

JACEK KURCZEWSKI
University of Warsaw

The Spoiled Drama of Emancipation: Conflicting Narratives

Abstract: This paper focuses on the negative narratives of the transformation in Poland, which describe the Round Table talks in 1989 as having been an act, showing at least the domination of the communist leaders, if not the betrayal by the opposition leaders. This is continued in the institutionalized procedures of lustration, in searching for secret police agents amongst others. The persistence of the topic as the foremost in the post-1989 political life of democratic Poland is explained by reference to the dramaturgical structure of the transformation as an emancipation that should have led to a cathartic culmination. In fact, in Poland the social drama (Turner 1974) had started much earlier, witnessed by the summer strikes of 1980 and the establishment of Solidarność but was spoiled by martial law which was introduced by the communists on January 13th, 1981. Thus the freezing stage followed instead, while the emancipation was effected ten years later from above as a result of negotiated compromise. Apart from that emancipation, this meant the introduction of a capitalist economy while political freedom and democracy were the only elements kept on the publicly agreed upon agenda of the anti-communist movement. The negative narratives result from frustration, which in turn leads to symbolic lustration attempts at scapegoating the opposition leader(s).

Keywords: transformation; narrative; conspiracy theories; lustration ritual.

Long ago, I published a short programmatical paper on the democratic transformation in Poland as a process of emancipation, a perspective that helped me to interpret developments in Poland in the last decades (Kurczewski 1999). This approach had been meant to be contradictory to the pessimistic view of transformation as ‘the shock’ (Sztompka 2000). Of course, the accelerated emancipation of Polish society was shocking for many, but step by step even those fearful became overwhelmed by the new opportunities and the re-shaping of their life projects, different than those already worked out under the state socialism. The theory assumes that transformation in the institutionalized sphere means the emancipation, that is, the empowerment of citizens with new rights and freedoms; the new regime, whatever its weaknesses, has at least a greater degree of freedom than the previous one. In this present paper I wish to comment on the conflicting narratives of the transformation which to me are a reflection of the ambivalence of the emancipation process that was put in motion by the transformation as such.

The transformation had been customarily addressed at the economic, political and social levels without paying enough attention to the psychological aspect. There is of course a large body of attitudinal surveys which deal with the deeper or more superficial reactions to the changes, but the element of change is located outside the individual. Even the familiar discourse on homo sovieticus pointing to the post-

communist mentality as an inherited structure functional in the ancient regime but is not fit for the new times of individual agency, is somehow located outside the individuals themselves. More appropriate, it seems to me, is the approach that points to the transformation processes that do occur within the individuals themselves, and of this the most symptomatic is the process of conversion. In former communist countries one would expect loyalty to the old regime amongst the followers of said regime. Something quite contrary happened, and Poland again illustrates this phenomenon on a mass scale. Much less stressed than the mass support for “Solidarność,” is the mass character of the membership in the then ruling Polish United Workers Party. There were some workers in the party as well, but its core was composed neither of the workers nor of the party apparatchiks, but of the loyal “middle class” of socialist society—teachers, army officers, business managers and top bureaucracy. In general, party membership encompassed about 10% of Polish society. To this one should add the majority of society trying to lead a decent life and to earn a living level as best as possible under the circumstances, displaying the passive, if not active, signs of loyalty such as participation in mass demonstrations which were well functioning ritualistic displays of loyalty that were visibly and publicly consolidating the communist society. In a survey I conducted in 1988, when the system was evidently in decay, 20% were against allowing “Solidarność” to return to public life after the martial law period. Even then, when asked about freedom in our country, 10% replied that there is enough of it or even too much, and that these were sincere statements is reinforced in that when freedom came in 1990, the percentage of those unhappy with it had risen to 20%, and even to 25% in 1992 (Kurczewski 2009: 19) which well illustrates the “transition shock” felt by a significant minority. And one should add that Party ranks were already deserted or cleansed of those who had concluded that enough is enough either out of calculation or of sincere disgust and care for the country. The biographies of the elite of those who undertook transformation are very often deeply contradictory. The eloquent defenders of the regime and its theoretical legitimization, practitioners of the communist governance at one step or another in their lives, decided to quit the party or to oppose its policy openly enough to be dismissed from its ranks. Already within the ranks of Communist Party one third were members of “Solidarność,” while the charisma of the “Polish Pope” had already cleansed the Party from almost all atheists and simply anti-clericals. The desertion and conversion was so massive that even the reintroduction of the totalitarian Party rule with help of the martial law did not bring back the loyalty of the deserters. Disenchanted, they were mostly happy to leave the unpromising and obviously delegitimized ruling organization.

