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EUROPEAN REMEMBRANCE

LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS,
COMMENTARIES,
2012–16

EUROPEAN NETWORK
REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

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EUROPEAN REMEMBRANCE

Symposium of European Institutions dealing with 20th-century History

LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, COMMENTARIES, 2012–16

European Network
Remembrance and Solidarity,
Warsaw 2016

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BUDAPEST 2016

Foreword

Does a European Culture of Memory Exist? The title of the first European Remembrance Symposium that took place in 2012 in Gdańsk at the initiative of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, in conjunction with the European Solidarity Centre and Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, is also the guiding question constituting its axis from the start of our undertaking. In light of different historical experiences, there are many differing perspectives on the 20th century in Europe. Therefore, there should be no ettempt to unify treatment of the past. Nevertheless, it is important to bind together various recollections in order to expand the viewpoint on own history with that of neighbours. Although it is not easy to answer, we seek each year to find a common language in discussions on the history of the past century. We believe that this dialogue should especially now take account of various narratives, sensitivities, experiences and interpretations. For this reason we annually invite representatives from institutions dealing with the history of 20th-century Europe to jointly discuss and debate vital events, their genesis, context and consequences, as well as to compare our experiences in their commemoration.

European Remembrance – Lectures, Discussions, Commentaries, 2012–16 features a selection of texts from five conferences that successively took place in Gdańsk, Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Budapest. This is a record of the most significant lectures and discussions, as well as commentary from historians and political figures on events discussed at the Symposium. We consider these pronouncements to constitute interesting material for students of history, as well as its fans.

We feel that remembrance is a form of responsibility understood as a message regarding the past that aids us in a more thoughtful building of the future. Memory of history is also a constituent element of the identity of each of us. For this reason it is important for remembrance to be most complete and perfect, so that it accommodates the remembrances of victims and trauma, as well as crimes and the memory of resistance against violence generated by totalitarian systems and dictatorships. We hope that this collection of texts will constitute a stone enriching the mosaic of European remembrance.

We wish you inspirational reading!

Dr Florin Abraham, Dr Réka Földváryné Kiss, Dr Ondrej Krajňák
Prof. Jan Rydel, Prof. Matthias Weber

Coordinators, The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, September 2016

Introduction

The idea of an annual meeting of representatives from institutions researching and promoting knowledge of the 20th century history of Europe arose from numerous discussions that Prof. Jan Rydel and I held with these circles in 2010 and 2011. Particularly inspiring were talks with Prof. Marek Cichocki, Prof. Andrzej Nowak, as well as Dr Anne Kaminsky and Bazyli Kerski. All commonly felt that persons active in the policy of remembrance in its various areas and countries of Europe lacked a forum at which they could not only present their projects and herald successes, but also talk about problems, seek partners for cooperation, as well as hear and see how their colleagues work in other countries. Our aim from the start was for these meetings to have a practical nature, to foster contacts, facilitate an exchange of viewpoints and to pose an intellectual challenge, not only to turn into an academic conference.

The symposia programme evolved with each year. We sought a method for all participants to speak out if they so desired. In addition to lectures and panel discussions, we introduced workshops and presentations. From Gdańsk to each subsequent location – Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Budapest – we visited places of remembrance to show how knowledge of history is passed on in a given country and how difficult 20th century history is commemorated. We showed the European Solidarity Centre under construction, the memorial site at Westerplatte, the Czech Lidice, the German Historical Museum in Berlin, the Memorial for the Victims of Nazi Military Justice, the Soviet War Memorial and Heldentor in Vienna, as well as the House of Terror and Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery Memorial Plot 301 and 'Kisfogház' in Budapest. The number of participants increased steadily: from 100 persons representing several dozen institutions from more than a dozen countries to over 250 persons from 180 institutions in 30 countries. Representatives ranged from large museums to small non-governmental institutions. Co-organisers also changed because in each country we invited local partners for cooperation. You will find the names of all of these institutions on page 270 . We are grateful to all of them for their substantive and organizational support, as in each instance this was a tremendous experience for us in the Secretariat of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity.

It is worth noting that the implementation of this project and numerous other ENRS projects would not be possible without annual support from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities as well as the Ministries of Culture in Romania and the Slovak Republic.

Obviously, reflection always accompanied practical aspects of the symposia. We asked if a European remembrance community is possible and, despite various experiences and assessments, whether we can and wish to commemorate jointly. Is this at all needed for us Europeans? You will find attempts to reply to these questions in texts comprising this volume, as well as a series of other

texts always related to a leading theme – the downfall of communist regimes in Europe, the end of the Second World War, and the events of 1956. This publication is not a record of all that was said during the five symposia, as its size would be much greater if we sought to do so. Mostly, these are speeches of keynote speakers and only in the case of the Gdańsk meeting did we decide to publish the discussion because it was indeed its main element. We refrained from including introductory speeches with the exception of two, given by Prof. Heinz Fischer, the President of Austria, and Dr Zoltán Balog, the Minister of Human Resources in Hungary, as they had the nature of introductory lectures. We also published two letters sent to us by the presidents of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and Hungary, János Áder. The entirety constitutes a collection of reflections of outstanding intellectuals from many countries of Europe, namely persons with differing sensitivities and viewpoints on history and on the remembrance of nations in 20th century Europe.

European Remembrance Symposia will continue, as all of us at the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity are convinced that such an international, inter-generational and inter-disciplinary dialogue on our past and its significance for the future, as well as that of our children and grandchildren, is a sine qua non condition for development of a community of states and nations of the Old Continent. The 2017 Symposium will take place in Brussels.

Rafał Rogulski

ENRS Institute Director

DANSK 2012

14–15 September

The First Symposium of European Institutions Dealing With 20th-century History


EUROPEAN
REMEMBRANCE
MARKUS MECKEL
Germany

Markus Meckel (Chairman of the ENRS Advisory Board). Introduction to the conference


WYJŚCIE

Discussion 'Does a European Culture of Memory Exist?' From the left: Markus Meckel, Robert Żurek, Georges Mink, Basil Kerski, Stefan Troebst, Luigi Spinola, Łukasz Kamiński

Luigi Spinola during the discussion 'Does a European Culture of Memory Exist?'

Participants of the 1st Symposium of European Institutions Dealing with 20th-century History

Does a European Culture of Memory Exist?

DISCUSSION FEATURING: ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI, MARKUS MECKEL, GEORGES MINK, LUIGI SPINOLA, STEFAN TROEBST, ROBERT ŻUREK, MODERATED BY BASIL KERSKI

BASIL KERSKI Over the last twenty years, our sensitivity with regard to memory has changed. Two decades ago, there was no notion of European remembrance in European discourse. Culture was seen as a very difficult area that impeded integration. The focus was on the classic *acquis communautaire*, the legal and the economic. EU enlargement was seen in equally technical terms. It was during EU expansion in 2004 that the idea was born to provide space for historical discourse since it was understood that enlargement was not just an economic, but also a cultural challenge. Karl Schlögel spoke of broadening cultural horizons. Jorge Semprún said that the true finale of European reconciliation and unification would be a merger of memories, in particular, those concerning the history of freedom, but also the difficult experiences of communism.

I must admit that I was then a fan of ideas expressed by Jorge Semprún, but it seems to me that some other notion is possibly more interesting such as that of *acquis historique* postulated by French political scientists precisely during the 2004 EU enlargement and highlighting the fact that it was a new process of learning. I like this notion because on one hand I represent those Central Europeans who fight for the presence of our Central European experience in Western Europe, yet we tend to forget that enlargement for us Central and Eastern Europeans is a new experience as well. Can we imagine European discourse without the history of colonialism or knowledge of the very difficult French debates on decolonisation? The Spanish civil war was also a European war. In short, the enlargement and unification of Europe is about more than just making us aware of our Central and Eastern European fate.

So, I would like to discuss three subject areas with you here. The first is obvious. Does Europe need a culture of remembrance at all, or would it be worthwhile to return to the pragmatism of twenty years ago? What is the European culture of remembrance and what can it be in the future? The second aspect is that we know very well that this debate is difficult, as we are familiar with our national debates. We know how pluralistic they are and also know about deep historical disputes. So, are our societies, expert historians and our public alike ready to think in European terms? Are they able to entertain a different perception of their neighbourhood? Are we able to engage in that dialogue at all? The third question for all of us here is: what role can we (various institutions, museums, foundations, memorial sites and educational institutions present here) play in this process? Let us start with the first and possibly most difficult question: does Europe need a European culture of remembrance?

Can we imagine European discourse without the history of colonialism or knowledge of the very difficult French debates on decolonisation? The Spanish civil war was also a European war. In short, the enlargement and unification of Europe is about more than just making us aware of our Central and Eastern European fate.

GEORGES MINK First, what is remembrance? It seems to me that here we constantly confuse history with memory, so it would be worthwhile to define our subject matter accurately. Second, on what planes are problems with remembrance revealed? If the question of remembrance is put in the context of Europe, we have at least three planes. First, there is the plane of the so-called European people, European identity, and memory as an identity identifier. Then, there is Europe as an institution or arena: the Parliament and the Council of Europe – this is that very prescriptive part. But, there may also be cases of mobilisation in these arenas in order to reclaim something. Here, for instance, a major role is played by the issue of remembrance asymmetry in that historical *acquis*, as we know that Europe was re-built under the slogan of 'never again', meaning the Holocaust, the Shoah, and the Second World War. No one obviously then thought about totalitarianisms or communist totalitarianism. Finally, there is Europe as a source of prescriptivism, issuing remembrance laws. There are parliamentary discussions on the recognisability of evil and consequences for the behaviour of nation-states as members of Europe.

There is the illusion that one can create a world from a single uniform memory primarily because memory can be perfectly instrumentalised. There

is a permanent interaction between international arenas and the national arena. Poland, for instance, has experienced two years of intense historical policy that was not about some common European memory, but about muscle flexing – how fantastic we were in that history. This is obviously dangerous. There was the mechanism of conditionality that played a major role before 2004 when some European countries set conditions for others. An additional motif to the *acquis communautaire* linked to *acquis historique* was added. If you do not acknowledge our version of history, you will not join Europe – you are not worthy of Europe.

Now, the question of shared historical consciousness is a critical issue, even for the so-called Western core of a European Union where the economic crisis exposed the fragility of the European common identity.

There is still the problem of asymmetry. The victims still sense such asymmetry. They feel undervalued and not compensated for what they lived through. This is a permanent mechanism that impedes the creation of common remembrance or *acquis historique* with everyone preferring their own version of the past and valuing it more highly than that of others. This is evident in certain symbolic years in Central European countries: 2006 marked competition between Central European countries over who was a stauncher fighter against communism. We remember that the Hungarians used 1956 much at the time to present themselves as both the primary victims of communism and its most courageous resisters. We all remember what a failure it was in the end because Orbán and sections of the extreme right played out 1956 yet again in front of the Parliament building in Budapest, but put it into a contemporary context and blamed today's Hungarian Socialists for 1956. In 2008, the Czech Republic fought to be visible in the history of the 1980s. In 2009, Poland was massively frustrated – 'why is our role not acknowledged as the key actor in the fight against communism'. I remember a rather surreal scene at Unter den Linden [Berlin]. On the old building of the Polish Embassy a banner first read, 'It all began in Gdańsk', and Berliners began to wonder what specific date the slogan referred to. It was corrected quickly to read 'Poland, first to fight'. Yet again, we saw rivalry between these two countries and it is a factor that is constantly present in the area of politics.

To sum up, it is not that some *acquis historique* exists in the manner of *acquis communautaire*. History itself is not an aspect important enough to exclude anyone. But then again, if you look now at Hungary and the country's Trianon syndrome one can speak of the danger not of perhaps being excluded from the European community, but rather of temporary banishment. What Viktor Orbán

is doing with Jobbik, seemingly separately but somehow giving legitimacy to Jobbik as regards history and particular Hungarian memory, shows how very difficult it is to have a common historical *acquis*.

BASIL KERSKI A premise has been formulated here: twenty years ago there was hardly any historical debate. In the highly dominant German-Polish-French perspective the difficulty of building *acquis* is stressed, yet Georges Mink has pointed out that history has made a comeback in Europe as an aspect of dispute, danger, or of Europe's disintegration. The 1990s marked a brutal confrontation with the classic legacy of the 20th century, for example, in the Balkan war where historical policy and new constructions of identity played a massive role. As for memory, one should remember that for twenty years it has been, unfortunately, a permanent area of conflict, what Claus Leggewie called a *schlachtfeld*, a European battlefield.

