing up the police this included murders and economic offences or white-collar crimes involving big sums of money. Meanwhile the support for the Security was much wider, but was most commonly used by the espionage and counter-espionage units. It was the Secretary of State who was empowered to approve a bug. Setting a bug and using material sourced from bugging required ingenuity and good intuition. While other officers played games with real people, Mirek was dealing with particular sorts of toys inserted into and removed from various Polish walls. He moved around Poland a lot. Being called to jobs in different places, he participated in jobs about which he could not have talked with colleagues from Marianowice, or basically with anyone. This surely added to his local prestige as a specialist, who was being called to difficult jobs by Warsaw. Eventually, his business trips involved more than perfected technical skills. He had to switch identities, to be someone else, to be two different people at one time. About such unusual and bookish experiences he talks with a lot of pleasure. These jobs elevated him above a casual and mediocre level of the Marianowice Political Secret Services. The mist of secrecy has surely worked towards the aggrandizement of his involvements committed in the sphere of professional life.

Mirek could not recall any sort of event, throughout his years in service, which could be read as an expression of someone's disapproval of what he was doing. When he was 'taking care' of people, they were most of the time overzealous and submissive towards him. When he dealt with 'ears', he only installed and did not listen through them. Today, he keeps recalling those difficult jobs which were particularly challenging. Such recollections are always coupled with pleasant affective states.

You know, to install, because it is mainly about passing, making an opening, so later it could, because the rest is just cosmetics – so it [the opening] could have taken a while, like, taking a decision what [tool] to use now, how, what do you see, how is it in there… and these sort of things could have taxed one's brain, some of them perhaps still do today.

This detailing of his technical work was probably, for him, the only delightful aspect of our conversations. Talking about 'ears' and 'idiots'. He was 'the only one' in Marianowice who installed so many 'idiots'. And there were a few of them in Poland – but I should not have written about that. Apart from delight though, there is resentfulness in Mirek. It was not an easy daily bread as he spent hours and hours in drains setting cables. You can read hard work in his hands.

The letter

It is our third meeting. Mirek is searching for something in his bag. As usual, the bag contains a bottle of cheap Hungarian wine and three bottles of dark Polish beer. The search sounds familiar, yet, this time, apart from a bottle of wine with which Mirek starts his manly conversation, he takes out a well-worn piece of paper.

Mirek: Here is a letter of a sort that I found. Not everybody got it. This is a sort of recap of my work. […] It says in what unit, how long, at what positions […].
Me: Did you ask for it?
Mirek: No, it was without asking, but as I am saying, not everybody got it, because not everybody worked this way, because here there are the imminent dangers, it was not applicable to everybody…

The letter open in my hands was the only sign of gratitude Mirek got from the state. However, this letter was worth nothing. A well-worn piece of paper written on a type machine listed his work experience and health problems caused by his professional involvement. In spite of that, Mirek held on to it, as it proved all that he had told me.

The feeling of resentfulness Mirek holds for the transition comes out only occasionally. Like many officers in the secret political police, he was sure he would be staying in service. Verified negatively, he did not even appeal against the decision of the invisible commission.

You know, I regret that things worked out this way. *I very much liked*… you asked about prestige before, could you specify?

When the UOP came into power, they were strolling through corridors with guns and from around the corners they were shooting into each other – puf, puf… - meaning they did not shoot for real, they were only playing around because they got guns into their hands. I was taught that an officer of secret services takes out a gun only when he is to use it – that's it – just like samurai and his sword. To impress somebody with something? That something hangs under your armpit…

The way the transition happened feels humiliating for Mirek. He thought of himself as a politically non-involved specialist. The unprofessional acts of the newcomers were embarrassing for him.

Why are we like this about Russia? Why are KGB and GRU reproached? Where were they [the UB/SB generals] to be educated at that time? In our times, the vice-chief Alek Olenty – I am saying like this, he graduated from an academy in Moscow, a SQUIRT, a vice-chief of OKAP, a SQUIRT, he had no clue about the operational work, a SQUIRT. He left and he became a chief of security in a bank. *What did he do in his life and what did I do*?

Mirek receives 1100 PLN of pension each month. The average pension for 2008 equals 1397 PLN. He switches on a radio or a TV, or opens a newspaper and he hears about ex-officers of the secret political police who, even though they were bloody bastards repressing the political opposition who led the country towards democracy, are taking enormous pensions of about 6000 PLN. Still, he knows of many of his former superiors, who were blind ideologists, or who followed the ideology blindly for gains - these people took secure positions in financial institutions, or founded their own companies.

Mirek is an honourable failure today. After the verification, he did a couple of jobs on the black market, working for some shady fellows whom he met through his ex-colleagues and who most probably used to work as their informers in the past. These were all technical jobs for which he was well-trained. The network cut off at some point, though, and he sat at home with his books. He heard this or that discussed publicly about 'the firm', 'the factory' he used to work for.

You see, *I want to say that not all of the officers in this service are or were like this* [in a defensive tone], the way I am saying, as if, oh… to represent them to the public opinion, that they are

bloodthirsty, just like not all of them were like the one whom I talked about, even though these were particularly numerous, that they would take a kilo of cucumbers or tomatoes, because they were for free. For sure many, many… and that's why I do not keep in touch with my ex-colleagues. According to this rule, they are well-off at the moment.

Franek: *And I felt, and I still feel… all the time, that my work was essential.*

I got Franek's contact through another former security officer. As he suggested, we were meeting in his office after working hours so as to grant us the privacy needed for the sort of conversations I wanted to have. Franek run a detective agency situated in a former printing-house building. The space itself was a bit murky. It had some socialist-era armchairs and a low longish rectangular table, two black desks of a more modern style and stands filled out with file binders. Next to a calendar with a naked young woman hung a series of kitsch landscapes in pastel colours – Franek's attempt at softening the milieu of the office. On the other wall were an emblem and a hanging bust of Marshal Piłsudski - Franek's ironical commentary on the political reality.

Towards becoming a communist

Franek was born after WW2 in a small Polish town in what he calls an 'intelligentsia' family. Talking about them, he found it important to underline the mixed political and religious convictions present in the family.

> On my mother's side it goes like this: brothers, grandpa linked to BCh partisanship. Mother's brothers – one in BCh, the other in AL. The youngest brother did not catch hold since he was too young, so, neither a partisan nor nothing. This is on my mum's side. On the side of my father's family – <u>wrong</u> [said in troubled voice]. Father's oldest brother – AK [he smacks] […] chased after war by the way [he smacks] but he did not have the sort of problems sensu stricto, he was not arrested, but he was constantly reproached with things. In turn, the other of father's brothers - in Zośka battalion, died during the Warsaw Uprising and the entire family, the entire family, because later on I obviously did talk about <u>these issues</u> – so it was more AK, AK… I am talking about it because these options [political] of my family were slightly divided. But, but in my family, perhaps it was this sort of time. I now regret that in my family <u>these issues</u> were very rarely, modestly talked about.

He than went on complaining that any sorts of conversation they had had within the family regarding these issues were generalities. He underlined that he himself had had no wish to deepen this knowledge and that he basically had grown up with typical PRL books – 'Meaning neither Katyń nor other nothing. Just admiring, obviously, Red Army…'. Through his narrative, he has repeatedly expressed resentment towards his family, university teachers, and the party for not educating him about the atrocities committed by the regime he worked for.

In his story, Franek placed himself at the margins of the family, often in opposition to his parents. Starting from the political affiliations present on his father's side of the family, he than moved to his parents' strong adherence to the Catholic Church, from which he broke away. As a teenager, he was drawn into the Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

In general Franek introduced himself as a flaneur, an artistic and frivolous type, a crafty fellow, who liked to have fun. He dreamed of getting into film school and becoming a film director but he failed the entry exams. After that, he tried to study Economy and Political Science without much success. Meanwhile, he did some work for a railway company, a job he quit as it did not fulfil his ambitions, and became politically engaged in the workings of the Rural Youth Union (ZMW) where he boosted his ego and found a venue in which he was able to feel really self-confident.

> There I become a vice-president of the regional board and I entered the party. All the time […] I am a non-believer. I join the party in 1968. I substantiated my membership application pointing at my disdain towards the March events [famous protests], meaning I identify with the authorities at that time and so on and so on. I am obviously being perceived as a sort of ideologically-devoted acquisition in the PZPR.

For the first time, Franek enjoyed the prospect of omnipotence when he joined the ZMW.

> ZWM? Honestly? It was great fun! First as an ideology instructor of a district I was recruiting new members for the organization […]. I surely have a great merit in this, because a lot of youth entered the association. I was travelling around as a so-called – just like in the aftermath of war - ideologue [laughing], like this I was travelling around those villages and I was making appeals to the youth and building up the organizational structure. And I was being perceived very well. I had plenty of girls, whom I so well knew how to buy, I was skilful in buying them, you see, with my speeches.

After the ZMW episode, Franek approached the university once more, again unsuccessfully. He thus once again found himself captured in a moment of high expectations incommensurate with the reality of his abilities or engagements. Fortunately, there came a helping hand from the family. The husband of Franek's sister, a sociologist, had been enlisted by the secret political police and made a career there.

> And when I was kicked out from the Faculty of Political Science, then, what to do with such a great brother-in-law – Franek [said in diminutive], right? So they drew Franek [in diminutive] down to Marianowice and this is how I got into the secret political police. With a couple of credit books in hand […] it was possible for me to finish my studies in Marianowice at the local university, this time in extra-mural program, as an employee of the apparatus.

Franek started his job in the secret political police as a low-ranking officer in the auxiliary unit which dealt with such tasks as following people, taking photographs, often in disguise, on the staircases, in cars, observing and collecting the information that the higher-ranking officers asked for. The job did not require particular qualifications, and Franek eventually reached a moment when he felt he should have been doing something more noteworthy. Also, he was working under cover, so not being able to divulge his affiliation interfered with his sociable lifestyle. He knew too many people in Marianowice and telling lies was becoming difficult. He thus insisted on his brother-in-law arranging his promotion into an official position in 'the firm'.

> […] it is 1982, the beginning, so, just after the announcement of Martial Law. I do not remember, but it must have been March, so the Martial Law goes on, right […] I get to the least popular unit in which I stay till the end, it is a unit – I do not know, well, how you will use it… it is the unit number three […] which dealt with the entire superstructure, so everything was there […]. And from the very first day, I get to the section which deals with universities. […] And I get one particular university, the staff; the entire staff.

Franek basically occupied the position of his brother-in-law, who moved higher up the secret political police's ladder. The job in unit three lent him wings[118].

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[118] It is important to stress at this point the diversity of occupational structure of the secret political police. Specificity of a unit or a section has been particularly relevant for developing particular modes of comportment and social behaviour. It moreover resulted in different strategies of justification applied by employees of different units in today's condition of public disclosure and reprobation. In the case of

It seemed strange to me that Franek basically opened our first long conversation with issues like the Katyń lie. I later realized this was an expression of his regrets for not knowing about it. Later in the conversation, he said:

> Franek: […] I regret I did not have this knowledge, because, most probably, it would not change my consciousness, option and my views in general concerning all of that, but the knowledge would have been useful.
>
> Me: What for?
>
> Franek: Because you know, […] I do not know whether I will explain it well to you. I often faced a necessity of conversations concerning, including other things, the topics like: Piłsudski, Polish-Soviet war… or Russian, whatever you want to call it – I should have had a knowledge that is objective, and not only the one-sided as represented by the option which was at that time [communism]. […] Till the very end of my job my approach was very ideological and non-critical. […] I could have led some of the conversations differently – do you understand? And in this way… this is how I see it now, that it seemed as if I was a… how was it called… as in old times – a Stalinist, and I would perceive myself as the kind who had blinkers – only PRL and so on and so on…

This was an unexpected turn in our conversation. I was waiting for a more trivial story, even if constructed for display only, of at least partial condemnation of things like the 'Katyń lie', as it is commonly called now, for being an inhuman atrocity. Franek, nonetheless, criticised his lack of knowledge about the 'Katyń lie' on different grounds. He described it as a problem concerning his competency as an officer. He blamed the family, authorities and professors for blocking the information which, according to him, was necessary for performing his job in a professional manner. He brings in an image of the old boys, whom, as an officer belonging to the second generation, he does not want to resemble. It is crucial to him to differentiate himself as a professional, esteemed for his knowledge. He also sought to appear a bit of an intellectual type[119]. Coming from an intelligentsia family and having a sister who was a successful academic, Franek, with his numerous university failures, developed an inferiority complex. Getting into unit three seemed to him to be a chance to

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Franek, it was the fact of dealing with the intelligentsia often in the form of casual conversations or amicable interactions that played a significant role.

[119] Among the secret political police officers I talked to, an ethos of intelligentsia seems to be overtly present – an enduring effect of traditionally hierarchical Polish society which the communist project aimed at revolutionizing had its ambiguous consequences. Often, people recruited to the secret political police were born into peasants' or workers' families and moved from small backward villages to the socialist cities. Many got a possibility of earning a higher degree through the secret political police venue. Work in the secret political police was a way of social promotion. The sense of superiority was caused not only by the financial and material well-being – typical for the entire communist state-sector - or by the reputation of being all-powerful, but also through the access to education and professionalism.

enter a social milieu he looked up to and to master the sort of social skills that he found worthy. The work he had to perform gave him the grounds for distinguishing himself from other officers, who seemed more rough, uneducated, and plain.