Taking this into account, one may look more carefully at the other pole of the transformation process, that which is within the psychological substratum. The equivalent of the conspiracy theory at the public level is the conspiracy theory of the soul. Those who are suspicious of the institutional sincerity and transparency usually are also suspicious as to what individuals are hiding. While those not believing in the sincerity of the democratic convictions of the communist elites usually even do not discuss the obvious corollary of their public distrust, the people who accept the transformation as a sincere turnover at the public level are often prone to subscribe

themselves to the other kind of conspiracy theory, that which is addressed to the average citizen, not a member of the elite. This is the popular theory of *homo sovieticus*, which is to us the logical counterpart to the theory of the communist conspiracy at the Round Table. *Homo sovieticus* is the person who, despite the regime change, remains mentally imprisoned in the psychological patterns functional in the days of the communist totalitarian system and totally unfit for the new circumstances. In other words, *homo sovieticus* is a person who stays in a prison that no longer exists, contradicting the objective emancipation open before him. This time, those who were in the vanguard of the transformation process, those most effectively emancipated, are the most suspicious of their society. Society is lagging behind the opportunities; the standard complaint is made by those stressing the virtues of the free market. Here the adventurous spirit of initiative is needed and masses tend to be passive instead of dropping even available public aid and assistance in order to start their own business. Such accusation is most vitriolic in the mouths of the economic vanguard that feels betrayed by the passivity and idiocy of the state-dependent masses. In my memory I cherish recollections of the visit I paid at the beginning of the 1990s to the former “Solidarność” activist who, after internment, was pressed to emigrate to the United States. His wife, proud of their newly rented small family house on the outskirts of an industrial town, was telling me with contempt of the fellow “gawks” who stayed behind in Poland. Such contempt for “gawks” is widespread in Poland nowadays amongst the successful sectors of the upper and middle class, often addressed against unprecedented categories. The academic world is one of the objects of the permanent denigration campaign of the right or liberal media—Polish universities are described as the tribal reservations of the *homini sovietici*, the need for an academic career is put in doubt, the need for the market reorientation of the universities is stressed. In what seems to be a well-orchestrated campaign (if not our general suspicion of conspiracy theories), the academic teachers in Poland are kept at the lowest possible salary level while allowing at the same time for the uncontrolled mushrooming of the secondary university level private teaching enterprises, distorting thus the academicians from research and high quality teaching which undeniably means both the debasement of the academic standards and then criticizing Polish academia for its backwardness in comparison with US and North Western European academic establishments of high quality. The mediocritization of the academic world is legitimized with the help of the *homo sovieticus* theory which in turn reinforces the theory of “academic gawks” in the eyes of the otherwise under-educated political and media elite.

At the institutional level, the mass conversion process is reflected in the debate on lustration, to which we shall return later. At this macro-societal level, the dramaturgical perspective reveals the patterns that are obscure to conventional sociology. The combination of such a perspective with cultural anthropology has led to the development of a dramaturgical ritual approach. From this perspective, the first observation is that transformation is by definition, a passage, and as such—if a theory is valid—the ritual symbolization of the passage from the old to the new regime is needed. Until it had been assumed—like in Max Gluckman’s sociological interpretation (Gluckman 1962)—that symbolization is needed only in closely-knit traditional societies,

social transformation in modern society seems to be exempted from the need for ritualization. The challenge of Victor Turner's anthropology against the older traditional/modern opposition was possible when he pointed to the anthropological essence of the rite of passage, which is its liminality and the metaphysical experience of liminality as such. Whether it is the sex, drunkenness, feast or the more sublime higher state of consciousness, the specific alteration is always evidenced. With all their concern about abuse of such states, even the pontiffs of the Church of Rome had been lately (John Paul II, Benedict XIV) pointing to the erotic experience of love as the substratum on which spiritual love has to develop. The common understanding now, is not that states of altered consciousness are to be isolated as pathological but to be acknowledged, researched and put to adequate use, even if the opinions as to what constitutes proper use differ. This holds true as well for the postmodern, modern or traditional man; hence the ritualization of passage seems to be an inevitable attempt under any social circumstances.

Witness the political struggle over lustration. Public exposure of the hidden agents of the former regime is the permanent preoccupation of moral entrepreneurs in the transformation period. It had been easily accomplished only under one set of circumstances, such as when the liberated East German society was immersed and colonized by the free West German society. The game was played not by the local participants, but by external observers, even with the help of some insiders. In the other ex-communist societies that must content themselves to live with their own past sins, the process is much more convulsive to such a degree that sober anthropological insight is needed instead of conventional political analysis. The very heart of the controversy surrounding the lustration points to the irrational elements in the debate. The present author, himself involved in the debate at the beginning of the transformation, had already in 1992 observed that the myth of a clean, new beginning was at force. It is moreover, not only the myth, but also the need of a ritual passage to the new life. Lustration in cultural anthropology has its old established meaning, to which E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1951) points when describing one of the rituals that accompanies the passage of the Nuer bride, bridegroom and their relatives to the new social state of marriage with its resulting transformation of mutual rights and obligations. Washing off the past is always a material element in ritual semantics. The agents should fall off the new emerging political body of the liberated society like the filth during the purification process. This is the anthropological meaning of the legal and political process.

