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Symbolic Construction of “Solidarity:” the Conflict of Interpretations and the Politics of Memory

Abstract: The memory of the “Solidarity” movement, problems of memory and conflicts of memory are analyzed in the contemporary context of the formation of collective identities in Poland. Politics of memory and commemoration are discussed as part of the politics of symbolization.

Symbolic construction of “Solidarity” is analyzed on two levels: the symbolism of the organization of collective actions and discursive symbolism—in other words—symbolism in the “Solidarity” movement and the symbolization of the movement. The other aspect implies politics of symbolization, politics of memory and commemoration, conflict of interpretations and conflict about the memory.

The “Solidarity” movement has had many meanings and the interpretation of the movement can refer to various frames of meanings: a workers’ revolution, a civil revolution, a movement for national liberation, a movement for religious deprivatization, a moral movement. The multiplicity of meanings has generated conflicts of interpretations. Collective memory is crucial for the phenomenon of “Solidarity” both as a historical movement and as representations in discourses—the symbolic movement of memory.

Keywords: collective memory; politics of symbolization; “Solidarity” movement.

Symbolic Movement of “Solidarity”

The phenomenon of “Solidarity,” if described exclusively in a language of political history, is not fully understandable as a social and cultural phenomenon. Thus one often hears about the Polish peculiarity, an extraordinary event, unprecedented in the Soviet bloc, but also about a movement possessing unique characteristics, which is described in different ways depending on its aspects: a struggle for political independence, democracy and civil rights, a workers’ and social movement, or a national and Catholic one. The source of the ambiguity of “Solidarity” is not only the conflict over an interpretation of the process of political change but, first of all, the difficulty of understanding the phenomenon of “Solidarity” as such.

In order to understand the phenomenon of “Solidarity,” one can look from the constructionist perspective that shows it as a symbolic movement. Therefore, the starting point will be the protest movement which used different types of strikes: protest, warning, occupation and general. “Solidarity” belongs to the protest movements which have their cultural and historical context in the 20th century, associated with the development of democracy where routine political action often becomes unsatisfactory and simultaneously, the use of force would threaten democracy itself (Lofland 1985: 9ff). Protest and occupation, as ways of action in the political arena,

appeared in the USA during the workers' movements in the 1930s and the civil rights movements of the 1960s. "Solidarity" used these proven forms of peaceful action in a completely different political situation. Therefore, the fundamental meaning of the "Solidarity" movement consisted in creating an area of public action—a condition of democracy, a public arena for deliberation, articulation of arguments and conflicts which in democracy should be resolved without the use of force. Such a public area is constructed symbolically.

The proper understanding of a protest movement requires forsaking a comprehensive approach, and attempting to analyze the way it is constructed, i.e., trying to define situations and forms of collective action. A protest is a communicative action that aims at social change which first requires changing the meaning of the existing social reality. A protest movement consists in processes of interaction and symbolization. In their radical form, protest movements aim at a far-reaching intervention into existing relations of power and institutions, becoming a threat to the status quo. A less radical stage in the development of a protest movement are actions consisting in the establishment of alternative institutions. However, most often a protest is limited to the rejection of cooperation, i.e., to various actions which disrupt the functioning of existing social arrangements. A strike, institutionalized in democracies, is an effective instrument. It is also a symbolic message. The most limited forms of protest are various ways of expressing discontent that do not result in direct action for change, such as proclamations, petitions, letters of protest, marches and demonstrations, participation in ceremonial gatherings. This form of protest is limited only to the communication of meanings. It is described—not very accurately—as a symbolic protest, since symbolism constitutes all phenomena and all social movements. The symbolic interactionists are right when they point out that the social nature of a protest does not consist only in the communicative action of protest groups, since the meaning of a protest depends also on actions undertaken in reaction to that protest (Lofland 1985: 263ff).