STEFAN TROEBST I believe that the politics of history in Europe with the aim of creating a pan-European culture of remembrance is a very thick board through which different groups, not least politicians, will drill for a long time. I see two primary issues at the pan-European level that at least slow down this process. One is that it is difficult to find consensus on tragic events and processes, especially in the 20th century. The other is that, even if it is possible to find a consensus, one finds that conveyer belts to the 500 million citizens of the EU are often not available. I wish to provide two examples. The oldest pan-European organisation, the Council of Europe that was founded in 1949, made an attempt in 2004 in its Parliamentary Assembly to set up a European institution to commemorate the victims of ethnic cleansing, forced migration and displacement. This failed relatively quickly through the vetoes of two important European states, namely, the Russian Federation and the Republic of France. They both stated that something of that sort could not be done. The reason was use of the word "deportation" within the concept of this institution. From a French perspective deportation is reserved for the Shoah and must not be used in other historical contexts. From the Russian perspective such a word was not desired under any circumstances because it was feared that Stalinist deportations within the Soviet Union would also be addressed and that a pan-European institution should not deal with the dramatic history of the Soviet Union as understood by its largest successor state. Thus, the project died and was not resumed.

An example of an absent conveyer belt would be a successful proclamation by the European Parliament of a pan-European day of remembrance for the victims of totalitarianism, or Nazism and Stalinism. This ultimately succeeded in 2009 with some friction. It was stated that this is the lowest common denominator of memory in 20th century Europe that practically all 500 million citizens of the EU can agree upon. Nazism and Stalinism were crimes against humanity and their victims must be acknowledged. So far so good. What has not worked, however, was to transpose it into national holidays and cultures of remembrance. In some cases this worked, even easily, in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland with no problem. In Portugal and Ireland, however, it was far more

difficult. It is interesting that one of the two signatories of the Hitler-Stalin Pact or their successor states, namely reunited Germany, made no effort at all to transpose this new European day of remembrance into a national culture of remembrance. One can only speculate why.

An attempt to promote a public debate on the Pact's anniversary in 2009 did not attract any great interest in Germany. I would guess that this was because the relationship with the Soviet Union from the German perspective is hidden as regards the decisive date of 1 September 1939, that of the Wehrmacht attack on Poland, together with the period from 1 September 1939 to 22 June 1941 before the Third Reich attacked the Soviet Union. It is not part of German history that both totalitarian regimes divided up and closely cooperated during their occupation of Poland, that the Soviet Union massively supported the Third Reich in economic terms, or that the secret police of both dictatorships cooperated closely. This is not the German view of history and it is not politically correct to mention it. So, the European Parliament initiative to mark 23 August, the anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, as the pan-European Memorial Day has at best been met with mixed success.

I also want to note that this dichotomy of European/national culture of remembrance is misleading because there is also a large regional European culture of remembrance. It does not extend to South-Eastern Europe, Western Europe, or Northern Europe, but rather to Central Europe. This, of course, is due to the occupation terror of National Socialism that primarily took place in Central and Eastern Europe. The Holocaust and the expulsion of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe (that I would perhaps somewhat daringly state) were centred there in the second half of the 1940s, but at least there is an East-Central European remembrance community in the making. One manifestation of this is the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity in which four states in this region are involved. Interestingly, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Austria, which were originally present and which wanted to take part, backtracked and dropped out.

I would say that the engine of this emerging Central and Eastern European remembrance community is the Polish-German relationship, namely this frictional relationship of both national communities that is not limited to the 20th century, but which began in the middle ages and the early modern period. This is a relatively unusual constellation that does not exist with other regions in Europe. Portugal and Spain are located on the Iberian Peninsula, but historically, as it is said there, stand with their backs to each other while the Germans and Poles face each other directly.

LUIGI SPINOLA I am not a historian, so I will take a journalistic approach to the discussion and it will be a point of view from the South. I stress this point because public debate in Europe within the context of the financial crisis has rediscovered the South-North divide with a sort of geographic and sometimes genetic or anthropologic determinism that particularly applies in to the way you manage your budget. So, to use another popular term of the Euro-crisis jargon, I come from the 'periphery' of Europe, even though Italy is one of the founding countries of the EU.

The common memory debate starting in 1989 and then after the 2004 enlargement mainly revolved around the East-West divide. Now, the question of shared historical consciousness is a critical issue, even for the so-called Western core of the European Union where the economic crisis exposed the fragility of the European common identity. I think we are witnessing dangerous nationalistic competition, even historical grievances that were in some way hidden behind the political and economic success story after reconciliation. A lot of things were swept under the carpet and I believe this was not very healthy.

I want to touch on the East-West divide as it is seen by an Italian. I will start from my personal experience. I have to confess that, although I have known most of the countries of Eastern Europe for a long time, my family and I came to Poland for the first time only one year ago. First, we gained a lot of knowledge about Poland and I have to say that we knew very little about the Warsaw Uprising or the Polish Underground State. Second, knowledge in itself is not historical consciousness, so with it came a different perception of the Polish national legacy, which in turn helped us to better understand the views and decisions that Poland even today expresses on the international arena. Third, there was a sense of belonging. My reaction after my journey was that you have to come to Poland if you want to call yourself a European. Now, I proudly feel this legacy as a part of my identity, one of my multiple identities, which are not conflicting – I am Roman, I am Italian and I am European.

As an Italian, I would say that we lost contact and interest in Eastern--European society after 1945. There are, of course, many exceptions. One of the greatest was the election of the Polish pope, which had an extraordinary impact in a Catholic country like Italy. But, during the period 1945–89 we mainly looked at the East through abstract geopolitical and ideological lenses.

So, what I have tried to describe are the different steps of a personal process of historical integration. But, of course, there are strong historical and political reasons that explain why the Polish resistance in general and the Warsaw Uprising in particular have not been a popular subject, to say the least, in Western countries, which during and after the Second World War looked the other way so as not to annoy the Soviet allies. As an Italian, I would say that we lost contact and interest in Eastern-European society after 1945. There are, of course,

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So what does it mean for an Italian to integrate Eastern European memory and to move towards a common narrative? With the memory of the Second World War, for example, the first is to realise that Eastern and Western fronts were very different and that the heart of the war was in the East, not only in terms of military strategy but also human pain and suffering, which is, I think, the strongest experience that contributes to everyone's historical consciousness. I will give an example: the father of a very good Polish friend of mine, Pawel Morawski, visited schools in Rome with an Italian to talk about the war with children. He felt embarrassed because the Italian mainly spoke about hunger – war was basically a time when there was little to eat. Meanwhile, Mr Morawski's experience was that every week news came that a family member had died. The reason Eastern Europe overall has a different interpretation of the war (not as a two-sided battle between good and evil, Nazi and anti-Nazi) is that Eastern countries were the ones that had to pay for the necessary alliance of Western democracies with a totalitarian Soviet Union. So, if 1945 was a year of liberation for us in Italy (defeat of course, but the main and political prevailing feeling was of liberation) 1945 in Eastern Europe marks the transition to another occupation and the start of a new era in which our experiences then were very different to say the least. The point is that we have reached a legacy gap and I speak again about every man's consciousness and perception of history and his own identity.

BASIL KERSKI So, maybe we can move straight from the first subject area to the second one: are our societies, institutions such as the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, and expert historians able to think about European history and ready to do so?

ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI The Institute of National Remembrance is different from most European institutes of remembrance. Those that have been established over the last decade in East-Central Europe were in a way inspired by the Institute. The Institute's trademark is a comprehensive approach (albeit also incomplete) toward confrontation with the difficult past. The authors of its legislative founding act assumed that it was insufficient for nations to come to terms with the past in purely legal terms or to merely make documents available to victims. Hence, the Institute combines prosecutorial functions, namely prosecution of crimes in the past (perpetrators are still brought before courts each year) together with the public release of documents from periods of dictatorship, primarily post-war, but also materials related to repression during the Second World War. Another very important pillar of our activity is research and education. In order to reconcile the past, one must first get to know it and then find a way to teach young generations, as they have not had first-hand experience with dictatorship.

I wish to begin with our starting point, that is, the question of whether a European culture of memory exists. I contend that it does not. Here,

convincing arguments were presented during the debate to show that even the most common European experience of the Second World War does not translate into a single culture of remembrance, i.e. a uniform awareness of what the Second World War was. Residents of Paris and Warsaw on one hand and those from Helsinki and Athens on the other define that event completely differently in terms of substance, but also chronology. There are countries such as Russia for which the Second World War began in 1941, and this is very clearly emphasised. So there is no common culture of remembrance.

The question is whether it should exist. I would say 'yes', in some form, but certainly not in the form of a common and universal historical awareness such as uniform history textbooks in schools. This is not feasible or necessary, in addition to being very dangerous. But, when we look at Europe, or more precisely at the European Union as a certain political organism, it needs common values apart from common interests. When we speak about certain fundamental values such as democracy or respect for human rights, we are not able to present their importance, particularly to young Europeans, without referring to the past when they were brutally violated. How else are they supposed to understand without any personal experience that democracy is indeed a value and that it is worthwhile to care about human rights and many other values? That reference to the past in this context is important, so we should look for a way to create a certain common past. In this case common means that a European culture of memory should not be very expansive, as it must make room for naturally dominant national or regional cultures of remembrance. In my view, and here I am moving to practical matters, it is possible, obviously in a long-term process, to create such a thing as a European culture of remembrance.

I want to give you one specific non-European example here. The United States decided at the federal level, twenty years ago, to build a Holocaust Museum. Then many state-level Holocaust museums were opened. This is precisely an example of adding something *de facto* completely new to the existing culture of remembrance, as the Holocaust experience was not a directly American experience. Obviously, some victims found themselves in the US after the war and it became present through mass culture, but not as an internalised American experience. Yet, it was decided that a story about values could be spun around that experience. For instance – and this was important for me during my visits to the Holocaust Museum – there are many programmes there for uniformed services, soldiers, police officers and prison guards. For example, present-day police officers – thanks to their familiarisation with the tragedy of the Holocaust – will be more sensitive to human rights in completely different cultural and geographical realities. This is possible, but one must ask how to do it, and whether we are ready for it? I believe that there already is a network of remembrance institutions in Europe (partly formalised and partly not) that could serve as an institutional foundation for the creation of a European political culture. Certainly, some institutions should be added to it such as the European Solidarity Centre that is being established in Gdańsk or the Museum of the Second World War, as they do just that. They start with histories in terms of geography (states and nations involved) and broaden them. I wish

there could be more places like that, but first we must decide on how to show these values.

There is a risk here, already mentioned by Professor Mink, of renewed rivalry over the number of victims or who was the prime victim of communism, Nazism or a larger victim globally. There is also competition over who was a greater hero or who put up more resistance against both totalitarian systems. That risk is very real and I feel that there is an alternative that we have seen in recent years partly changing the way we think about the past, namely the showcasing of individual histories. This is a method with which the story of values can be told. Examples should be shown of both victims and heroes hailing from various cultural circles, yet evoking the same values that are close to us. So, in my opinion we are ready and have a partially developed method of encouraging Europeans to possess some sort of a common European culture of remembrance. It is one based on respect for victims and heroes and a highlighting of the great importance of those fundamental values that we share.

ROBERT ŻUREK Listening to what is being said here I still have the feeling that we are talking about very difficult, complicated, and complex issues. We should talk about not only national memory, regional memory, or European remembrance, but also sub-national memory, as nations are not monoliths. To give you just one such very controversial example – [Tusk's] Wehrmacht grandfather dispute looks totally different from the perspective of Gdańsk or Upper Silesia and that of Warsaw or East Poland. The dispute regarding expulsions of Germans after the war looks completely different in the German debate from the viewpoint of CSU [Christian Social Union in Bavaria] voters than those supporting the Greens. These debates that are and have been held in recent years in Poland and Germany have demonstrated that there is no such thing as national memory.

Moving on to Polish-German relations we can see that there is a sizeable group of Polish and German historians who have found a common language and have been practising that dialogue for a long time. After all, the Polish-German textbook commission has been active since the 1970s. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall its operational opportunities were limited, but we can still look back at its achievements. Klaus Zernack was one of those people building bridges even before 1989. I keep discovering how many German historians who today play a key role in the Polish-German dialogue were his students. It seems to me that building a common historical narrative or maybe rather a position of approximation – making others sensitive to the fact that there is not just my truth, but that there are others who see things slightly differently – is worthwhile.