Once said, it is all obvious. What is less obvious though, is the lack of synchronization of the lustration attempts with the chronology of the emancipation. The emancipation starts at the latest in the summer of 1980 when the Inter-Company Strike Committee is formed, then in Gdansk and elsewhere agreements are signed and the Independent and Self-Governing *Solidarność* Trade Union is established. This is the new beginning. There were no opportunities to conduct lustration at that moment, though soon the lack of mutual confidence began to grow because the malicious actions on the part of the secret police defending the old regime still in existence were obvious. It came out afterwards that some of the top activists were in fact agents—if not of the police, then of the Party in power—while the veil of suspicion remained

about the others whose supposed lack of integrity was never proved. Before things settled, the process of emancipation was frozen *manu militari* by General Jaruzelski. This move had changed the lifelong careers of many. The very internment of the militants led to new proof of political merit, while the stern measures alienated many Party members from the communist ideology and practice. Even Party sociologists who were active in Party extra-university academics became alienated from their own elite. When the emancipation process is de-frost in late 1988 and with the 1989 Round Table agreements and semi-free elections in June of that year, it follows that the ranks had changed. The Party not merely lost some of its active supporters, but also the passive support of the silent majority. This is why it lost the 1989 elections: counting too much on the deteriorated number of active supporters of "Solidarność." The new regime started with a different staff, though some of the old "Solidarność" and opposition remained, notably its leader Lech Wałęsa, symbolizing the continuity of the movement.

At the end, we come back to the neglected, deep psychological side of the emancipation. Sociological anthropology cannot allow itself to fall into psychoanalytical guesses until it accepts its own way to study internal processes. The complex issue may be dealt with in a simple way. The psychology that is of social interest is public psychology. Such is the institutionalized way of narrating internal problems. Thus, instead of provoking confessions, sociology studies confessions already made. The sociologist is not interested in the sincerity of the reports and should not be interested in the truth of the accusations. The massive conversion to democracy occurred, but it does not mean that this conversion is sincere. When I asked a random sample of 101 Polish parliamentarians in 1995 whether they prefer the new democratic Poland or the past People's Republic, only one of them had chosen the past, though many of those interviewed were Communist Party members in the past and some represented the post-Communist SLD Party [Democratic Left Alliance] (Kurczewski 1999a). Should one check the sincerity of these expressions? There is no way to do it. One may not check the sincerity of nostalgia expressed by the minority displayed in public polls in Poland (not like in some other post-communist countries). But the conversion remains a fact which is institutionalized or not at the same level, where the public performance of democracy is staged. However paradoxical, an individual's problem is expressed through social performance. Individual dramas are enacted as social drama.

Though daily politics is the main concern of media that attempt to dramatize it in scandals, the only permanent public drama that continues almost like Agatha Christie's "Mousetrap" at the Soho stage at the transformation stage in post-communist Poland is expressed in terms of lustration. There is no room to describe the process fully. While collaboration with the communist state's secret police was the permanent rumour throughout the old regime, open public debate on the issue started in the summer of 1991 before the first fully democratic parliamentary elections in the "Solidarity"-dominated Senate, where a proclamation had been adopted calling for lustration.

After a few months, in the new Polish Sejm, which was for the first time elected in free elections in 1991, a proclamation was suddenly proposed and adopted on the

28th of May 1991 which urged the Minister of the Interior to provide lists of public functionaries including MPs who had been registered as agents by the communist secret police. The next day the long lists were distributed amongst the all parliamentary factions. But the secret lists were distributed amongst the four top officials of the country and that included also Lech Wałęsa, then President and Speaker of the Sejm and Wiesław Chrzanowski, a long-term political prisoner from Stalin's days. The scandal erupted and submerged the government as well which was, in effect, deposed by the ad hoc coalition. The Constitutional Court found the proclamation unconstitutional but decided that lustration would be acceptable if it included the procedure that would safeguard the right to defence for those accused of collaboration with the communist secret police. This condition was the basis for all subsequent attempts at regulating the issue. In the turmoil that followed, some suits were won by the politicians whom courts found unjustly put on the list. The Interior Minister explained that he only published the register of files held in the secret police archives.

On the outset of the scandal, several parties prepared their own drafts of the law on lustration, agreeing that something should be done in order to settle once and forever the issue of former secret police informers. The Senate even passed its own draft that provided for the establishment of a special quasi-judicial appellate committee to deal with the appellations of those who would disagree with incriminatory certificates issued by the Ministry of the Interior. The commission was to be nominated by the President of the Supreme Court. The draft was then sent to the Sejm where it remain together with five other members' drafts until the parliament was abruptly dissolved in May 1993. The next Sejm, though dominated by former communists, started to work on the law on lustration anew and passed on the 11th of April 1997, the first full-fledged law on the issue called the "Law on Exposing Those Persons in Public Office who Worked or Served in State Security or Collaborated in the Years 1944–1990." The law introduced the obligatory lustration statement to be made by all public officials and MPs. False statements were punished by a ten year ban on performing public duties. Two institutions were set up—the Public Interest Spokesperson, nominated by the President of the Supreme Court for a period of six years, and the special Lustration Court to deal with the cases where the Spokesperson, on the basis of the secret files at his disposal, had doubts as to the veracity thereof. The judges were to serve on this court voluntarily and soon it came out that they were not willing. The first Spokesman, Judge Bogusław Nizieński served for 6 years and reviewed about 20,000 lustration statements and sent more than 150 for decision to be pronounced by the Lustration Court. After the elections in 2006, when the Right won and advocates of lustration from 1992, including the then deposed Interior Minister, took the government of the country, the Institute of National Memory where the files of the communist secret police are held and investigated was granted larger competence. The secrecy of the files had been undermined since a journalist had published a lengthy register of several hundred thousand names included in those files and new charges had been filed before the Lustration Court. At the peak of the turmoil, the already invoked Law of the 15th of March 2006 was passed which dramatically extended the list of f.i.: those beyond the original narrow circle of public functionaries, adding all professors or journalists

who had to declare in writing their innocence, not having access to the files themselves and risking the ten year ban on performing the profession if in these files something was found by the Institute against them. This law was stopped at the last minute by the Constitutional Court when tens of thousands of statements were already sent to be checked. The new law on lustration had then been promised by the parties, but the new elections that changed the composition of power until now had stopped further drafting, most likely to be undertaken with the approach of the end of the term. It is symptomatic that at present Lech Wałęsa is involved in the new trials that amount to the permanent investigating was the leader of the first successful anti-communist peaceful revolution agent of the communist police or not, even though at least twice he had been cleared by the court.