"Solidarity" was a movement of protest and its basic actions consisted in a symbolic communication of discontent and rejection of communist authority. This meaning of "Solidarity" as an attempt at a peaceful transformation of the communist regime is stressed most often, but the politics of protest of 1980–1981 was diversified and even at that time led to divisions and conflicts within the movement.

"Solidarity" is a developing phenomenon which changed over time, with the turning points on December 13, 1981 (the introduction of martial law in Poland) and 1989 (Round Table Agreements) when the political change was implemented as a result of conventional forms of action of the political elites and became a subject of conflicting interpretations and valuations. In 1989 the "Solidarity" movement became a symbol which legitimized that change (Hałas 2000: 309–322). Arguments over the importance and identity of "Solidarity" put the phenomenon in the field of discourse and therefore render it a symbolic phenomenon of a different nature than the symbolism of a protest movement in the historical process.

As a social—protest movement and as a subject of discourse "Solidarity" is constructed symbolically. It has been and remains a symbolic movement. I use the expression "symbolic movement" initially in its abstract meaning, i.e., in reference to

a social process of creation, maintenance and change of meanings. Such "symbolic movement" is constantly taking place in social life, since society is a symbolic interaction (Blumer 1969: 78–89). I do not abstract completely from social movement, i.e., a community that builds a common identity which contributes to social, political and cultural change. "Solidarity" was a social movement started by the protest movement. However, one should remember that even in this "empirical" sense, "movement" is a metaphor and in a social movement the movement of meanings is also a source phenomenon, since only the delegitimization of the status quo—questioning of the existing order of meanings—makes the development of a movement possible. In the theory of social movements, symbolization should be given a prominent position since it is instrumental in shaping the processes of cognitive and affective orientation of a community through ascribing meanings to reality and defining the goals of collective action (Snow and Davis 1995: 196). In 1980 "Solidarity" questioned established meanings and habits of everyday life in real socialism. Defining the situation as an extraordinary event and shaping the moral feeling of solidarity required a specific symbolic construction of the social movement and its forms of action.

The "Solidarity" movement did not develop on the basis of some ideology. Therefore, "Solidarity" can be described as a performance-type movement in which performances—collective forms of protest—played a leading role. It was a movement of protest actions, both planned and spontaneous, a movement in which the collective action was to a large degree improvised "here and now," considering the context defined by real socialism and Soviet domination that limited the scope of possible contestation. The protest action came before the program which was a gradually formulated project of change.

The "Solidarity" movement employed various protest actions, the form and style of which have not been thoroughly investigated. It utilized a rich array of symbolic gestures in the social drama being created. The social drama should be understood as processes of interaction in a conflict situation that created sequences of events leading to the escalation of crisis. They are acts performed on the public stage in which actors use available cultural symbols to communicate their values and identity. The conflicts in which they are engaged make it possible to symbolically objectivize and communicate the basic problems obscured by everyday routine. New moral imperatives of duty and loyalty that follow force men to take distinct positions (Turner 1974: 32–45; 78ff). In 1980 the Polish society participated in a drama of protest during which the experience of risk related to the consequences of actions that were taken was accumulating. The repertoire of protest forms adopted by "Solidarity" can be researched from the perspective of what is common for unrest and social movements in general, from the perspective of what is common for "Solidarity" and protest movements that express civil disobedience in Western societies, and from the perspective of what has been unique, or idiomatic, for national freedom movements in Poland since the 19th century. The phenomenon of "Solidarity" as a symbolic movement exists in a complex, multiform articulation of experience of meaning, value and collective sentiments. The way "Solidarity" was experienced by various social groups: unanimous, complementary, conflicting, opposing or contradictory, and simultaneously changing over

time, including legal validity of the experience from the perspective of participants, is simultaneously continuous and non-continuous.

