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## Symbolic Transformations: State Symbolism and the Fall of Communism in Poland

Social reality and its institutional structures are based on the ability to symbolize (Searle 1995: 228). Communities, societies and institutionalized relations remain outside the reach of the individual's everyday experience (Schutz 1962: 352–356). They are only symbolically accessible constructs. Alfred Schutz argued that the more stabilized and institutionalized are social relations, the more perceptible are their symbols, and this observation also pertains to the state. This article will focus on the adoption of new state symbolism and ways of representing the meaning of the systemic change as the fall of communism.

Despite visible symbol changes, the significance of those symbols has remained ambiguous, as an analysis of political discourse shows. The process of systemic transition was vague and the situation dramatic in the phenomenological sense: the available schemas for typification were problematic (Grathoff 1970: 54).

At present, December 29, 1989 constitutes a symbolic turning point for the collapse of communism in Poland. The Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa* – PRL) was renamed and symbolically transformed into the Republic of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita Polska* – RP), commonly called the Third Republic, in correspondence with the Second Republic of the interwar period and as its continuation.

On December 29, 1989, the issues of transforming state symbolism – changing the name and emblem of the state – were on the agenda of the debate during the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Sejm (the lower house of parliament) of the Polish People's Republic – the so-called contract Sejm<sup>1</sup>. The bill to further amend the Constitution of Stalinist origin (1952) was read for the first time<sup>2</sup>. This debate was unique because

1 On June 4, 1989, elections to the Parliament took place – to the Sejm, where a limited number of seats had been reserved for the opposition, and to the newly established upper house – the Senat – with no such limits. This rule was part of the contract between the ruling communist party and representatives of the opposition, agreed upon during the Round Table talks in February 1989.

2 The analysis of the debate is based on the transcript from which all quoted statements were taken: *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 17 posiedzenia Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w dniach 27, 28, 29 grudnia 1989 r.* [Stenographic transcript of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic, taking place on December 27–29,

of the modes, characteristic for that transformation, of attributing meaning to the act of changing the state's name and its emblem. This communicative event will be analyzed as a way of discursively "performing" the systemic transformation before it actually takes place. The changes in state symbolism agreed upon during that Sejm session ultimately became legitimized in January 1990, symbolically marking the downfall of the communist regime in Poland.

This article focuses not so much on symbols, which stand for themselves (Wagner 1986), as on the functions of symbolism (Hałas 2008). Another field of interest encompasses the agents of change and the intentions which accompanied their use of the aforementioned symbols. Importantly, symbol use also defined those agents' reciprocal relations.

### Topics of debate on transition

The speech of the rapporteur of the Legislative Committee<sup>3</sup> introduced the topics of the parliamentary debate, framing and prospectively channeling this communicative event. The parliamentary performance taking place on December 29, 1989 deserves detailed study in itself, but this analysis will focus only on the issue of symbolism, encompassing two dimensions: an ostentatious surface change of state symbols as such, and the symbolic effect of the mode of changing the name and emblem on state identity and power relations – that is, generating meaning of the systemic change itself as transition. In the latter case, we are interested in the *modus operandi* of the change of state symbols as a symbolic representation of systemic transformation in Poland. Words spoken during the parliamentary debate functioned as performative acts or declarations (Searle 1995: 34). This focus is in accordance with the assumption that symbolism constitutes social formations and relations.

The opening narration of the Legislative Committee's rapporteur is particularly significant as regards the symbolic universe of ideas and images, as well as the symbolic move carried out within it to legitimize the transformation. The basic question is to what extent the incipient transformation involved the existing symbolic system, including the core typifications of the communist regime, which was approaching its end. The backdrop of this universe of symbolic typification was

1989]. Full transcripts from this and other sessions of the contract Sejm are available online under <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenogramyX.nsf/main?OpenForm&Seq=1#top> [accessed on 9 May 2015].

3 Hanna Suchocka from the Citizens' Parliamentary Club (*Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny*, OKP).

created by the Constitution of the communist state and any change in it targeted that symbolic system, which legitimized the existing regime; one example is the removal of the preamble, which emphasized the leading role of the working class.

The changes proposed by the Legislative Committee during this debate were to signify overcoming the limited range of earlier initial projects, which restricted the scope of changes to the most urgent ones. "Minimal changes" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP) meant deleting the third article of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, which guaranteed the hegemony of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – PZPR) and its satellite factions: the United People's Party (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe* – ZSL) (this faction subsequently transformed into the Polish People's Party "Rebirth" – *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* "Odrodzenie," later referred to as PSL "Rebirth") and the Democratic Faction (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne* – SD).<sup>4</sup> The proposed additional changes formed two broad categories of topics introduced into the parliamentary debate. The overarching topics referred to the form of the process of changes as transition or transformation. The second category of detailed topics related to the crux (substance) of the legislative changes. The overarching category comprised the following topics: the extent of changes in the Constitution; the appropriateness of the time when changes should be made; the pace of the changes; the transient (temporary) status of the changes (between revision of the PRL-era Constitution and the establishment of the new Constitution).