Franek arrived in a unit which preoccupied itself with superstructure. His job was to 'take care' of the staff of a particular university. This was an ambitious task, a challenge as much for him as for many of his co-workers. They had to face an image of intelligentsia which put them down, which annoyed them with its superiority, which from time to time played that superiority out. This complex is particularly visible when Franek talks about his lack of objective historical knowledge and his blind devotion to the communist ideology. He feels anxiety when he imagines what the staff of the university he 'took care of' might have thought of him. How had he appeared to them? He gets uneasy thinking about his lack of competence. He imagines he should have known about certain historical details, as he would have said things differently in the conversations he held doing his job. This is *post factum* thinking about some past situations in which he felt he was dominating and which he now imagines might have made him look naive. In a sense he sees through the mist to realize he might have been merely a tool, but this image is not strong, as the fulfilment and enjoyment of the work and who he was at that time wins through.

There was a power

> And if you asked me whether I had regretted getting into the department […] I would definitely answer 'no'.

Franek liked his job for the fact of being someone. It allowed him to acquire prestige, which he always sought but failed to gain in other ways. He recognizes that the prestige was, to the greatest part, based on fear. Yet, it did not take away his enjoyment of it. He knew it, yet, he behaved as if the element of fear was not there. Gallant and sophisticated, he liked to behave softly. He detested those officers who had shown their hands.

> Franek: None of the people, my family members, friends, acquaintances would have allowed themselves to say something negative about me being there. It is not sure whether they were afraid. They were afraid because, it is like this, I want you to know, the secret political police was perceived, and anyhow, anyhow this is how it was, that police [he smacks], they were as if, they could have envied us, but they never stood against, you know. So, I am thinking that it was rather fear […] it was not said. It was not said.

Me: And was it felt?

Franek: I tell you for instance, that because I got married to a colleague from my unit, and it was 1975 and I was so unlucky, because her parents were pressing for this marriage so much to take place […]. So, for my friends in Mientok, where I lived, I organized a sort of homey wedding party… with invitations […] and very many of my friends came to this party – from school and from other places. […]. And there a clash happened. Under the influence of vodka, under the influence of this… Well, one of my colleagues could not resist himself, and he was also an employee [of the secret security services], just like me [.] and he kicked up a row. […] This and that took place so we had to handcuff him, and what – disarm, because there was a gun and so on.

Me: What was the clash about?

Franek: Under the influence of vodka [said in diminutive] he said: 'I know about you! A lot! Here, I know about you, and about you, and I will…' [he smacks]. This is the sort of thing I later on tried to weed out […] – the lower someone was located in terms of possibilities and ranks, the more he wanted to show off and these were the sort of very negative, very negative aspects.

And here you have an answer to your question, that the position of this institution was so strong that even if someone was thinking differently, he did not say it. […]

Me: But when you say prestige… to my mind, it is something positive…

Franek: Well, perhaps it is a wrong word that I used… but yes, prestige, it was the kind of prestige that – perhaps it was not a prestige – you were towering over other people. […] perhaps I should not speak about the prestige of power, but there was a power.

Franek talks about the prestige of the secret political police with pleasure. My remark suggesting that perhaps what he talked about was not straightforwardly positive after all was taken up by him for a moment only, causing doubts, but, with successive statements, he came back to his initial feeling about the prestige, which was enjoyable for him. He does not see anything wrong in fear constituting the basis for his feeling of superiority. Yet, the difference should be stressed in regard to the process of production of fear. In his narrative, he condemns a situation in which power is being abused. Now, his definition of abuse of power is particular. It includes stripping yourself of the disguise and a lack of emotional elegant playfulness with the situation in which you are clearly dominating. You abuse when you straightforwardly show your affiliation and expose it in an unsophisticated manner - when you make people fear in a crude way.

The university staff – you know, despite all, they were people up to the mark. And for instance [he smacks] I think one had to be really well prepared, at least this is what I think, for such a

conversation – not only in terms of arguments [he smacks] but also in terms of manners […]. This is how I imagined that. But, for instance, not all of us did… […]

Another story of his illustrates a peculiar way in which he defines transgression. During one of our conversations, I asked him to tell me about something difficult or weird that happened to him at work. He asked me to switch off the recorder and spoke about a situation which I want to bring in here because it complements the other story. After the voice recorder was off, Franek talked about a good friend of his who, from time to time, lent him the key to his flat, so that Franek could sleep over. One day Franek opened the apartment, went in, and could not believe his eyes. In the living room there were piles of 'bibuła' [illegal propaganda publications]. 'Fuck! What to do?'. Sober in his thinking and full of good will to 'save his friend's ass' but at the same time being loyal to his professional code, he rang a colleague (another 'employee') and explained the situation to him. They took the 'bibuła' away and, on Franek's initiative, they decided to give a lesson to the man who had disappointed Franek's friendship. Franek set up a meeting with the 'bibuła' guy at one of the school playgrounds. When the guy arrived Franek and his colleague played out the following scenario: Franek, not anticipating what he might find, enters the flat of the 'bibuła guy' with his colleague. There, in the living room, the colleague sees 'bibuła' and is shaken. He insists on turning the 'bibuła' guy in to 'the firm'. Franek tries to convince him not to. They discuss. Eventually, Franek persuades his colleague to meet the 'bibuła' guy and just give him a sort of warning talk to see what his reaction might be. So, the 'bibuła' guy turned up at the playground, and Franek acted as if he could not have done anything to change the course of events… if only he had been alone while entering the flat, everything would have gone differently. Now, all he could do was to ask the colleague not to give the 'bibuła' guy up to 'the firm' but to see him first. Coincidentally, the 'bibuła' guy was planning to leave the country and join his son abroad. He had been waiting for this departure for a long time for deeply emotional reasons. Franek knew about it and he used this personal information with the skilfulness of the security officer. 'Are you fucking crazy? Now that you are to see your son – you waited for it so long? What, for this sort of shit? What can I do with it now?' The superbly staged conversation continued. Eventually, Franek caused the delay of the 'bibuła' guy's departure, but, at the same time, did not give him up to 'the firm', so the consequences were not as severe as they could have been. Franek presented this story as if it was an instance of his decency and help given to his friend. He could not have let the thing go because he believed that 'bibuła' was a politically dangerous object which could have weakened the system which he was supposed to defend. The repercussions of leaving it could have been serious – for his friend also.

The meeting set up by him can serve as an example of a way in which he imagines a performance of professionalism – a casual conversation in which threats are made in a 'polite' and veiled manner but seem friendly after all. He needed to position himself as the 'good cop' and to have his colleague playing out the 'bad cop'. He could not have simply talked to the 'bibuła' guy himself, nor to let the whole thing go. In most of his official situations with informants and clients, he played the part of good cop, really believing at the same time that this is who he was. The word he used for that sort of intervention while talking about other situations like this was 'neutralizing'. He perceived his way of 'neutralizing' people to be correct, because it relied on a 'dialogue'. He felt good in it, because his position in that 'dialogue' situation was almost always superior.

Networks

The methods of work Franek was using made the drawing of a clear line between his job and his private life unworkable. When asked about his circles of friends while working in the secret police, he said that the spectrum was wide, and among a few other categories, he mentioned 'university friendships' – which meant the contacts derived from his job. When asked about ways in which this changed after he left the secret security apparatus, he said that the 'university friends' basically dropped off. This made me think that he did not actually perform the sort of common separation between professional and private life. Apparently there was an aspect of his profession which felt to him like leisure time, especially when he had an informant who was a lover at the same time or when he kept being invited for vodka by some of the academics and it felt as if a sense of friendship was being built up. Since Franek still lives and works in Marianowice, in the post-1989 situation he is likely to meet his 'university friends' every now and then.

> [...] still now I have colleagues, acquaintances, because friends, I would rather not say that...
> associates, acquaintances at the university... where I can go, and I have been going and even at
> department [x], that if only I needed, still long after I quit [.] I could have, let's say, asked that
> they re-examine someone – these sort of things.

Franek treats his professional contacts as possible venues for favour-gaining. It is through sociable interactions deprived of deeper affectivity that he gains and reciprocates certain profits. Among other things, his son graduated from a department in which Franek had his most devoted informants. Since, in an informal conversational set-up, an informant could not have clearly differentiated whether what Franek did for him was official or not, a feeling of obligation might persist on the side of the informants. They could not have clearly recognized that, when Franek brought presents, which

he himself had chosen, he did it because he simply wanted to and liked to, or because this was his professional method. Typically, he often gave the impression that he did some things out of his good heart, and he also somehow believed in it. He was amicable, he was helpful, and he was flirtatious – perhaps, a cup of coffee with a cognac, or stockings from a Pewex shop in his briefcase.

Me: So, what did your interactions with the academic circles look like?

Franek: I was having conversation of a type – as it is being currently talked about, this is how it was. Firstly, there were so-called official contacts, where basically, if I asked, no-one could have refused, or it never happened […]. The other things were typical operational contacts, where it was possible to talk with various people, apart from the official hierarchy […] basically to chat, in a form of a lovely cup of coffee or something. […] you only needed to know, well… whether someone wants, whether a person is not afraid of this contact… whether someone voluntarily agrees and amicably agrees, because you know… this was like this, you had to work out yourself some sort of friendships […]. You need to know who is who. […] and this is a question of intuition. And apart from that, you also need to take under consideration that I knew something about the people I talked to and relying on that I was building a whole strategy […]. I had many interlocutors – let's call it this way, or if you prefer – people who cooperated, who of one's own free will, by themselves, through established contacts 'I have to [talk] with you, because I have an important [issue] this!'.

Me: And why did they do it – out of their own belief or they could have gained something?

Franek: […] a part of them did it out of conviction that they did a good thing, a part of them did it because, let's say 'I like Franek [said as diminutive] so I will please him, he will be delighted with this information'. A part of them was counting on benefits, meaning – I will do something for Franek [said in diminutive] and he will do something for me'. And a fraction knew that if they say something good, well, then they would get cash.

Such constructed relations can persist only if you remain a valuable contact. Not all of the ex-officers of the secret political police are a desirable part of people's networks at the moment. The prestige of some of them fell down along with the Berlin Wall, or gradually disappeared. Mirek is an example of such a person, who dropped out of the networks. Franek, on the other hand, stays in, successfully networked. It might be that this is the main reason for his disorientation – he feels ashamed before his former professional contacts for believing in something which currently seems so obviously naive. Again, as opposed to Mirek, Franek cares about what people think of him. He likes to look good, and

drive a good car[120]. Now, he runs his own company; hence, he has more real capital in his hands in comparison to Mirek. Franek looks down on his failed colleagues.

> I am talking about a category [of colleagues] who retired and did not take up any action, did not do anything, and they only live with this pension [contemptuously] and they are getting old very fast. While those who remain active, or they own a firm, or they do something – these people look so much better […]. Besides, the level of conversation with those people who are active is completely different. They are normal, you can speak to them about recent stuff, about this and that, also about private, about accomplishments [.] about vodka, entertainment; meanwhile the other group is embittered, dull eh…

Transformation

In the early nineties, the secret political police went through a so-called 'verification' process. Those who were verified negatively recall it with disdain. Franek called verification a 'very ugly formula', 'a verification without verification'. Like most of the officers who were negatively verified, Franek wrote an appeal. He concluded the appeal in the following manner: 'my appeal is not caused be my desire to stay [.], because this is out of the question, I simply do not want this sort of stuff'. The actual appeal ended with the following words: 'as stated above, I ask for thorough and objective reconsideration of my appeal'. This appeal was rejected in the same schematic manner, also by post, yet, this time, without any possibility of further appeal. Like other ex-officers of the secret political police who were negatively verified, in his narrative concerning verification Franek brought in the topic of 'one brutal colleague', who behaved like a Stalinist, and who nonetheless stayed in the firm. He felt this demonstrated that the verification process is arbitrary, unjust and offensive.

A common perception of transformation among the middle-ranking officers of Bezpieka is that they were victimized by the top-ranked Party leadership, who used them and now gave them up.

> Yet, no sign on Earth indicated that, and please underline it, that our authorities – both departmental and political […] would sell us. […] the leadership shall be blamed for that, the leadership of the department and of the party, that while giving away everything, and it was the

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[120] People who constitute desirable chains in social networks are more self-confident and keep a balanced relationship with their professional past. They do not feel much fear for the projects of accounting for the communist past and marginalizing the functionaries of the communist state in terms of privileges and prestige. In fact they do not have many personal enemies. Meanwhile, the sort of networks they have built throughout their career in the secret services, if used properly at the beginning of the transformation, could have served as a good starting point for a career in the new Poland. Franek is a successful type. He despises those who failed.

right thing to do, they skipped that topic. Because there was no place for any sort of bargain in here. Nobody was wise enough to say that this sort of claims will be laid, that this sort of lustration will take place, this and that.

It is not only that they – the *eminences grises* of the communist state – were betrayed by their own comrades for whom they loyally worked. Their moral code was also abused as their words of honour are being violated. Whenever they asked a person to cooperate, they gave assurances that this was between them and the person concerned, and no trace would be left, no possibility of identification. Now there exists an institution which uncovers such traces and breathes life into them. Such a condition is embarrassing, if not humiliating for an officer, who was a professional.

Franek: Now we can have a break and talk about love. I very much like you. What else baby, what else?

Conclusion

The world is rich enough to support an indefinite number of correct descriptions.

Neisser (1986).

This thesis should be read as a personal attempt at conveying an ethnographic description of a dynamic process of meaning given to the communist past in one Polish town through a collective endeavour pursued within a framework of a democratic nation state. It is ethnography of a particular moment in Polish history, when one party's victory made possible the articulation of a strong moral stand against the communist regime. This agenda, which implied defining who the Polish nation is and has been, made certain groups of people cluster around this short-lived manifestation of a centre of power and its project. The consolidation of claims to truth about the past, which emerged in a form of memory politics and retributive justice project, made a collective enactment of a moral framework achievable. On a very general level, this thesis is about ways in which the individual is intertwined with the social, and how collective endeavours focused on defining the past, channelled through the state institutions, may influence individual processes of remembering, forgetting and articulating the self. My ambition with this work was to study the intersections of collective and individual efforts to objectify the past in the present. I aimed at grasping a larger picture of the practices of memory construction, as they emerge on different levels of social life, kaleidoscopic and multidimensional in their nature. I chose to work with the two groups of people, differently positioned vis-à-vis the memory project, because I was interested in ways in which the divergent positions and resources available for defining themselves have influenced the idiosyncratic ways in which they tried to maintain the sense of self-coherence in time. Throughout these chapters, I tried to describe ways in which the memory framework drew lines of inclusion and exclusion, generating a sense of belonging in the heroes/victims, and a sense of disorientation among the former security officers.