The first problem is how to involve the broadly understood historical communities in both countries, which include Polish and German historians who do not directly participate in these Polish-German debates. I was somewhat surprised to discover within the German debate on expulsions over the last decade that German historians not directly involved in Polish-German relations when talking about the expulsions and did not take into account what Polish and German historians cooperating with each other had accomplished.

Their knowledge of certain matters seemed to be taken straight from Cold War era books. This shows how difficult it is for us to enter the historical mainstream with the results of our discussions and research. Many important German historians participate in the Polish-German dialogue, yet if one examines it in a broader context, for example, looking at the three large Berlin universities, there are very few professors there with any solid knowledge of Poland.

The other problem is reaching out to the broader public. I think that here historians are able to do less than journalists, politicians, or institutions like those that invited us here. They can create certain mechanisms for translating the results of their academic research into public awareness. It seems to me that a lot remains to be done in that respect, although much is happening as well. I believe that developments from the last decade, including those very difficult disputes, have led to a better mutual understanding. Today, the term 'Warsaw Uprising' is much more recognisable in Germany than a mere ten years ago. Likewise, 1 September 1939 is more telling to us than just a decade ago. Also, on the Polish side the fate of the German population from territories taken over by Poland in 1945, a taboo subject before 1989 with the exception of a few opposition or Church-based circles, is now commonly known. I think that what is happening in Polish-German relations shows that we must be patient. After all, those organisations that we created, such as the Polish-German youth exchange, are actually quite new. Their participants are now entering public life and slowly assuming important positions in the public life of both countries. I think that with time this will bear more fruit.

MARKUS MECKEL At this point in the conversation, several ideas come to mind. Several years ago we produced a German-French history textbook after years of work and now a German-Polish one is in preparation. For these types of projects and others we need three major elements: first, appropriate professionalism, but this is normal practice. The second is internationalism. No real project can currently be completed only by national academic representatives. The third is transparency. My trust in academia is immense if at the same time there is willingness for great transparency, also at the European level.

We should talk about not only national memory, regional memory, or European remembrance, but also sub-national memory, as nations are not monoliths.

I would like to raise a second point: we have had the experience in Germany that many of these history projects arise through civic engagement, i.e. important museums and memorials in Germany that are not created in some parliamentary committee, but which arise through civic action and in that way become

policy. Since politicians are also citizens, this can, of course, also arise from policy itself.

The final point is that we face a special challenge in addressing difficult issues that can cause problems. We had such a situation with the subject of expulsion. I attended an event of the Polish Robert Schumann Foundation at the Europejski Hotel in Warsaw in December 1997 at which documents were published and presented by Polish and German academics on the subject of expulsion. It was immensely important, since a representative of the Expellee's Union was invited, who many years earlier was a certain enemy figure in the People's Republic of Poland. One did not have to agree with him and I did not, but at least one could talk to him. One could talk with representatives of academia and politics. The Czech ambassador in Warsaw sat next to me and was surprised and said that this would have been impossible back home.

It is thus vital that a policy framework be created and that difficult issues be addressed cross-border. This European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity is indeed such a tool. In essence, it states: let us together create an instrument with which academics and societies work together on difficult issues and topics. I have been saying for some time now that we should look not only at Germany and Poland, but a bit further south. I earlier referred to treaties after the First World War such as the Treaty of Trianon. Look at Hungary now and the reactions of neighbouring countries – this is an unprocessed history for nearly a century that today leads to problems between states. A last good example that can be cited is the state-employed but well-staffed Polish-Russian Commission for Difficult Issues. This Commission appears to have succeeded without arguing over facts in bringing different perspectives together in a dialogue. This seems to be a model and something that can be undertaken in other areas.

GEORGES MINK As I expressed a pessimist's view at the start, now I will show some optimism. It is not true that historians have not worked much on the communist period. Everyone here must have read *The Black Book of Communism* by Stéphan Courtois, a book that in France and elsewhere was not just a bestseller, but which also led to a lively debate among historians. It was a highly positive debate because it led to a certain balance in approaching history, as if history had pushed the pendulum. It first swung in one direction, then the other and finally to the middle, so that we now have very reliable books on the subject. They are obviously less numerous than those on colonialism. The issue of colonialism has been mentioned here and for France it is a sensitive issue as its parliament obsesses over remembrance laws. We have very many of them right now and historians do not want such remembrance laws. I somewhat go against the current of what is said in the mainstream because historians say that, once history becomes subject to legislation, freedom of speech is limited in a way that impacts historians' work. Obviously, this is a very sensitive issue that I do not wish to discuss here by introducing a new subject, but there have been a number of such shocks in France related first to negating what happened in the past and then recalling the painful past, for example, of the Armenian issue. Historians do not always

want remembrance policies, but on the other hand culture and social ethics require them.

ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI Returning to the question of the role of historians in building European remembrance over the last twenty years, let us recall how long we waited for serious syntheses of the Second World War or the Holocaust. It came no less than twenty years after the war. First, historians must ascertain facts and numbers and sources must be analysed. It is not as if all the sources immediately became commonly available after 1989. There are countries where communist files are still inaccessible.

I would also like to comment on Professor Żurek's suggestion that historians should conduct research, whereas journalists and politicians can transfer it to a broader audience. My view is that historians can do this too, but, of course, we must learn some methods. Definitely, this should not be done by force or centrally, which means that we cannot proclaim that from now on things will be this or that way. The role of various institutions of remembrance, museums and other institutions is to make suggestions and to offer opportunities for using that historical experience and transferring it to our times. This can be done by setting up certain remembrance centres or highlighting certain historical dates. I am less pessimistic as to the future of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, 23 August. I think that this date still has huge potential and it may well be that in time it will become a European point of reference.

LUIGI SPINOLA If we speak about how we can have a grand narrative, a pan-European narrative, we must first go back to all the debates that are still not resolved at the national level such as in Italy. We still have to deal with the idea of fascism, which was not some strange dream imposed on us by an alien population in 1922 and which then disappeared in 1945. We have to deal with the fact that we had a broad consensus and that this is still a very controversial topic now in Italy. We also have to deal with our co-responsibility for the Shoa and with colonial crimes. We have our Eastern question as well. This, of course, did not derail at the integration process, but means that this type of debate is now within the European Union.

Italy's perspective on memory has to be Euro-Mediterranean. When we talk about the North-South divide, we must remember that for Italians the historical experience of Portugal and Spain over the last 50 years has been very important. There, fascist regimes remained until the 1970s while nearby Italy had a very strong Communist party. So for us, unlike in Eastern Europe, the clash was between fascists and democrats, not between communists and democrats. So we have a completely different view of European history.

Now, as for the last question of what we can do? I know that each member state has a different set of policies regarding memory loss, awareness initiatives, and fact-finding commissions. My impression is that we should not look for a common view on history because it would combine the worst effects of memory loss, which in turn creates taboos rather than historical consciousness with the worst effects of forced harmonisation, an aspect of European integration history. We

did that much in the last 50 years; we brushed many things under the carpet. We had this view that national differences would with time disappear on their own or be considered as a leftover of history. I think this was very unhealthy.

STEFAN TROEBST With regard to the positive components of European remembrance, I have every sympathy for including such European values as democracy, rule of law, the market economy, and the European integration process in the remembrance narrative, although I am somewhat sceptical as to whether the monetary union should be incorporated. We then have Claus Leggewie's negative points in his seven part model of concentric circles of European memory. There are, I believe, five clearly negative connotations, namely the Holocaust, the Ottoman genocide of Armenians and so on. There is also one neutral event, which he calls migration, and one positive, namely the process of European integration. I therefore believe that the value or quantity ratio will remain as such. The negative viewpoint will surely outweigh the positive and I do not believe that this can be changed with political history measures.

Finally, I have a plea related to the clearing out of national cultures in Europe, both in terms of the Council of Europe, but also within the EU. Let me give you an example: EU member Bulgaria, after its transformation, immediately replaced the communist state holiday of 9 September with the previous state holiday of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, 3 March. If one looks closely, this concerns a Russian-Ottoman treaty in 1878 that fortunately never entered into force. The treaty stipulated that the Bulgarian state was designated with territories that include parts of present-day Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, and Romania. Fortunately, neighbouring countries did not realise that Bulgarians introduced this state holiday that implicitly claims territories of these seven neighbouring countries. One may have expected that Bulgaria would choose another national holiday in the course of EU accession. This was not the case and it could be useful for the EU, in the form of its Parliament, to more closely scrutinise the state history policies of its 27 member states in order to carry out such a clearing.

ROBERT ŻUREK We always wonder how we historians can contribute to the deepening of integration between Europeans, but it also works the other way: that political, economic, cultural cooperation, very intensive after all, also brings more mutual interest in the history of others and their points of view. So there is some feedback here and we must be ready to satisfy the interest of others and think how to tell our history so that it is comprehensible to outsiders so that dialogue follows. Two things are required for such dialogue to take place. First, history cannot be treated as a battle and the task for politicians is to end all disputes that may be used for political reasons such as seeking financial redress. Once such things have been closed, dialogue, even that concerning very difficult subjects, will be much easier. Second, there must be openness to the 'Other'. And here much is still left to be done, more in Western than in Eastern Europe.

Let me conclude with a brief example that illustrates that problem well. We, as the Centre for Historical Studies, are an intermediary in attempts to show an exhibition of the Institute of National Remembrance (INR) about the Cold War in Germany. We have been very active by contacting several dozen German institutions. I must say that in west Germany there is no interest at all in this topic, while there is some interest in east Germany. That low level of interest is coupled with two stereotypes. The first stereotype is of Poland as a country that has little to say in terms of universal subjects apart from its national martyrdom. The other stereotype concerns the INR as a politicised and patriotic institution. At the same time, the German institutions that have been interested in the exhibition are deeply impressed with how the exhibition shows the Cold War as a universal European experience. The institutions that have chosen to show the exhibition are keen on closer collaboration with the INR. Taking the first step to break down stereotypes may result in a deepened dialogue. I think that we should be patient, persistent, and should act.

The discussion took place on 14 September 2012 in the historic Artus Court in Gdańsk.

ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI is a historian and was chairman of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) from 2011 to 2016. Since assuming his duties, he initiated the publication of a fundamental selection of documents from East European archives on the reaction of Soviet bloc countries to the crisis in Poland from 1980 to 1981. Together with Grzegorz Waligóra, he released the following collections of documents on the activities of security services aimed at opposition groups and organisations in the 1970s and 1980s: Fighting Solidarity in Documents, Codename Vassals: the Security Service with regard to Solidarity Student Committees in 1977–1980, Codename Pegasus: the Security Service in relation to the Society of Academic Training in 1978–1980. Łukasz Kamiński established international academic cooperation on the recent history of Central and Eastern Europe and initiated numerous seminars and conferences devoted to issues of the socio-political crises in Soviet bloc countries. He has also co-organised several major international academic conferences on the communist system and its repression apparatus.

GEORGES MINK is a sociologist and political scientist, as well as Senior Researcher Emeritus at the Institute of Political and Social Sciences at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. He is a lecturer at Science Po in Paris and Permanent Professor at the College of Europe (Natolin campus) and has been a figurehead in social science and political systems debate in Central and Eastern Europe. He is the former director of the Centre Français de Recherche en Sciences Sociales in Prague and was awarded the Frantisek Palacky medal by the Czech Academy of Sciences. His latest books are: *Le passé au présent, actions d'historicisation et gisements mémoriels en Europe centrale et orientale*, (co-dir avec P. Bonnard), Houdiard Editeur, 2010; *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, Memory Games (co-editor with L. Neumayer), Palgrave, 2013, and *La Pologne*

au coeur de l'Europe, de 1914 à ces jours, Histoire politique et conflits de mémoire, Paris, Buchet Chastel, 2015.

LUIGI SPINOLA is a journalist with a keen interest in contemporary history. He is the editor-in-chief of the Italian weekly pagina99 and author-moderator of the radio programme 'Radio3Mondo' on 'RadioRai'. He has been a contributor to Euronews and to numerous newspapers and magazines, including *Venerdi di Repubblica* and *Newsweek*, mainly covering Mediterranean European themes.