In this drama there are two interesting elements. First, that it is the leader of the emancipation process who is subdued to the tormenting process of never-ending accusation. Those who do it often stress that they do not undervalue his role in 1980 and afterwards, but as they claim, he was morally dishonest before that. This in a way strengthens the idea of conversion. What is not mentioned in the lustration debates is that Polish culture in fact abounds with such examples of villains who became heroes. The best Polish romantic drama by Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziady*, develops about the Gustaw who, when imprisoned, becomes the Konrad who will fight for freedom, the most popular Polish poem, *Pan Tadeusz*, by the same national bard tells about Jacek Soplica who expiated his national treason by becoming Father Robak who is secretly engaged in the patriotic Polish conspiracy, and the most popular Polish novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz tells about noble hoodlum Andrzej Kmicic who, after compromising collaboration with an anti-Polish plot, changes his name and converts into the Polish liberation hero. Villain-turned-hero is thus the basic Polish topos, which in the contemporary Polish public drama is rejected as.

On the other hand, lustration doesn't apply at all to the Communist Party membership. Members of the Communist Party, whether they remained loyal to the end as General Jaruzelski or turned away long ago and paid for it with long term imprisonment as Jacek Kuroń, are in fact treated the same way. The unspoken "historical compromise" of this transformation is that one's involvement with the Party in the past is not inquired upon. The underlying assumption is then that everybody concerted unless somebody is not willing to be accounted for in this way. The fact remains that in post-communist Poland even the post-Communist Party is not communist in name or in its program. It doesn't try to reinstate state socialism "with a human face" or without, and the organizations that link themselves with the Marxist past are part of the local folklore, being absent from the national political scene.

My conclusion is then that the drama of transformation was spoiled by martial law and the following freezing of the democratic emancipation in the years 1982–1988. As a result, there was no dramatic climax but instead the rational negotiated transformation bargain that engaged the Party reformists and opposition moderates. This is obvious. Less obvious is the accompanying dramatic lack of the cathartic culmination of the process. To use Rene Girard's ideal linked with Victor Turner's anthropology of social drama, the spoiled drama that should pass through the public

execution of the Polish equivalent of Ceausescu or at least through the public trial disrupted and instead the symbolic leader of the ascending side became the symbolic scapegoat of the secondary lustration ritual aiming at the victimization of a person responsible in fact, not of the conspiracy or treason, but of the peaceful transformation as such, a hero who spoiled the drama...

So to sum it up, emancipatory transformation, as a process, has quite a complicated structure in which the macro-societal level both opposes, and simultaneously meets the deep (psyche) individual level. Studying the transformation we arrive thus at the basic sociological and anthropological aspects of social life. While old sociology used to construct the “societal” or “macro-sociological” (in jargon simply “macro”) level as made of ontologically the same type of facts, events or processes. The difference was supposed to consist in the complexity so the emergence of the new qualities was, in a sense, ontologically reducible to the social “facts” of the lower (“Meso,” “micro”) order. The social structure is conceived then in terms of the superimposed orders, with infrastructure and superstructures too well known from the Marxists constructions. The dramaturgical perspective is attractive as it instead offers the instruments for presentation as the qualitative difference between the orders. As in theatre, where the biological life of even the best actors continues making the performance possible but is usually overlooked, so the everyday social processes make the presentations possible at the societal level, which consist of them but in order to create the different reality of performance. What is, after all, political life if not such a performance? And the continuing process of demaskation made in democracy by the media, and in the totalitarian reality by anonymous humour and rumour dissects the official performance and its actors into a component play of drives, interests and passions involving human beings as weak as the public. Still the irreducible political performance continues, as elections are won, wars are lost, presidents and prime ministers appear and disappear and the international game of sovereign political actors is played out. Parliament is a social group in Poland composed of 560 adult people who sometimes meet face-to-face, sometimes diversified into smaller groups that talk, eat and drink together and who are paid monthly by the common cashier, but Parliament is also a body of 560 adult citizens who are by due procedure ceremonially sworn in as representatives of the society and who are bound to debate the matters of common interest to society and to vote for or against decisions in the procedurally regulated way. And though most of political science consists of describing how the latter group functions, the intrusive media entertain the public with the sometimes downreaching reality of the “micro” and “meso” processes that occur behind the stage. The boy who shouted that the King was naked was right, but the King remained the King. Exposure does not end the performance, as it deals with a different social reality than the play.