This thesis is as much about the phenomenological experience of communism that my informants lived through as it is about the historically emergent, state-controlled channels through which the meaning of the communist past was generated. The processes of objectification of the past are understood as collectively realized enactments in which various groups participate with different motivations in mind. The society I studied is characterized by deep ideological divisions. These divisions translate into the sphere of memory politics. In reference to the communist past, the heroes/victims and the former security officers have different claims to the truth and, during my fieldwork, they also differed in terms of channels and resources available for realizing these claims.

Wanting to belong to a continuous national community for which they fought, the heroes/victims saw communism as an aberration, a form of colonialism. During communism, they were deprived of a sense of belonging to the emergent political form; hence, in order to feel at home in today's Poland, they needed to exclude that period as exceptional, representing it as an error. The former security officers, on the other hand, wish to continuously belong as, after all, throughout their entire lives, they served the national interest. They vowed to the nation, and everything they did, they learned to explain in terms of the Polish interest. They find it absurd when they are accused of a 'communist crime'. They understand communism as one of many legitimate state forms, smoothly transformed into a democratic one, among others, through their own effort; and if there were transgressions taking place, the high-ranking communist party members should be brought to account for those transgressions in the first instance – they believe.

A self-criticism of a post-communist writer

My writing obviously mirrors my struggles in finding a theoretical stance capable of conveying my mode of looking into the world that surrounded me in the field. Wanting to approach memory as a complex social phenomenon, and wanting to reach into various layers of social reality, I combined various theoretical stances and methodology. I am most indebted to the linguistic anthropology, material culture, memory studies, and cognitive psychology literature. All of these various fields of research seemed useful for me in the process of grasping and depicting the social modes of constructing the image of the past in the present. They allowed me an insight into the different ways in which memory is social. I relied on the linguistic anthropology literature, applying the methodology of CDA, when dealing with the institutionalized aspect of the memory project like sermons or speeches evoked during the commemorative rituals. I chose this approach for its sensitivity to the politicized aspect of collective production of meaning and its pragmatic appropriation. On the institutional level of the analysis, the material culture studies were also helpful in tracing the ways in which meaning was generated through materiality and how the symbolic moulding of the landscape was controlled through the institutional channels serving at the same time as means of expression of very personal emotions. My reading into the symbolic interactionist school opened up for me a possibility of observing the dynamic aspects of the processes of construction of memory along with their collective character. This was particularly significant for the work within the association, where the fact of the phenomenological belonging to a group created with a clear aim put the exchanges on a particular track, creating a space for being a hero/victim. Eventually, the life narrative constituted for me a vantage point through which I could closely

observe the individual processes of the self formed in relation to the social position and collectively produced meanings. In pinning down the individual processes of remembering and forgetting the self in time, the cognitive psychology literature proved helpful, as it allowed me to keep the rigour of clarity when the borders between collective and individual often blurred. As a result, the presented ethnography evokes rather than represents.

Csordas, paraphrasing Tyler, argued that ethnography would be better to "evoke" than to "represent" (Tyler in Csordas 1994). While writing this thesis, I was enchanted by this idea of an evocative rather than representational mode of writing about an anthropological encounter with the other. Rather than interpreting and cognizing, I most of all focused on trying to feel how it is to be my informants. In the ethnography, I wanted to evoke this embodied aspect of their experience and to give snapshots of manifestations of their past lives in the present. I did not want to create another essentialized representation of them, especially since they were already essentialized in a representational form, which I was also to study. I wanted to go beyond the essentialized identities. For this reason, I decided to use significant amounts of the recorded material in the thesis next to my interpretation of it. When my interpretation is limited, I hope my informants were able to give a sense of who they were.

This ethnography could be criticized on the asymmetrical nature of the groups of informants. For one thing, this work eventually became an ethnography of male remembering, as most of my attention was given to men on both sides of the barricade. This was not a very conscious choice. Rather, during the fieldwork, I encountered men in the great majority and, while I could have decided to balance the material with female insights, I strategically chose to go deeper into the more personal and individual male remembering. I decided the latter was more important for me, as the most burning questions I had were those about the ways in which the self gets reconfigured on the wind of politicized history. Throughout my research I had a chance to work with female heroes/victims, and it was clear to me that they clustered together and that the female practice of remembering differed. Hence, this work does not encompass the gender dimension either among the heroes/victims or among the former security officers. I believe an ethnography of female, middle-ranking security officers would be a fascinating journey. If I had a chance to continue this research, this would undoubtedly be one of the avenues to pursue.

Apart from the gender issue, the asymmetry can be traced in the generations of informants I worked with. The first part of the ethnography is devoted to the people who were repressed during the Stalinist period, while the second deals mostly with the former security officers who served the communist regime from the sixties onwards, that is, after the Stalinist era. The more proper basis on which to collect the material would have been to juxtapose the experience of these heroes/victims with the narratives of the Bezpieka officers who served under Stalin. The only problem with these people was that they did not want to talk or, in order to open themselves up, they needed much more time, as they had much more to hide and much less institutional support behind them. The research period, on the other hand, did not allow time for working out a kind of trust, which would have allowed the reception of confessional narratives. I could have, on the other hand, chosen to work with different generations of the heroes/victims, focusing on comparing their positions and ways in which their memories underwent the processes of statization. I meant to construct this research in a way that would describe two opposing worlds, believing that such a construction would allow me to better understand each claim to the truth. Focusing on the Solidarity activists and the group of former security officers I worked with would be a plausible solution allowing me to keep the symmetry of the data. Alas, at the beginning of this research, I was very unlucky when trying to get in touch with the associated former Solidarity activists in Marianowice, who did not answer my phone calls and were difficult to meet. Only later, when I attended the trial of Janek, was I able to interview a couple of people from that circle. By that time, however, the material I gathered within the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Time seemed so rich and promising to me that I was not willing to abandon it. Despite these asymmetries, the work is meant to give a sense of the ways in which the collective defining of the communist past in Poland impacts upon individual lives and processes of remembering.

The methodological take of this work implied building a social and political context of the Law and Justice Party-implemented memory project and then focusing on interactive and individual processes of memory and self-construction undertaken in the midst of it. My methodological focus on the individual ensured that the in-depth picture remains idiosyncratic in its nature. I cannot claim that every hero/victim is like Leszek and that the structure of his emotions and memory could be easily ascribable to others. Yet, clearly, these people are living through similar collective processes of objectification of the past. The same holds for the security officers whom I wrote about in the thesis. They are not generic cases but idiosyncratic biographies who, at most, try to achieve coherence in their life stories in a similar way as they do so in reference to an emergent collective framework

which describes them in a definite way. No matter how idiosyncratic they may be, though, I believe each in-depth study of an individual experience of the self in the light of the politicized public definition of it sheds light on ways in which larger collective projects may possibly impact upon individual psychologies.

Testing the value of the memory project

In some sense, with this research, I wanted to see how successful the memory and retributive justice project has been for the heroes/victims and the former security officers in terms of bringing a sense of closure and justice in the aftermath of the communist past. My main observation concerned the fragility of this project, and a sense of uncertainty about this solution felt by both categories of informants. For the heroes/victims it was a constant fear entangled with experiencing competing forms of remembering, which did not allow for the comfort of experiencing or perceiving one's claims to the truth as common. Only with the help of the Church and the state institutions were the heroes/victims able to craft a comfort zone, in which they practised their hero/victim selves as transcendental, possibly allowing for the construction of a coherent and valuable self-image. In particular, it was the Law and Justice Party's government in which they trusted. They felt that, finally, these politicians understood what Poland was. Yet, even in the association, an act of painting a gibbet with a swastika hanging on it on the association's door, by an unknown culprit, made all of the members whom I knew feel anxious. They felt as though they had been attacked and had lost ground. Was their struggle not over yet? And was the current state willing to protect them at all? More importantly, at the end of such encounters there are always hidden internal doubts about the sense and correctness of one's choices, which cannot be questioned if one is to serve as a fully-fledged hero/victim, a symbolic resource of the nation. I found that the heroes/victims' task was particularly difficult to accomplish: being used as a national resource in the condition in which the communist past is still being contested in the public space, and trying to relate the sense of self to the collectively achieved framework in an absolute fashion, while being often reminded in the course of social interactions that this image and their truth were partial only, filled these people with a constant fear of denial.

The former security officers, on the other hand, felt that the fragility of their condition, during the Law and Justice Party's term, was defined by the arbitrariness of the memory project and the fact that they became a symbolic scapegoat in the process of judging the communist past. They thought that the judgement was performed by the victorious victims and not by society. In their eyes, the

project did not have a proper collective dimension, nor was it constructed so as to trace and punish individual transgressions independent of the political system. Obviously they knew about the ins and outs of the various violent faces of the communist regime, on the maintenance of which they had worked often very meticulously. However, the Law and Justice Party's memory and retributive justice project did not create the conditions for communicating their truth and incorporating their lives, even if full of mistakes, into a larger picture of societal transformation. The collectively achieved framework concerning the communist past ascribed to them the role of perpetrators, which was difficult for them to identify with, especially since it implied a possibility of being charged for the past transgressions which they had sometimes been ordered to carry out. The process of judging which took place was understood by them as unpredictable and arbitrary. Hence, the safest strategy they could have adopted was the one of distantiation from guilt and responsibility, which often implied distancing from the past phenomenological truth and transforming this truth through the process of elaboration of new constructs, attuned to the new reality and allowing the keeping of a positive self-image. The anxiety was omnipresent among these people. The clearest evidence for it was the difficulty in finding those willing to talk. Eventually, once I sat face to face with some of them, I felt their internal pressure for presenting the past selectively and desire to create a coherent account in which the self would be located at a safe distance from any possibility of transgression and wrongness. The more remote they were from their past lives, living in a world which condemned them and created no platform for the evocation of the past truthful to their phenomenological experience, the more intelligible this past became for them, and the more difficult it was to convey it. After each encounter with a security officer I felt how difficult it would be for me to see through them and how tiny were the pieces of themselves given away in a narrative form.

Myself in the landscape of the Polish memory

> "The subject of the human sciences is man, yet the man who studies himself as he practices the human sciences will always allow his preferences and prejudices to interfere in the way he defines himself to himself. What is interesting in man is not subject to scientific decision but results and always will result from a choice which is ultimately of a philosophical order" (Lévi-Strauss 1973:ix).

This ethnography should also be considered from an angle of constituting an 'ethnography at home'. Having noticed my habit of searching for deeper roots of research some people ask me why I was interested in these particular two groups of people, supposing that my family history implied a

political engagement of some sort. At first, I readily denied any connection. Yet, later, I started to wonder about the possible rooting of the topic in me. Throughout the main body of the thesis, I avoided imposing myself on the reader. This was partially because I believed that the material I gathered should be given priority in terms of exposure, and presented without self-reflexive interruptions. Still, in the contemporary anthropological writing, explaining the ethnographer's position vis-à-vis his or her subjects, particularly if it is an anthropology 'at home', became an unquestionable standard. I hence saved space in the conclusion for delimiting my stance. This delimiting will be more of a sketch than a coherent narrative. I wish to allow the reader to close the shape, as in the Gestalt theory, by herself/himself. On the one hand, I do not have a coherent story of myself to give and, on the other hand, I do not think I am entitled to carry out self-interpretation in this ethnography. I do believe, though, that shedding some light on the place inhabited by me in the society I described may help understand the way in which this text unfolds.

One can live in Poland or be a citizen of this country without thinking about the communist past or feeling a sense of belonging to the nation. This was very much the truth about myself who, for the most part, disliked the public events of disclosure, or the pathos of freedom evoked by the new elites. I did not really live through communism. I do not feel obliged to judge it or commemorate aspects of it in whatever form. In fact, I do not feel inclined to any sort of politicized and national experience either – be it the death of the Pope or the entry into the European Union. I do, however, have a very strong curiosity for other people and their ways of living through things, especially when they conceive of reality in a very different way from me. One experience certainly brought me closer to the topic of memory politics and ways in which communism is remembered in today's Poland. During one of my earlier fieldwork research projects conducted in Poland, in Gdynia shipyard – a cradle of Solidarity - I met a handful of true unionists disillusioned by the transformed Poland; they faced massive layoffs, and their protests were no longer seen as a brave act of national resistance but were instead represented as backward and hooligan acts. These were very bright and well-educated people with a very rigid and clear moral stance, devoted to the ethos of bravery of the workers, who stood up against communism. These people were nonetheless disoriented in the new reality. From them I learned that the myth did not hold together: Solidarity meant different things to different people, and some of the people from Solidarity felt betrayed by other people from Solidarity, while these other people thought that a significant part of the Solidarity group was maladjusted to the new reality and that there was no development without scapegoats. This was my

first serious encounter with the absurdity of the transformation. Since then, I became more sensitive to other aspects of the, absurd at times, Polish change from communism to democracy.