When presenting changes as radical as reinstating the pre-war name of the state and, as also postulated, returning to its emblem – symbols which had been suppressed and removed outside the symbolic boundaries of the communist state – and embedding them in the Constitution of the PRL, the rapporteur mentioned the dilemma whether to "... assign this change to the very negatively evaluated act of 1952, or rather wait for the new Constitution" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP). In light of this ambivalence, the Legislative Committee proposed changing the name of the state and postponing the emblem change; however, the latter was not excluded, as the initiative of a minority within the Committee. In the course of parliamentary discussion, no one mentioned the consequences of adding subversive, hitherto persecuted symbols used by the opposition to the Stalinist founding Constitution of the PRL, even though this issue highlighted the significant problem of the Polish

4 As well as the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (*Patriotyczny Ruch Odrodzenia Narodowego* – PRON) which had been formed in the aftermath of the martial law imposed in Poland in December 1981 to suppress the "Solidarity" movement. This organization no longer existed in 1989.

state's continuity and identity, and ultimately had to provoke questions about the PRL's status as the Polish state.

The time of changes was thematized as "awareness of the transitional period, awareness of the somewhat temporary character of the adopted solutions" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP). The pace of the changes was gaining priority over their momentum. When the Legislative Committee provided a project for revising the Constitution, it allowed inconsistencies in the basic law and its further hybridization. The hybrid character of forms created by embedding new elements in the old structures of the communist system was a hallmark of the transitional period (Staniszkis 1999: 131). The rapporteur stated: "It [the Constitution of the PRL – EH] will, indeed, never be a good legal act" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP). A particular figure of speech, metonymy – "making successive breaches" in the Constitution of the PRL under revision – evoked the laborious demolition of existing walls through actions leading to the regime's downfall.

The rapporteur, unlike subsequent speakers, did not conflate changes in the existing Constitution and construing an entirely new Constitution by a new Sejm, elected in a fully democratic and free election.<sup>5</sup> The rapporteur's speech carried a forward-looking motive of hope regarding the adoption of a new Constitution, which was described vaguely as: "A Constitution which would be an act of unequivocal axiological choice and would have all the features of a basic law, the most important law in the country and in public opinion" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP). The topos of "axiological choice" assumes some dilemma which had not been articulated in terms of specified values underlying the public sphere. There were no attempts at settling accounts with the communist past, at judging the regime in legal, political or moral terms. As regards detailed topics – the substance of the proposed changes<sup>6</sup> – this analysis focuses solely on state symbolism.

5 Although the free parliamentary election took place on October 27, 1991, the new Constitution was only adopted in 1997.

6 Proposed changes: deleting the third article from the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic on the leading role of the communist party and proposing an article which would guarantee the freedom and voluntary character of creating political parties; deleting the preamble to the Constitution, since "both its form and its content no longer correspond with the present reality"; changing the state's name to "Republic of Poland"; deleting the first chapter and adopting the provision of a democratic rule of law; deleting the second chapter and changing the provisions pertaining to freedom of economic management and protection of property, regardless of its form; filing a minority motion in the light of a lack of consensus in the Legislative Committee regarding the emblem change. The other changes were: no more state regulation of the national economy; inclusion of the prosecutor's office within the Ministry of Justice in

## State identity in transition: from "PRL" to "Republic of Poland"

Naming, whether in relation to individuals or collective subjects, is a very important communicative act which imposes identity or causes its change. Naming gives structure to the social world, and the right to name is an attribute of power (Kertzer 1996: 66–67). The legislative move towards changing the state's name to that from the pre-Second World War period was not addressed discursively in a comprehensive manner. This topic was taken up by only seven deputies. No statement questioned this proposal, which would have ponderous implications for the state's identity, for expected power relations and changes in political culture. Thus, the restrained discourse with its tacit premises perfectly illustrates the peculiar character of the change which may be termed an involutorial transformation – folding the system inwards.<sup>7</sup>

The semantics of the discourse on symbolic transformation appears ruled by the principle of minimal expression. By this I mean the restraint with which the symbolic system of the waning regime and its successor were interpreted. Namely, the parliamentary discourse neither openly addressed the crucial topic of regime collapse nor expanded upon it, but left this issue implicit and unspoken.

Statements made by members of the Civic Parliamentary Club were short and supportive; however, with some variation as to the degree of complacency. On the one hand, the loftiness of the ongoing transition was extolled: "The crowning moment of the currently ongoing changes should be the name of the state, as well as crowning the eagle" (Maria Sielicka-Gracka, OKP).