STEFAN TROEBST studied history, Slavic, Balkan, and Islamic Studies in Berlin, Tübingen, Sofia, Skopje, and Bloomington. He worked at the Free University of Berlin (Freie Universität Berlin). Since 1999, he has been a professor at the Centre for History and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe at the University of Leipzig and currently acts as its Deputy Director. He is a member of the Academic Council of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, and the Academic Council of the Federal Foundation for Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship.

ROBERT ŻUREK studied history and theology in Berlin. He received his doctorate in Halle and worked for the German Historical Institute in Warsaw on the project 'The Catholic Church and areas along the Oder and Neisse 1945–1989'. He is currently Deputy Director of the Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin. In 2013–2016, Robert Żurek was a director of the Wrocław Branch of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance. Since September 2016, he has been a board member of the Krzyzowa Foundation.

MARKUS MECKEL is a theologian and politician. He was involved in the opposition movement in the German Democratic Republic and co-founded the Social Democratic Party in the GDR in 1989. In 1990, after free elections, he served as foreign minister of the GDR. As a member of the German Bundestag (1990–2009) he focused on European politics, security issues, and German-Polish relations. He was vice-spokesman of the SPD for foreign policy until 2009 and spokesman of the SPD parliamentary group in two commissions dealing with the SED dictatorship and its consequences (1992–98). He was a chairman of the German-Polish Parliamentary Group (1994–2009) and head of the German Parliamentary Delegation to NATO. He is chairman of the Council of the Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (a body he initiated) and a member of the advisory board of the Federal Authority for the Processing of GDR State Intelligence Files/BStU. He is the German co-chairman of the Council of the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation. In 2013, he was elected President of the German War Graves Commission. Meckel is Chairman of the ENRS Advisory Board.

BASIL KERSKI (born in 1969 in Gdańsk) is a German-Polish manager of culture, editor, publicist, and political scientist. He grew up in Poland, Iraq and West Germany and studied political science and Slavic studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. He is Director of the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk and since 1998 has been an editor-in-chief of the

bilingual Polish-German journal DIALOG and a contributor to *Przegląd Polityczny [Political Review*]. Mr Kerski worked as an expert in international politics for the Aspen Institute Berlin, the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), the Social Science Research Centre (WZB) in Berlin and the Bundestag. He is the author of more than 20 German, Polish and Ukrainian-language books analysing history and politics. Many of his articles were published in magazines and newspapers, among others: *Die Welt*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Der Tagesspiegel, Berliner Zeitung, Internationale Politik, Limes, New Eastern Europe, Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita,* and *Tygodnik Powszechny.* In 2001–2005, he was a lecturer at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin and in 2011 at the Institute of History at Humboldt University Berlin. During his academic carrier he was a guest of many prestigious universities in Europe and the US, e.g. Sorbonne, Georgetown University in Washington and Columbia University in New York. He is a member of the Polish PEN Club. Basil Kerski has received many awards and distinctions: The Gold Cross of Merit of the Republic of Poland, Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland and the Silver Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis. He is the father of two sons and lives in Gdańsk and Berlin.


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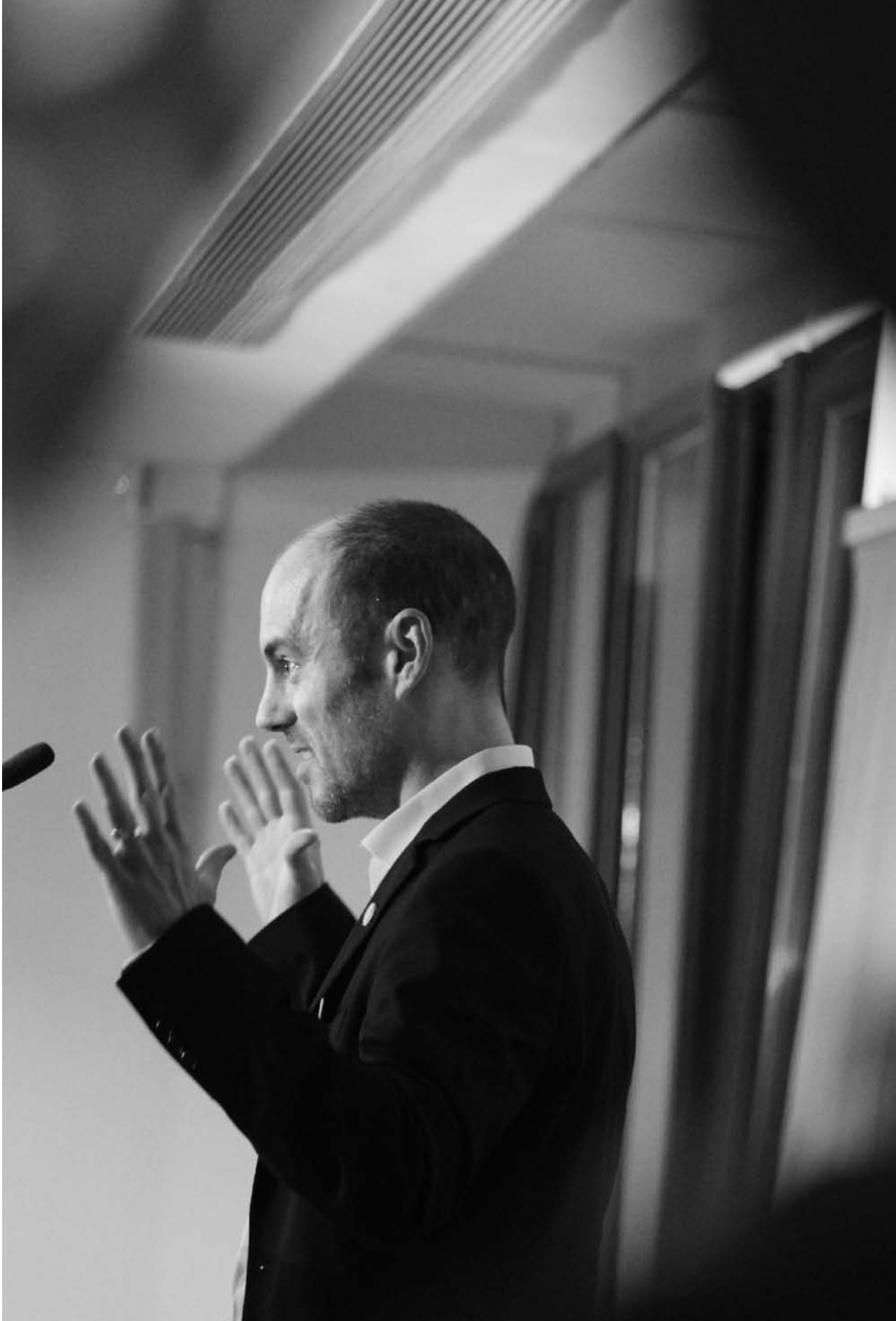
◄ From the left: Jan Rydel (Chairman of the ENRS Steering Committee), Matthias Weber (German Coordinator at the ENRS Steering Committee) and Oldřich Tůma (member of the ENRS Academic Council) at the the Federal Foundation for Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship during the 2nd European Remembrance Symposium

How Much Transitional Cooperation Does European Remembrance Require? Caesuras and Parallels in Europe



Keith Lowe,
Opening lecture

Participants of the 2nd European Remembrance Symposium. From the left: Matthias Weber (German Coordinator at the ENRS Steering Committee), Rafał Rogulski (ENRS Institute Director), Jan Rydel (Chairman of the ENRS Steering Committee), Markus Meckel (Chairman of the Advisory Board)

Not a Laughing Matter: Different Cultures of the Second World War Remembrance Across Europe

KEITH LOWE

Hello. Thank you. It is very nice to be here. Before I say anything else, I should, like everyone else, thank the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. Thank you for inviting me.

Some of you may know that this is not the first conference at which I have spoken about remembrance. A few months ago I addressed the Euro Clio Conference in Erfurt where I spoke about the need for open hearts and minds when dealing with a history that involves other people as well as ourselves. Unfortunately, I was only at the Euro Clio Conference for a very short time, but was there long enough to notice one rather strange thing. The conference was quite busy, with delegates from all over Europe, and everyone was speaking in English as so often happens at these things. But, there was a distinct lack of English people there. I asked one of the organisers why this should be, 'Where are all my countrymen?' She simply shrugged and told me that it was always difficult to get British people along to these events.

I have to say that this does not really surprise me: Britain is not really very good at remembrance, particularly when it comes to events of the 20th century. And when I say the word 'remembrance' it has quite a specific meaning, especially for British people. It implies something sombre, something sad; remembrance is something you do during a minute of silence. But, British people do not like to remember things like the Second World War in silence. We like to shout about them! We like to celebrate them! Give us any excuse to sweep the dust off our Spitfires and fly them around and we'll take it. Our novels and histories about the war regularly top the bestseller lists. We make TV dramas about the war, which often get the highest viewing figures. We sing songs about it, we create exhibitions and even make jokes about it. In fact, our jokes about the

war, I think, are particularly revealing because we British take our humour very seriously, if that makes sense. It's in our jokes that we often reveal our collective subconscious.

I heard a joke about the Second World War the other day that will give you an idea of what I mean. I have to warn you this is not a particularly funny joke, but it does demonstrate the point. It goes like this: 'How many armies does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'It's at least six. The Germans to start it, the French to give up without really trying, the Italians to start, get nowhere and start from the other side, the Russians to do most of the work, but then smash everything up in the process, the Americans to finish the job off, but then claim credit for the whole thing, and the Swiss to pretend that nothing ever happened in the first place.'

I am quite surprised you laughed! Because actually, I think it is in many ways quite an offensive joke. You can tell immediately that this is a British joke because it criticises everybody except Britain. Everybody else has a reason to be ashamed of themselves because of the way they behaved during the war. But not us. We're the heroes. The implication is that all of you Europeans are violent, treacherous or cowards, somehow. But, we British are superior in every way, not only because we are honourable, but because we won the war and you didn't.

This is the way many British people, unfortunately, remember the war. Perhaps not intellectually, but it's what we feel in our hearts. We have carefully constructed this mythology that allows us to think that we are better than everyone else. I think the equivalent joke about the British might go something like this: 'How many British people does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'Sixty million.' Actually, the Russians and the Americans change the light bulb, but sixty million British people sit around and congratulate themselves on a job well done.

Now, I want to tell you a story about remembrance in Britain today. Last year, in 2012, the year that the Olympics came to London, we unveiled a brand-new memorial in the centre of the city. It was a memorial to the men of a bomber command, who flew airplanes over Germany, dropped bombs and so on in the Second World War. Now, there has never been a memorial for these men before in Britain because it has always proved too controversial.

Veterans of the bombing war were understandably a bit angry about this. Why should there be memorials to our sailors, soldiers, and fighter pilots, but nothing to remember the sacrifice of the men who flew the bombers? So anyway, nearly seventy years after the war they finally built this monument. This could have been an opportunity for greater reconciliation and understanding between Britain and Germany. It could have been a memorial to the 55,000 bomber crew who died, but also to the 500,000 Germans who also died under the bombs. It could have been an opportunity to demonstrate to today's generation how terrible war is, particularly that war. But, there was no mention of the bombing victims at all. In the end, it was just a monument to the British airmen, as if they were the only ones who had suffered.

And I have to say that this is not a small monument, it's huge: far bigger and grander than any of the other monuments that stand close by. I was expecting, when they unveiled this monument, that there would be some kind of

controversy over it, especially since this was happening while the whole world was arriving in London to celebrate the Olympics. At such a time it seemed like a very insular way of looking at our history. Besides, in the past there has always been controversy about whether Britain's bombing war was justified. But, to my surprise this time around there was no controversy at all. The newspapers and radio covered the story, but there was almost no mention of the German victims at all. I myself wanted to write a piece for a newspaper asking why this should be the case, but my editor advised me against it. She said: 'You won't win any friends, but you will make lots of enemies.' Nobody in Britain nowadays wants to hear about the victims of the war bombing. They only want to hear about the heroes, our heroes, British heroes.

So, this is the way that we tend to remember the war in Britain today. Where once we remembered the war as a shared catastrophe, a European catastrophe, we now refuse to acknowledge anyone but ourselves. We will remember our dead, but not yours. We will celebrate our dead as heroes and will not spare a thought for the people that we ourselves killed.