“Solidarity”—contrary to the etymology (the Latin word “solidus”)—is not a solid and unchangeable phenomenon. It reveals itself in interactions and interpretations. In order to uncover its symbolic construction, one can use an analogy that refers to Noam Chomsky’s differentiation between surface and deep structures of language; an analogy that is imperfect insofar that it does not take into consideration the “movement” of meanings that is allowed in the conception of Fernand Braudel, who differentiated between events and long-lasting processes. Therefore, I set the “surface” research of what can be described as the “eventness” of phenomena related to the “Solidarity” movement (conducted mainly by historians and political scientists, but also by sociologists if they did not analyze the identity of the movement), presented in a narrative way according to the pattern “who, what, where, when, how,” against the analysis of symbolic construction presented here. Between the scope of the theory of social symbolism (Hałas 2008a) on one hand and the descriptive knowledge of a historical way of manifestation of phenomena of community life on the other, it is possible to present a *reconstructive* analysis of the “Solidarity” phenomenon; an analysis which is simultaneously hypothetical as far as the future of identity symbolism and collective memory is concerned.

It is often difficult to keep an objectivizing distance from social phenomena under research. The analyses and reflections presented on the occasion of anniversaries of “Solidarity,” describing the moving phenomenon of the movement, should overcome the convention of apotheosis, indiscriminate idealization, and “bronzing”—all the more so because the symbolism of “Solidarity” is linked to the phenomenon of sanctification. By the term “sanctification” I mean something different than the religious interpretation of “Solidarity,” using a metaphor of “Solidarity” as “Church” (Karlłowicz 2002). I do not intend to place particular emphasis on religion, or stress the role of eminent priests—Henryk Jankowski, Józef Tischner, Jerzy Popiełuszko, and above all John Paul II. I mean neither the teleologism which is present in the discourse on “Solidarity” referring to Providence, nor the rhetoric of miraculousness when one speaks of “Solidarity” as of a miracle (Geremek 2005). The rhetoric of miraculousness merits further research, since miracles are ahistorical and do not have any substantial meaning for history and its further course.¹ When I speak of sanctification, I mean the functioning of the name “Solidarity” as an imperative—an appeal, a watchword that requires a response, and is capable of awakening the social bond. It is the imperative: “Let [name] be sanctified!” used for sublimation, when the amplitude of collective emotions is high and values are solemn, i.e., when one witnesses a particular manifestation of social symbolism and a process of sacralization in a society (Durkheim 1990: 206). The symbol of “Solidarity,” the proper name that is also a mobilizing appeal, had a wide array of meanings and therefore its impact consisted in a symbolic condensation (Turner and Turner 1978: 246). The name of

¹ On the miracle of “Solidarity” see Marek A. Cichoński’s interesting remarks in the light of Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Cichoński 2002).

"Solidarity" was invented and used effectively in the politics of symbolization, based on the strategic use of symbolic means, in order to control collective sentiments.

The look at "Solidarity" from the perspective of its symbolism is not quite original since it had been noticed earlier, albeit not in its complexity (Kubik 1994). I suggest researching the symbolic construction of "Solidarity" on two levels: as symbolism of organization of collective actions and symbolism on the level of discourse, in other words, symbolism in the movement of "Solidarity" and symbolism of the movement, i.e., symbolization of the movement. Here I mean symbolism as an instrument of action of a social movement, and in a broader sense the historical events it started, and recontextualized symbolism on the level of social representations of the movement and historical events. Although such differentiation is useful, one should remember that these are two ways of manifestation of the same social phenomenon that can be called a horizontal plan of "taking place" and a vertical plan of "reading" its meaning.

In the center of the historical process there remains the trade union which originated from the protest movement. It is not some "natural" history of its existence and evolution, but continuity of its identity constructed, sustained, and sometimes questioned, despite the nominal continuity of the name (Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity"), noticeable as early as April 1989 during the argument over the registration of the Union for the second time. Even more problematic is the question of identity of other "Solidarities:" "Solidarity of Individual Farmers," "Solidarity 80," or earlier "Fighting Solidarity," and later "Election Action Solidarity."