At the other pole, the deep individual internal life, if it may be discussed at all, seems to be distinct from the “meso” or “micro” levels of social interaction as well. Here, the warning seems necessary. By pointing to the play performed at the public level and the passions felt intimately, we do not imply the acceptance of both of these performances—to the world and to oneself at their surface value. One lies to

others as well as to oneself. Better, one doesn't know the meanings hidden in one's own play at both levels; at least this is because the play always involves others. The paranoid suspicion usually displayed by tyrants is grown out of their sheer realism and knowledge about themselves. Nobody knows to what end in whose plot one is acting. The anthropologist as psychoanalyst has the task of investigating hidden meanings and competing plots. The reconstruction of the transformation does not end with an assessment of the level of consolidation between the institutions of democracy, the capitalist economy and human rights; it starts rather with these assessments to move beyond and to doubt what is offered in order to suggest further and wider understanding.

In the medialized social science this takes the well known form of **conspiracy** theories. In Poland, as in other ex-communist countries, the transformation to democracy is often presented as the plot. These supposed KGB plots play the role in the political and academic folklore in the east as the presumed CIA plots in the West. One encounters there the otherwise serious independent academicians who whisper to you that the Tiananmen Square massacre was faked by the CIA inspired media in order to subvert attention from other important events, as well as university professors here who strongly believe that Gorbachev implemented the KGB plan to allow for the red *nomenklatura* to survive in the secure economic system. In Poland, the Round Table agreements of 1989—the milestone of transformation—is permanently interpreted by a faction of historians, sociologists, journalists and politicians as complicity that was aimed as a way to make ordinary people believe the idea of real change.

We must confront these conspiracy narratives of the transformation as social facts that are themselves symptomatic. First of all, it does not make sense to contradict the particular information which is cited by the conspiratorial school of thought in order to support their interpretations. The invasion of Iraq illustrates well the fact that publicly available information is often, at crucial moments, prepared and deformed by willing politicians and agencies that wish to satisfy them.

Conspiracy theories are typically opposed to the official interpretation of events. In our case, this interpretation starts with the official document signed at the end of the Round Table talks, signed in public by the “Party-official side” and the “Solidarność-social side.” Neither the fact of the talks nor the authenticity of the document are under the suspicion of the conspiratorialists but first, the assumption that the talks exhaust the process and actors that led to the transformation, and that, second, the agreements were the necessary condition for further developments. So the conspiratorialists claim positively that there were other clandestine talks (the so-called Magdalenka conspiracy), and negatively that whatever was decided, the decisions were made independent of the negotiations that were just a show for the public. As to the first, conspiracy theoreticians have a problem in that the leading figures of the Catholic Church were involved in the process; the representative (Bishop Orszulik) was agreed upon as the witness of the negotiations and Pope John Paul II was directly informed about the progress in the talks. The full claim to non-authenticity of the talks would mean either a conspiracy involving the Church (the accusation of which was never made) or an agreement behind the Church (also not posed). If one reflects upon these facts, then

one is tempted to observe that such accusations are perhaps made in secret. The conspiracy theory held in secret this is however a self-nullifying interpretation and one should not exclude it a priori. It suffices to say that there is a fringe current in public opinion claiming that all major figures in the process, including Primate Glemp and Bishop Orszulik, are in fact “Jews” acting against Polish national interests. Another claim is that the Round Talks were simply a show on the Party’s side. If by this they mean, however, that the Party would otherwise surrender its power, the answer is that this hypothesis is quite well established in light of the subsequent developments but totally unlikely at the moment when the talks were initiated. In fact, the conviction, at least on the *Solidarność* side, was quite the opposite. The conspiracy theory which was accepted in the decision-making milieu of opposition activists, bishops not excluded, was the opposite. “They want to involve us in the negotiation in order to blackmail us into the acceptance of their rule.” Such was the open deal: leave us with 51% of the power and we shall grant you 49% plus the re-legalization of “*Solidarność*.” And here we are coming to the real point of dissensus: if “*Solidarność*” was to win in the future, independent of the agreements if such compromise agreements were needed at all, and if they were in fact necessary in May 1989 they were necessary after the elections of the 4th of June 1989 when the Party lost its face and started to collapse. The first people to enter into the agreements on the part of “*Solidarność*” did it with a lack of conviction. Remarks by Bronisław Geremek made it quite clear, while future first non-communist prime minister in the last stage of Communist Poland, Tadeusz Mazowiecki preferred to stay aside. When he decided to join the political process, there were still others who wanted to stay clear of involvement in the compromising. The conspiracy theory helps both to explain their hesitance as well as their distance from the “traitors” who worked out and then implemented the more and more antiquated compromise.

This is not to deny that the Party elite that entered into the agreement with the opposition did so in order to survive, either in power, or in property and personal safety. The transformation process meant not only the transformation of former dissidents into politicians, bankers and entrepreneurs but also the transformation of Party apparatchiks and security officers into politicians, bankers and entrepreneurs. The surprising success story of Jerzy Urban is the best illustration. Though himself just a humble journalist for decades attempting to keep intellectual independence and not even being a Party member, he was asked to join the ruling elite after martial law was introduced and where a strong, loyal small team was needed. As the spokesman of the junta government, Urban earned the well deserved hatred of the opposition, and the new regime allowed him to pursue his route as the millionaire—editor and owner of the strongly anti-clerical and anti-*Solidarność* satirical weekly in which he could now freely express his prideous contempt for the less intelligent and hypocritical new elites of anti-communist origin. Urban was however, neither communist himself nor a political policeman. Many of those using links with the criminal underworld—some criminals already worked for the Communist secret services both in Communist Poland and outside on its behalf—emerged soon on the lists of the wealthiest Polish entrepreneurs. The process was less manifest in politics, since the regular electoral purges made such careers less interesting and less likely.