Now, don't get me wrong: I have nothing against a memorial to the men of bomber command. They were brave men and deserve to be remembered. What I object to, however, is that their sacrifice has been taken out of context. This, I do not think, is remembrance – at least not the proper, soul-searching remembrance that I would like to see. This is more mythology and it makes me profoundly uncomfortable.

That is the way much of Britain, unfortunately, is beginning to remember itself. But, how do we remember others? Let me tell you another joke. It's a British joke, but you can probably tell it anywhere in Europe, certainly Western Europe, and it will be understood. 'How many Germans does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'Silence, Schweinhund. We are asking the questions here.'

Again, I am surprised; there is a slight titter there. I mean, that again is not a particularly funny joke. It's quite offensive. I look at my wife over there and she looks horrified that I should come to Berlin and make a joke like that. It basically says that all German people are members of the Gestapo: this is a really offensive thing to say.

The thing about Germans is that they have had to put up with jokes like this for decades. And they *have* put up with them. It's quite astonishing really. But the reason why Germans have put up with jokes like this is because, actually, they have no choice. The crimes that were committed in the name of Germany were probably the worst crimes in history. Since it is impossible to deny these historical crimes (although, as we know, there are some strange people who do actually deny them), there is really nothing that Germans can do but hold their hands up and to admit to them. To their credit, this is something that Germans and Germany has been doing for almost seventy years now, mostly without complaint. In Germany, you call it *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In Britain, we can call it 'taking it on the chin'. There is really something quite heroic about it. I think this quality – this willingness of Germans not to fight the subject, but to take our punches on the chin – has won Germany countless friends throughout Europe.

No one in the rest of Europe can really imagine what it must have been like to live with this legacy. I am reminded of the words of a Czech Jew interviewed

by the Imperial War Museum in London. He was called Alfred Hübermann, who was liberated from Theresienstadt in 1945, and who said, I quote: 'When I was first liberated, I thought that Germany should be wiped off the face of the map completely. There was a feeling that one would like to exterminate the whole German nation so this sort of thing could not happen again. But, as time went on, one realised that this was impossible. Whenever I met a German I thought: "What can I say to him?" I could only feel sorry to have to live with that on his conscience.'

It is no coincidence that this symposium is taking place in Germany. The last conference I went to about remembrance also took place in Germany. There are, of course, many reasons for this, but one of them is this German attitude towards remembrance. It is exactly the opposite of the British attitude. For the British, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is an irrelevance; we don't even have an English word for it. But, for the Germans it is of *supreme* importance. Unlike any other country in Europe, all Germans are taught from a young age to appreciate their nation's past sins. We are so accustomed to this that it is sometimes easy to take for granted. But, things are changing in Germany and there are now other forms of remembrance, other memories that are also emerging now. Germans were not only perpetrators of the war; they were also victims. I was speaking a few moments ago about the British attitude towards bombings and this has begun to change. Well, the Germans' attitude towards bombing has also begun to change. A few years ago there was quite a famous book by Jörg Friedrich called *Der Brand: A History of the Bombing War*, which in horrific detail described what it was like for German civilians to be bombed. It sold hundreds of thousands of copies here in Germany. It was actually on sale in Britain as well, but as you can imagine it only sold 3,000 copies. Surprise, surprise.

This is just one example. There are all kinds of other examples of the way that Germans are beginning to remember themselves as victims of the war. They remember the expulsions from other parts of Europe, they remember the rapes that took place here in Berlin when the Soviets arrived. And so on and so on.

Now, this makes some people rather nervous; they don't like the idea of Germans thinking of themselves as victims. Myself, I am not so worried. Of course, Germans suffered as a result of the war and should be allowed to remember that suffering as long as they also do not forget that they were the perpetrators. On the whole, I think that Germany generally gets the balance about right. What worries me more is the thought that some of the traditional German sincerity may be slowly draining away. Germans are tired of apologising for the war and their patience wears a little bit thinner every time outsiders like me make stupid jokes about the Germans being members of the Gestapo.

So let's leave the Germans alone for just a moment and tell some jokes about other people. 'How many Frenchmen does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'Two. One to run away and the other one to telephone the Americans and ask them to do it instead.' Actually, I have a lot of offensive jokes about the French. British people love this sort of thing: 'Why did the French plant trees along the Champs-Élysées? So that the Germans could march in the shade.' 'Why don't they have fireworks at Euro Disney? Because every time they fire them off, the French try to surrender.' And did you hear about the new French flag?

It's a white cross on a white background. I could tell you dozens more. If you're French, please do not be too offended, because when I was a child I used to spend my holidays in Italy and heard exactly the same jokes being told about Italians then. I daresay that we British tend to say the same jokes about the Dutch, Danes or Belgians if we are ignorant of those countries.

But, the French are a particularly good target. They were one of the world's great powers before the war, so their embarrassment by Germany was all the greater. If there is one thing that we British enjoy, it is *Schadenfreude*; it may be a German word but, unfortunately, we British embrace it.

Remembrance in France and indeed in much of Western Europe is much more complicated, I think, than in Britain and Germany. Once again, it is not made easier by outsiders coming and making stupid jokes about them. Almost every aspect of French remembrance is controversial, so I want to look at some of these aspects, in turn.

Firstly, when the French look back at the Second World War they remember themselves as victims. Half a million French people were killed in the war. Two million French men were taken to Germany as forced labour. The Nazis humiliated and abused French people and performed countless atrocities on French soil. The most famous symbol of French victimhood is the village of Oradour-sur-Glane. If you remember, this was the village where one of the greatest atrocities took place: a German division came through and rounded up all the men and shot them. They then herded up all the women and children into a church and set fire to it. Nowadays the village of Oradour-sur-Glane is a national monument. It has been preserved exactly as it was on the day of the massacre as a memorial to French victimhood.

Even in this archetypal symbol, things are not quite straightforward. When the French investigated this atrocity in the 1950s they discovered that some of the SS soldiers who carried it out were not quite as German as they had thought. Some of them were actually from Alsace, which is a region of France. In other words, when you look at it more closely, the massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane is not only a symbol of victimhood, but also of collaboration.

Collaboration is the dark shadow that lies behind every act of French remembrance. The French collaborated with the Nazis at every level of society – sometimes involuntarily, sometimes enthusiastically. Unsurprisingly, this is something that they do not often wish to commemorate.

I want to give you an example of this reluctance, this desire to forget. As is the custom in many countries, there is a tradition in France of naming streets and squares and boulevards after famous French heroes. In 1945, there were hundreds of streets named after the war-time leader, Marshal Philippe Pétain. This is not the equivalent of the German habit during the war of renaming every town square 'Adolf Hitler Platz'. Philippe Pétain actually *was* a true French hero: he was the man who saved the nation during the First World War by repelling the Germans at Verdun. But, after the Second World War he was no longer a hero; he was a collaborator. So the French no longer wanted streets named after him and began renaming all of them. Today, there isn't a single street in France bearing his name. I think the last 'Rue Maréchal Pétain' was in a village called Vinrin in northern France and it was renamed just this April.

All of this is quite understandable. To have a street named after you is a great honour and if you have acted shamefully you should have this honour withdrawn. But, there is also something else going on here. The French want to remember themselves as heroes, not as collaborators. When they drive down the Boulevard Général Leclerc in Paris or study at the Lycée Jean Moulin they remember their past as the past of heroes and martyrs. The collaborators, on the other hand, have been erased from public memory. Isn't that just a little bit convenient? By erasing their names from streets and boulevards the French are removing the things that make them feel uncomfortable. It is much easier to pretend that collaboration did not really happen if you are not reminded of it everyday when walking down a street.

So you see, commemoration of the war in France is a much more complicated matter than it is in Germany or Britain. In Britain, we are all very happy to remember ourselves as heroes, regardless of what really happened in the past. In Germany, you are more resigned to remember yourselves as the villains, but in France they are somewhere in between – and it is difficult to define exactly where. On one hand, they are indeed victims and martyrs; on the other hand, they are heroes and resisters, but also obliged to remember some of the more uncomfortable things – the crimes they themselves committed and the way that many of them collaborated.

These are the shadows that lie behind every act of remembrance, not just in France, but in all of Western Europe. Incidentally, the French as we have heard collaborated not only with the Nazis. There was enormous sympathy with communists as well, which is another subject.

Let us get back to my terrible light bulb jokes (these are all real jokes by the way; I did not make any of them up and would have tried to make them funnier if I had!). The next one is this: 'How many Polish people does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'One. But it takes an entire Soviet division to make sure that he doesn't go on strike.'

As you can tell, this is probably a joke from the 1980s and the first thing you notice is that it is not derogatory. The Pole in the joke is not a sadist or coward, or anything else bad. In fact, he is a hero: one Polish man holding down an entire Soviet division.

I would forgive you for thinking that this is slightly unfair. I have been rude about the French and Germans, so why can't I also be rude about the Poles? Well, the answer is that I am not *allowed* to be rude about the Poles. Firstly, we British still feel guilty about what we did to Poland during the Second World War – or rather what we did *not* do. When Stalin demanded the eastern part of Poland to become part of the Soviet Union, we did not stand up to him; we just rolled over and gave it to him. In compensation, of course, we then gave Poland a part of Germany and that caused all kinds of other controversies that are still raging today.

The second reason why we British cannot be rude about the Poles is that, frankly, we felt sorry for them. Not only had their country been invaded by the Nazis, but also by the Soviets. At the time when I first heard that joke in the 1980s, Poland still had to dance to the Soviet tune. Don't worry, by the way, we no longer feel sorry for Poland and have all kinds of offensive jokes about them. But that is a different story.

My point is that if remembrance of the Second World War and its aftermath is complicated in Western Europe, it is much more complicated in Eastern and Central Europe.

To begin with: what should be remembered? The problem of remembrance in Poland is not that of quality, but quantity: there is simply too much to remember. To start with, the Poles were the archetypal victims; invaded from both directions and brutally suppressed by two enemies. The entire country could be made into a memorial if we wanted to. Every street in Warsaw was the sight of some atrocity or other. All the main extermination camps for the Jews were in Poland and some of them also became infamous communist punishment centres after 1945. But, the Poles were not only these archetypal victims. They were also archetypal heroes. Resistance to Nazi rule in Poland was massive and universal. Unlike in Western Europe, everyone really was in the resistance in Poland; there was a secret army there, a secret government, secret schools and universities. A whole network of resistance that encompassed not just thousands, but millions of people.

The Poles do not feel the need to be careful about the resistance myth like the French do. The Poles feel confident enough to shout about the resistance as proudly as they like. Of course, there was also a huge amount of resistance to Soviet rule. Not so much as against the Nazis, perhaps, but, as any Polish patriot will tell you, the last member of Armia Krajowa was not flushed out of the forest until the mid-1960s. That gives you a sense of the strength of feeling of these people.

So this is the way that Poles *like* to remember themselves. A bit like the British: they think they are all heroes and victims. If you go to Warsaw today, you will see a huge, brand-new museum dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising. And you'll see the symbols of Polish war-time resistance – symbols from nearly seventy years ago – not only in the museum, but as graffiti on the walls and even stickers on the backs of people's cars.

If the story stopped there, remembrance in Poland would be very easy. But, unfortunately, the story does not end there; of course it doesn't. Poles were not only victims and heroes during the war, but were also perpetrators. Their treatment of Jews was nothing to be proud of and there are many places in Poland where Poles joined in with the Holocaust, sometimes enthusiastically. Even more shamefully, this anti-Semitism continued after the war ended. In places like Kielce, for example, Jews continued to be attacked well into the late 1940s. As you can imagine, remembering this part of their history makes many Polish people very uncomfortable. Some people react to this discomfort simply by pushing it away, by trying to pretend to themselves that it did not happen or that it did not matter.

I can tell you a story that demonstrates this quite clearly. I was in Poland recently to publicise the Polish edition of my book. I must have been interviewed at least fifteen or twenty times and, as always happens with those interviews, a certain pattern began to emerge as to the sort of questions I was asked. Firstly, I was repeatedly asked by interviewers why Western historians always ignore the fate of Poland in their books. I did not really know how to answer these questions because – as far as I am aware – Western historians do not ignore Poland. They talk about Poland all the time. In Britain alone, there are books about the

invasion of Poland in 1939, books about the Warsaw Uprising, books about the Katyń massacre, the Soviet takeover, and about almost every act of the war in Poland. There are even books about individual Polish airforce squadrons in Britain or about individual Polish army units. Some of these books are bestsellers in Britain. So, as far as I can see, in my country at least the West does not ignore Poland at all. But, for some reason this seems to be the way that Poles see things. Perhaps this is a hangover from the Cold War when Eastern Europe felt itself to be forgotten by the West. I honestly do not know. Perhaps Poles are so used to putting themselves at the centre of the story that they cannot quite understand why they are not at the centre of it in Britain and France and so on, too.

