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Transformation in Collective Imagination*

Abstract: Transformation, as a transitory phase, is particularly susceptible to politicization of symbols and open to conflicts about the proper interpretation of meanings. Within transformation three functions of symbolism are discussed: stabilization of the process of transformation through the mobilization of symbolism related to the liberating ethos of Solidarity, including the symbolism of "retrieving memory"; deactivation of the collective agency which initiated these changes (i.e. the increased devaluation of the symbol of "Solidarity"); and the idealization of goals – the utopia of the end-point of transformation. Metaphorically, these functions can respectively be labeled: "anesthesia," "amnesia" and "term" of transformation. The issue of the ethics of public discourse is raised in the context of just representations of collective experiences.

Symbolic Transformation

The year 1989 symbolizes a "grand systemic change" (Sztompka 1999:viii), often described as a systemic breakthrough (Kurczewska 1999:8). This total social experience (Szacki 1999:123) engenders complex changes of legal-political, economic and social institutions, in the narrower sense, which regulate interaction, roles, social relations, and group activities. It also involves cultural changes in the spheres of ideology, axiology, human behavior and mentality. Both in academic and popular discourse the term "transformation" has become fashionable (Szacki 1999:125) in condensing the multitude of meanings of those processes. However, no "theory of transformation" exists as such (Rychard 1993:5; Szacki 1999), nor seems possible (Wnuk-Lipinski 1995). Whether "transformation" may become a precise theoretical concept remains an open question.

In spite of these doubts, "transformation" continues to function as a category which organizes popular experience and supplies a minimum of understanding of new and complex social processes. It has become a constructive element of the definition of a problematic common experience; in other words,

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it has become a "quasi-theory" (Stokes, Hewitt 1976:846) of the extraordinary time of changes. The vague and ambiguous character of this common knowledge reflects the transitory, "liminal" condition (Turner 1969:145) in which the society finds itself when attempting to, as it were, convert all its institutions into democratic and market rules in public life. Often, the term "transition" is used interchangeably with "transformation." It further shapes collective imagination and active tendencies, even replacing such categories as "revolution," and the partial and more predictable "reform." For those studying the processes of grand change, the symbolic organization of collective imagination and identity, including the use of the category of "transformation," calls for special attention.

The term "transformation" is fairly new within the social sciences. Its usage, either to denote a particular case, i.e., the historically specific set of systemic changes initiated around 1989, or to describe any general form of such changes has not yet been established. What does "transformation" connote? It is not clear to what aspects of social change the term should apply to be different than the concepts used thus far, such as: *growth*, i.e., the quantitative change in a particular direction; *evolution*, i.e., the qualitative change in structures and functions; *progress*, i.e., a qualitative change towards a certain standard; *adaptation* or *integration*, i.e., a change towards compatibility with another system (MacIver 1937:407); or *imitation* (Ziółkowski 1997:9).

Other sciences, however, such as biology and linguistics, have defined the term "transformation" quite precisely by going back to its Latin etymological roots – *transformatio*, i.e., reshaping. The analogy to the mathematical meaning of "transformation" as a redefinition of objects, a change in their coordinates, or their movement, may be of particular use.

A fundamental issue in transformation is its invariance that is, the retaining of a certain immutability (*The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* 1977:81). By this is meant the following problems: if certain relations or functions are given, how are we to find the transformations which will not alter them; if a transformation is comprised of a set of functions, how to find all the elements which do not change. Analogous questions may be raised with regard to the so-called systemic transformation. Here, too, we may ask about the elements which do not change (constants) – for instance, how the transformation allowed the communist elites to maintain their privileged economic position and acquire political power through the post-communist parties. I propose to utilize the analysis of the use of symbolization as a tool of transformation.

The symbolic dimension of transformation is extremely important. Its function is to introduce to collective imagination a new, or recovered, set of meanings which are supposed to define what the new reality is and what is significant in it. This process is political because a symbolic organization of imagination affects collective actions. Transformation, as a transitory phase, is particularly susceptible to politicization of symbols and open to conflicts about the proper interpretation of meanings (Pekonen 1990:136).