I was born in 1979, ten years before the representatives of the Solidarity movement, the Catholic Church and the Communist Party sat at the round table to talk things over. My mum, coming from a peasant family with a strong national and anti-communist inclination, moved to the town from the village in her teens and graduated there from a technical college holding the profession of economist. She worked in various state-owned companies, queued in the shops, and was a full-time parent to her kids. My dad, half-orphaned early in his youth, was a real city boy of a workers' family origin. Very keen on biking, he pursued a sports career as a cyclist and later as a coach, while in the meantime he happened to work as a dresser in a theatre, or, during transformation, as a businessman – a profession taken on by a significant percentage of Poles at that time. He has been less explicit in terms of his political beliefs in comparison to my mum. During our family life, I have seen them befriended by all sorts of people, regardless of their political views. Two of my older brothers, who came into this world around one decade earlier than myself and my youngest brother, both went through a period of anti-communist involvement, fascinated with Solidarity and the protests, which erupted every now and then in the town. My mum played forbidden political songs on the Grundig radio at home, and she felt fearful and proud at the same time when my youngest brother and I, as little kids, started to sing these in front of two militia officers on the streets, during martial law. She collected such stories of small everyday resistance in her memory, turning them into icons of our family life, recalling them every now and then as if such acts made a difference. For me, they were amusing little tales. Like the story of my oldest brother, who cut the red flags with a razor everywhere in the town during a national-communist holiday; or the one about my middle brother, who was hidden by an old women in her apartment at night, when the militia guys tried to catch him on the streets during the riots; or the one about my youngest brother, who overheard my parents talking about the civic protests due to take place that evening, which involved turning on the TVs at news-time and putting them in the windows with the screens facing the outside, and the way he insisted on doing that with our TV, screaming and crying, and how we eventually did it. Looking at her, how she tells them, I feel very moved, because I see how they function as her treasures. I see, at the same time, how she fits them into larger myths of the national resistance, almost as if we were anti-communist soldiers. Perhaps we were. At least, as far as she is concerned, every single thought made a difference - only that the events and thoughts we choose to turn into icons are necessarily selected. And the memories like the one of herself quarrelling with her dad, arguing that communism

was good as it allowed her to go to school in the city, move into oblivion, interpreted as the thoughts of a stupid young girl. Meanwhile I find this thought very legitimate. My view of Polish communism and transformation is convergent with an image of the Romanian revolution conveyed in Corneliu Porumboiu's film '12:08 East of Bucharest', in which the main actors of the symbolic transition which took place in a small Romanian town cannot agree on what actually happened.

Dream of belonging

The people whom I really wanted to meet in this fieldwork were the middle-ranking security officers. I approached them with no feelings of disgust or prejudice. I was simply curious to learn who they were and how they ended up doing all those things for which they are detested. With this research, I tried to come closer to their underworld. I am conscious, though, that the world of their memories could be dwelt in even deeper. The level of intelligibility of some of their stories, and the fragmented nature of their narratives, as well as a sense of eeriness of what they recalled in front of me make me think that there is much more to discover than a language of distantiation, which I was able to grasp and convey. Their stories require much more time to unravel than those whose identity is based on the fact of the existence of that strange underworld that was aimed against them. The act of unravelling what constitutes these people requires an acceptance and openness to strangeness and a possibility of being many different things at the same time. The former security officers amaze with their plasticity; they lie both to their interlocutors and to themselves. In their narratives, they form their selves as overtly masculine and, at the same time, as good and helpful, aggrandizing their work and their way of being while, in fact, most of their stories, when listened to carefully, are riddled with awkwardness and clumsiness, so remote from what they believed these stories to have been. And yet, I felt they needed me – someone to lie to and to display that coherent version which allowed them to exist, yet also to admit, a little bit, the evil aspect of their work. I was sometimes suffocating in their rooms full of stories, knowing that they used my silence as a sign of approval. My meetings with them built up hope that the memory project was not the only mode of approaching them and their past. As I sat silently in strange places with a voice recorder – sometimes curious, sometimes speechless, asking them questions, but never really provoking a discussion or making them feel uncomfortable… I was unable to act differently. I felt disgusted by what happened to these people, by whom they became, and I felt sorry for their ordinariness which so much reminded me that evil is banal and is a part of our social world – difficult to explain and make transparent in the eyes of those who commit it. And yet, I was unable to judge them.

For the heroes/victims, my research was another experience of recognition and confirmation, particularly prestigious, since this project was realized in England. The work with this group of people was easy because of their sense of obligation to convey and transfer the knowledge of their devastating experience to subsequent generations. They were easily accessible and open. Yet, this work was simultaneously difficult, since the modes in which they were ready to convey this knowledge were already objectified, canonized and collectively coordinated. I hence faced a task of pinning down the already canonized ways of narrating and representing one's past and searching for those memories which have so far escaped the uniformity of collective forms and myths. The fieldwork among the heroes/victims was particularly difficult for me in emotional terms, as these people, despite their centrality to the Law and Justice Party's memory politics, did not feel a genuine gratitude to the next generations for what they had fought for, and they also felt very lonely in their efforts to give testimony and teach patriotism. Apart from the state-organized events, in which children recite poems, proudly stand with flags and give the heroes/victims flowers, they often received no other experience of recognition. In particular, they hardly ever got such recognition from within their own families – from their children and grandchildren. In fact the recognition they experienced was quite narrowly defined, as it emerged only through institutional channels and happened on the special occasions. Hence, every encounter with a member of the younger generations, in whom the heroes/victims discern a genuine interest, generates a kind of need for an emotional bond between them, and the hopes that the message they give will be carried on by this person and conveyed to others. Eventually, they also hope that the interest in their past taken by such a person simultaneously means a readiness to support them in their associational struggle for visibility and involvement in the memory project. I, who perceived my informants as victims not only of communism, but also of nationalism, found myself in a particularly difficult position while in the field, situated vis-à-vis my informants, because I was not able to reciprocate the gift of their story and their trust. I feel a strong sense of objection to nationalism and forms of national remembering, for their exclusive nature and ways in which they evoke a sense of superiority in people. I strongly object to militarization and do not look up to lives lost in the name of a national community. Hence, despite feeling empathy and sadness for the miserable and humiliating experiences of the heroes/victims, I was not able to align myself with their enthusiasm for the memory project and involvement in the national and patriotic education. I was more attentive to the hazards of their beliefs, and the ultimate emptiness of the recognition and thanksgiving which they receive from the nation state for their efforts in guarding the national values. On numerous occasions during the fieldwork, the heroes/victims asked me to become an honorary member of their association. Each

time, I was embarrassed by such proposals and I rejected them. I never stated openly that I did not identify with their values and ideals. I only tried to give as much respect to their lives as possible while listening, observing, and asking questions. I know that manifesting my beliefs could have closed my path to them. On the other hand, though, they did not seem to want to know about my beliefs either, as my very presence meant so much to them.

The relationship with the informants was the most difficult part of this research. This was because all of them were so much in need of recognition, acceptance, and a sense of closeness, which I was not ready to give in any other form than by researching. In this sense, I did not meet their expectations. On the other hand, a sense of belonging is something that I also crave; and in this sense, none of these people gave me the slightest feeling that I belong where they do. Ultimately, this research evoked in me questions about the sort of community this society has become – definitely more fragmented now than thirty years ago.

Being conscious that what I saw with my eyes was very far from what my informants were able to admit with their words made the writing of this ethnography a harsh process. I opened this chapter quoting Neisser, who wrote that '*The world is rich enough to support an indefinite number of correct descriptions'*. I hence insist that the reader treats this description as one of many possible – a very personal, hopefully correct in some ways, account of my encounter with the two groups of people seized and almost paralyzed by their past, next to whom I had lived most of my life without noticing them. The bond I felt with them during this research and now when I recall them was that of humanity as, in the first place, they appeared in my eyes as human beings; and the lesson which I carried with me beyond this work was the fact that we are the same in terms of structures of our desires, needs, weaknesses, and inclinations - except that we became differently conditioned and variously tied by events, encounters, and meanings in the production of which we were involved. I feel truly sorry for a number of crippled psychologies produced by the socio-historical process in the locality where I live. Pessimistically, I think that we have not changed much. Capitalism has resulted in another kind of social anomie. And yet, my eyes are glued to these landscapes of Polish memory… for they explain so much about who I am.

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Appendix One

Glossary of terms: The Landscapes of Polish Memory.

Agnieszka Osiecka - born in 1936, was a Polish poet, lyricist and journalist. She died in the late 1990s.

Armia Krajowa (AK) - the major Polish resistance movement organized in Poland against the German occupation during World War II. Subjected to the Polish government in exile, it formed the Polish "underground" forces and state structures. Disbanded in 1945 when the Soviet forces started to build new state structures. Some of its members continued the underground fight against the communist system under new organizational names the major of which was WiN (Wolność i Niepodległość).

Armia Ludowa (AL – People's Army) - a partisan force set up by the Polish Workers' Party during the WW2 so as to support the Red Army against the Germans.

Baden-Powell - a lieutenant-general in the British Army and founder of the Scout Movement.

Banderowce (the Banderists) - a radical faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, created in the interwar period, whose goal was to remove all non-Ukrainians from the area of the future Ukrainian state.

Bataliony Chłopskie (BCh - *Peasants' Battalions*) - a Polish resistance movement and partisan organization active during WW2. BCh was created in the 1940s on the side of the peasants' party called Stronnictwo Ludowe and got partially integrated with the AK. When the Soviet Army entered Poland, parts of BCh joined communist-backed AL. They were gradually dismantled after 1945.

Bierut Bolesław - a Polish communist leader, who served as President of Poland in the aftermath of World War II, during the Stalinist era.

Communist crime (z*brodnia komunistyczna*) - a concept used in Polish law since 1998 implying acts committed by functionaries of the communist state in the period between 17 September 1939 and 31 December 1989, consisting in the use of repressive measures or other violations of human rights, or in connection with their use with respect to individuals or groups of people, or acts which already constituted crimes in the understanding of the Polish Penal Act in force at the time of the preparation of the crime'.

The cooperation – according to the act on IPN, conscious and secret with the operational or investigative units of the secret security services as a secret informer or an associate in the process of operational information gathering.

Dekomunizacja *(decommunization)* - a process of overcoming the legacies of the communist regime in a form of legal solutions.

Dzika lustracja (wild lustration) - the term coined to name the non-authorized forms of public disclosure of the Bezpieka files in the media without checking the credibility of the files and their authenticity, and without double-checking their content with other sources.

Functionary of the communist state – according to the Act on IPN, a public functionary or a person enjoying the protection equal to that of a public functionary, including, in particular, state functionaries and persons occupying high-ranking positions within the statutory body of the communist parties.

Gazeta Polska - a Polish right-wing/conservative weekly, founded in 1993.

Gazeta Wyborcza – a daily which began publication in 1989. Its founding was an outcome of the Polish Round Table Agreement between the communist government and the representatives of the Solidarity movement. It is Poland's second-largest daily newspaper aimed at liberal readers.

Grieved party – according to the act on IPN, a person about whom the organs of state security collected information on the basis of data collected intentionally and secretly. […] A person who

subsequently became a functionary or an employee or a collaborator of the organs of state security shall not be deemed a grieved party.

Grey Ranks (Szare Szeregi) - a codename for the underground Polish Scouting Association during WWII.

IPN (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) - On the 18th of December 1998 the Polish parliament established the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - IPN) - which institutionally embraces most of the current policies concerning the communist past. The IPN is a triple body. It collects, preserves and discloses the files assembled by the Polish secret security apparatus from the period of 22nd of July 1944 till 31st of December 1989, thus serving as an archive. It forms a research and educational centre so as to propagate the newly (re)interpreted history. And finally, it works as a prosecution commission that investigates the crimes against the Polish nation from the Nazi and communist periods as well as bringing the actual charges into court. The institute got additionally involved in the process of lustration – which implies an obligation of the legally defined public figures to make an official testimony in regard to their past cooperation with the communist secret security apparatus. The IPN employees use the communist security archives to determine the truthfulness of the testimonies of the political figures.

Jacek Kuroń and **Adam Michnik** - leaders of the democratic anti-communist opposition, particularly active during the eighties. They formed the spine of the intellectual part of the opposition. After the collapse of the regime, they got engaged in the left-wing liberal stream of politics. Jacek Kuroń took a position of Minister in a Polish government twice. Adam Michnik has been working as a chief editor in one of the biggest Polish dailies – a liberal newspaper titled *Gazeta Wyborcza.* These figures symbolize for the heroes/victims the betrayal of the core national values since, among other reasons, Michnik, in Gazeta Wyborcza, has been promoting a policy of dialogue. The policy of the 'thick line' announced by Prime Minster Mazowiecki is widely understood as an idea that originated in this very circle. The heroes/victims are very critical of Gazeta Wyborcza. They perceive the political circle formed around Michnik, Kuroń and Mazowiecki as a Jewish clique, which does not care for the Polish interests, and which has close relations with the post-communist elites.

Jerzy Popiełuszko - a Catholic priest from Poland known for his anti-communist sermons in which he motivated people to protest. Associated with the 'Solidarity' movement, he was murdered by employees of the secret security apparatus in 1984. More than 250 thousand people attended his funeral which has been recognized as a symbolic anti-communist statement. The officers who murdered the priest were put on trial in the 1980s and convicted as if they had carried out the killing on their own initiative. After the collapse of the regime, attempts to re-open the legal investigation were made. It is assumed the murder was ordered by high-ranking communist officials and carried out by the so-called 'group D' which functioned within the secret services as a death squad or a special-task group.

Karol Wojtyła – served as a Pope of the Catholic Church as John Paul II.

Katyń massacre (*zbrodnia katyńska*) - a mass murder committed by Soviet NKVD in 1940 on approximately 22.000 Polish intelligentsia and military officers.

KBW Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (Internal Security Corps) - a special military unit created in 1945 to ensure internal order in a country torn by numerous military conflicts. The unit was created to fight against the independent Polish underground, the Ukrainian armed organizations, and the German units. Between 1945 and 1954, KBW was supervised by the Minister of Public Security.