The second level is the level of—"logies"—discourses and narrations, i.e., the level of collective performances, recontextualizations and decontextualizations of the meaning of "Solidarity," its heroes and events. It is on this level that "Solidarity" is placed as a subject of private, public and institutional discourses, as an object of historical research, as a political myth and a discourse on myth. Thanks to historians and political scientists, but also sociologists, the knowledge about the historical movement of "Solidarity" is shaped. For the future, this second symbolism of "Solidarity" is more important than the one that constitutes the basis for the game of history and memory.

There are claims about the end of the symbolism of "Solidarity," claims that with the fall of communism the myth of "Solidarity" (Frybes and Michel 1996: 13ff) was irrevocably destroyed. The symbolic construction of "Solidarity" is very complex and its planes—horizontal and vertical, of "happening" and "reading"—can be independent. Therefore, such claims seem to be premature, not taking into consideration the complicated relation of myth and reality. Moreover, the claim on the basis of which the destruction of the symbolism of "Solidarity" was proclaimed—the statement about the homology of collective identity of "Solidarity" (Frybes and Michel 1996: 148ff) and communist ideology of identity of a socialist society and its "unity"—is disputable. The self-organizing and self-limiting movement (Staniszki 1984), reaching agreements through negotiations, was a complete contradiction of the consolidation practices forced by the supervising center of power. Moreover, "Solidarity" was not a homogenous entity but an immensely differentiated multitude of "Solidarities," which it still remains. Here, I refer not only to what was described

as a community of “Solidarity” communities (Buksiński 1995: 79–96). “Solidarity” was a broad articulation of collective actions, taking on in part organizational forms, and partly forms institutionalized in a trade union, at the same time forming a much broader social movement for changes not limited to workers’ issues, rooted in the micro-social sphere of families and neighbors, exerting influence in the mezo-social sphere of existing organizations and associations, and in the macro-social sphere of national, political, economic and religious institutions, as well as—on the global scale—relations of power and international relations. In all these dimensions—micro, mezo, macro and global—“Solidarity” “was happening” as a social value. Under one symbolic form the phenomenon of “Solidarity” includes the rivalization of various meanings and valuations.

If we consider “Solidarity” in a plan of action as a protest movement, the myth of a great “Solidarity” in action becomes a reality only in a small degree. This myth remains within the plane of discourse, i.e., as a myth of a great “Solidarity” it is present in books or encyclopaedias. Many list “Solidarity” with a capital “S;” the entry refers exclusively to the great movement of 1980, and does not cover other meanings of “solidarity.” It was not the fall of communism, or even the earlier martial law, which brought about the deactualization of the myth of a great “Solidarity.” The process of myth deactivation was unavoidable in view of the institutionalization of the protest movement and focusing on organization of the trade union. The process of routinization of the leadership’s charisma was unavoidable. Numerous intentions of “Solidarity” found a weaker realization in other movements and organizations which aimed at goals and values for which the organization of a labor union was not enough. In 1980 “Solidarity” formed a public arena, but the weakness of the party system and the parties that traced their origins to “Solidarity” plus the weakness of social movements and organizations in this sector which is so important for a democratic change (e.g., NGOs) shows that the road from a protest movement to a civil society is a long one.

Social actions, not some abstract principle that is often called the logic of a system, or logic of history, are crucial for the vitality of social symbolism. There is no rule of logic that would assume the unavoidable fall of the symbolism of “Solidarity.” Here I refer to the symbolic means, the use and consequences of which can be influenced by many factors. This is the sphere of possibility, but stereotypization and petrification of meanings are not excluded. Crucial here is the politics of symbolization,² including the politics of memory, practiced from the current perspective, where meanings are selected. Some are actualized, others deactualized. This politics can assume various forms, from socialization to indoctrination. While the former remains in a relation