Symbolic transformations are a significant part of social and cultural changes. Names of places, streets, and institutions have been changed, and those previously suppressed as being rebellious, including the name of the country – the Republic of Poland and its sign, an eagle in a crown became official. New monuments symbolizing anti-communist identity, such as those dedicated to Marshal Józef Piłsudski, have been erected. Numerous people have been reburied with honors and many falsely accused and sentenced by the communists have been exonerated. The calendar of public holidays has also been changed. Without any doubt the so called systemic transformation has become enshrined in public rituals. The integration of the various parts of the process of transformation was the work of symbolism, requiring time, energy and public finance.

In this context, the question about the constants of transformation remains very significant. It is a question about the alibi which symbolic changes have given to the transmission of privileges and power by the elites coming from the previous regime. This question has not been addressed yet. Jadwiga Staniszkis (1991:11), while attempting to construct a theory of transformation, only briefly mentions the role of cultural resources in stabilizing and facilitating changes in the process of the control of transformation.

From the beginning, starting with the ritual of the "round table," which Gustaw Herling-Grudziński called the "bloodless bridge," (1993:303) the study of symbolism has been crucial for understanding the popular imagery of transformation. Within symbolic transformation, I single out three functions of symbolism: stabilization of the process of transformation through the mobilization of symbolism related to the liberating ethos of Solidarity, including the symbolism of "retrieving memory"; deactivation of the collective agency which initiated these changes (i.e. the increased devaluation of the symbol of Solidarity); and the idealization of goals – the utopia of the end-point of transformation. Metaphorically, these functions can respectively be labeled: "anesthesia," "amnesia," and "term" of transformation. At the same time, the problems of collective imagination created through public discourse, ritualistic behavior and iconic symbols will be shown in axiological dimension. One can ask similarly not only about individual identity (Kołakowski 1995:45) but also about the integrity of collective identity, i.e. about responsibility (Ingarden 1987:116) for symbolic representations and actions.

The Ethics of Public Discourse

Individual ethics calls for compatibility of the words and deeds of individuals. Such compatibility belongs to the catalogue of features of a just man represented most dramatically by a man of honor. Such compatibility of words and actions may be postulated within an institution where virtues acquire political meaning. According to Alasdair MacIntyre the ability of practice to keep its

integrity depends on whether virtues may be exercised in the process of maintaining the institutional forms which carry a said practice (1996: 351). Social psychologists who study attitudes often notice the ambiguity of relations between what we say and what we do (Deutscher 1973) and judge such incompatibility without moral rigor as it need not be intended or instrumentalized. This problem becomes even more complicated at the collective level of the communicating and acting society.

One of the ways of modeling democracy is through the analysis of an ideal communicative community. This pragmatic model, first argued by George H. Mead and Charles S. Peirce, and currently embraced by Jürgen Habermas, assumes that definitions of collective actions can be rationalized and that justice and solidarity are public qualities. In such cases, the ethics of public discourse would assume compatibility between the key representations or imaginations and the collective actions they entail. The ideal model and the universalistic principle of such a form of communication face a challenge from particularistic interests whose fulfillment requires an instrumental use of symbols in an attempt to control the arena of action, or, in other words, they face a challenge from the dynamics of power, ideological production and domination in communication (Bourdieu 1979: 495).

Incompatibility between words and actions at the collective level of experience may be caused not only by an instrumental use of communication or by manipulation. Particularly, in the problematic situation of macro-scale changes, collective actions are directed by only provisional estimates of goals, conditions, and resources. Discourse often moves between the poles of abstraction, especially if it contains categories not yet tested in action, and of known but anachronistic motives negatively verified by experience. A good example of such diverse cognitive styles in the discourse of transformation (Schutz 1976: 20) are the so-called "theoretical interests" (Staniszki 1991: 184) of the rational market economy or "nostalgia" for the egalitarianism of real socialism.