Kontakt operacyjny – not necessarily registered, an informant very keen on providing information.

Lustracja (Lustration laws) – the policy of limiting the participation of informants of the communist security forces and members of the security forces in the public life in Poland.

Maciej Płażyński - a member of the Solidarity movement during communism, he got involved in making a political career after the collapse of the regime. Conservative and liberal, he co-founded the Civil Platform party in 2001.

Marian Krzaklewski - a leader of the political alliance called Action Solidarność (AWS) centred around the post-Solidarity right-wing elites strongly connected to the Solidarity union. AWS won the elections in 1997.

Milicja Obywatelska – M.O. *i.e.* citizen militia, a name used during communism similarly in all countries of the Soviet Block originating from a Russian word 'Militsiya'.

Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (National Armed Forces, NSZ) - a part of the Polish resistance in WWII and in its aftermath. NSZ fought against the Nazi occupiers as well as against the Stalinist Soviet forces and Polish communists.

OKAP - an extra unit within the secret security services responsible for keeping the party membership and political morals of the officers high.

OZI - stands for Operacyjne Źródło Kontaktu – an operation source of contact that is a person who supports the operational activity of the security with vital information from within the sussed-out circle.

PRL (The People's Republic of Poland, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa) - an official name of the Polish state from 1952-1989, during that time governed by the Polish United Worker's Party (**PZPR – Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza**).

Pewex (*Przedsiębiorstwo Eksportu Wewnętrznego*, *Internal Export Company*) – chain of shops in Poland, which sold Western goods in Western currencies of special bank cheques.

Piłsudski Józef – a military chief, socialist party leader and authoritarian ruler known for leading Poland towards regaining independence in 1918.

Policja i.e. Police – a name used after 1989, apparently imitating Western English 'police', German 'polizei', Italian 'polizia', French 'la police'.

Radio Maryja - a Polish religious, nationalist, conservative, anti-post-communists and pro-life Roman Catholic radio station and media group. It was founded in Toruń, Poland, in the early 1990s. The station has been run since its inception by the Redemptorist Tadeusz Rydzyk, often called Father Director by his fellow Roman Catholics. The radio station is very popular among the heroes/victims, who identify themselves with the radio content considering it as truthfully depicting the Polish reality. The hierarchy of the Polish Church perceives Radio Maryja as a problematic schism within the Church. Thanks to the ownership of the big media group, Father Rydzyk has grown into an extremely influential figure, who takes decisions independently of the hierarchy. His extreme views are considered by the hierarchy as harmful to the overall image of the Church. However, the station has a very large group of followers, indulgently called 'woollen berets' (*mocherowe berety*) – a name originating from the head covering used by the retired women in Poland, who are very religious and rather poorly educated, yet very devoted.

The Round Table Talks – talks taking place in April 1989 among the communist elites and the Solidarity leaders leading to a peaceful dissolution of the communist state in Poland.

The secret security services in PRL were re-organized thoroughly in the 1960s. **Urząd Bezpieczeństwa (UB)** is a name used in the initial period of the institution's operating (1940s-1960s). The name was changed in the 1960s into the **Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB)**.

Świerczewski - general in the service of the Soviet Union.

Tankietka - a TK-3 tank for two people.

Tajny współpracownik (TW) – a registered secret informant who signs a commitment.

Thick line policy (polityka Grubej Kreski) - announced by the Prime Minister Mazowiecki in 1989. A policy implying that the new government based on the post-Solidarity politicians would take no responsibility for the wrongdoings of the previous system. This declaration was widely understood as avoidance of accounting for the communist crimes.

Unit C – an archiving unit in the SB.

UOP - The State Security Office – a new secret service from the 1990s onwards.

Volksdeutsch - during World War II, Polish citizens of German ancestry faced the dilemma of whether to sign the *Deutsche Volksliste*. The list was the idea of the Nazi occupiers, and it included names of Germans living in Poland. Those who signed it were often regarded as traitors by the Poles, yet, on the other hand, those who did not sign risked repressions from the German side. Some Poles still today regard the word *volksdeutsch* as synonymous with the word "traitor" – a person who betrayed the Polish nation.

The Warsaw Uprising (Powstanie Warszawskie) – organized by the AK fighters to liberate Warsaw from the German occupiers during WWII.

ZMW (Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej, The Rural Youth Union) – the union was established in 1928. The communist party in Poland used its structures to gain the support of the countryside.

ZBoWiD - an official veterans' organization, which operated under this name both during communism and in its aftermath.

Appendix Two

Part One
Cast: The Landscapes of Polish Memory.

Adam - came to Marianowice from a different region. He was a member of a youth organization, and got imprisoned in the Stalinist period for nearly a year. As opposed to most of the heroes/victims, he managed to achieve a good position in the communist era within the structures of the voivodeship level of the Ministry of Health. As a dentist, Adam had among his clients the Security Officers and Communist apparatchiks. This variously layered past generated a strange condition for Adam's positionality in the association. He aligns with the heroes/victims during the interactions in the office, overtly displaying his hero/victim identity and anti-communist stand. Yet, at the same time, he reads liberal newspapers and does not support Radio Maryja.

Alojzy - a zealot of Radio Maryja and the extreme right. Very devoted to his political convictions, he always urges the heroes/victims to vote for specific local candidates, whom he knows are 'our people'. He is the only person who knows how to operate a computer. He edits the association's periodicals. He is a nervy person, and often gets himself into arguments with other members of the association – mostly concerning political matters, but also in reference to internal decisions. Sentenced for active participation in the anti-communist, illegal organization, he spent over twenty months in borstal.

Andrzej - born in a small town near Marianowice. In his teenage years, with a few colleagues, he got involved in the distribution of anti-communist materials. Captured by Bezpieka, he was sentenced and imprisoned for over a year. Now in his seventies, still vigorous, Andrzej is writing up his memoirs. After the recent passing of his wife, he appeared on every commemorative occasion and got involved in the associational affairs very often. He gets animated by political affairs and holds very conservative views. In his free time, he reads tomes of history books and literature, as well as

preparing home-made liquors. Afflicted by a serious illness lately, he withdrew from the works of the association; yet, he still visits the office almost weekly.

Henryk - a member of an anti-communist youth conspiracy group in the Stalinist period. Uncovered by Bezpieka, he spent 3 years in jail. After he was released, he worked at the state railway company as an engine-driver till he retired. Now in his seventies, he lives in a small town in a block of flats with his wife, daughter and mother-in-law. He fancies collecting insects and recording films about nature. He has been involved in the works of the association from its beginning.

Igor - a very introvert, silent person. He comes to the office on a weekly basis and does his share of paperwork in silence. He faced a trial for membership in a post-war structure of the underground army - WiN. He spent over six years in jail. He graduated from a technical college of aviation and worked all his life in an aeroplane factory near Marianowice.

Jerzy - a very cordial and modest person. He spent over six years in various prisons after being sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment for anti-communist activity. After getting out of jail, he graduated from a technical college. He worked in a car factory on the shop floor. Now, in his retirement, he enjoys carpentry. In the association, he fixes all the minor damages, as well as preparing new furniture. He lives in a tiny flat in a block of flats together with his wife. His family never attends official ceremonies with him. His children are grown up. His granddaughter, now a student, is of great concern to him. He often underlines a big difference between his generation and the generations of his children and grandchildren in terms of values and way of life. Similarly, he often complains about contemporary politics and a lack of transparency and adherence to higher values. Such anxieties are typical for all of the heroes/victims.

Leszek - a president of the association. He will be introduced in greater detail in the fifth chapter.

Marek - a member of Leszek's clandestine organization. An orphan, he keenly joined the group formed by Leszek. The group filled a family vacuum for him. He happily recalls their common trips to the forests in search of ammunition. They bring tears to his eyes. He got sentenced to years of imprisonment and spent over a year in jail. He dreamt of a university degree, yet, due to his past anti-communist engagements, his plans of advancement were numerously blocked. Eventually, he

passed the entry exams to the Faculty of Law by adroitly directing the conversation with the commission so as not to let them discover his anti-communist past engagements. The story of him getting a question in the entry exam about the article for which he was sentenced became an iconic story in the association. He graduated from Law, yet he worked in veterinary science for many years. Currently retired, he is emotionally imbalanced and lonely. He gets moved by tiny recollections and is treated by his colleagues like a child or an impaired person.

Stanisław - never keen on talking about the communist past and repressions he experienced. I vaguely learned that he was sent to Siberia as a prisoner of war and spent a few years there. Stanisław only showed me a photo certifying that and declined to give me his life story. Now in his seventies, Stanisław is a merry gentleman, who likes company. He spends his free evenings going to dancing-halls. Twice a year, he leaves for the sanatorium, where he enjoys meeting females of his age. After the death of his wife, he lives alone. He has two daughters. He talks affectively neither about the wife nor about the daughters. He fancies bawdy jokes. He puts a lot of effort into his outfit on the commemorative occasions, during which he appears in a uniform. He is one of those heroes/victims who is always ready to form an official representation body during the official event.

Waldemar - together with two of his brothers (both killed by the Communists), Waldemar took part both in the anti-German and the anti-communist military structures of the underground army. In the late 1940s, he tried to start a regular life under a fake name but was uncovered by the Communists. Imprisoned, he spent three years in jail. After he was released, he got married to a nurse. Most of his life, he worked in the scales factory. He has three daughters, who have their own families. He wrote a memoir, which he printed in three hundred copies, partially on his own money. He dreams of re-publishing it, yet, he has problems finding the sponsorship. Now in his eighties, he is particularly devoted to transmitting his memories of the active fight in the underground army and imprisonment by the communists, as well as engaging in numerous initiatives commemorating the anti-communist heroes/victims. A cordial person, he is highly respected by the heroes/victims and local authorities. Apart from his engagements in memory politics and documenting the past, he derives pleasure from his family life, mushroom-picking and gardening.

Zygmunt - a self-confident and sociable person. For one month he was a member of the Underground Amy. He disclosed himself in the course of the amnesty in 1956. He underwent an

investigation and a trial and was eventually released. He worked as a teacher in a technical college for most of his life. Together with his wife, he lives in a house with a garden. He fancies preparing home-made wines and meat. His granddaughter belongs to a scout organization and often takes part in the official celebrations as a member of the heroes/victims' representation, bearing the standards. Actually, Zygmunt has a very poor relationship with his granddaughter and gets easily irritated by her.

Appendix Three

Part Two

Cast: The Landscapes of Polish Memory.

Andrzej – a vigorous farmer in his eighties, living in a small town near Marianowice, a volunteer member in the Internal Security Force (*Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*, KBW)[121], and later, a security agent.

Henryk – a well-taken-care-of gentleman in his eighties, self-confident, living in Marianowice, participating in the pensioners' club in the main Police Headquarters; known to others as one of those more important local figures among the first generation of the security officers, yet, very unwilling to talk.

Wiesław - a man in his seventies, living in a small town near Marianowice who used to hold a high position in a district office of the secret police; He fancies hunting, engages himself in maintenance of the communist lieux de memoir, seems very embittered.

Second generation former security officers:

Damian – a man in his fifties who lives with his mother; very nervous and unfulfilled; not willing to talk about the past.

Franek – a man in his sixties who likes to mix aristocratic and sporty outfits; he runs his own detective company; he likes women, hanging out and drinking; He lives in a well-appointed house in Marianowice.

Jan (Janek) – a sporty man in his sixties who lives together with his wife in a house with a garden; very humorous and sociable with a very clear worldview; they live on his pension and his wife's salary; she works in a travel agency.

Mirek – a knowledgeable man in his sixties, living together with his wife in a tiny apartment in a block of flats; an alcoholic, who spends most of his days at home reading; very proud; they live on his and his wife's pensions and her work at Marianowice's bazaars;

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[121]Internal Security Corps - Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (KBW) was a special military unit created in 1945 to ensure internal order in a country torn by numerous military conflicts. The unit was created to fight against the independent Polish underground, the Ukrainian armed organizations, and the German units. Between 1945 and 1954, KBW was supervised by the Minister of Public Security.

[121]Andrzej refers to the evacuation of the Polish government to Romania upon the German occupation in 1939.

Paweł – a married, yet, nervous man in his sixties, who lives in a block of flats in Marianowice together with his wife; they run a wholesale business in second-hand clothing; he cultivates various types of wine.

Stefan – tall, American actor-type, a very courteous and somewhat arrogant man in his sixties who drives a luxury car and works for a real-estate agency.

Appendix Four

A brief introduction to the political history of the communist and post-communist Poland.

Opposing Nation

After Hitler gave the order to attack Poland in September 1939, the Polish government and state apparatus made a tremendous effort to go underground. Alongside administrative and educative functions, the underground state organized the army to actively resist the Nazi forces. In 1942, the partisan troops in conspiracy were named the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa* – AK). The AK, which gathered together the majority of the Polish military and paramilitary groups of various political lineages, became an unquestionable symbol of Polish resistance and heroic nationalism. After the capitulation of Nazi Germany, the AK was eventually dissolved in 1945 by an order issued by the authorities of the underground state. This decision was taken in the light of the Soviet plan for the 'liberation' of Poland backed up by the Western democracies. The dissolution was to ensure that there would be no violent confrontations with the Soviets, and that no threat of civil war in the post-war situation would occur.

Throughout WWII, one of the strategic plans of Stalin was to turn Eastern-Central Europe into a Soviet area of influence. The plan was successfully negotiated in the Yalta agreement settling the accounts in the aftermath of war. Throughout the post-war years, the main task set by Moscow for Poland included the establishment of a unified dominant communist party, along with an impression of its spontaneous success. Stalin installed a puppet government in Lublin. The new authorities were controlled through purges and unannounced check-ups exercised by the NKVD (Davis 1999:594). Yet, the policy of purges and elimination which hallmarked the Stalinist era, along with its internally oriented face, had also an external one. Securing the communist party's authoritative place in Polish political life required clearing from the field all possible political opponents. In fact, the project implied the building of new elites. Davis argues ironically that, were it not for the activities of the Soviet secret security police, who used terror and repressions against all their opponents, most of those Poles who resisted with zest might have considered the option of cooperation[122].