² The term “politics of symbolization” refers to—roughly speaking—the use and management of meanings in social interactions and power relations. It is wider than “symbolic politics,” introduced by Murray Edelman to denote the use of symbols for political spectacles (Edelman 1985: 195–214). It is also different from the notion of the “politics of symbols” (Čolović 2001; Staniszkis 1999: 49) which refers to a technique of gaining power through manipulation of symbols as cultural artefacts and ideological images, mainly political myths, not verified or opposed to social reality. It shares the premise that symbolic actions are crucial for reality construction, particularly for group identity (Mach 1993), rejecting the contrast between the symbolic and the real (Kertzer 1996: 154).

to a moral experience, the latter consists exclusively in sociotechnical management of meanings. An extreme form of this management was the politics of memory and symbolism employed by totalitarian and authoritarian states.

The polysemy of collective identity is inscribed in various discourses about "Solidarity," but attention should also be brought to multiple meanings of the "solidarity" root metaphor. The term "solidarity" originates from the French word "solidarité" that came into use in the 17th century, at about the same time as the term "society." In sociology, "solidarity" was used in reference to what constitutes society, more precisely—social groups, i.e., in the sense of ties that link people. However, if a bond—excluding the natural and associative ones—can be imposed on a group, "solidarity" becomes its antonym. Solidarity does not impose any ties. The term refers to cooperation in striving for a common goal, providing mutual help, and collective responsibility. If one can speak here of a bond, it is exclusively a moral one. The term "solidarity" indicates also a moral feeling, for some (Scheler 1986: 86, 243, 320) a universal one, as a principle of solidarity of all moral beings, for others—a particular one, generated by the opposition of experience: "we" and "they." The symbolism of "Solidarity" carried both kinds of this moral feeling.

The Multitude of Meanings of "Solidarity"

The fact that the "Solidarity" movement had many meanings opened up the possibility of broad mobilization through an appeal to various motives of participation, that is—in terms of social movements theory—through "saturation" of their meanings. The interpretation of the "Solidarity" movement can refer to various frameworks of meaning: a workers' revolution, a civil revolution, a movement for national liberation, a movement for religious deprivatization, a moral movement. All of these were present within "Solidarity" and their multitude is a source of conflict over interpretation.³ The first interpretation often assumes the framework carried by a workers' movement with its symbolic myth of the working class as the demiurge of history, and the myth of a general strike that makes possible the strike rituals which in turn sustain and strengthen the myth. The "Solidarity" movement grew indirectly out of the tradition of socialist movements, but directly it referred to Polish workers' protest movements against the communist power in 1956, 1970 and 1976. The second framework of meanings is much broader and includes the civil and liberal revolutions. The participation of all social-professional groups, striving for subjectivity in the state, should be perceived within this tradition. It was overlapped and enhanced by another framework of meanings shaped within the romantic tradition of Polish uprisings, the framework of the national liberation movement. In the not too distant past the reference is provided by the symbolism of "Fighting Poland" during the German occupation and the Warsaw Uprising.

³ The presented analysis of frameworks of meanings does not exhaust possible interpretative approaches and their subtleties. See for example Latoszek (2006), Kurczewski (2006), Krasnodębski (2001), Krzemiński (2006), Touraine et al. (1983).

Despite the relations between national and Catholic content, the religious framework of meanings can be treated as separate and carrying more universal contents. “Solidarity” was not a religious movement, but it strove for the deprivatization of religion. Religious practices were publicly manifested by the participants, and freedom of religion and a free access of Churches to the public media were included in the “Solidarity” demands (Demand no. 3). The movement referred indirectly to the politics of identity and symbolization used by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. The symbol of the Jasna Góra icon became one of the emblems of “Solidarity.” Much has been written about the importance of Karol Wojtyła’s election to papacy and his first pilgrimage to Poland as the catalyst for the “Solidarity” movement, which certainly was a not entirely unexpected consequence of those events.