The expression "crowning moment" suggested the culmination of the process of political change, and did not reflect the actual state of things on the verge of transformation.<sup>8</sup> The more reserved voices among OKP deputies did not question the sort of symbolic politics being implemented: "Yes, removing the word 'People's' from the name of the Polish state reflects a certain political reality, reflects the fact that Poland is heading towards democracy and away from the communist regime" (Jan Rokita, OKP).

The political actor who pronounced the last word on the topic of changing the state's name represented the communist party, and his speech exemplifies a flexible use of national symbolism under the communism regime.

an attempt to strengthen judicial independence; and adoption of temporary legislation permitting the use of existing official documents, containing the name and emblem of the Polish People's Republic, for five years.

7 Term borrowed from Harrison C. White (2008).

8 On symbolic transformation see Hałas 2002.

That which is happening today in the Polish parliament has the aim of reinstating the historic name ... Today, the primate Glemp<sup>9</sup> said during a meeting with members of both houses of the parliament that we are representatives of the nation. That is why all this – reinstating our country's historic name: the Republic of Poland, crowning our eagle, all this, taking place in the presence of the president<sup>10</sup>, constitutes a certain symbol of the Poland we are striving for (Ryszard Bartosz, PZPR).

The above narrative explicitly illustrates the sort of symbolic politics in use, as well as its protagonists – the contract Sejm, the primate of the Catholic Church and the president. The communist party was being affirmed as the agent of transformation. Its agency was equated with the agency of the whole nation, and national unity was assumed – especially parliamentary unity. Finally, the legitimizing authority of the Catholic Church was called upon as an additional means of persuasion. In parliamentary discourse, all parties involved claimed the right to represent society as a whole, thus obfuscating important social differences and divisions. As Catherine Verdery points out, in classic liberal democracy parties represent the interests of specific groups, whereas in communist countries these differences were treated as nonexistent, creating a dichotomy: the people and its enemies (Verdere 1996: 93).

### Transforming the communist state emblem – crowning the eagle

The initiative of changing the national emblem was not put forth unanimously by the Legislative Committee, but suggested more cautiously by a minority within that Committee – thus, an indirect route was adopted. Furthermore, this unprecedented act of reinstating a symbol of the Second Republic which had been abolished as subversive in the iconoclastic Stalinist era excited no controversy among communist party deputies, nor among members of other parliamentary clubs. This change, like no other, was to indicate a complete inversion of the symbolic order according to a binary code that designated what is good, respected and lofty, as well as what is evil and rejected. The Civic Parliamentary Club backed the proposal, although some statements of its representatives raised doubts concerning the inscribing of regained symbols in the communist Constitution. However, there was no resolute opposition against reinstating the emblem of the Second Republic, cherished by

9 Cardinal Józef Glemp (1929–2013) was the primate of the Episcopacy of the Catholic Church in Poland and the successor of cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981).

10 The president elected by the contract Sejm was general Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923–2014), the leader of the junta that had introduced martial law in Poland in 1981.

the anticommunist opposition, as well as by earlier resistance against the German and Soviet occupation during the Second World War. The ambiguity of embedding this symbol in the Constitution of the communist state was not an obstacle. This powerful symbol was put into play at the threshold of transformation, before the adoption of truly democratic institutions. Some doubt had been expressed regarding this fact, mentioning national honor, but the issue was presented as a minor offense, or a small faux pas.

Thus, I believe that including elements such as the name: the Republic of Poland, as well as the crowned eagle, within this document [the Constitution of 1952 – E. H.] would be slightly at odds with that spirit and that letter. Actually, I'm afraid the crowned eagle might feel offended (Jerzy Pietkiewicz, OKP).

Like changing the state's name, the topic of reinstating the emblem was uncontroversial. However, during the debate the latter issue was taken up twice as frequently (12 times) as the former. The narratives relating to the emblem were also slightly more elaborate, given the more sensitive topic of the eagle's crown, a reference to the state's sovereignty. They were mostly voiced by representatives of the parties who had made the proposal – communist party satellites.<sup>11</sup> Deputies of the Civic Parliamentary Club spoke three times, whereas a deputy of the communist party spoke up only once – at the very end as the final voice.

Those who put forth the proposal utilized a set of narratives relating to the meaning of the state's symbol. The first one appealed to the tradition of Polish statehood.

Nonetheless, since we're introducing such basic systemic changes in the Constitution, since we're renouncing the name 'Polish People's Republic,' it seems that the old, traditional emblem can be reinstated. After all, this is nothing new. This would be a return to the time when Poles were able to decide their own political destiny and system. Things had always been like this ... there is also seemingly nothing to hold us back from introducing, in this Constitution, in this system – although we still consider it imperfect – the traditional emblem, a white eagle wearing a crown (Stanisław Rogowski, UChS).