Transformation was legitimized by the idea of justice understood as realization of the rights of man, including property rights and economic freedom as the foundations of citizens' dignity and sovereignty. When we accentuate the "rule of law" as the chief principle we politicize the idea of justice, or even formalize it as if legal procedures were a leading mechanism of democracy. In this context, "social justice," value and symbols touched by inflation as a slogan of communist ideology depreciates and ceases to be properly conceived of. It is worth mentioning the words of Friedrich von Hayek who claimed, quite correctly, that millions became victims of that slogan:

It is absolutely necessary to clearly distinguish between two quite different questions raised by the demands of social justice in the market based economic order. The first is whether the idea of 'social justice' has any relevance in a market system. The second is whether a market system can exist when, in the name of 'social justice' or under any other pretext, authorities impose certain patterns of remuneration based on their calculations of input or needs of various individuals. The answer to both questions is unequivocally negative (Hayek 1993: 124).

Generally, the systemic transformation was presented as a consequence of the actions of Solidarity, and any questioning of this, for instance by the anti-communist Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland in their "Independence Charter" (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 12.11.1996) was deemed as a threat to democratic reform. This common belief that the events of the year 1989 and the changes which followed resulted from the 1980 Solidarity protest were also originated in the West. The Solidarity movement as a "self-limiting revolution" neither tried directly or could have tried to abolish communism at that time. The activities of Solidarity escalated the delegitimization of the existing system. Its mobilizing power stemmed from moral condemnation of injustices, measured by unfulfilled expectations – the discrepancies between the egalitarian ideology and the practice of *nomenklatura* privileges.

At the same time, growing pressure to have these promises fulfilled must have contributed to the self-destruction of the myth of the socialist system: such was the projected logic of Solidarity's collective action. The collective agency of these actions was driven by the affective images of a just community (Buksiński 1995: 81), or a congregation of strong communities: such as the family, the church, the neighborhood; or territorial and professional, at the forefront of the national community of historical fate. It was not difficult to prove that, after 1989, such imagination had a purposeful "anesthetizing effect" during the "shock therapy" on the way to the "market system." Without any doubt this factor played a role in containing the social reactions of protest and unrest. If Leszek Balcerowicz was right in saying that this was a "controlled shock," it must also be true in the sociotechnical sense where the symbols and imagination it evoked played a significant part. Solidarity, as a symbol by its very nature, played such a role at its own expense due to heavy abuse in the new context (Klapp 1991).

Coming back to the issue of "just representation" in public discourse (Czyżewski 1997: 115) of the process of changes, one must wonder whether a civil society which represents itself in ways incompatible with reality or does not strive to close the gap between representation and reality deserves to be called an agent. The gap concerns the images of the past and its own projection by the society which has already found itself in a situation not necessarily of its own choice. The "Round Table" was not elected democratically but was a result of a contract made between the party *nomenklatura* and the opposition elites.

Only in the "formally" democratic way did the post-communists gain power in the years 1993–1997. In 1996, a man belonging to a group of young party careerists from the 1970s was elected President. Many, as Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, blamed the policy of the "thick line" (*gruba kreska*), i.e. approaching the communist past without settling accounts with it, for such a state of affairs. From the elitist point of view, it was the *homo sovieticus* that deserved the blame. It signified a type of people who did not accept either property rights or the market system. The specter of this *homo sovieticus* – a man allegedly responsible for bringing the post-communists back to power, was first described by Józef Tischner as a man "who has not yet

developed the responsibility for true 'having'" (Tischner 1993:30); who is hiding away from freedom under the false dreams of a welfare state.