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[122] Many underground anti-communist soldiers with whom I talked during this fieldwork, and who disclosed their identities in front of the communist authorities in the course of amnesty during Stalinism, did so because they wanted to go back to a normal life. Nonetheless, they

In the territories occupied by the Soviet Army in the summer of 1944 there emerged a situation of double-authority – as the Polish underground structures competed with the Soviet-led centres for power. Many of my informants declared that it had been an ambiguous period – as some of the underground troops had been ready to support the Red Army, or at least not to provoke it, hoping for a political compromise. Others had stood on a position of continuation of an active fight, this time against the Red Army perceived as a dangerous partner. Meanwhile, despite declarations of neutral cooperation in liberating Polish soil from the Germans, the communists were not planning to assist the Polish underground either in defeating the Germans or in building the new state. Instead, they were focused on a complete seizure of power, which meant elimination of opposition through the policy of infiltration and systematic repressions.

Some of the members of the underground military structures took a decision to continue the partisan fight and formed new organizations (*Wolność i Niezawisłość* - WiN and *Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe* - NZW). They were devoted to propagation of the idea of national independence. They hoped for an anti-communist government, hence they focused on actively fighting against local communist-led institutions – the security and the militia services in particular. They specialized in sabotage and open fighting, aiming at weakening the communist influence. These people withdrew to the forests, bunkers, hidden locations – relying for their survival on a few whom they trusted, as well as on robberies. Named by the communist authorities 'bandits', they were a favourite theme of the early years of communist propaganda. Tempted by consecutive amnesties, living in inhuman conditions of almost complete isolation, many of them disclosed their identities and networks hoping that a new, regular life was still an option. Historians from the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* - IPN) estimated that, due to the first amnesty, 53,517 people left their lives hidden underground, and 23,257 of those already imprisoned disclosed their anti-communist activity. The second amnesty of April 1947 basically meant the end of any meaningful underground activity. There were approximately 1,100-1,800 partisans remaining underground, yet their situation was extremely difficult and they did not constitute a threat to the communist rule (IPN exhibition). Those few, called by the historians 'Cursed' or 'Trapped', have been increasingly represented in today's memory politics as the symbol of the nation's resistance to

were meant to be 'neutralized' by the communist regime, who, despite illusionary promises, did not mean to give them a new life. They were denied a place in the new order in more or less violent and direct ways.

communism. They were turned into a symbolic capital of the nation through the post-1989 practices of collective remembering[123].

Simultaneously, with the merciless death of the 'Cursed', a small wave of resistance went through the young generations. School children and students started forming conspiratorial groups propagating anti-communist slogans, preoccupying themselves with sabotage, or self-education in the spirit of Catholic and nationalistic values. The IPN estimates that, up till 1956, there emerged nearly one thousand such groups incorporating nearly ten thousand young people (IPN exhibition). According to the 'myth of continuous resistance', these were the children of the anti-communists; they grew up in patriotic families who valued 'God, Honor and Motherland' – the elementary values of a Polish patriot (Ziółek 2001:16). The youth conspiracy was monitored and repressed by the security apparatus. Its members faced trials (including show trials with death sentences) and were sentenced to years in prison. In terms of historical writings, this category of heroes/victims shall be considered as a recently emergent category. It has been defined in relation to the 'myth of continuous resistance' of the nation against the foreign occupation. As will be illustrated in chapter five, for people belonging to this group, the post-1989 recognition has constituted a sort of personal rediscovery.

Even though the communists cut themselves off from the Stalinist methods in the sixties, more restrained modes of repression performed against the early anti-communists persisted. As late as1983, Leopold and Lechicki, writing about political prisoners of the communist period, complained in reference to the Stalinist era: 'the system was condemned, it was called by euphemism "a period of mistakes and distortions". No consequences followed such condemnation though […]. The rehabilitation processes of the victims of the system, often posthumous, took place without notice. Till today, many of the prisoners of 1945-1956 were not rehabilitated. There was no disclosure of the data regarding the outreach and methods of the terror, no list of those murdered was published. There are no historical studies […]. We cannot thus speak about settling the account with the past!' (Leopold and Lechicki 1983:9). Hence, the actual moment of recognition of the anti-communist heroes/victims in fact came only after the collapse of the regime.

When the fierce period of seizure of power called Stalinism is set aside, historians and agents shaping memory politics represent the later history of Polish communism mostly through exposure of the

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[123] None of the 'Cursed' were alive during my fieldwork. Still, I worked with a few individuals who did engage in both anti-Nazi and anti-communist partisan activities, and who eventually disclosed their identities during one of the amnesties.

moments of 'resistance'. There are a couple of symbolic dates which children in Polish schools are supposed to learn. In June 1956, in Pozen, the workers protested against the increases in prices and went on strike which further escalated into street fights and demonstrations. In March 1968, students went on to protest against the closure, by censorship, of a theatre play which included politically sensitive content. Eventually, these protests were used as a pretext for an internal party struggle dressed up in anti-Jewish sentiments which caused an exodus of many Jews from Poland. In December 1970, in Gdańsk, the shipyard workers went on strike protesting against increases in prices. In 1976, in Radom and Ursus, workers again went on strike in response to an increase in food prices. Eventually, 'Solidarity', in the 1980s, emerged first of all as a workers' response to the increases in food prices, and it ultimately gathered around 10 million people merging workers and intellectuals under one banner. In December 1981 martial law was announced and nearly 5 thousand people were interned. Strikes were suppressed. Everyday life was restricted by, among other things, the curfew. Following the violent measures applied by the communist authorities in the early eighties, the monolithic structure started to break down in the entire communist bloc. The end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties in Poland were the years of intense political and economic transition in which the leading role was taken by the ex-communists and the ex-Solidarity activists.

The post-communist Poland, offering its citizens freedom of association and freedom of speech, meant the emergence of the hitherto suppressed voices of those who were humiliated by the regime. The underground soldiers, the youth conspiracy members and the Solidarity members gradually replaced the communist heroes in the official pantheon. The years after 1989 have been hallmarked by a slow transformation in the sphere of memory politics. The transition should be understood as a process shaped both locally and centrally. A number of actors joined in an effort to elaborate and propagate a myth of true Poland inhabited by a brave people who resisted the totalitarian regimes and were not broken by the consecutive foreign occupations. This myth has been legitimized through a growing research in the field of the history of communism. Its main institutional propagator is the IPN, but other state institutions dealing with commemoration, medals-giving, or monumentalization of the past are equally engaged in building a collective frame for remembering communism. Since 1989, a number of associations assembling victims and heroes have grown. This thesis examines one such association, emergent in the 1990s, and the institutionalized contexts of its functioning.

Those who took part in the acts of resistance and who were repressed have been gradually included in the pantheon of state-certified heroes. For some years, they have been able to apply for 'an grieved person status' (*status pokrzywdzonego*), which was certified by the IPN on the basis of the existence of traces in the IPN archives of purposeful repressions organized by the security forces against the person in question. These people have been imagined and represented as belonging to the same tradition of the continuous fight for independence. Some of them (usually those who belonged to the intellectual circles within Solidarity), after 1989, forged impressive political careers. Some, mostly workers who went on strike during communism, went into oblivion[124].

Transition

The round-table talks of 1989 are the most frequently-mentioned symbol of the Polish velvet revolution. Since this agreement, the Polish political stage has been polarized with the main actors being represented by the post-Solidarity elites (which further divided into more nationalist and liberal factions), and post-communist elites. PZPR people continued their political careers under the new name of social democracy. Led by the reformists, they nonetheless claimed financial continuity with the PZPR (Roszkowski 2003).

The post-1989 memory politics has evolved unevenly and randomly, mostly due to the polarized condition of the post-communist political scene characterized by shifting alliances. The notion of reconstituting the victims of communism and anti-communist heroes through sets of institutionalized symbolic practices of recognition did not evoke much discussion, even though it went on slowly. The old communist heroes, who still gathered in their own associational structures, have been gradually losing their privileged position, to be replaced by the anti-communist activists. The issue of punishing the wrongdoers proved more complicated and controversial.

In a famous speech, the first democratic Prime Minister with a Solidarity lineage, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, announced a 'thick line' policy. As an advocate of a policy of reconciliation supported by the more liberal circles of post-Solidarity elites, he aimed at avoiding tendencies to revanchism based on an idea of collective responsibility. Many commentators argued that such reconciliation through

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[124] The paradox of this transformation, both in terms of conceptual history, symbolic reordering and economic changes, is that the engine of Solidarity – the workers (the symbolic anti-communist heroes and at the same time the symbolic base of the communist ideology) - have lost face in the process of transition from communism to capitalism. A few years ago, I did fieldwork in the shipyards of Gdynia. At that time, Poles voted in a referendum for the EU accession widely understood as a natural consequence of the democratic change. The shipyard workers associated with the Solidarity trade union were fiercely against this accession, knowing it would bring about the physical death of their workplace. At the time of this fieldwork, the fate of Polish shipyards was very unstable and the EU demanded that the Gdynia shipyard be shut down.

oblivion caused an increased sense of impunity among the ex-communists, as well as a social distrust of the possibility of achieving democratic standards of legality and justice by the new state form. According to Roszkowski (2003) though, it was the economic factor that proved most decisive for the social deficit of trust. The frustration of the people was an outcome of the publicly visible fact that, as a result of transformation, it was mostly ex-nomenclature and intellectual elites who experienced upward mobility, while the majority of society had to bear the costs of transition. In the post-communist conditions, public opinion was being constantly informed by the free press about the economic and political scandals, the linkages between mafia and economic and political elites, and crimes committed by politicians, which were never punished. In such a milieu, the fragmentary and random accusations of collusion between the security services and the main post-Solidarity politicians and some priests, as well as spying allegations thrown at some post-communist leaders, caused a crisis in terms of how people felt about justice and security. Often, it meant a total loss of meaning felt by Polish citizens who perceived a growing gap between themselves, and the politicians and other, politically-connected elites, who were understood as the main winners following the collapse of the old regime.

The attempts at decommunisation, commenced by the post-Solidarity elites, were numerous and variously effective. Early in the 1990s, the Ministry of Interior Affairs was reorganized; the Citizen's Militia and the security services were renamed and a verification process was commenced so as to purge the institution of those who were devoted to the previous system. Out of 22 thousand security service employees, 14 thousand approached the verification with the aim of continuing their careers in the renamed institution. Ten thousand people were verified positively (Roszkowski 2003). The processes of accounting for the violations of the old regime had been impacting mostly on the middle-range officials of Bezpieka, evoking in them a sense of betrayal and victimization. The trials of high-ranking officials have been rare and thus far ineffective. Society reveals no unified stand on the matter. Each year, on the anniversary of the implementation of martial law, two groups of people symbolically clash in front of General Jaruzelski's house in Warsaw shouting on the one side: 'hands off the general', and on the other: 'traitor and murderer'.

In 1992, Olszewski's short-lived cabinet, gathering together mostly radical supporters of the drive to bring to account the perpetrators of communist crimes, commenced an improvised 'lustration' – that is, a disclosure of the names of some of the politicians of the time who, from the evidence of the communist security service's archives, had co-operated with these services as agents. The

government was overthrown after these revelations saw daylight. Despite that, a so-called 'war on files' started and the prestige of the post-Solidarity elites deteriorated (among others, Lech Wałęsa was placed on the list of co-operators). The files became a tool for political intrigues and contests. Ironically, lustration, being a part of the 'decommunisation' project, did not harm the post-communist elites but worked towards strengthening them. Their past involvement in the regime was obvious, while the disclosure of files proving the co-operation of the members of the post-Solidarity elites was not only new, but caused a state of confusion and distrust, undermining their moral legitimacy for ruling. Such revelations turned into a weapon used by these circles in their internal struggles for power. The post-Solidarity elites were discredited not only by the series of never-fully-explained scandals involving the co-operation of the prominent activists of the Solidarity movement with the security forces, but also through their inability to implement a coherent decommunisation program.

Only in the late 1990s, when most of the opinion leaders claimed that decommunisation after 10 years of round-table discussions was belated and could bring no real effects, did the post-Solidarity government successfully legalize open access for citizens to the communist secret security files along with an act of symbolic condemnation of communism, as well as an institutional mechanism for implementing lustration laws. A new institution, the Institute of National Remembrance, emerged as the main body dealing with decommunisation policies on various levels. It was based on the German model. Dormant for a couple of years, the Institute gained a new dynamism with the coming to power of the Law and Justice Party, who fiercely backed the policy of decommunisation on both the symbolic and the juridical level. Their term in power coincided with my fieldwork.

Apart from the Act on the IPN, the interpretative discourse on the communist times comprises a number of scattered acts concerning various aspects of that past and its remnants. There is a variously-amended act stating the obligation of disclosing one's co-operation or work for the secret security services between 1944 and 1990 that binds widely-defined public figures. There are acts defining such categories as veterans, and victims of oppression, along with their privileges and rights. There is a project defining the category of a communist functionary which aims at depriving people falling into this category of their privileges and status. There exist legal acts concerning medals, official rituals, and commemorative practices. Such a politicized semiotic framework organizes the social practices of remembering and commemorating that are the main interest of this thesis.