The last of the frameworks of meanings described here is the framework of moral meanings referring to the dignity of man. “Solidarity” was a movement of dignity within which—through the use of proper forms of action (non-violence)—the identity of the collective ethical subject was constructed. As a moral movement, “Solidarity” had its predecessors in the USA and in India. It did not have a moral leader comparable to Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi, unless one would like to ascribe such a role to John Paul II. The multitude of frameworks of meanings enabled the particular symbolic flexibility of the movement and its symbolic poliphony. It allows for multiple interpretations of “Solidarity,” placing emphasis on various kinds of content: liberal, moral, social or national and ecclesial-religious. This is the reason for conflicts of interpretation that can determine the vitality or exhaustion of the movement’s symbolism.

The ambiguity of “Solidarity” is accompanied by antinomies. The essential antinomy is the contradiction between claims and resignations required in striving to achieve the set goals, i.e., the antinomy of equality and freedom. Thirteen of the twenty one demands were clearly social in character. The social component of the demands and the proletarian framework of the movement’s meaning were the pretext for what can be described as a symbolic expropriation of the demands of “Solidarity” by the post-communist Alliance of Democratic Left during the campaign preceding parliamentary elections in 2005.

Antonymous are the carnivalesque or martyrological interpretations of “Solidarity.” The image of “Solidarity” is often presented as the carnival of “Solidarity,” as a ritual rebellion. A carnival is a weak candidate for a great historical moment, the “heroization” required in the process of constructing a political myth. The carnivalesque interpretation takes away the solemnity of past experiences and authority, shifting these experiences to the sphere of *homo ludens*. The carnivalesque interpretation can support the arguments put forward by defenders of the martial law who presented “Solidarity” as a politically irresponsible movement. The opposite interpretation, an image of martyrology—experiences of strikes and the martial law—follows the tradition of Polish historical experiences. This interpretation has its own symbols: the martyrdom of father Jerzy Popiełuszko and miners from the “Wujek” coal mine. One should distinguish the antinomy of meanings and conflicts of interpretation from the symbolic anti-politics adopted in 1980 by the communist Polish United Workers’

Party and propaganda which interpreted "Solidarity" as a politically anarchic and economically destructive movement. It continues in apologetic claims about the martial law.⁴

The conflicts over interpretation of the meaning of "Solidarity" are accompanied by controversies over the reputation of leaders and the elites of the movement. Controversies over reputation are unavoidable in processes of constructing the collective memory (Fine 2001). The question of a hero is essential both for vitality of symbolism of the "Solidarity" movement and for its myth. Just as any social group, a movement needs a symbolic objectivization, i.e., a metonymic representation by its leader who embodies and represents the movement. The symbol that personifies the movement of "Solidarity" was Lech Wałęsa. The problem of leadership symbolism can be analyzed on two levels: action and discourse. Within these two contexts, various identities and trajectories of their change exist. Historical characters are always characterized by a certain ambiguity. They often appear in narrations that are not only competitive but also conflicting, constructing different memories and counter-memories, as in the case of "Solidarity." Thus, the conflict over interpretation of "Solidarity" includes also the questioning of Lech Wałęsa's reputation and symbolism of leadership by part of the movement's elite, led by its co-founders: Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda. Every injury to the reputation of the elites, ranging as far as their partial "loss of face," has its consequences for the identity of the movement. It is difficult to symbolize a community without an adequate representation. However, a hero of the "Solidarity" movement is, after all, a collective one and partial damage of reputation, or attempts at discrediting, do not necessarily pose a threat for the symbolism of "Solidarity," since the movement has many identities and frameworks of meaning.