I think that in some ways some people feel that the West's view of Poles is just not quite heroic enough and that our sympathy for the Poles is just not quite sympathetic enough for a nation of heroes and martyrs.

The second question that I was repeatedly asked in Poland was why the West always insists on calling the Poles anti-Semitic. Again, I am not aware of any great Western belief that modern-day Poles are anti-Semitic. We do have a perception that many Poles *during the war* were anti-Semitic. But, even the most patriotic of Poles must acknowledge that anti-Semitism was widespread during the war and that evidence of it is overwhelming. This may not be a comfortable subject for Poles to acknowledge, but it is not an invention by Western historians. One interview I had was particularly eye-opening in this respect. It was an interview with a national newspaper and for 45 minutes I was asked about why I talked about Polish anti-Semitism in the aftermath of the war. Didn't I know that the Poles had helped the Jews, too? Didn't I know that the Kielce pogrom was instigated by the communists? And so on and so on for 45 minutes.

I should explain to you that my book is not about Poles and not about Jews. It is about the whole of Europe in the aftermath of the war. It is full of atrocities, revenge killings, and stories of local civil wars that took place everywhere, from Norway in the north to Greece in the south, from France all the way through to Ukraine. The section about Polish anti-Semitism was about four pages long. Not only that, I was not particularly picking on the Poles. I actually spent far longer talking about anti-Semitism in Hungary and Slovakia, in Holland and France and so on. But this was the only thing he questioned me about for 45 minutes. That was the strangest interview I ever had.

It only dawned on me *afterwards* as to what really was going on here. This man was desperately trying to protect an idea. As far as he was concerned, Poles were victims and heroes during and after the Second World War; they were not the perpetrators. If some Poles were anti-Semitic during the war, it was not their fault; it was the fault of the Nazis. And if some Poles had been anti-Semitic after the war, that was not their fault either; it was the fault of the communists. I also asked this journalist at the time, who *was* it who beat those Jews to death in Kielce? It wasn't the Nazis or communists, but ordinary Poles. And who *were* these communists who supposedly started the violence in Kielce? These communists were also Polish.

This opens up a whole new problem for remembrance in Poland and indeed for the whole of Eastern Europe because Poles were not only victims and heroes, but occasionally the perpetrators of crimes. They were also collaborators.

Perhaps not collaborators with the Nazis – not so much in Poland, but certainly collaborators with the Soviets.

In 1945, people in Poland joined the communist party in the hundreds of thousands. They helped the Soviets win control over the country. They even denounced resistance fighters to the authorities. This is not something that Poland particularly likes to remember now. Just like the memory of French collaboration during the Second World War, it remains a guilty shadow that simply will not go away.

Which reminds me of another joke: 'How many communists does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'None. Because the light bulb contains the seeds of its own revolution.' I love this joke because, of course, the word 'revolution' in English also means 'to revolve, to turn', like when you're screwing in a light bulb. But my point is that it was not only the Soviets who changed this light bulb in Europe, in Eastern Europe. The light bulb did a small part of the job, of the work, by itself.

Every nation in Europe has a different experience of the past. Some of us were never occupied by an enemy at all. Some of us were occupied by the Nazis, the communists, or by both. Some of us experienced fascism or communism as an outside force and some of us had our own home-grown versions of it. The idea that we can all see history in the same way is really just an impossible dream. All of us are simply too different from one another.

As I hope I have shown, in some respects problems in both East and West are exactly the same. We all want to remember ourselves as heroes and martyrs, but all have to face the inconvenient truth that we were also perpetrators in one respect or another. All of us are reluctant to face this because it hurts. Our problem is that we want our history to make us feel good about ourselves. So, we create nice cosy myths like pretty bubbles floating in the air. When outsiders come and pop these bubbles with their sharp and spiteful jokes, we do whatever we can to defend them.

In other respects, however, there are some very real differences between us. Not just between East and West, but between every single country. I have used France as an example of Western Europe, but the French situation is nothing like the situation in, say, Italy, Denmark, or Belgium. I have also used Poland as an example of Eastern Europe, but in many ways, actually, Poland was exceptional. The experience of both fascism and communism was very different in Romania or Hungary.

Every nation in Europe has a different experience of the past. Some of us were never occupied by an enemy at all. Some of us were occupied by the Nazis, the communists, or by both. Some of us experienced fascism or communism as an outside force and some of us had our own home-grown versions of it. The idea that we can all see history in the same way is really just an impossible dream. All of us are simply too different from one another.

So, is there anything at all that unites us? Well, yes, I believe there is and I can demonstrate this with another joke. Please, bear with me!

'How many Jews does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'It takes six million before the rest of the world finally sees the light.'

For the past sixty or seventy years, ironically, the Jews have been the unifying symbol in Europe. The Jews were unquestionably the greatest victims of the Second World War. Not only that, but we all acknowledge that we should feel guilty for what happened to them.

While the Nazis bear the ultimate responsibility for the Holocaust, we were all complicit: the French and Dutch administrators who gave out their addresses, the Italians and Belgian police who helped round them up, the Romanian and Hungarian railway officials who transported them, and so on. Even the countries that were not occupied by the Nazis during the war cannot escape the guilt because when the Jews came to Britain or Sweden or Switzerland for sanctuary, we turned them away.

The one act of remembrance that unites us all today is Holocaust Memorial Day. Indeed, this is probably the only time when my own countrymen shut up about how brilliant we are and join everyone else in respectful silence. Even that Polish journalist who questioned me so closely about anti-Semitism must feel sombre on Holocaust Memorial Day. It is a sacred day in our calendar. For non-Jews it is unique because, unlike virtually every other remembrance day, it is not a day to remember the things that happened to us. It is a day when we remember something that happened to others. I say 'others' here because there are very few Jews left in Europe today; less than one percent of the population. But, actually in some way that is the wrong word to use because Holocaust Memorial Day also invites us to put ourselves in their shoes, to imagine what it would have been for us if we too had been Jewish. It is, therefore, simultaneously an act of contrition, sympathy and empathy.

There are hundreds of memorials to the Holocaust all over Europe and I would argue that these are the most important memorials we have. Not only do they remind us that this great war was not glorious, a terrible thing, but also of the horrors of extreme nationalism. They are a warning to all of us. More importantly they are also a warning that we all listen to.

So what is this warning? What is it trying to tell us? This is where I can finally put my finger on what I feel is one of the main differences between East and West. In Eastern and Central Europe, there is sometimes a perception that fascism and communism were somehow equivalent to one another. They were both totalitarian systems. They both committed terrible crimes. The wounds of fascism are old, but the wounds of communism are still fresh. So there is a temptation sometimes to remember the crimes of communism first and foremost. In fact, some people are tempted to remember the fascists fondly: since the fascists fought against the communists, they were the good guys, right?

But fascism and communism were *not* the same. For all their crimes, there was no communist equivalent of Auschwitz. There was no communist equivalent of the Holocaust. Sure, we should repudiate communism and what it did to Eastern Europe. But we should always remember to repudiate fascism more.

I make this point only because I think that communism is all but dead now in Europe. However, fascism, in the form of radical nationalism, is still very much alive. This is a far bigger threat today than is communism. Extreme nationalism is an ideology that blames all our problems on outsiders. It promotes stereotypes that are not helpful: the sort of stereotypes I have been demonstrating in my stupid light bulb jokes. It poisons our memories with stories and false statistics that exaggerate our own victimhood and belittle the suffering of others.

This is why I think that remembrance, real remembrance, is so important. It should never be something cosy. Instead, it should be something uncomfortable, even painful. We need to remember not only the things that were done to us, but also the things that we did to others. We also need to remember how things look from other peoples' points of view. Remembrance should be the bearer of truth, not of French truth, German truth, or Polish truth, but a complicated mixture of all our truths simultaneously. This is the kind of remembrance that is healthy. This is the kind of *Europe* that is healthy. It's a hard, messy, and painful thing to do, but it is infinitely better than the pretty myths and fairytales that we would rather tell ourselves.

I am afraid that this is something that is potentially being lost today. Every nation in Europe is becoming more cynical of the European Union, more dismissive of neighbours and more defensive about itself. We are all retreating to our own nationalist perspectives and own nationalist myths without ever bothering to look back on what it is we are throwing away.

Which leads me to one final joke: 'How many ultra-nationalists does it take to change a light bulb?' The answer: 'None. Because they'd much rather sit in the dark.'

Thank you.

KEITH LOWE is a British author and historian, who studied English Literature at the University of Manchester. For several years he worked as a history editor and in 2010 become a full-time writer. His first novel *Tunnel Vision* (2001) was shortlisted for the Author's Club First Novel Award. Lowe has published two critically acclaimed history books about the Second World War and its aftermath. *Inferno* (2007) describes the firebombing of Hamburg by the British and American air forces in 1943. *Savage Continent* (2012), a history of Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, covers the lawlessness, chaos, and unconstrained violence that gripped the continent from 1944 to 1949. It covers a variety of controversial issues such as postwar vengeance, ethnic cleansing and the many civil wars that took place across Europe. It won Britain's Hessell-Tiltman Prize for history in 2013 and Italy's Cherasco History Prize the following year. His books have been translated into 20 languages.

European Remembrance between the East and West

ANDRZEJ PACZKOWSKI

The notion of 'remembrance' used in this context may be – and indeed frequently is – construed in different ways, yet its various semantic fields do not have to be divergent. On the contrary, they may partially overlap. This notion may therefore denote both 'public remembrance' and 'general remembrance' (including that of an individual nature), which, in turn – to follow the typology proposed by Jan Assmann – may be 'communicative', i.e. shared by a witness to an event, or 'cultural', i.e. originating from more or less institutional sources. If all conscious references to the past that exist in community life were to be taken into account, we should also account for knowledge, which is history in its capacity as a science. In a book, Henry Rousso, a leading French researcher of the question, points to four institutions responsible for 'producing' a remembrance of the Second World War: the state, associations (mostly of veterans), culture (here predominantly the media), and academia itself.

We should therefore decide on what type of remembrance we mean. I believe that in our case this is predominantly 'public remembrance', one that is shared by school textbooks, celebrations, monuments, museums, street names, as well as films, and books (novels and monographs). Yet, sociologists and anthropologists predominantly study how this past becomes grounded in an individual: what Ms X or Mr Y 'remembers' from the past and essentially what they know about it from a highly varied array of sources: how they assess individual events and their actors, their attitude to the past of the community to which they belong and also their approach to the past of communities with which they have contact. The latter is also due to 'remembrance' being constructed in this manner, including the past of 'others', aliens, or even enemies. I believe it is proper to realise that quite often we deal with a discrepancy, if not a conflict, between

various types of remembrance, also among them (or each of them) and history as a science. This may give rise to a conceptual Bermuda Triangle in which we may unexpectedly drown. In a subsequent part of my lecture, I will refer to one such striking case.

Actually, when speaking of 'European remembrance' we meander between various areas that do not render the task any easier. Interestingly, Europe may be a smallish continent, yet it is exceedingly diverse and it is no easy task to observe the differentiation in the lecture title into 'Eastern' and 'Western' parts. If I decode the division proposed by the organisers of our meeting correctly, Western Europe includes Greece and Finland, whereas Eastern Europe includes Slovenia and the Czech Republic. It must be remembered, therefore, that this division has a historical nature and is linked to the 20th century, or more strictly speaking only its latter half. Other divisions have also been present in actual 'long history', including ones in which Athens is in the East and Prague is in the West, as precisely as geography teaches us. This addresses comments of a methodological nature.

Many researchers believe that although there was no shortage of violent events, including those that significantly changed the course of history after 1945, the Second World War still holds a central place in the collective remembrance of most European nations. What was it, then?