The history of the communist security apparatus in Poland opens with the entry into Poland of the Red Army in 1944. Deletant argued that the security apparatuses in the communist countries generally operated in two stages. Firstly, they were responsible for consolidating power in the new terrains of Soviet influence, among others, through a ruthless elimination of the opposition (both within communist circles and outside). Secondly, after the seizure of power, the security services were responsible for total control, keeping the powers-that-be in position and preventing any sort of crisis (Deletant 2005). After rapidly eliminating a real armed resistance aspiring to govern the country, the security apparatus turned towards implementation of preventive measures aimed at expansion of control over the everyday lives of the comrade citizens. The main task comprised a 'suppression of the slightest symptoms of resistance for fear they would turn into mass protest' (Persak and Kamiński 2005:8). Bezpieka focused on not letting society slip out of control or think independently.

The security apparatus in Poland was officially recognized in July 1944 by a decree of the self-appointed People's Home Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*) on the establishment of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego PKWN*) – the new puppet government installed in the city of Lublin. The Security Department was formally called *Bezpieczeństwo* (Security). In mid-August 1944, small security offices were being opened on various administrative levels in the country. Provincial (*wojewódzkie,* WUBP), District (*powiatowe,* PUBP), Municipal (*miejskie,* MUBP) Public Security Offices, as well as Security Units at the communal MO (the Citizens' Militia – Milicja Obywatelska) stations were created so as to oversee society more closely and to reach everywhere. Members of the local population were joining the new structures, which promised prominent positions, power, and a better life. *Bezpieczeństwo* was proverbially named the 'sword and shield of the party' – responsible for defending the establishment. It was subordinated to the highest Communist Party structures only.

In the 1940s, the security apparatus was basically assisting the Soviet security services. It was actively engaged in eliminating the Polish anti-communist conspirators and the Home Army (Armia Krajowa AK) – through disarmament, detention and exile to Russia[125]. Gradually, the open Soviet presence in the security apparatus became more discrete, with the apparatus becoming more and more Polish.

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[125] Dudek and Paczkowski report that, between 1944-46, various Soviet units on Polish soil held around 47,000 people, with no less then 25 per cent of the Polish underground soldiers (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:222).

Still, many Soviet officers remained in the executive posts in the ministry. It was not until 1956 that these forms of direct control diminished (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:223).

The first years of the official life of *Bezpieka* were channelled into combating the anti-communist underground – clearing the field for building a new monolithic political structure tightly linked to the Soviet empire. In their fight with the underground, the security services pursued military-style operations and violent measures of repression. Simultaneously, they conducted operational activities consisting in building the agency network among the oppositionists, recruiting from amongst them the secret informers. The authorities further tried to persuade the conspirators and partisans to come out and disclose their identities. Claiming that they would be allowed to come back to a normal life, the security actually aimed at overpowering them[126].

Reorientation of the Secret Services

In the 1950s, the security services expanded their field of activities going beyond the immediate paramilitary threat. The new areas of interest included the Church, Educational Institutions and Industry. Both the number of employees and the network of agents were enlarged. This was followed by infrastructural developments. Separate hospitals, clinics, residential homes, a network of shops, canteens, cafeterias, kindergartens, resorts, sports clubs, bakeries, shoemakers or tailors and the like (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:223) were helping the officials in the ministry to live hermetic lives in privileged enclaves, evoking a sense that they were of pivotal importance for the security of the country[127].

It was not until the late 1950s, though, that the Ministry of Public Security (MBP) underwent a significant reorganization. Along with the demise of the Stalinist era, cosmetic changes were implemented - including dismissal of directors, improving prison conditions or reducing the number of arrests. A great scandal involving the defection of a high-ranking officer in the MBP – Lt.Col. Józef Światło, who fled to the West, and whose revelations about Bezpieka operations were broadcast by Radio Free Europe - forced the communist authorities to commence serious restructuring. After

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[126] Among numerous small-scale operations, two big political actions were carried out: amnesties of August-September 1945 and of February-April 1947. They were used for operational purposes and for building substantial records on anti-communists circles. The large-scale pacifications and high agent-saturation meant that within only 10 months of 1947, 'along the lines' of combating banditry and the underground, nearly 33 000 people were arrested and 10 500 were sentenced to various types of punishment. By 1947 central and regional underground structures were liquidated. Isolated partisan units were active until the mid-1950s, but they now constituted a threat, even to local authorities (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:263).

[127] In 1953, the MBP employed approximately 14 thousand operational personnel and nearly 20 thousand civilian employees (like doctors, typists, bookkeepers) (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:223).

consulting Moscow, the MBP was liquidated (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:226). The liquidation was a sign of a deeper political and social crisis resulting from the dismantling of Stalin's empire and a move towards a less 'severe' phase of communism. According to Dudek and Paczkowski, in the mid-1950s the network of agents shrank due to people's refusal to cooperate, and the security functionaries felt confused when realizing that the responsibility for the errors of the Stalinist era were ascribed to them[128]. The idea for solving the problem, which came from above, involved 'hiding' the security apparatus within the more neutral-looking structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (at the central level) and the Citizen's Militia (at the local and district level) (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:228).

After the de-Stalinisation, *Bezpieka* staff numbers grew again. In 1957 *Bezpieczeństwo* employed a total of 10,231 functionaries while, in 1985, the number of employees reached 25,634. Only in the 1970s, probably due to political stabilization, did the personnel numbers fall, by nearly 15%. From 1976 (a year of administrative reform and the beginnings of political opposition), the SB started to grow again. The political crisis brought about by economic destabilization, the emergence of Solidarity, and the involvement of the Pope in Polish affairs caused a rapid 18% growth in staff in the 1980s (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:244). The need for control of waves of societal unrest grew significantly.

The social profile of the security officers also changed over time. In the 1940s and 1950s, most functionaries were recruited from among young people from the working class or young village dwellers (in 1957, 94% of functionaries had such a background) (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:242). In 1945, 80% of those were educated to primary school level. Historians argue that the security apparatus served as a channel of advancement for uneducated young people[129]. This mechanism of brilliant career-making is considered as resulting in a greater loyalty to the *Bezpieka* and is further discussed as one of the reasons why investigations and operational work were dominated by 'primitivism and ideologically-motivated emotions generating frequent abuses of power' (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005, IPN historian personal communication).The level of education, though, was considerably improved over time. As of 1957, only 7.6 per cent of security officers had a university degree while, in 1982, the figure rose to 40 per cent (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:245). Up until the end of the era, there was not much difference in the composition of the security staff in terms of

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[128] Similar disorientation characterizes the second generation of the ex-security officers, who feel they are wrongly blamed for all of the wrongdoings of Communism.
[129] It is worth bearing in mind, though, that the entire structure of society has changed over time along with industrialization and mass education. Furthermore, the loose argument linking the level of education with the inclination for violence should either be considered for all the political factions of society or dismissed.

social background. In 1969, 64 per cent declared a working-class background, 27 per cent were farmers, and only 9 per cent came from a middle-class background (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:246). A significant number of the original cadres responsible for building the security apparatus in the first years of the new communist Poland stayed in the apparatus for many years (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:240). In 1982, over 51 per cent of Ministry of Interior Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych MSW) directors, 61 per cent of Civic Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO) commanders and one third of deputies had served in *Bezpieka* structures since the 1950s (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:245)[130].

As *Bezpieczeństwo* was meant to be 'the sword and the shield of the party' (*zbrojne ramię partii*), the degree of party membership among the security officers was expected to be very high. Dudek and Paczkowski talk about 98.3 per cent of the executives in the security services being party members in 1953. However, party membership among SB functionaries decreased steadily from 84 per cent in 1957 to 69 per cent in 1983 (2005:238). Generally, it was the leadership for whom PZPR membership was a must. The lower-ranking officers could have escaped politicization, yet this implied no serious advancement in the institutional structures. As the chapter analyzing the narratives of the security officers will illustrate, they themselves talk about such rare cases as if they were acts of heroism. Party membership was often perceived by the second generation of security members as a pragmatic necessity, and those who openly opposed the rule of the majority were described to me as courageous.

From the mid-1950s onwards mass terror was subsequently applied only in cases of big strikes and rallies which, whenever the 'forces of law' appeared, turned into street riots (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:274). The main strikes and rallies now indicate the dates that are most emphasised in the memory politics and which children in school learn by heart: 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980, 1981, and 1989. Apart from straightforward, confrontational situations of rallies and riots, the operational involvement of the security apparatus as well as forms of repressions applied after 1956 were selective, i.e. they were targeted against individuals or circles considered a threat to the state. In most cases, such activity did not exceed operational activity (surveillance, eavesdropping, censorship), but there were also arrests and sentences for political reasons every year. Among the

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[130] The early cadres of the security apparatus comprised mostly the communist partisans of Armia Ludowa (People's Army, AL). The partisans were placed at the district level and lower posts at the voivodeship offices. There was a tiny group of people who completed an NKVD officers' training in operational techniques in the Soviet Union – they comprised a cadre of provincial and district security officers. The senior functionaries were people who were actively engaged in the USSR during the war in the Polish Patriots' Union and the Central Bureau of Polish Communists.

measures taken by the SB officers against the democratic opposition were: 48 hours' detention, house searches combined with confiscation of printing machinery and illegal materials, pressurizing employers to fire a given person, refusing to issue passports, or carrying out 'operational games'. Some of *Bezpieka* officers were also involved in direct actions.

On 13 December 1981, martial law was introduced. Dudek and Paczkowski report that around 5,000 activists were interned on the basis of proscription lists prepared in advance. Over 3000 people were arrested and accused of organizing strikes. At least 10 people were killed. In the course of repeated demonstrations, various forms of repressions were used against 8000-10000 people. In several cases there were fatalities and beatings. Several hundred people were imprisoned for 'underground' activities. The death of over 30 people engaged in Solidarity or the underground have never been explained either in terms of their motives nor circumstances (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005)[131]. Such figures however, give no idea of the security officers' perspective and the emotions felt upon the commission of these acts of repression.

Bezpieka was active in trying to handle strikes of varying intensity. Frequently the security services tried to stop a strike and identify its instigators and leaders. The latter were usually offered the opportunity of becoming secret informers (*Tajny Współpracownik* - TW), but when this proved impossible, they were subjected to various degrees of repression, like making it impossible to obtain employment (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:269, informer 3 and 4). Until the enormous wave of strikes in the summer of 1980 erupted, the communist nomenclature was convinced that the opposition remained under the relatively tight control of the *Bezpieka*. Yet the Solidarity trade union, with nearly 10,000,000 members, required an amazingly labour-intensive effort from the security officers who were then tasked with taking over control of Solidarity from within (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:270).

As could be read from the scheme representing the structure of the security department (for the security service's structure in 1985, see Appendix Six), the operational techniques used by the security officers included: control of correspondence (for specific addresses, and random checks), gathering people's opinions and attitudes on politically related matters, eavesdropping (TP for telephone tapping, and PP for room bugging), clandestine photography and other operational technology, filing the 'hostile element' and the current operational cases (gathered in the central

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[131] In 2005, IPN organized an exhibition - 'victims of the martial law'. Big photographic portraits of the people killed, mostly in '*niewyjaśnione okoliczności*' (mysterious circumstances) were displayed publicly in the squares of the main Polish cities.

records)[132]. The next chapters rely on the material gathered from the security officers who worked in various sections of the apparatus: investigation, operational work, technical work etc.

A network of various secret collaborators was a fundamental part of the work of the security apparatus. The communists believed that mass recruitment of agents constituted an instrument of terror and control, and that, through this channel, people were kept in fear and dependency (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:255). The army of secretly cooperating comrades became another – next to communists - category of people symbolically excluded from the democratic Poland. Poland of Snitches (*Polska Konfidencka*)[133] was created through the minute and complicated practices of the security officers (Musiał and Szarka 2006). The procedure implied the following stages: an officer found his candidate, his superior had to confirm the choice was good, and, after the confirmation was given, the officer checked the candidate for possible cooperation with other departments, after which he sat at a desk and wrote down a plan for the candidate; eventually, a meeting was arranged by an officer during which the cooperation was proposed (Musiał 2008:51). The secret informers were recruited and effectively introduced into the world of cooperation through so-called 'compromising materials' (like sexual inclinations, crimes, AK membership) – i.e. blackmail, 'on patriotic sentiment' (volunteers and those who wanted to help), and 'financial gains'. There was also a category of cooperators who informed *ex officio*, and who thus were not registered. TW was not the only abbreviation used for categorizing informants. Yet, as noted by Dudek and Paczkowski (2005) 'the borders between these categories was fluid, and the classificatory mark by no means tells about the quality of the information given'[134].

The issue of secret informants is difficult to classify, not only because of the quality of information passed on to Bezpieka officers by various informants. Also, the relationships between the security employees and the people who passed on information to them had very diverse characters. Violence – both physical and psychological - was not the only and, most probably, in the post-Stalinist period, not the predominant mode of cooperation.

It was only in April 1990, after the PZPR was officially dissolved, that the Sejm (Polish lower parliamentary chamber) passed a law which led to the restructuring of the state apparatus. The law

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[132] In 1987, the main general information records contained 3,100,000 cards (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:251). The total population of Poland in 1988 amounted to nearly 38 million people.
[133] A term used by Musiał and Szarka
[134] In 1962, the number of TWs amounted to 10,750 while, in 1989, there were 96,104 TWs registered (Dudek and Paczkowski 2005:260-261).

implied the transformation of the Citizen's Militia into the Police, while the Security Service became the State Protection Office (UOP). Significantly, the new head of the UOP was an editor of a Catholic weekly. Soon, he took the post of the Minister of Internal Affairs and started the process of 'vetting' among the security agents (Dudek i Paczkowski 2005:232). The employees of the Security had to reapply for their positions.

Appendix Five

Textbook subchapters

The closing phrases of each subchapter in a chapter titled 'Poland under the Communist Rule' in '*Historia Polski przez Wieki 3. Podręcznik Klasa 3 Gimnazjum*' (Wendt 2007):

The parties were connected to its predecessors by name only; hence, they were called façade parties.