The Symbolic Movement of Memory

The phenomenon of "Solidarity" is also a phenomenon of collective memory—a symbolic movement of memory. It is not only a question of remembering "Solidarity" from the current perspective, since in 1980 "Solidarity" was also a movement of memory based on commemoration (Connerton 1998), i.e., rituals of looking back at the past collective experiences of the Polish people. Commemoration, as in a paradigmatic religious pattern of *Commemoratio*, was becoming a condition of communion, of community, due to the commemoration of national heroes in the frames of a calendar of anniversaries: of the May 3 Constitution, Independence Day (November 11) and national uprisings. The analyses that focus exclusively on the time cycle, on the calendar of anniversaries and holidays celebrated by "Solidarity" (Kubik 1994; Baczek 1994), are not adequate since "Solidarity" was not only a ceremonial movement where ritualism was to be an instrument of coordination and control. One should rather refer to the conception of a ritual that assumes construction of a political drama based

⁴ A similar rhetoric of motives was used by Stanisław Kania who, on the 25th anniversary of "Solidarity," spoke "clear intentions of those who introduced martial law" (Kania 2005).

on symbolism that transforms reality (Turner 1974). The “Solidarity” movement belonged to the romantic political dramaturgy. It was a drama of Poland. In order to understand it, one has to be familiar with Polish idioms, i.e., specific symbolic expressions of the Polish experience. As a political drama, the movement was extremely complex, since it contained various parallel narrations, various collective identities and polysemy of meanings in the construction of a multitude of identities.

The introduction of two distinct strata of symbolic construction of “Solidarity” only partially overlaps what—to paraphrase an expression from the theory of law—can be described as “‘Solidarity’ in action” and “‘Solidarity’ in books,” i.e., “Solidarity” in historiography, and also—more broadly—in other types of media. It is a question of differentiating between historical eventness and collective memory, where a movement of memory affects history and historiography.

Collective memory is understood as the group’s memory of its past that defines its identity in relation to other groups (Fine 2005; Hałas 2008b). In other words, memory is what is transferred from the past into the present reality of a group, i.e., what a group does with its past (Le Goff 1992: 95). Contrary to Maurice Halbwachs’s view, historical knowledge and collective memory are not complete opposites; both are constructed and they interact. The key to their relations is the politics of memory⁵ where the instruments are commemorative acts, since through them experiences from the past are selectively exploited. In collective memory a historical message is always used selectively and the fragmentariness of commemorations is the source of conflicts of memory. Commemorations create, or reproduce the dominant commemorative narration. Therefore, remembrance is usually ritualized, subject to a clear moral message, e.g., the 25th anniversary of “Solidarity” message as a way to freedom for Poland and other nations.

One can distinguish the popular, political and expert collective memory. The popular dimension of memory of “Solidarity” refers to everyday life, to common memory. The political one is defined by the politics of memory and its various strategies: liberal—using non-memory, amnesia, forgetfulness—or conservative ones that refer to tradition. A significant, but not a decisive part in shaping collective memory is played by experts, especially historians; however, it is not the professional history (which objectivizes knowledge about the past) that determines collective memory, including the memory of “Solidarity” and therefore simultaneously its meaning in the present and the past.

Commemorative time differs from historical time. In the process of constructing collective memory one makes an arbitrary—to some degree—selection of the so-called great moments that are believed to have influenced the course of events (Zerubavel 1995: 242). While analyzing the symbolic representation of “Solidarity” it is also possible to see that regularity in constructing the memory of the movement where the Gdańsk Shipyard gained such a distinguished status. It was Gdańsk, not Szczecin or Jastrzębie, where the accords were negotiated and signed. Such gradual

⁵ This term is wider than the term “politics of history” and should not be confused with the latter. “Politics of history” appeared first in German as “Geschichtspolitik” that implies political interest connected with the historical memory.

separation from historical context, clearly visible in the symbolic text, characterizes the process of forming political myths (Tudor 1972: 137–140). The great moments which are to represent the process of historical transformation have to possess diverse meanings and can be subject to various interpretations, as in the case of the memory of "Solidarity." If conflicts and contradictions of interpretation—confrontations of contradictory interpretations—intensify, the myth faces the danger of becoming damaged, or even destroyed. Contrary to the fears of those who react with indignance when the conflict of memory of "Solidarity" comes up, and who would be quick to prevent any manifestation of counter-memory, any questioning of the prevalent narration and reputation of dominating symbolic representatives of "Solidarity," including Lech Wałęsa, it has to be stressed that the lack of any conflict of interpretation would threaten with a quick petrification of meanings and the destruction of the myth.