If we were to compare the scope and intensity of state terror in Europe's two totalitarian states as of 31 August 1939, that is, on the eve of the war, we would see a significant disproportion between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Brutality and ruthlessness in subjugating society, in destroying political opponents, and in the dispossession and extermination of Jews or 'unwanted individuals' resulted in the killing and deaths in prisons and camps of probably close to 10,000 people during the Nazis' rise to power, with approximately 170,000 Germans passing through concentration camps within the first six years. However, in just a matter of months from July 1937 to November 1938, as the murderers themselves counted with extreme precision (and perhaps truthfully), 681,691 people were shot dead in the Soviet Union, the Homeland of the World Proletariat governed by Stalin. Early in 1935, the population of the camps verged on one million, and in 1937 alone the number increased by another 700,000 slaves. The Soviet Union did not cease its policy of mass terror towards its own citizens and those of other countries when it colluded with Germany (suffice it to mention the Katyń massacre, i.e. the execution of around 22,000 Polish officers in the spring of 1940 within less than two months), as it fought a life-and-death battle against the Third Reich and especially later when the Red Army advanced toward Berlin and Vienna.

Still, the Second World War significantly changed the previous scale of such deaths. Nazism, as François Furet wrote, 'before it disgraced itself with crime, allowed great hopes. It mesmerised millions of people, many intellectuals included.' The enchantment ended, although I am not sure whether this only actually occurred after the defeat of the Third Reich. To understand the essence of the change, it suffices to mention that from mid-September to late December 1939, Wehrmacht troops together with special military and police units executed 40,000 to 50,000 Poles, i.e. many times more than were murdered in the entire

Reich over six years. Moreover, in 1940 approximately 70,000 psychiatric and terminally-ill patients were murdered in Germany (within its new borders). This took place under the innocent sounding name Aktion T 4. All of this was a mere prologue to the Holocaust launched in mid-1941. A total of 35–40, possibly 45 million persons were killed in combat and air raids, murdered by a shot to the back of the head or with the strike of an axe, gassed and burned in German death camps, publicly hanged or shot 'as a deterrent', or starved or frozen to death. Historians and demographers argue about numbers. Numbers are important as they provide scale and make it possible to become aware of the vastness of a cataclysm (*clearly of the highest magnitude since the demise of the dinosaurs*). Yet, what we find of special importance here is that this war was a tangle of events, plans and random twists and turns of action, changing frontlines, and alliances established and broken. Although a number of European states – notably Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland – remained uninvolved, nearly the entire continent from North Cape to Crete and from Canterbury to Leningrad found itself ablaze. The whole of Europe was on fire, yet can we speak of a single 'European remembrance' of the Second World War?

It would probably be easier now to seek it through the perspective of great campaigns and battles beginning with the 'Polish war' of September 1939 via the *Blitzkrieg* in spring of 1940, the Battle of Britain in the skies, Operation Barbarossa in the latter half of 1941, D-Day three years later and the final attack on Berlin. After all, the memory of the First World War was to a great extent 'domesticated' because that war mostly consisted of major battles that took place along frontlines rather than across territories of participating states. Nevertheless, the Second World War was not only a total one, but also a conflict that consisted of countless 'minor frontlines' in addition to major ones. It involved hundreds of thousands of people, triggered the vilest instincts on an unimaginable scale, sparked aggressive behaviour, murderous fervour, and a lust for vengeance and retaliation for actual or imaginary persecution. These were wars that saw Croatian Ustaše kill off hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, and Bosnians, and Ukrainian nationalists perform 'ethnic cleansing' by murdering over 100,000 Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in 1943–1944, far more Poles than those killed by the Soviets in the Katyń massacre. Several thousand Jews escaping from 'liquidated' ghettos died at the hands of Polish peasants, frequently for a kilogram of sugar or a litre of vodka handed out by a German police officer, while many others were delivered into the hands of German henchmen. In the mountains of Serbia and Bosnia, Tito's communist guerrillas attacked Mihailović's monarchist fighters without respite. Late in 1944, while Greece was still overrun by German soldiers, a civil war broke out in the country. Germans imprisoned hundreds of thousands of allied Italian soldiers, survivors from the Eastern front, in POW camps when Mussolini was overthrown in a coup in August 1943, yet guerrilla fighters in northern Italy attacked strongholds of their fascist compatriots rather than those of the German occupiers. Fighters on the German side included 'national' SS divisions from occupied states, including Flemish and Walloon, while their governments remained as *émigres* in London and the resistance movements they controlled tried to operate in their home countries. Even neutral players did not always maintain their status: the Spanish

'Blue Division' froze to death in the snows of central Russia, while Swiss banks eagerly received gold robbed by Germany in conquered countries. An estimated figure of more than one million Soviet citizens, mostly prisoners of war, served in military and ancillary formations of the Third Reich. One of them excelled in bestiality while quelling the Warsaw Uprising in the summer of 1944. Aside from the attacks organised by resistance movements and guerrilla fighters, the first death sentences passed against collaborating nationals were carried out in 1943: in Krasnodar in liberated eastern Ukraine and in Algiers after being taken by Allied forces. Some of Hitler's confederates, notably Romanians and Hungarians, shed blood by the Don and Volga, while others, for example, Bulgarians, did not even declare war on the Soviet Union. In 1944, when Americans were dying on the beaches of Normandy and on the islands and waters of the Pacific, Stalin persistently respected a non-aggression treaty with Japan until August 1945. There cannot have been anything simple or unambiguous in that war. Can we, then, encompass it with a uniform and shared remembrance?

Does the line between these remembrances really run along the 'East to West' divide? It is certain that the German occupation and war waged by Germany were far more cruel and bestial in the East than in the West of the continent. Poles continue to marvel that Jean-Paul Sartre (and not only he) published and produced plays in German-occupied Paris, a feeling generally more negative toward the French philosopher than the Germans. In 1943, regular parliamentary elections were held in formally occupied Denmark; the social democrats were the winners with the Danish Nazis winning as few as 3% of seats. In France, most inhabitants of Oradour were killed and the city was burned down, yet the same fate was shared by hundreds of villages and their populations in Poland and Belarus. Warsaw was razed to the ground in the autumn of 1944 after the Uprising collapsed and the city was totally depopulated.

Thus, the division defined in Winston Churchill's famous adage about 'the Iron Curtain' extending from Szczecin to Trieste does not actually apply to what occurred east of the Reich during the war, as the division at that time was of a racial and ethnic nature rather than a political one. German armies displayed no special brutality in Slovakia, Hungary or Romania. Their victims were millions of Slavic *Untermenschen* (with the exclusion of allies) and primarily Jews (and Gypsies) who were considered even less human. In fact, they were nothing.

Possibly, however, an equally important reason for the disparity in experiences at the time – and, therefore, also in remembrance – in the East and West is the fact that the 'bloodlands' or 'lands between Stalin and Hitler' (or rather, governed by Stalin and Hitler), as termed by Timothy Snyder, were affected not by one, but by two occupations during the war. The blood of their people was drained not only by the Germans, but also by the Soviets. The Polish-Jewish city of Vilnius was annexed by the Red Army in September 1939, entrusted to Lithuania in October, and incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. A year later, it found itself under German occupation, only to return to the bosom of the 'Soviet Motherland' three years later (obviously without the murdered Jews). For the Polish population of Vilnius (130,000 Poles in a population of 200,000 in 1939), this meant four changes of occupants in five years. During the first phase of the war from September 1939 to July 1941 the Soviets murdered

no fewer than 40,000 to 50,000 people in a territory covering approximately one-half of the Polish state, of whom 10,000 were killed during the evacuation of prisons after the attack by Nazi Germany. At least 500,000 were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan (of whom at least 5–10% perished). For Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania, i.e. Western neighbours of the Soviet Union, the Second World War in fact began with Soviet aggression or occupation. In turn, for Poland it began with the partition of the country in September 1939. This twofold character of events in the 'bloodlands' remains to this day a significant (and sensitive) element of 'Eastern remembrance'.

The bloody intervention in Hungary, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the introduction of martial law in Poland, and the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* resulted in an erosion of the unconditional pro-Sovietism of Western intellectuals, so common especially in the 1940s and 1950s. Still, it did not manage to disseminate knowledge of what was taking place east of the Iron Curtain and what the foundations of the specific system frequently referred to as 'real socialism' were in the intellectual culture of that 'true Europe'.

As a result of this complexity, but also the specific nature of 'popular' individual memory, findings in a recent Polish study of Second World War remembrance conducted on the 70th anniversary of its outbreak may be somewhat confusing. Results show that 'bad' and 'very bad family memories' affect not only Russians (or rather Soviet citizens) – as these were expressed by 57% of respondents and Germans – 62.6%, but also Ukrainians, as indicated by as many as 63.8% of respondents. While the percentages for Russians (Soviets) and Germans can be considered natural, the posture of Ukrainians requires reflection. Germans and Russians (i.e. Red Army soldiers) occupied the entire territory of Poland for a longer or shorter spell, thus, encounters with them were a general experience. By contrast only a fraction of the Polish population – possibly no more than 20% –25% – had direct conflict with Ukrainians and yet so many declare having bad 'family memories.' I believe that this arises from the aforementioned mechanisms of developing a 'popular memory'. In this case, it can be assumed with a high degree of probability that this prevalence of negative associations with

Ukrainians stems from the realm of 'public memory,' as Polish public opinion has for many years been informed about 'ethnic cleansing' conducted by Ukrainian nationalists, most often called the Massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. I do not claim that one should invalidate or disregard the study results, yet I believe that they suggest that caution should be exercised when viewing memory as a source of knowledge of the past.

How, then, can this fact – study results are a social fact after all – be factored into 'European memory'? Perhaps one should concur with the view that all nations have some skeletons hidden in their closets and prefer peering into their neighbours' closets rather than their own.

A significant element of the hiatus between the 'memory of the East' and 'memory of the West' also formed around events in the final phase of the war and the start of the post-war period, which my co-lecturer today, Keith Lowe, brilliantly described in *The Savage Continent* (published in Polish as *Dziki kontynent*). Namely, with all the chaos that engulfed a significant (and perhaps major) part of Europe at the time, the Red Army and Soviet security services supported minority communist factions directly and physically in Poland, as well as in Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria (and evidently also in eastern Germany), thus paving their path to power with Stalin providing them a protective 'umbrella' in relations with Allied forces. Wherever the communists' own forces sufficed, as in the case of Yugoslavia and Albania, such support was unnecessary. Obviously, there is no rule without exceptions. One of these was indicated by my distinguished colleague in his book. In Greece, first the United Kingdom and later the United States strongly supported the monarchists (and the right wing, generally) in defeating communist guerrilla fighters. These, in turn, under Stalin's pragmatic policy were somewhat modestly and indirectly supported (with weapons, means of transport, and provisions) by states on the road to sovietisation, including Poland. Although one cannot empirically prove that the 'Greek reactionaries' would not have coped with the guerrillas themselves, it is equally probable that the communists would have won the civil war. Yet, the scenario of communists in France or Italy managing to start and win a civil war and not doing so, as they were thwarted by the presence of British and American forces, is political fiction. On the other hand, the fact that one of a handful of NKVD police force divisions stationed in Poland arrested more than 50,000 people from October to December 1944 was no political fiction at all. Nor was the fact that by May 1945 the NKVD and Soviet counterintelligence (Smersh) units arrested and sent over 30,000 soldiers and officers of the Polish clandestine Home Army (Polish: AK) to prison camps. There, Polish soldiers were incarcerated side by side with Germans, Hungarians, and later also Japanese. It was no political fiction either that commanders of the Polish clandestine movement (including the formal government's deputy prime minister) were invited for political talks in March 1944, deported to Moscow, and three nights later sentenced in a show trial. Although none of the defendants were sentenced to death, three of them died in Soviet prisons. Extreme brutality combined with a finesse of operations were also characteristic of the Soviets' activity in Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia. Yet, there was also guerrilla fighting in former Polish eastern territories incorporated into the Soviet Union (i.e. the western parts of Ukraine and Belarus),

as well as in Lithuania, and Latvia that continued until the end of the 1940s and bore the features of pacification. At the time, tens of thousands of civilians and fighters were killed and several hundred thousand people were deported. A similar war also took place in Poland. In a significant part of the 'bloodlands,' the first post-war years were marked by forced resettlements of millions of people: primarily Germans, but also Poles (approx. 1.5 million), Ukrainians, and Hungarians. Migrations of this type were virtually unknown in the western part of the continent.