Zybertowicz writes that, “more than ten [!] years after [communism] in Central East Europe was abandoned, the notion of regulation through infiltration is still marginal,” while, “communist parties tend to enforce their policies through mafia-like operations” (Zybertowicz 2009: 345). Zybertowicz points to the fact that in the 1980s, after martial law, the network of so-called secret collaborators was about 100,000 strong. This figure (Zybertowicz 2009: 343) is as solid as it could be, but then the author makes the following argumentation: “Various techniques were used to recruit real or potential agents. Some became fully-fledged agents of the secret police, some became involved in difficult and hazardous games intended to outsmart the secret police and some were barely aware that they were collaborating with the police. Some found themselves in a blurred zone of lost or dual loyalties.” This leads to the conclusion that, “**Only a few** [bolding J. K.] escaped completely unscathed from the numerous police attempts at bribing, cheating, flattering, flirting, threatening, battering, harassing, seducing and manipulating them” (Zybertowicz 2009: 343). This is the typically persuasive argumentation that by first extending the notion of secret collaboration to “potential” collaboration, then to “barely unaware” collaboration to conclude without any empirical foundation that “only a few” dissidents had not been “infiltrated” or “manipulated.” If to that, one adds the impression management by police that led to the “invisible eye of the ruler” being an efficient controller of society, it is no wonder that according to Zybertowicz and others, infiltration, “became later an essential element of the policy of “controlled reform from above,” which resulted in the Round Table Talks in 1989” (Zybertowicz 2009: 343). And this is interesting in that nobody will deny that massive open (censorship of publications, censorship of private mail and telephone communication) as well as secret surveillance was used by the Communist Party administration throughout the 1980s, and there is no reason to define it as the essential element of controlled reform from above. Well, it is a well known anecdote that Bishop Orszulik, when in Magdalenka, would go to the restrooms to join Bronisław Geremek in order to exchange tactical information without being overheard. So what? Zybertowicz feels oppressed by today’s “unholy alliance” of former dissidents and former administrators of the repression and the explanation he sees in the family links between the two groups (Zybertowicz 2009: 348) while rejecting a priori the rational argument that “secret police operations do not matter I large-scale historical processes. The various secret services always attempt to outsmart each other; these produce no “real” effects since they tend to annul each other” (Zybertowicz 2009: 347). I agree with the first part of the statement that is rebuked from the beginning by the author. As for the second part, one knows from history the cases when mutual annulment happens, and sometimes not only by two opposing secret services, but even by two branches of the administration. On the other hand, collaboration with a secret agency may be in reality annulled simply by the secret willingness to “outsmart,” as was the case with the military leader of the Polish independence movement during the First World War, namely Józef Piłsudski, who earlier was attempting to establish cooperation with the Japanese Head Staff, and then collaborated with the Austro-Hungarian Army, its intelligence included. In the Round Table talks of the late 1980s, it is obvious that secret intelligence was gathered, as in

all decades of communist rule, on the intentions and opportunities of the episcopate, *Solidarność* and other possible players. The study of the intelligence is a legitimate subject in and of itself, but it is a different thing to assume that because there was infiltration and surveillance that the Round Table Talks were not real negotiations between independent players. Not surprisingly, even President Lech Kaczyński, to whom professor Zybortowicz serves as an advisor, commented for instance on the 1st of June 2009 that despite some opinions that the “Round Table Talks” were treason (on the part of the opposition participants), the bad reputation of the 1989 Magdalenka talks (the confidential talks between the heads of the negotiating sides) is “undeserved” and that being personally present there, he rectifies that there was no conspiracy or secret agreement made” (*Gazeta.pl. wiadomości* of 2 June 2009).

Another important writer from this orientation, Sławomir Cenckiewicz, in investigating the infiltration and surveillance of “*Solidarność*” by the secret police, develops in his writings that communists were playing out the differences within the opposition in order to isolate the “constructive leaders” from “unconstructive ones.” In fact, these policies were known from the beginning as Cenckiewicz himself quotes General Kiszczak’s announcement of the 26th of August 1988, that no conditions are given as to the contents of the negotiations, but those “who reject the legal and constitutional order of the Polish People’s Republic” will be excluded. It was in fact the restatement of the condition that was already opposed by the more radical elements during the 1980 Gdańsk strike, namely that the principle of the leading role of the Communist Party must be recognized in order to negotiate with the communists. That the group in power was willing to negotiate the renewed liberalization of the regime based on the assumption that it will continue to exist was understandable to “moderates” in the summer of 1988 as well as in the early months of 1989. Cenckiewicz writes ominously that, “so Magdalenka was born, from the beginning conceived as the sui generis socio-technical device aiming above all to disarm the social discontent. “*Solidarność*” was to stamp the difficult and painful economic reform. One may say that according to [communist] authorities, the effect of the new “*Solidarność*” disarming the discontent was to pull out the protective umbrella upon the whole process of the reconstruction of the real socialism negotiated in Magdalenka and at the round table and implemented even after the elections of the 4th of June 1989 won by “*Solidarność*.” Out of the 63 members of the Citizens’ Committee at Lech Wałęsa, according to secret police, 63 were defined as “constructive” and 40 as “extremists.”¹