The deputy quoted above voiced the opinion that reinstating the state symbol would be an adequate representation of the systemic transformation and newly regained political sovereignty. In another interpretation, the reinstated symbol of the state was treated as a property or a gift – a symbolic object – which should be ritually transferred to the Polish nation to fulfill the expectations rooted in national consciousness. "This crown, the object of the dispute, is such a small matter

11 SD – 4 voices, and PSL, UChS, PZKS and PAX – 1 voice for each club.

and yet means so much for the Polish people, who have waited for this for many years and are still waiting today" (Jan Świtka, SD).

Sporadic voices protested against the inconsistency of the state emblem's reinstatement by the contract Sejm.

However, it seems that the crown, and especially the crown placed today on the head of the Polish eagle, is something of an overstatement.

We had the idea that we would perform the crowning when, with the nation's permission, the issue of foreign troops stationing in Poland is finally regulated; when the apparatus of coercion is no longer in the hands of one party, but in the hands of the entire society; when the electoral system is fully democratic. All these things haven't happened yet (Jan Rokita, OKP).

The communist party's position as regards changing the emblem presented that party as the true agency of symbolic transforming, having the power to exert a very real and lasting influence on the transformation. The narrative that emphasized communist agency in the reintroduction of the eagle's crown is a telling one for the post-communism in the process of becoming.

Today, we want to restore the proper dignity of the nation – both in the content of the Constitution, and in the emblem of the Polish family. That's wonderful. This is a return to the sources, and we need very good water, water that quenches thirst. Hard, weary work awaits us, a struggle to return fully to Europe, Latin Europe. And that is the tendency (Applause) (Ignacy Czeżyk, PZPR).

This narrative presented a binary opposition between post-communist agency and the passive nation – a topos that contrasted with the dignity discourse of the "Solidarity" movement. The temporal construction of this narrative was characteristic for the parliamentary debate, during which special significance was attributed to the very date of December 29, 1989 – the present moment that obscured the communist past and made it seem irrelevant.

The topic of changing the state symbols, so reservedly raised without opposition, had also gained only a limited number of rudimentary interpretations with regard to the emblem's significance. Deputies from the Democratic Faction assumed the role of the custodians of national symbolism. This satellite faction clearly specialized in flexibly adapting national tradition in order to facilitate identification with the communist state. The use of national symbolism legitimized the communist system in its waning phase.

The semantic field for the emblem consisting of a crowned white eagle was not elaborated upon as regards its symbolic meaning. In their lofty speeches, deputies used clichés which constituted the building blocks of national identity. The first meaning to be evoked was sacred in the Durkheimian sense of sacredness of the

transcendent community. The expressions used reproduced the typical imagery of a primordial bond: land, borders, defense, independence, blood, sacrifice. These topoi constitute a memory of the fatherland as a holy territory and a place of memory (Smith 1999: 152–153). "Banners with the image of a white eagle wearing a crown are sanctified with the blood spilled on battlefields and in the fighting to protect the country's borders against foreign invaders, in the fighting to regain independence" (Jan Świtka, SD).

As such, the sacred symbol in the binary code: good-evil, purity-defilement (Alexander 2006: 124) was contrasted with the emblem of the PRL – sacrum against profanum. The crowned eagle was contrasted with the PRL's eagle emblem,<sup>12</sup> which "has become the symbol of evil, has been defiled" (Kazimierz Ujazdowski, SD).

In the sequence of parliamentary speeches, the image of an eagle wearing a crown was also interpreted as a symbol of the unity and sovereignty of the Polish state, reproducing a widely accepted meaning. Furthermore, the crowned eagle was presented as a "symbol of the consciousness of the Polish society" (Anna Dynowska, SD), typified not only as pursuit of freedom – the image preserved in narrations about the Polish uprisings against foreign oppression (the last one was the Warsaw Uprising in 1944) – but also the value of social justice. Finally, the significance of reinstating the national emblem was associated with the value of the state's tradition as such: "Nobody, but nobody can say that the traditions of the Polish state hold no significance for the Pole" (Andrzej Bondarewski, SD).

Without evaluating the statehood of the PRL, and without a specific notion of traditions, this pronouncement remained vague. While a minority of the Legislative Committee, led by the satellite Democratic Faction, proposed the reinstatement of the crown-wearing eagle, no member of the Communist Party club referred to this symbol's meaning, which had been negative in the PRL, and left the issue unspoken with no justification or apology. In contrast, Civic Parliamentary Club deputies, having initially adopted the stance that the banned symbol can be reinstated by passing an ordinary act, without inscribing it into the old Constitution of Stalinist origin, did not oppose the latter option, nor did they engage in deeper interpretation of the symbol and the significance of the act of reinstating the crown, even though this act might have had implications for the representation