One should distinguish between the time of "Solidarity" in action in 1980 and the time of commemoration—present and future. Undoubtedly, there exists a great symbolic potential and potential of memory. "Solidarity" condensed in itself many meanings of Polish historical experiences and was their specific culmination in the 20th century. It is far too early to proclaim the destruction of the myth of "Solidarity" (Majcherek 2005), because this myth is deeply rooted in history and collective experience. Its symbolic construction is extremely well developed and allows for symbolic flexibility of its use in the future.

In the age of globalization the meaning of collective memory, which became a target of politics of symbolization and memory in the anniversary year, increases. Therefore, one should also consider the question of the loss of the distinguished symbolic status of "Solidarity" as a "great moment" of post-communist transformation in Europe. The cautious, negotiated change symbolized by the Round Table does not have the same expressive effect as the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Moreover, it focuses on 1989–1990 as the breakthrough, not on the Polish year of 1980.

An unavoidable correlate of memory is the process of forgetting (Ricoeur 2000: 536ff). Both remain in a continuous interplay. Therefore, collective memory depends on commemorations, and the end of commemorations leads to the end of collective memory. Commemorations can be spontaneous, but they are also directed by "memory entrepreneurs." There are, however, limits to an exclusively manipulatory approach to collective memory. If there are no participants in commemorative rituals, even the greatest commemorative investments will prove unsuccessful.

The constructivist approach favors analysis from the point of viewing the politics of memory as the politics of symbolization. The successful politics of memory requires a good command of commemoration that transforms reality. If this is not the case, ritualism is imminent. After 1989, "Solidarity" failed to effectively control historicity (Hałas 2002; 2004; 2005), to exercise control over meanings given to the past, important for defining the meaning of changes taking place in Poland. The subjects of commemoration do not and should not be limited only to state agencies, but should include media, educational institutions, associations, various organizations and foundations on the local level. Collective memory is actually a multiplicity

of memory, which includes records of ordinary experiences and testimonies of the average participants in events.

Despite frequent repetition of the claim that the political change which occurred in Poland in 1989 possessed great significance and an epochal dimension, this claim was not explicitly confirmed by symbolism and politics of symbolization of the ongoing historical movement as the fall of the communist regime. The political change was characterized by restorative politics of symbolization, which consisted in bringing back the symbols removed by the communists and thus legitimizing the political change in the symbolic dimension. The experience of fighting against communism that culminated in “Solidarity” was left without symbolic objectivization. The month of August 1980 has not been included and objectivized in the symbolic politics of the state. Therefore, the identity of the Third Republic of Poland has been criticized. Its symbolization, when compared to the symbolic identity of the People’s Republic of Poland, remains weak, underdefined and ambiguous. It is not difficult to show that this policy has been functional for the post-communist formation, but great divisions (Zerubavel 1995: 7) of collective memory have been avoided as well. Introduction of the so-called “thick line” principle was consistent with the claim formulated by Ernst Renan that forgetting is necessary when an experience divides a community, such as a national one (Stråth 2000: 25). It was a political choice of giving up decommunisation and lustration, of blurring the difference between collective amnesia and amnesty (Ricoeur 2000: 585ff), and a potential source of subsequent symbolic conflicts.

The problem of the memory of “Solidarity” is a problem of interpretation, i.e., of ability to develop tradition in a creative way. The question whether it will be a live tradition, subject to interpretation, is crucial for the symbolism and memory of “Solidarity.” The claim that: “History must give the Poles the principal credit for bringing the Soviet bloc to its knees” (Davies 1996: 1108) will be verified by collective memory at least as much as by scholarly studies, and probably to a greater degree.

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