Domination and seduction by means of symbolic representations is an intriguing subject for sociologists. According to press reports, in the fall of 1996, the popularity of president Aleksander Kwaśniewski was growing to the point that "in the October poll of public trust (CBOS) (he) matched the first place occupied by Kuroń (each getting 20%)" (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 2.01.1997 "Zmienny głos ludu" [Changing Voice of the People]). Such developments seemed to disprove the words of Sławoj Leszek Głódź, the Chief Military Chaplain, uttered during the 1918 Independence Day celebrations: "Poland knows where she came from and what she has gone through, particularly in the last half century" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12.11.1996). The church hierarchy and Roman Catholic media, and since 1991 particularly the controversial Radio Maryja, run by the Redemptionists, are factors shaping collective imagination. As the Primate Józef Glemp said, these media were responsible for spreading imagination incompatible with reality, as for instance the conviction that "we now live in the hardest times" (Cardinal Józef Glemp, "Hałaśliwa metoda walki" [Noisy tactics] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2.12.1997). Pope John Paul's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* points out that the evangelical principle "then you will discover truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8,32) is an important attribute of civic life (*Veritatis Splendor* II, 31).

The Polish People's Republic [PRL] was almost totally monopolized by authoritarian lies. Transformation brought the possibility of pluralism and competition among diverse persuasive discourses; however, the state has retained many tools allowing it what Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence." Can the postulate of ethics of authenticity, i.e. a dialogue with argumentation, to use Charles Taylor's term, be transferred to the level of public discourse, to replace manipulation of the potential "electorate" or "true believers"?

Anesthesia of Symbols

What I have in mind in this context is not some metaphysical truth but a maximum rapprochement of cognition to historical existence, both in the individual biography, and in the closely related public life. Quoting existentialists may not be fashionable today, especially instead of post-modernists, yet to the problem under analysis the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, who claimed that fear of truth is a fear of freedom, are particularly well suited. His thought may be applied to collective imagination in the context of the systemic transformation. The example which he uses – Mrs. T., who does not see the doctor because she fears being diagnosed with tuberculosis, and thus escapes from responsibility and freedom – can be applied to the condition of the society and citizens of the former PRL, part of which was the party apparatus. Some were plotting against the system, the majority acquiesced, including the institution of the church which, as Józef Tischner noted, by functioning in the public sphere "went along

with the 'building of socialism'" (Tischner 1980:191). To ignore the truth about this system is like trying to escape from responsibility in the name of "it could not be any different," or "if we don't know it, it does not exist." Oscar Handlin writes that "where there is no proof there is no history. Truth, for a historian, is found in small elements which together form a document" (Handlin 1979:405). No sufficient effort as an academic task was made to study the system of real socialism, by creating documents attesting to narratives of everyday life particularly since the files of institutions have been destroyed. Knowledge of real socialism, understanding of its everyday experiences, or more generally, the truth about the PRL, have not become politically significant for most people, a fact which helps to determine political culture today.

The vote of 1989 was a symbolic "scraping off" of communism and signified a consensus to the changes, thanks to the identification with Solidarity as the carrier of politics appealing to values, particularly to the dignity of the "common man." Does it mean that, at that moment, there existed a collective agency – a society with an anti-communist identity which resisted the "authorities"? It surely stands for a collective desire for sovereignty and authentic existence, even if some members of that society "made deals" with the authorities. Society is not a being, or an organism; rather it manifests itself in single interactions and in collective purposeful action which carries its own momentum i.e. it is capable of fully articulating its goals and mobilizing its members for their realization in favorable circumstances.

Therefore, it remains problematic as to why the elites, after 1989, abandoned directing the collective actions of Solidarity, while at the same time the actions of the state acquired its symbolism. The disbanding of Citizens' Committees in 1990 undermined the efforts, at the local level, to strengthen collective agency capable of shaping its historical existence. Deprivation of illusions is dangerous in collective life. The oligarchic tendencies and endowment of labor union elites led to the deconstruction of the ideals and collective identities of Solidarity as a myth. The myth of Solidarity was replaced by a vision of pragmatic politics with corruption and appreciation for skillful players built into it. On the one hand it caused helplessness and passivity. On the other hand it led to hapless capriciousness of that part of the electorate which voted for "anyone but Wałęsa." He wasted the symbolic capital of a charismatic leader through too many instrumental claims of symbolic reference to the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity."