In this sense, the public psychology of transformation is the public analysis of the intentions and actions of its main actors. As the process was pursued “from above,” the top politicians involved in the negotiations were analysed. The political propriety limits these investigations to “*Solidarność*” leaders, assuming that the episcopate is “clean.” It does not mean that such an assumption is held universally. As of late, after the transformation was finished, arguments were raised that lustration should extend

¹ Sławomir Cenckiewicz, “Służba Bezpieczeństwa Okrągłego Stołu” (Security Service of the Round Table), <http://www.videofact.com/polska/cenckiewicz16.htm>. I don’t know to which category I was enlisted, but the proportion seems interesting and pointing to the fact that the main bodies were pluralistic despite the wishes of the Communist Party.

not only to the academicians and journalists, but also to the clergy. The episcopate reacted by letting each of the dioceses deal with its matters autonomously by diocesan lustration bodies set up by the bishops. During the process, one of the bishops who was to become the archbishop of Warsaw was stigmatized for collaboration with the communist secret police and as a part of the dramatic event he resigned on the day of his instalment. As for Bishop Orszulik who took part in the secret Magdalenka talks which paved the way for the Round Table agreements, he was accused of “talking with the secret police” to which he rightly responded saying that such talks were inevitable in the communist system and whatever one was doing, it was with the knowledge and confidence of his colleagues and supervisors. One should recall that the talks were held with the chief of the secret police and the previous chief of military counter-intelligence, General Czesław Kiszczak, then Minister of Internal Affairs, who was empowered for the talks with the opposition by General Wojciech Jaruzelski. It is also symptomatic that no attention is paid by these historians and analysts to the extended Central Committee of PZPR [Polish United Workers’ Party] meeting that agreed as late as the 18th of January 1989 to accept the entrance of the “constructive opposition” into the public sphere and the formation of new trade unions opening up a path for the re-legalization of “Solidarność.”

The Original Sin of the Polish transformation in 1989 is thus that it didn’t cut off its communist past. The Red Dragon was not beheaded, the transformation happened because the ruling faction in the ruling party agreed to it. The sense of disgust is transformed into the theory of conspiracy. One of the leaders of the 1980 strikes in Gdańsk, engineer Andrzej Gwiazda, who incessantly accused Lech Wałęsa with treason and collaboration with secret services, observed during the turbulent presidential campaign in which Wałęsa lost to post-communist politician Aleksander Kwasniewski, noting in more general terms that it is difficult to tell with what services Wałęsa collaborated:

This is really hard to answer, as the degree of dependency of the [Polish] security service on the KGB has not [yet been] revealed. In order to check the level of dependency on other services, one should look into the preparatory stages of [perestroika]. [Perestroika] was prepared with the knowledge of the US government, in some cooperation between the KGB and CIA and Western European intelligence. [...] One should go back far in time, as I share the belief of Professor [Jadwiga] Staniszkis that [perestroika] was decided in 1968 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.²

But there are two version of this black narrative. One is political and related to the unfulfilled purifying ritual of the elimination of the people of the former regime. The subsidiary ritual of lustration is meant as a search for former secret agents and collaborators and is then incessantly invoked as to blow the reputation of some opposition people in order to substitute for a lack of a mortal blow to the rulers themselves. The second version is economical and this is much more inspiring though impossible to overcome with magic instruments. It had been aptly expressed by Jadwiga Staniszkis (1999) herself ten years after the Round Table by reminding de

² Interview with Andrzej and Joanna Gwiazda by Dariusz Wilczak, *Kurier Polski* 221, 15th November 1995 after <http://swkatowice.mojeforum.net/viewtopic.php?t=2988>.

Tocqueville, who said the feudal principle failed only after the feudalists themselves socially and economically became actors of the new capitalist system. Here it can be seen that there is a hiatus between social and political victory at the Round Table.

This may be also the reason for the short-term improvement of the ex-communist orientation in Polish politics. Though it shocked the former opposition, the “transition shock,” if it existed, certainly led many people to support the post-communist party, first as a leader in the united front type coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), changed in 1999 into SLD as united party. Taking into account the coalitions led by the post-communists in democratic Poland, they started at a very low level of support in the first free elections of 1991—13% of the seats, to jump then in 1993 up to 37% and 36% in 1997, and in alliance with the left Labour Party, up to a record high of 47% of parliamentary seats in 2001 to fall down dramatically in 2005 to 12% which continued in the most recent elections in 2007. In 1995, the post-communist candidate for the presidency, Aleksander Kwasniewski, won 35.11% in the first round and 57.72% in the second round and 56.9% in the first round in the 2000 presidential elections. All this means that former communists in post-communist Poland were not by any means excluded from the country’s politics, quite to the contrary, they played a major role due to the majority public support in the years 1993–2005, that is, through most of the 20 years of transformation. On the other hand, it proves also that, contrary to what had been assumed by some, the post-communist party in Poland had not become a neo-communist party. On the contrary, it even seemingly managed to attract support due to the economic transformation shock, as much of the electorate was expecting economic and social safety as in the “old days,” but the actual policies of the post-communist SLD proved to be just as free market oriented as the others. This of course supports the economic deal concept but at the same time shows that the deal was sufficiently satisfactory to secure the new Polish democracy.