12 In the history of Polish statehood, an emblem consisting of a crownless eagle first appeared during the rule of the Piast dynasty. A crowned eagle was the emblem of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The communist regime utilized the symbolism of the Piast eagle, excluding the symbolism of the Second Republic, which drew upon the symbolism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

of the current balance of power relations. This issue appeared in only three brief statements, each of which presented it from a somewhat different angle. First, the change was backed by giving voice to representatives of Home Army soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The deputy (Maria Sielicka-Gracka, OKP) read an excerpt from a letter entitled *An appeal from the Warsaw District Association of Home Army Soldiers*, which stated that removing the crown from the national emblem signified forcing a foreign, imperialist will upon the nation. The identity of the "foreign will" remained undefined and could implicitly refer to the Yalta conference (1944), during which Poland was left in the Soviet zone of influence. Using such a vague expression made it possible to avoid explicitly mentioning the period of communist rule and the role of the Polish United Workers' Party, as well as to ignore the current political divisions in Poland.

This voice exemplifies the rhetoric of understatements, hidden assumptions and tacit implications, which – as emphasized above – combine into a general ambiguity of discourse. Such ambiguity translates into control over meanings that have the potential to escalate conflict. At the end of 1989, the status quo remained diffuse and undefined, as exemplified at the very beginning by the statement of the rapporteur of the Legislative Committee: "we find ourselves in the present condition" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP).

Another position, parallel to the somehow skeptical view on changing the name of the state at that stage of transformation, referred to the performative function of the symbolic act consisting in reinstating the eagle's crown. "We're placing this crown on the head of the Polish eagle, but we're doing it with the conviction that it doesn't fully reflect the Polish reality at present" (Jan Rokita, OKP).

This pronouncement can be interpreted as a form of disclaimer; the intent was to avoid negative consequences for the identity of the Civic Parliamentary Club resulting from the response of the more radical anticommunist opposition. The same purpose was achieved by a certain amount of criticism directed at the fact that the initiative to reinstate the forbidden emblem had been seized by satellites of the communist party. However, the legitimacy of their action was not denied outright: "... the political forces which, during 40 years of their activity, haven't displayed the right to demand the reinstatement of that crown today in the loudest voice" (Jan Rokita, OKP).

13 The Home Army – a military formation created in Poland under German occupation, subordinated to the Polish government-in-exile, persecuted by the communist government from 1944 onwards.

The legitimacy of the act of reinstating the crown in the national emblem consisted in identifying with the nation which had fought for its independence at least for half a century, with the Home Army, with the workers killed in Poznań in 1956 and on the Baltic Coast in 1970, the Workers' Defense Committee, the Polish Emigration of Independence, the milieu of the "Culture" magazine in Paris, the Polish government-in-exile, and finally, the "Solidarity" movement. Again, the legitimate agency remained unspecified, since on the one hand the speaker identified himself as a supporter of "Solidarity," but on the other, he stated: "Thus, if we place this crown on the head of the Polish eagle, we will place it together, by the will of the entire House" (Jan Rokita, OKP).

Consequently, the supposed legitimacy of the act of reinstating the emblem ascribed to the Civic Parliamentary Club was extended to the entire parliament, including communist deputies. The legitimacy came from identification with the successive generations of fighters for independence: "... it is they who took this tradition of the Polish crown and are permitting us, with a certain moral authority, to return it today to the emblem of the Polish state ..." (Jan Rokita, OKP).

The expression "with a certain moral authority" was ambiguous: it could mean both "to some degree" and "true moral certainty." Similarly ambiguous was a statement in which the crown in the national emblem was contrasted with the crown of thorns.

Just two sentences in response to the statement of deputy Sekuła. I would like, and that was my intention, to see the rights of all political parties, their freedoms, including the party of deputy Sekuła, extended and not limited. I wouldn't want the crown which we're placing on the Polish eagle's head today to prove a crown of thorns (Adam Michnik, OKP).

Thus, there was a metaphorical shift of sense between the symbol of the nation-state and the religious symbol of Christ crowned with thorns. Such a rhetorical device opened various possibilities of interpretation, alluding to the Messianic narrative, characteristic for the 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic ideology of Poland as a "Christ of nations" sacrificing itself "for your freedom and ours" (Domańska 2000: 255). Here, this metaphor was ironically used as rhetoric of opposition against banning the communist party's activity.

### Making the meaning of the time and pace of transformation

The parliamentary discourse of December 1989 on the transformation of state symbolism was also significant regarding the socially constructed meaning of the time and pace of systemic transformation. The steps taken defined the meaning of time by actions embedded in it, and their quantity determined the pace. This

was a subject for highly reflexive and strategic communication, which imposed cognitive frames on the perception of history in the making.

Time can be understood both as a resource and an object of rivalry, when various agents strive to embed their endeavors in it. But time is also the cultural dimension of meanings, in the sense that it enables us to answer the question "When?" for undertaken actions (Hałas 2010: 308–315). Thus, in the parliamentary discourse, speakers ascribed meaning to the time of transformation in various ways, and the motive of delaying or hastening the changes was used in accordance with specific rules of the discursive game. The constitutional motion signified systemic alterations, which were presented during the debate. The contract Sejm was also turning the groundbreaking year 1989 into a symbol in itself.