The loss of meanings and values weakens collective identity and prevents responsibility for the community from emerging. The rejection of the past – the "thick line" – or veiling of the experiences of PRL, which were supposed to be no longer significant, has multifaceted consequences. There can be no collective identity – "who we are" as a civil society, without "where we come from" (Taylor 1991:34). Transformation involves not only the institutions of the state and market but, first of all, the systems of meanings and collective identity without which the collective actor – civil society – will not emerge.

There is nothing wrong in heroically projecting this, to a great extent, opportunistic society and the Church, e.g. in identifying with dissidents and martyrs such as Jerzy Popiełuszko. In the communist system almost everyone “became overwhelmed” by its principles, at least to some degree. Such captivation of minds can be manifested in an obsessive attachment to everyday surveillance, so typical for the PRL, in the phobia about snitches and in demanding lustration. Life in the PRL could not be authentic; it called for some measure of double standards and secrecy. The mimetism of those superficially accommodating to the system differed from the secrecy “for the system” practiced by secret agents and informants at various levels. The Act of 11th April 1997, requiring the revealing of work for or service in the secret police and collaboration with those organs between 1944 and 1990 of those who hold or run for public positions, in article 7, lists only a limited number of positions. As Bogdan Pęk (1997), a member of parliament reported on the works of the Extraordinary Committee, the Act was supposed to “compensate for the loss of trust in the cleanliness of political elites” on the part of the Polish society.

Apart from other functions it was also supposed to have impact on collective imagination. There remains the problem of imaginations concerning the functions of institutions in the system of constant surveillance – schools, universities, the military, places of work, the church. The absence of such imaginations contributes to the absolution of the communist system proportionately to the feeling of guiltlessness on the part of the society which particularly during the time of Solidarity adopted the manicheic division into “us” and “them.” Without exposing the falsity of life and mentality as shaped over several decades, the prohibition of abortion and introduction of religion to public schools by fiat may have been understood as deprivation of liberty. Paradoxically, the heir to the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR), the Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD), could be construed in collective imagination as one protecting freedom and privacy, particularly to those for whom the complexity of the techniques of enslavement in a communist system remains a mystery. The problem of practicing justice towards the issue of individual rights and private property can be seen in the same context. Each personal history constitutes a part of social self, an objectivised image of a person. Consequently, freedom has not been experienced as a right to know one’s own enslavement by gaining access to one’s own files in the secret police archives.

Historical duration reveals itself in *habitus*, collective mentality and in institutions. Communism had its own theory and practice of social life. By eliminating the dogmatic language of ideology and by introducing the principles of market mechanisms we have not put an end to the communist system, which finds a good illustration in the term *post-communism*. We can speak of transformational alibi not only because the communist structures, including the PZPR, continue in their transformed state. The party *nomenklatura* has retained resources which allow it to rule. Francis Fukuyama claimed in 1989 that we witnessed the “end of history” and many people

believe that the destiny of the post-communist countries is to build capitalist liberal democracy. However, when we realize that these ideals are carried by the old structures, one must ask about the possible mutations, still more because the existence of the “socialist society” has not been treated seriously, and the changing results of elections only confirm it. The fact that former authorities remain untouchable and unpunishable normalizes the system of violence, corruption, and opportunism. Together with the creation of socio-economic *fait accompli* and the so called gray sphere of economy it converts civic virtues into empty rhetoric. The “thick line” has left behind the seriousness of the struggle for freedom measured by spectacular sacrifices of life and well-being, by the terror of the martial law whose symbol remains the pacification of the “Wujek” mine – the collective existential experience of the 1980s. It has also abandoned Solidarity as an instrument of social change.