All this amounts to saying that emancipation meant also the emancipation of the old regime’s people. Black stories about secret police and Party apparatchiks making private business long before capitalism was officially reintroduced are true. Exactly these stories serve as material for the black narrative of the Round Table. The conspiracy police theory turns into a conspiracy economic theory. What was seen as a political crime against the nation turns out to be the economic crime of the former apparatus of oppression. The black narrative helps to express the frustration that even if, as it is agreed that communism has fallen, the communists survived. “And fare well,” the typical sad comment is added. Socialism was sometimes called, ‘the expression of social envy on the part of the poorer segments of society.’ This time, it might be repeated with one correction, in that social envy is aimed against the former constructors of socialism in the country, so there is no room for socialism any more. This is not only because the concept had been compromised, but above all because capitalism brought rapid overall improvement in people’s standard of living, despite reportedly increasing inequality. It was impossible to open the market for only part of society, especially since the market had to be started with at least some little fortunes that were accumulated semi-legally or illegally under the old regime. Also, the old regime managers etc. were the incumbents of the new business class as they

had initial knowledge, skills and resources. It is as if the ancient regime's ruling class became the middle class of the market regime. In fact though, there are no data to substantiate such a one-sided story. What happened instead was an unholy alliance of new entrepreneurs from the old ruling milieus and the opposition ranks; the result being the quick rotation of fortunes and the socially mixed composition of the new entrepreneurial classes.

It seems to me that the deep, hidden reasons are revealed in the following statement given to me by the late Jacek Kuroń, one of the legendary dissidents, who co-authored the transformation:

[The] classical case is Balcerowicz's leap in the initial period. In June 1989, when we were going to elect ourselves, I had no idea as to the scope of the so-called transformation or change of the order. Change was significantly harming the significant part of my electorate. And here we have the case in which I (and the majority of the deputies) was acting in [a] way [which was] harmful for the aspirations of the electorate and in contradiction to what was proclaimed in the electoral program. The electoral program was changed because conditions changed. This is the reason for the deep political crisis, as we are in effect facing today the rejection of politics. We shall pay the price for it for a very long time. One could ask today therefore, if that was not a political mistake. Were we right when assuming then that this is necessary? I still do not see any other way to set up conditions for [a] market economy when the central system was breaking down (In an interview for research on political representation in Poland, cf. Kurczewski 1999a: 36–37).

This statement provides the best illustration of the whole of the politics of transformation and the role representative democracy played in it. The free mandate legitimized the leap (whether backward or forward, it did not matter) to the capitalist regime. This is another “plot” to be pointed out by those who look into the crossroads of emancipation. The political treason is that not only was freedom for the opposition given, but freedom for everybody, including the former rulers (this is the political side of the emancipation) but there is above all the social treason as free capitalism was introduced that was neither the open desire of the opposition nor the open program of the transformation (cf. Ost 2005).

So how is one to judge the transformation? A sociologist may respond with the answer of others. If one looks into the Polish assessment of the transformation, overall satisfaction is seen despite the conviction that it could have been done better (50%).

Table 1

Could you tell within a time perspective whether or not it was worthwhile to change the regime in Poland in 1989? (CBOS, standard all-nation representative samples)*

Was it worthwhile to change the regime in 1989?	III 1994	VII 1994	X 1995	V 1997	IV 1999	V 2001	V 2004	I 2009
Yes, worthwhile	60	64	75	70	63	56	65	82
No, unworthy of	28	27	16	14	24	30	21	8
Difficult to say	12	9	9	16	13	14	14	10

* CBOS Bulletin 224 of 9–15 January 2009.

My conclusion is then that the drama of transformation was spoiled by martial law and the freezing of the emancipation in the years 1982–1988. As a result, there

was no dramatic climax but the rational negotiated transformation deal that engaged the Party reformists and opposition moderates. This is obvious. Less obvious is the dramatic lack of a cathartic culmination of the process. The revolution was too “glorious.” To use Rene Girard’s ideal linked with Victor Turner’s anthropology of social drama, the spoiled drama that should pass through the public execution of a Polish equivalent of Ceausescu or at least through a public trial disrupted, and instead the symbolic leader of the victorious side became the symbolic scapegoat of the secondary lustration ritual aiming at the victimization of a person responsible in fact, not of the conspiracy or treason, but of the peaceful transformation, in this context, the spoiled drama. The frustration felt by the audience is aggravated by the fact that once the transformation was staged in its first act, and the solution in the final act—democracy-plus-capitalism—was achieved without any warning as to the real outcome. In this sense the process escaped the routines and rituals.

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Biographical Note: Jacek Kurczewski is Professor of Sociology, Chair in Sociology and Anthropology of Custom and Law, Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw. 1980/81 advisor to “Solidarność,” 1991–1993 Deputy Speaker of Sejm.

Address: E-mail: j.kurczewski@uw.edu.pl