The most prominent posts were taken by the PPR (Polish Worker's Party), and all of the decisions taken by the government were controlled by Stalin.

Most of them were never released, as they were killed by NKVD.

Zaolzie, taken over in 1938 by Poland, was given back to Czechoslovakia.

Simultaneously, Recovered Territories were being populated by the Polish settlers coming from that area of the Second Republic of Poland which had been seized by the Soviet Union, as well as the inhabitants of the central Poland, who hoped for the improvement of their conditions of life.

Many of them thus decided to stay in conspiracy.

Many of them got sentenced to death.

In this way, the communists managed to break KPOPP.

In those electoral districts where, despite the induced terror, the opposition supporters prevailed, the referendum results were forged and used for propaganda purposes.

Soon after, Mikołajczyk, threatened with arrest, had to secretly leave the country, while the PSL lost significance.

Along with Ukrainians, the rest of the local population – Łemkowie and Bojkowie, who did not cooperate with UPA, were resettled.

In August 1951, Gomułka was arrested.

This proposal illustrates well the majority hold in the new party by the supporters of changes patterned after the Soviet Union – collectivization, nationalization, and a total settlement of the opposition.

In order to keep the pretence of democracy, the elections, in which both attendance and the outcome were forged, were held regularly.

In a big trial, 19 officers were sentenced to death, and the sentence was carried out immediately.

For this refusal, he was interned by the communists.

The cultural and publishing activity which was read from it was possible only abroad.
Soviet soldiers, as much as German ones, plundered civilian property, since they treated Poland as a conquered land, which did not count as an ally.

Small allotments resulted in a very scattered and ineffective farming.

As a result of these changes, the difficulties in providing the market with groceries increased.

Instead, huge and ineffective factories employing a large number of representatives of the new 'leading class' – workers - were created.

Since then, the personnel of badly-stocked state and cooperative shops in the first place had to realize the plan of sales imposed from above, and, only after that, to deal with the customer service.
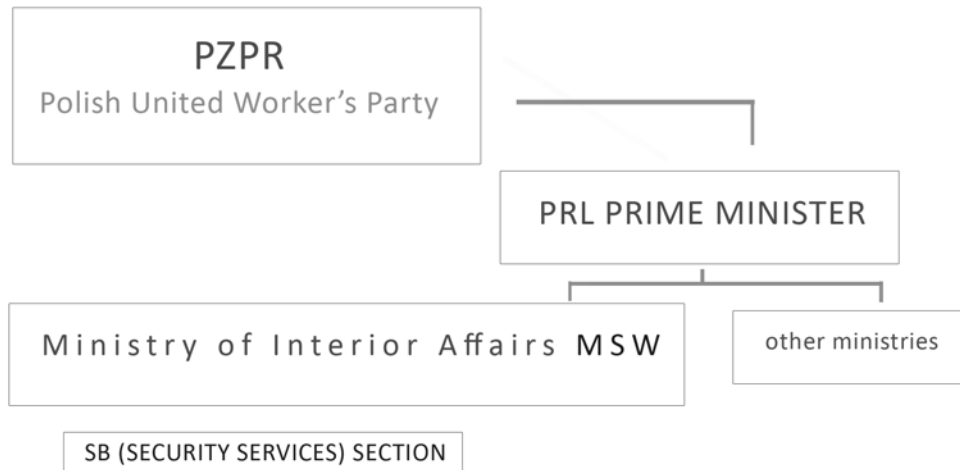
The arrangement of the Recovered Territories, with around 4 million Poles from the Eastern Outskirts seized by the Soviet Union, and from central Poland, was commenced.

Despite such immense effort and sacrifice, into which the entire society was forced, the communist plan was not implemented entirely.

Appendix Six

The Bezpieka structure in 1985:

MSW STRUCTURE IN 1985

PZPR
Polish United Worker's Party

PRL PRIME MINISTER

Ministry of Interior Affairs MSW

other ministries

SB (SECURITY SERVICES) SECTION

Minister's Cabinet

Department I – foreign intelligence

Department II – counter-intelligence

Department III – combating hostile activity

Department IV – churches and religious organizations

Department V – industry, transport and communication

Department VI – farming

Department "T" – operational technology

Passport Office

Studies Bureau (combating organized opposition)

Investigation Bureau (combating organized opposition)

Bureau "A" – codes

Bureau "B" – operational surveillance

Bureau "C" – operational files

Bureau "W" – correspondence control

Bureau of Radio Counter-intelligence

Functionaries Protection Office

MSW Main Inspectorate

Main Industry Protection Inspectorate (supervising Industrial Guard)

SOURCE: A Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatues in East Central Europe 1944-1989. Eds K. Persak and Ł. Kamiński. Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw 2005; F. Musiał. Podręcznik bezpieki. Societas Vistulana 2008

Transcript of a patriotic sermon spoken on the 20th of October 2007

The people, who speak the same Polish language – why? Why? In the name of what? These people, who speak the same language, murdered father Jerzy Popieluszko. But was it only him? And what about the priest Niedziela, and the priest [.]; and many others murdered by unknown culprits? Why does a man kill another man? In the name of what? In the name of ideology? The ideology based on hate – the hate of God in the first place, and everything that connects to the faith in God in the second place. Communism was an ideology of hate, hate. You, the political prisoners, in your youth [.], you developed the sentiment of love for your country, for your fatherland. You came to love its culture, the past and the present and you could not have approved the new ideology – the ideology of hate, violence and lies – you couldn't have agreed on. And you made it explicit. You resisted through words, through the leaflets, through organizing of the scouting groups in the spirit of traditional scouting – that from before the war. Only that for the new authorities, the new authorities really disliked it. They were irritated by it. They were furious about it. And these young people, these young people, who had, and who still have, a mixed soul of priests, poets and painters – they decided to eliminate these young people; to eliminate them from life. You managed to survive. Mister President faced a death sentence. He was only 17 at that time. But he did get sentenced to death. I think that the prayer, the prayer, the prayer of his mother – because his father was murdered by Germans – that this prayer of his mother rescued his life. The death sentence was changed into a sentence of long years in jail. But was it the only case? After all, those, who participated in the Marianowice miracle – the revelation of the Mother Mary in the cathedral – they also were sent to jails, here, at the castle. And at the castle, as Mrs Marta counted, 180 young people were eliminated in a very brutal manner; In the Marianowice castle; 180 people. Among those, there were the leaders of the underground squads – beautiful, gorgeous heroes, who, for the fatherland, for its defence, fought the German occupier. And there came another occupier – and Poles joined that second occupier – some of the Poles, those with black souls. And they were killing those beautiful boys. But before killing them, they were torturing them. Mrs Marta writes about these young heroes [.] because they were so traumatized. This

ideology of hate also got a hold of our great brother in blood – the Pope John Paul II [.]; The Pope, who represented the eternal truth of Jesus Christ, the freedom, who reminded about the Human Rights – he had to be eliminated. That day – the 13th of May 1981 was supposed to bring his life to an end. But it happened otherwise. The Pope survived. Even more – that day – the 13th of May, started to speak to him. The Pope remembered that, on the 13th of May 1914, the Holy Mary came down on earth and spoke to three little children [.] and she passed on them the truth which was afterwards confirmed. He asked for the evidence concerning her appearances [.]. So as to thank the Holy Mary for saving his life [.]. And he got convinced that despite the danger, despite [.] the consequences, this request of the Holy Mary had to be fulfilled, and that Russia has to be scarified, about the ideology of hate – the Russia had to be dedicated to the immaculate Heart of the Holy Mary; despite being conscious of the fact, that the people who live in the soviet sphere of influence can face serious repressions. Yet, this thought of his, to idea of fulfilling her request, urged him. And on the 25th of March 1984, on the Saint Peter Square, in the presence of the cardinals, the bishops [.] he made that act. And it happened. Things started to transform. In March the year after, Gorbachev came into power in the Soviet Union. He announced Perestroika, and Glasnost. He started to look both at the political and social life. And then, the Polish communists, the Polish communists came to understand, that the support for the communist party in Russia is weakening, and they started to treat the society a little bit differently. Their hands were covered with blood. The Polish communists had their hands covered with blood. Who can estimate the victims? After 1944, who can estimate the victims? There was blood of the workers in Pozen, the blood of the shipyard workers at the seaside, there was the blood of the marital law. Yet, they got softened. And thanks to that, thanks to the fact that the Pope entrusted the Holy Mary [.] something changed. The political freedom arrived; the kind of freedom which allowed you to organize the association. We say to create the association – what sort of association? An open one [.]. The memory plaque which we fixed today in the wall is commemorating your suffering [.] your love for the country and your sacrifice. Someone can say that all of that was an accident – that it happened by accident – one can say that, one can interpret the events in this way [.]. If it was not for the facts belonging to the past, if it was not for the confessions of the sister Łucja and her notes, her documents… So, this relation of a human being with God, the relation of a human being with the Holy Mary, entrusting to God and to the Holy Mary – it was confirmed by that reality. And today, many former political prisoners went into heaven [.] thanks to the beautiful expression of love towards the fatherland [.] the Merciful God shall bless you for the

further years, in the autumn of your life, the God shall bless you, so that you give the testimony, just like John Paul II did – of love towards God, love towards the Church and love towards the fatherland; so that you give the testimony to the young generations, who do know the past, who happened to live in a different reality. Shall the God bless all of you – the prisoners, the authorities, and the guests. Amen.

Appendix Eight

An ethnographic example of a case discussed by the Council in Marianowice.

A proposal for a memorial devoted to a local priest and sent to the council for approval included the following text of inscription: 'In memory of the priest Anatol (1911-1945), a great clergyman and a Pole who, throughout his life, gave a testimony of fidelity to God and Motherland. He died murdered on the 10th of March 1945 […]'. As the case was already known to the council, an immediate hearing was given to an IPN representative belonging to a prosecution branch of the institute. In legal jargon, he gave a short report of numerous investigations opened and closed in various eras (the latest closed in 2006) which did not bring in sufficient evidence for confirming without doubt the 'involvement of the communist state into this crime'. However, as the IPN representative swiftly noted, 'the local population reveals a firm belief in the fact that the functionaries of the communist state must have played a role in this murder. Unfortunately, this belief did not get translated into evidence'. Stating that, the IPN representative expressed his satisfaction with the inscription, assessing that it was 'adequate to the state of knowledge' he possessed. An agitated hero/victim was given a voice: 'this was a priest, a Pole – extraordinary! He was a chaplain of the Polish underground! […] priest Anatol was without a doubt murdered by the UB! […] They knew that this man was ours!'. Another voice joined: 'Let's call a spade a spade!'. The proxy tried to mollify the emotional upheaval, proposing that, if the specific hero/victim had confirmed 'the historical fact' that the priest had been a chaplain of the Polish underground (note that the historical fact can be officially legitimated by a living hero/victim's testimony), the Council would have then proposed that such a statement be included in the inscription. Two of the heroes/victims approached the proxy whispering they could have testified that this version was true. Most of the people confirmed that such an indication must be placed on the plaque, indexing the urge for a clear demarcation of dead bodies along the lines of their political alignment.

Appendix Nine

Items confiscated from Leszek by Bezpieka

From among his most precious belongings the secret political police discovered the following:

- A notebook in a hard black cover which served as his personal diary. Leszek wrote down in it his thoughts and encounters.

- A notebook in a soft brown cover, which he called 'a working notebook of the organization', included: names, addresses, serial numbers of the official documents [issued by the organization], aliases, future military ranks. 26 people were listed on the pages of the notebook. One of the names was erased. It was Szymon's name. He was removed from the organization after demanding a higher rank for delivering a gun. Leszek announced a sentence of death for Szymon. The order was never carried out. During the interrogations, Leszek called that order 'an ill-considered decision'. Szymon was sentenced to prison by a regular court along with other members of the group. Today, he holds a membership in the association and is a close friend of Leszek. They live in the same communal block of flats in a small provincial town. They meet on name days and other occasions. Yet, there is a strong feeling of resentfulness left in Szymon, who often comments angrily on Leszek's behaviour.

- A notebook in hard black cover called 'General' included: technical details of the weapon that was supposed to be used by the organization in the future, details of membership and armaments to be used by the future squads and to be organized in case of war, the notes describing ways in which attacks on state officials and militia members should be performed (taken from the books about partisans). The notebook also included data concerning military installations.

- A notebook in soft cover wrapped in a grey newspaper titled 'investigative service' was aimed at improving the conspiracy methods by deconstructing and detailing the methods of the secret political police.

- Books that belonged to Leszek and were confiscated by the secret political police during the search included the following titles: 'A secret of a well-aimed shot', 'History of a machinegun', 'Scouts in the field', 'A book of a reservist', 'Catechism of a Polish soldier', 'Military handbooks'.

- In this assemblage one could also find pieces of ordnance maps, photographs of the group and of military targets, a tiny printer, and 18 envelopes filled with newspaper scraps, including names, photographs and addresses of various people [most of them unknown to Leszek], a few IDs of strangers and some notes. The data collected and hidden in the envelopes were part of a so-called 'black list' which Leszek was meticulously compiling. He confessed during the interrogations:

Leszek: 'The Black List constituted a register of dangerous for the organization people, whom we avoided. This category involved those who were actively participating in building of socialism in Poland and functionaries of the secret political police. Each member of the group was obliged to give me names of dangerous fellows. In the Autumn 1952, Todek, walking the dormitory area, […] said to me that, in the dormitory, there operated a great activist Tomek Parol, a tutor. This conversation took place at the Garden street, when we were coming back from school, and Tomek Parol was walking in front of us. […] Also Jurek, Todek and Miron, while talking with me about the dangerous folks, expressed their opinion that Tomek Parol should be killed as he was too active[1]. These statements, though, were not concrete and most of all, they were unreal, since I would not allow for killing Parol.' [Source: IPN].