One could see here an applied dialectics: from a communist thesis, through a Solidarity antithesis, to a post-communist synthesis. The principle of historical contradiction has been written into this latest history: a mass labor movement enabled the qualitative conversion of communist party apparatchiks into captains of capitalist industry. Later, in accordance with the iron law of oligarchy, labor union leaders joined this capitalist elite. The dialectic self-destruction of real socialism and its emergence as a part of a new ruling class which ruled by appealing to liberal thinking, free from ethical principles, makes post-communism a kind of avant-garde because it is a pastiche of democracy. President Kwaśniewski (“Dwie Polski” [Two Polands] *Gazeta Wyborcza* 12.11.1996), standing in the shadow of the monument of Marshal Piłsudski, bowing to the Church, the democratic opposition and emigration, implements this avant-garde by claiming that the ruling left acted in a patriotic way by “protecting as much sovereignty as was possible in the post-Yalta context.” Demands for truth and justice may only be regarded as “fundamentalism” or “totalitarianism” in the face of Kwaśniewski’s avoidance of wordly judgements, by transcendental dimension in which he locates the legitimization of the political *status quo*. In his 1996 New Year Speech, Kwaśniewski quoted John Paul II, as if to make his role more heroic, “a man who is responsible before God and History” by making his statesmanship a part of the mission to build the “civilization of love” (“Przebaczenie wyzwala” [Forgiveness liberates], *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2.01.1997).

This strategy warrants a closer analysis. It entails such symbolic gestures as:

1. the avoidance of being typified as a “communist antichrist” as the saying goes “only a devil fears holy water”;
2. making people believe that the Pope, for him, is an authority;
3. suggesting that he respects fundamental Christian values by using the metaphor of “civilization of love”;
4. demanding that communists be absolved in the name of higher moral rights (the principle of “love thy neighbor and thy enemy”);
5. by placing those who are unwilling to accept the post-communist *status quo* into the role of those who morally violate.

Amnesia After Anesthesia

The usefulness of liberal discourse for the benefit of post-communist systemic synthesis is particularly visible with regard to collective memory, i.e. to the imagination and commemoration of what happened in the past (Szacka, Sawisz 1990:8). By principle, the liberal doctrine and practice are inimical to memory since freedom must be a liberation from the burdens of the past. Marquis Mirabeau was among the first to note that to rule is to control the collective imagination. Synthetic post-communism is possible only thanks to creation of a collective amnesia (Król 1996:156). I consider awareness of this process to be crucial because it converts a community into a mere collectivity of groups of interests and leads to an anti-identity symbolic politics. This thought was firmly stated by such an opinion leader as the chief editor of *Nowa Republika* and is worth quoting.

"This manifests itself in the debates on the remembrance of the previous system in the post-communist times and eventual consequences that should be drawn from remembering crimes and harm. Such a debate is *nondemocratic* because memory cannot be fully democratic, thus one cannot render justice nor can treat all who should be remembered in the same way. It is for this reason, not for moral reasons, that limited forgetting favors the construction of liberal-democratic society. It will show only later whether the vertical, hierarchical, and emotional dimensions of memory will hinder democratization, yet be strong enough to determine the fate of post-communist countries in a decisive way" (168f, emphasis added). Such a controlled amnesia is a consequence of the anesthetizing memory of Solidarity. The shock of changes was controlled by the anesthetizing therapy, i.e., symbolism and belief in the fulfillment of Solidarity's goals. The sixteen months of Solidarity between 1980 and 1981 were symbolically framed by references to collective memory: the November Uprising of 1830, the regaining of independence in 1918, adoption of the Constitution of the May 3rd 1791, Poznań June 1956, the massacre in Gdańsk and Gdynia 1970, the workers' revolt in Radom in 1976 and other such events (Baczko 1994:193n).