Through strategies of making the meaning of the changes' time and pace, social knowledge about them was produced – the categories that created frames which made it possible to give meaning to ambiguous, unclear changes in the environment associated with ongoing processes of transformation. A crucial issue as regards the temporal dimension of the transformation's meaning was the horizon of future expectations in response to the question when the country was going to adopt a new Constitution, leaving the communist regime behind once and for all.

The questions of the pace and temporal horizon of creating new foundations for the democratic political system of a law-governed state in the new Constitution were raised on December 29, 1989 not only in the parliamentary debate, but also in the communist party's main propaganda outlet – the daily newspaper "People's Tribune" (*Trybuna Ludu*). Significantly, the theses presented in that article were introduced to the parliamentary debate not by communist deputies but by the Civic Parliamentary Club.

The key issue was the proper time in which to symbolically express the systemic transformation through changing the state's name and its emblem. This issue was associated with synchronizing the change of state symbols and the introduction of a new Constitution, which would provide firm foundations for democracy. Inconsistency stemming from a lack of appropriate typifications (Grathoff 1970: 59) posed a problem. In other words – there were important discrepancies between the plane of symbolic representation and political reality. Ambiguous discourse during the parliamentary debate translated into the ambiguous sociocultural reality of post-communism in the making. The pressing topic of the temporal horizon – a proper time for symbolic transformative changes – was addressed in the first speech by a Civic Parliamentary Club deputy: "I believe that the end of this year is the most suitable and most appropriate moment to give the Polish people a long-awaited beautiful gift: a new Constitution. Society has been waiting for this gesture of the Polish parliament for several months" (Edward Rzepka, OKP).

This statement contained a particular type of contamination, later repeated in the debate: it blurred the distinction between aspirations to a completely new basic law and references to amending the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic. Such a rhetoric of ambiguity featured prominently in the discourse during the last session of the parliament of the Polish People's Republic, particularly in regard to the notion of a "new Constitution." The time was affirmed as ripe for changes, but these changes were not specifically defined in political terms, nor in terms of symbolic politics clearly articulating the downfall of the communist regime in Poland. "The end of this year" could literally mean the end of the calendar year, only implicitly indicating the uniquely designated year 1989, soon to symbolize the turning point of systemic transformation.

Due to the high degree of conventionalization of the parliamentary debate, in which turn-taking by deputies takes place in the order of application, and to the fact that the time and pace of constitutional changes in terms of symbolism were discussed by "jumping" back to this topic over subsequent rounds of speaking, the analysis will focus on the stances of particular parliamentary clubs.

The problem of the proper embedding of legislative changes in time as a question of the momentum and pace of systemic transformation and its symbols stemmed from the fundamental fact, already discussed above, that the fully democratic free general election hadn't been held yet. In the analyzed parliamentary debate, that issue and related ones remained unarticulated or were passed over in silence. The question of the legitimacy of democratic representation was never raised, and deputies repeatedly affirmed the contract Sejm as representative of the whole nation.

The Legislative Committee, which proposed amendments, and the Constitutional Committee, whose task was to prepare the new basic law, worked in parallel. No one protested against embedding the regained symbols into the old Constitution of Stalinist origin. The main problem: a suitable time frame for the symbolic transformation, as well as its pace – haste or delay – often took a back seat to the purely formal and procedural questions affecting the speed at which things were progressing. Civic Parliamentary Club deputies successively and repeatedly expressed, in a ritual way, approval for the moment when changes in state symbolism were made, along with a strong will to increase the pace. There were recurrent arguments in favor of speeding up the revision of the Constitution of the communist state, accompanied by continual declarations that the new Constitution would be adopted very soon, without doubts regarding logic and rationality. "Nonetheless, we now assure the entire nation that the Constitutional Committee has been appointed and that a comprehensive Constitution will be prepared in the immediate future" (Zygmunt Łupina, OKP).



There were few explicit references to the ambiguous political context of the debate or to deeper justifications, as well as little meta-reflection on the implemented symbolic politics and the use of nostalgia for the Second Republic of Poland. In the parliamentary discourse, a voice from the Civic Parliamentary Club alluding to the article published in the communist "People's Tribune", which drew a contrast between revolution and evolution, justified the haste with which the Constitution of the communist state was being amended and state symbols changed as a legitimate strategy for preventing an uncontrolled revolt of society:

The article in today's issue of the "People's Tribune" contains one sentence which I would like to quote. Namely, the statement that changes can take place either through evolution or through revolution. We, too, are rightly proud of our evolution. However, we ought to be careful, lest blocking this evolution, delaying it, should cause social outrage. Some deputies say that radical systemic changes cannot be carried out by deleting words from the Constitution. However, the examples of other countries show that where deleting words was delayed for too long, the resulting events should be a warning for us all (Juliusz Braun, OKP).