The regaining of confiscated collective memory in commemorative ceremonies and other "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1985:1) allowed for the collective identity of the movement and national community to grow stronger in the game of memory and history (Nora 1984:xxxiv, xxv). One can substantiate the claim that, at the symbolic level, the period of transformation, particularly in the early nineties, was a continuation of the "labor" of symbols which had begun in 1980. It is worth mentioning the significance of symbolic claims. For instance, the focusing of public attention on the uncovering of the truth about the mass murders of Polish officers by NKWD in Katyń, irrespective of its great weight, legitimized the process of changes. This was of instrumental character. Anti-bolshevism was thus aimed at distant times, 1940 or 1920, and not against the familiar, national regime of Bierut, Gomułka, Gierek, or Jaruzelski. One must note the part in this symbolic legitimizing played by the

institutional Church, which was entering the public sphere in the shape of Polish "civil religion," particularly at the critical moment of passing through the "threshold of transformation" in 1989. Solidarity, represented by the Electoral Action Solidarity, could "regain power," thanks to a seemingly abandoned¹ method of symbolic mobilization appealing to the ethical vision of politics.

The Term of Transformation – Liberal Democracy

The issue of representation and collective imagination touches upon the past, which is distant and not so distant for the genesis of current actions, i.e. *terminus a quo*; but it also touches upon the future – *terminus a quem*, i.e. the liberal democracy which is the goal. Liberal democracy is portrayed as "the end of history," as a terminal stage located in the spatial utopia of united Europe, without differentiation, without discrimination or questioning. The former proletarian eschatology of the "era of communism" was replaced by the utopia of the terminal station of the society of integrated Europe. In its post-modern variation, liberal democracy contains cultural contradictions. Alain Touraine warns that "if we stress the fall of totalitarian communist regimes we may interpret it as a triumph of democracy. Why should we forget that social-democratic systems also disappear?" (Touraine 1995:256). It is worth remembering that within the post-communist discourse opinions rejecting the totalitarian nature of communist system were being encouraged.

The new, post-modern democracy seems tolerant and oligarchic where the majority are consumers, because even political choices belong to the sphere of consumer attitudes. Charles Taylor maintains that post-modern liberal democracy proposes diverse forms of authenticity, brackets history and the requirements of solidarity, and is antithetical to any deeper engagement in the community (Taylor 1991:40, 43, 46).

The post-communist call for "putting the evaluation of history behind" corresponds with the liberal volunteerism of absolute tolerance and individual freedom from norms. In post-modern liberal democracy the "end of history" signifies the end of a nation-state, the end of such collective subjects as nation or class, and also the end of religious institutions. It is obvious, then, that the national-Catholic *habitus* in Poland, together with whatever is left of Solidarity, becomes a burden in reaching that final stage. The end of transformation is presented in a simplified way; it does not address the problematics of the liberal-democratic political, social and cultural order. Some consider it a "news-peak of the free market," quite divergent from people's everyday experience

¹ According to Jadwiga Staniszkis, part of the political elites considered "nationalism" and "fundamentalism" (whatever they are supposed to mean) as disfunctional for transformation. Allegedly, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the symbolic prime minister of the beginning of transformation, was to speak against "neotraditional" and "neocollective" methods of influencing collective perceptions and actions (Staniszkis 1991:192–216).

(Morawski 1993: 5). Where we are heading is defined not by making negative comparisons with the institutions and habits of real socialism but by negating the forms developed in opposition to them, i.e. those of Solidarity and national-Catholic tradition.

Touraine rightly pointed out that any definition of democracy is useless if it does not help to identify its chief enemies in a given country. The pre-modern peasant class, modern industrial working class, the Church, and the nation stand in the way of post-modern liberal democracy. Metonymically they are considered as the leftovers of communism, which saw them grow into their current form. However, the question "what democracy?" remains an open one. As long as it is being asked, a democratic intention in collective life lives. In the Polish context the formal definition of negative freedoms – no one can rule against the will of the majority – have problematic meaning in the light of inadequate representations of the past, present and collective future. The rationality of choices of the electorate and unrestrained self-determination of the society in the condition of truth are challenged.

The misleading nature of the presidential campaign in 1995 when the candidate, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, gave false biographical data was later institutionalized by the decision of the Supreme Court. The current president ran at the same time under the slogan "choose future" which symbolizes a false representation. Freedom of choice is doubtful when beliefs are treated instrumentally by the elites, which concentrate resources even in the so-called "open society" (Touraine 1995: 272).

The problem of the instrumentalization of the working class appears particularly clear here. It seems that in the current representation of the end of history it has run its course in the system created in its name. Does it also concern the Solidarity labor union? Co-optation of a self-governing mass organization was a transformation of a system from within. The legitimization of the functioning of the Solidarity and the delegitimization of party authorities were achieved with the use of rhetoric of a peasant-workers' political system against the party bureaucratic *nomenklatura* and the apparatus of terror. As the strike showed, workers were mobilized in the name of justice and realization of egalitarian principles of the system. In this sense the thesis of the irrationality of Solidarity is false (Magdziak-Miszewska 1996). In those conditions it was a fully rational action and fully successful. It broke the representative PZPR monopoly of the "leading class" by. Yet, the union as an agent and as a key historical actor was "deactivated" during Lech Wałęsa's presidency. How it happened deserves to be studied, as does how Solidarity partially revitalized and led to the creation of the coalition government of Jerzy Buzek as a consequence of the subsequent parliamentary elections in 1997. The above digressions on the nature of collective representations deal with a significant dimension of these processes. In this process, "Solidarność" as a symbol was devalued because its use was too extensive, and because the promises went unfulfilled. Instead of being active, in the early 1990s the union

was reactive: it focused on protecting labor interests rather than on "shaping history," as Touraine would say.

Simultaneously, as Jerzy Szacki writes, instead of the myth of workers allied with intellectuals, another myth was promoted, that of entrepreneurs and the middle class with its civilizing mission. Working class and Solidarity "came to be regarded as potentially conservative and dangerous, inherently related to the type of economy set up and perpetuated under communism" (Szacki 1994: 160), though Solidarity drawing strength from the myth of national struggle for independence and democracy, could have been a carrier of radical anti-communist change.

So far the changes of the so called transformation are only problematically related to Solidarity's struggle against totalitarianism. This is why prime minister Buzek uttered this controversial statement in his exposé ("I will do everything so that the year 1997 be remembered as a beginning of the repair of the state, a final break with the bad past." Jerzy Szacki calls transformation a liberal experiment of converting the *nomenklatura* to capitalism (1994). Post-modern liberalism does not care about the issues of truth and historical existence. If Tischner writes that "the sense of justice which is in every man will not be satisfied in the case of communism" (1993: 109), one must ask whether we talk only about the impossibility of punishing the instigators of crime or about just and proper shaping of imagination of collective experiences.

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Historical Representation and the Politics of Memory in Kaliningrad, Former Königsberg¹

Abstract: A crisis of historical representation after 1991 resulted in Kaliningrad, former German Königsberg, in the need to re-examine its history. The narrative of origins of the place is closely connected to a question of belonging and of accountability of the Russian State in the protection of its population. Therefore, to revise the history by bringing in individual memory as a source of historical knowledge imposes a difficulty. Enthusiasm of historians and sociologists to legitimize memory in Kaliningrad is met with political resistance. This work examines conditions and reasons for which certain forms of memory are celebrated and others yield for authentication in contemporary Kaliningrad.

We know the scene: there are men gathered round, and someone telling them a story... They were not gathered before the story, it is the telling that gathered them... It is the story of their origin.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée*.

Introduction

This essay is an effort to formulate and reflect upon the relationship between historical writing and individual memory in the ambiguous space of the current national frontier of Russia – Kaliningrad – in light of the many "post"-times that inform that relationship – post-communist, post-Soviet, post-colonial. The formation of the Kaliningrad region after 1945 on the site of German Königsberg is itself a historical case in which a replacement of one nation by another and the eradication of history closely followed one another. The Soviet state's policy of the production of a new "Soviet" city in 1945-1989 were accompanied by the devastation of the remaining German architecture and advanced

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