One interesting interpretation suggests that the evolutionary path of top-down transformation led to the acceptance of communism as a legal system. "In other words, the system could not be prosecuted nor sentenced" (Staniszis 1999: 283).

Not surprisingly, the topic of a suitable time frame for amending the Constitution was frequently addressed (25 times). Several sequences of subsequent rounds of speeches focused on this issue.<sup>14</sup> Significantly, Civic Parliamentary Club deputies most frequently discussed the time and pace for the constitutional amendments. Communist party deputies addressed this topic less often, but voices from the satellite clubs ensured that balance was maintained.<sup>15</sup> The Civic Parliamentary

14 If voices on the same topic separated by not more than one round are treated as a sequence, the topic of the time and pace of changes came up in six sequences of voices. The first sequence encompassed rounds 2, 4, 5, 6; the second sequence – rounds 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18; the third sequence – rounds 26, 27, 28, 29, 31; the fourth sequence (after a break in the proceedings) – rounds 35, 36, 38, 39, 40; the fifth sequence – rounds 44, 45; and finally the sixth sequence (after a break in the proceedings) – rounds 48, 49. The relation of voices to clubs was as follows: first sequence – OKP, OKP, OKP, OKP; second sequence – PSL, UChS, PZPR, PSL, OKP, OKP, PZPR; third sequence – PZPR, PZPR, OKP, OKP, PZPR; fourth sequence – OKP, OKP, SD, PZPR, PZPR; fifth sequence – OKP, OKP; sixth sequence – OKP, SD. Clearly, OKP deputies most frequently addressed the topic of the time and pace at which the Constitution should be changed: 11 times, and if we count the two speeches of the rapporteur – 13 times in 25 rounds of statements.

15 PZPR deputies – 7 voices; PSL (2); SD (2), UChS (1).

Club expressed acceptance of the pace at which the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic was being amended. "We must declare that we see no reason for any delay in adopting the resolution by the Sejm and the Senate" (Maria Sielicka-Gracka, OKP).

The Constitution of the Polish People's Republic was being ambiguously assessed either as "the most important act of the Polish law" (Janusz Dobrosz, PSL "Rebirth"), "our Constitution" (Stanisław Rogowski, UChS) or "relics of Stalinism" (Janusz Dobrosz, PSL "Rebirth"). Amending the Constitution and changing it entirely were blurred and confused, so the problem of creating a hybrid act was never posed. "I am merely indicating what this example shows: that what has been done is only the beginning of the process of repairing our Constitution and the Constitutional Committee's work on changing that constitution entirely is an extremely urgent issue" (Stanisław Rogowski, UChS).

On the other hand, fervent critique of the haste with which the work on constitutional changes was progressing in December 1989, and simultaneously their lateness resulting from a slow previous pace, came from the communist party club. A singular linguistic creation was even conceived to refer to such inefficient time management – *niedoczas* (loose translation: "undertime"). "Undertime" meant simultaneously: missing time, lateness, and haste.

I feel that we've wasted a relatively large amount of time on numerous other issues, while regulating the systemic changes has been put off, even though – in my opinion – that is the task for which this term of office of the Sejm was appointed on June 4 by the voters. And today, we have found ourselves in a certain undertime (Andrzej Bratkowski, PZPR).

The communist deputies' rhetoric regarding pace consisted in arguments in favor of slowing the pace and broadening the temporal perspective. It was an opposite rhetorical stance to the one presented by deputies of the Civic Parliamentary Club, consisting in hastening the changes and narrowing the temporal perspective. The point of view articulated by the Civic Parliamentary Club was actually nuanced through multivocal variation. There were references to "Solidarity," indicating continuity between the goals intended by that movement since 1980 and the newly adopted amendments to the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic. Accusations of haste were constantly being rejected by pointing out that an entire decade had passed since 1980. "I want to respond to the allegations that amendments to the Constitution are being adopted too hastily. I am a member of 'Solidarity.' We have discussed changing the Constitution from the beginning. Also during martial law and later" (Zygmunt Łupina, OKP).

The communist party deputies, as already noted, did not object to the amendments, although such flexibility meant moving outside the symbolic boundaries of

the collapsing regime. Unlike deputies with a "Solidarity" background, communist deputies criticized the haste with which those changes were implemented, taking the role of guardians of the rule of law.

Once again confirming the political will of the PZPR parliamentary club to see the provisions of the Constitution actually adapted to the realities and changes in Poland in a timely manner, I want to say that our entire concern has been focused on precision, on the accuracy of the rules of the basic law (Józef Oleksy, PZPR).

Critical remarks which to some extent influenced the nascent identity of political actors performing the drama of transitional change ultimately proved irrelevant for the final outcome of the debate. Despite a voice from the Civic Parliamentary Club that expressed doubts about the moment for changing the state symbols, all other voices, regardless of the club they represented, were approaching consensus.

In line with the initial standpoint, the deputy expressed a critical opinion, but did not draw a decisive conclusion:

On the other hand, as I already said, everything – and especially the issue of changing the name of the Polish People's Republic to the Republic of Poland, as well as the emblem – the crowned eagle, I think it would be better for this to be performed by the Constitutional Committee (Jerzy Pietkiewicz, OKP).

Noticeably, statements made by members of the communist club ascribed the ongoing changes to the will of the party. "I want to emphasize as strongly as possible that the party which I represent agreed long ago that it is necessary to make profound changes in the Constitution and adopt a new Constitution" (Stanisław Gabrielski, PZPR).

The voices in the penultimate sequence on the topic of the moment and pace summed it up, expressing support for the Legislative Committee's initiative.

Before the final vote – summing up the parliamentary discussion on the proposed changes and commenting in detail on the modifications in regard to the Legislative Committee's project – the rapporteur defined the changes as temporary: "The act is a temporary act" (Hanna Suchocka, OKP). Such a semantic harmonized with describing that phase of systemic changes as a transition.

The last voice belonged to the spokesman of a minority motion regarding a state symbol – the emblem. The deputy who spoke in the name of the Democratic Faction, which – as we said – took the role of a change initiator as regards the state symbols, spoke in favor of speedy changes, ascribing a key role to this faction.

My faction, the Democratic Faction, has been asking for this for many years, and although we have given way before arguments that the time wasn't right, that it was too early, today we have the right to call out in a loud voice – yes indeed, the time has come. Poland is taking the shape the majority of us have been dreaming of (Andrzej Bondarewski, SD).

To conclude the analysis of the parliamentary discourse of December 29, 1989, the issue of control over historicity deserves comments. It was implicit in the earlier discussion and closely associated with the meaning of the systemic turning point, as well as making the meaning of time as transition. The mode of representing the ongoing transformation – ways of referring to that period of change, and above all, how it was contrasted with the waning phase of the Polish People's Republic – is characteristic. The earlier, pre-Second World War era was of significance because the symbolism of the Second Republic of Poland was being reinstated. Thus, it is interesting how that period, references to which had been banned by the communist regime, was now presented and evaluated. These issues appeared in sets of narratives linked to control over historicity in the statements of deputies from different clubs, starting with the speech of the rapporteur of the Legislative Committee. Differences of opinion concerned the evaluation of the Second Republic of Poland – not the evaluation of the Polish People's Republic until the political breakthrough. The statements barely mentioned the year 1980, when the "Solidarity" movement was created, and avoided addressing December 13, 1981, when martial law was imposed. It was 1989, the year of the regime's downfall, which was indicated as a turning point in Polish history. The period of the Polish People's Republic was being referred to only indirectly. Negative assessments – when they appeared – referred to Stalinism and it remained unclear whether they pertained to the entire duration of the regime or only to that particular period. The presentist temporal perspective made the "Solidarity" breakthrough of 1980 give way to the symbolism of the unprecedented and unique transition of 1989.

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## Coping with Captivity: The Social Phenomenon of Humiliation Explored Through Prisoners' Dilemmas

### Dilemmas of displacement

This paper is about the social inconsistency that arises when a person, a collectivity, or an organization seems, in the eyes of some, to be claiming an inappropriate social identity or occupying an inappropriate social position. Those who feel threatened or challenged by the behaviour of others who seem to be getting above themselves may decide to put matters right, using whatever means are available and seem to be appropriate; for example, strong words, legal measures or even direct physical force.

Their objective in such a case would be to reduce or eliminate the social inconsistency by taking forceful measures to put the offending parties back 'in their place,' that is, to relocate them in their 'proper' social niche, and by doing this to remind them quite assertively exactly whom they 'really' are and where they fit in. When pushing these 'offenders' down or back, they might even give them an extra shove in recognition of the offense they have given, sending them further back or further down than would have been the case if they had not offended. In other words, the relocation may involve an element of 'punishment' as well as 'restoration.'

However, the people who receive this treatment may see things in a different light. They may believe that the forceful measures just mentioned have, on the contrary, created a new and disgraceful social inconsistency where there had been none before. In fact, such people may feel they were already in their 'proper place' before they were so unjustifiably attacked, before their identity was besmirched and their dignity undermined. Now they have been rudely kicked aside, outrageously abused, and subjected to totally unacceptable threats. In other words, their smoothly running lives, settled routines and secure identities have all been dislocated. They may well use the term 'humiliation' to describe their condition. If they do not use that term, some third parties who become aware of what has occurred may use it on their behalf.

In situations of the kind just described everyone agrees that a previously existing state of affairs has been disrupted and a new one brought into existence.