If Tony Judt is right to claim that the 'post-war memory of Europe took shape' in 1945–1948, the practising of 'European memory' nowadays becomes a real problem: some will speak of Anglo-American aggression, while others will assume the imperialism and brutality of the Soviets as a point of reference.

The Second World War was extremely traumatic with events taking place rapidly and the entire war being relatively short. The cold war in Europe, which began in 1947, was in a way its opposite: extended in time to over four decades, it took place without spectacular military events and with few casualties (although these were incurred as well culminating in Hungary in 1956). Dominant from the mid-1950s and most of the time thereafter was a policy of 'coexistence', avoidance of open conflict, even coupled with concepts of a convergence of systems and slogans such as 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals'. Yet, it was that 'war without a war' that reinforced the division of the continent with nations finding themselves behind the Iron Curtain being 'forgotten to a degree that … they became no more than points of reference on the path to Soviet socialism', as Furet remarked.

Each part of Europe had its own short or long-term interests and significantly different value systems. It seems as if they were at cross-purposes. Millions of French and Italians voted for communists, yet for some reason none of them desired to move to the socialist camp and live there. On the contrary, hundreds of thousands of Hungarians – in 1956 – and Czechs – in 1968, not to mention the millions of Germans who escaped to the other side of the Iron Curtain and a stream of refugees from Poland, Bulgaria, and Lithuania trickled West during this entire time. Refugees included famous athletes and musicians, poets and engineers. It was during the Cold War that people from 'the East' expanded the notion of the American Dream, so lively among them in the late 19th century, to the European Dream, which not only retained its economic dimension, but for many years also incorporated a political dream: of being where freedom reigns. Although those who sought to bring freedom to their backyard were not in short supply, the number of those who simply sought to flee to freedom was incomparably greater. Poles and Bulgarians were, in fact, hardly concerned about the drama and vicissitudes of the painful French and English experience with the process of decolonisation; they found the 'dirty wars' in Kenya and Algeria distant much like the existence (and fall) of authoritarian regimes in Portugal and Spain or the *coup d'état* of the Greek 'Black Colonels'. Most people 'from the East' must have been absolutely indifferent and did not even reflect on accepting the propaganda clichés spat out by the machinery of state propaganda. The persistent presentation of the United States as a 'mainstay of the reactionary' and the 'gendarme of imperialism' and of Western culture as

the fruit of a 'rotting bourgeoisie' did not cause young people to abandon their dream of possessing a pair of jeans and eagerly listening to Elvis Presley and the Beatles. The number of people with anti-American attitudes in France and Italy was probably higher than in Hungary and Estonia. In turn, the tragedies of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the suppressed Prague Spring of 1968, and the revolt put down on the Polish coast in 1970 triggered reactions of compassion and friendship in the West. At the same time, however, they seem to have reinforced the belief that there is a 'Different Europe' over there; provided that this was still Europe rather than simply a fragment of a gigantic ideological empire. Nearly everyone, i.e. people and state institutions, focused on the pursuit of welfare and technological innovation and the great challenge of European integration. Initiated as early as 1957, it consumed a vast share of energy and emotion.

Shared viewpoints are hard to find in all of this, especially since the demarcating line did not merely extend along the 'East vs. West' divide. Within its demarcation was also – less universally, yet significantly – 'the left-wing vs. the right-wing' division. In August 1980, there were certainly many 'Western' Europeans who did not understand why striking Polish workers invited a priest and hung icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary and photographs of the Pope on shipyard gates instead of portraits of Marx and Engels. This division had a lasting effect. When *The Black Book of Communism* was published in France in 1997, a balanced but not dispassionate description of crimes committed in the name of the ideology that lay the foundations of many totalitarian states from Pyongyang and Beijing via Moscow to Havana, the Parisian press cried that one must not speak ill of socialism while 'the thud of the boots of Le Pen's hit squads' resounds in the streets of France. No more than several months ago, *Socialism and Democracy*, a Marxist periodical issued in New York, published an article by an American professor who proves that the 'Katyń massacre' is an invention of anti-Soviet and anti-communist manipulators beginning with Goebbels and ending with current 'pseudo-historians'. If such attitudes and views have stood strong to this day, it is even easier to understand the 'Stalinist seduction' of the French and English of the 1940s and 1950s: the Red Army never reached their territories and therefore can only be remembered as a symbol of the heroic struggle against the Nazis. The bloody intervention in Hungary, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the introduction of martial law in Poland, and the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* resulted in an erosion of the unconditional pro-Sovietism of Western intellectuals, so common especially in the 1940s and 1950s. Still, it did not manage to disseminate knowledge of what was taking place east of the Iron Curtain and what the foundations of the specific system frequently referred to as 'real socialism' were in the intellectual culture of that 'true Europe'.

On the other ideological side, there are those who deny the Holocaust of the Jews and question the 'Auschwitz crime.' Neo-Nazi hit squads and xenophobic reactions are no figment of one's imagination. In many parts of Eastern Europe 'individual' skeletons are dragged out from closets and embellished: Antonescu, Pavelić, Father Tiso, and the Latvian and Estonian SS-men. Leaders of states collaborating with the Third Reich become the idols of extremist nationalist movements and political parties. The traumatic Balkan wars of the 1990s were

to a significant degree a repetition of the former nationalist conflicts and had far stronger support in right-wing xenophobia than in current economic interests.

Our country needs no truth. What it must be given are hope, unity, and goals' are the words of General De Gaulle, who in 1969 commented on the famous documentary by Marcel Ophuls *Le chagrin et la pitié* when speaking of Marshall Pétain's conformism and collaboration in France. With our work on remembrance we seek to deny the words of the great Frenchman (the only European leader to have a monument dedicated to him in Warsaw): let us cherish both truth and hope as well as unity and goals.

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Continental Shifts

DAN DINER

Mirrored in the memory-icon of 8 May 1945, the importance of the Second World War for Western consciousness is deeply impregnated in that very date. That date of the military victory over Germany marks not only the end of the war, but also evokes the National Socialist mass crimes committed during the course of the war. 8 May has become emblematic of a historical rupture, highlighting the victory of good over evil. Such an assessment is shared, above all, by members of the Allied war coalition. From the perspective of their time as well as later, they have felt a sense of deep gratification from the war's outcome. On both sides of the Atlantic, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, the accepted unconditional surrender of the German Reich in Reims – the medieval coronation city of the holy French kings, and in the final phase of the war, the forward location of the headquarters of the Western Allied forces under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower – is recalled as an absolute, unlimited triumph.

At that time, on the day of capitulation, there were no doubts as to the war's righteous nature and outcome. Decades later, in the here and now, lights and shadows of numerous historical viewpoints pass across the gloss of the universal event icon – historical images nourished by the experiences of time in Eastern Europe and on the colonial periphery. They function to place the clear attributes of the time icon of remembrance under increasing pressure of justification.

The most extensive transformation of 8 May 1945 took place in the heartland of incriminating historical events – in Germany. In the course of but a single generation, this emblematic date transversed the rocky stretch of way in a change of meaning from capitulation to 'liberation'.

With ratification of the unconditional surrender of German forces demanded by the Allies, this day symbolised collective defeat and ignominy. Universally

felt relief from a cessation of hostilities and the end of suffering and deprivation was burdened by collective humiliation. In light of the capitulation, only a few in Germany felt elated by what had transpired. Joy was felt at best by those previously doomed to die, the persecuted and those scant few who, cloaked in secret, had acted as opponents of the Nazi regime.

After decades of change, the Federal Republic, the German Western state, adopted the narrative of the few as the valid interpretation of 8 May 1945. After but four decades, the day of the German surrender had mutated into 'Liberation Day'. It was the former President Richard von Weizsäcker, who in a startling speech in 1985 officially imbued 8 May 1945 with a new function for the body politic.

The transformation of 8 May fundamentally altered the country's choreography of memory: from the negative apotheosis of Germany as the 'Third Reich' into the democratic and liberal political culture of the Federal Republic. This necessitated a prolonged course of legal and political change coupled with a historical reassessment of the past. The different stages of this change were accompanied over decades by many offensive contortions and numerous scandalous distortions. These repeatedly flared, combusting from refractions of the past cloaked in the new apparel of the republic. In order to ward off a recurrence of previous calamity, everything reminiscent of the Third Reich was exorcised by means of a public taboo.

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First and foremost, any such beginnings that might even awaken the mere appearance that Bonn was at risk of becoming Weimar had to be guarded against. The much-touted anti-totalitarian consensus also gained support from the country's location on the forward front line of the Cold War at the time. In order to protect the republic from vulnerabilities and adverse conditions, the new Germany and its elites had to be held to task, prepared to meet the demands and challenges of a Western-style democratic order. Criteria adopted to this end were Western-influenced in two ways: one in the spirit of the Cold War acting as a front-line state of freedom internally and externally, as well as on a basis of tradition largely grounded on Anglo-Saxon liberalism – a tradition that historically in Germany had to date been held in but little esteem.

It had doubtless remained alien to those active in politics and business on up into in the early years of the West German state, themselves imbued with the spirit of the late Wilhelmine and Weimar eras. Despite their demonstrative external acceptance of the parliamentary system established with Western

allied support, they tended rather to view that system with reservation. In their eyes, the new democratic political culture was far from something natural and matter-of-fact. It is therefore no surprise that the Federal Republic of Germany was perceived not least as a Western Anglo-Saxon project. This sense of reserve extended both to the implanted political institutions as well as the economic and social constitution. But above all, their reservations concerned the intellectual and popular culture then crystallising and an image of history emergent only with hesitation – one that viewed the history of the German nation as a real or presumably necessary part of the prehistory of National Socialism from a stance equally critical and distancing.

The metamorphosis of the remembrance icon of 8 May 1945, transmuted from surrender to liberation, thus marking the conclusion of a forty-year process of transformation. It fully reflects the liberal values originally imposed by the Western allies: freedom and democracy, parliamentarianism and pluralism. In the memory of the Germans, 8 May 1945 is an icon of remembrance strongly impregnated by the West.

9 May 1945 etches a fully different trace in memory – a little liked, but for the (politically) former East Europeans nonetheless compulsory, icon of memory marking the end of the Second World War. It sprang from the Soviet vantage in the war and the military defeat of the German Reich under the banner of the anti-fascist struggle. In the decades thereafter, it also helped cement the Soviet-dominated post-war order east of the Elbe.

9 May 1945 marks the ceremony, repeated in Berlin-Karlshorst, of the German surrender already announced at the advanced headquarters of the Western Allies in Reims. The new staging had apparently become necessary to pay tribute to the highly complex alliance between liberalism from an Anglo-Saxon mold and Soviet communism at the war's end. This was because that Great Alliance was not anchored in a shared set of common values, but had been principally expedient due to geostrategic considerations. Its aim was to create a mutually agreed coordination of both fronts, Western and Eastern, against the war of aggression launched by the 'Third Reich', as the first primary prerequisite for defeating Nazi Germany.

Already during the course of war, it had not been an easy task to maintain the alliance. There were recurrent fears repeatedly besetting both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union that the other side might be tempted to reach a temporary agreement of some sort with the Third Reich, a move that would have shattered the alliance. Significantly, in a bid to prevent such scenario in the final endgame, which could not be ruled out – and forestall the possible forging of a separate or special peace deal, or even just a truce with Germany on one of the several fronts of the world war – Roosevelt and Churchill jointly agreed in Casablanca in January 1943, with Stalin's consent from a distant Moscow, on a formula of unconditional surrender. But at the latest with the turnabout in Stalingrad, there was a noticeable uptick in tensions within the alliance – tensions that would extend after war's end into the increasingly more palpable antagonism between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. The nascent architecture of the post-war order would soon be reflected in the immediately looming constellation of the Cold War. At the end of hostilities in Europe, it was

deemed necessary to symbolically keep alive a wartime alliance whose prime purpose was then unravelling.

The distrust between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union that characterised the Alliance prompted the Commander-in-Chief of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), General Eisenhower, in the late evening of 6 May, to abruptly dismiss a surrender offer from the Reich government under Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz based in Flensburg to capitulate solely to the Western Allies. The proposal was personally broached by General Jodl, who had been flown in especially to Reims for that purpose. Dönitz, as successor to Hitler, sought through such a partial surrender to mobilise the army and naval units under his command for a sustained evacuation from the Baltic area of troops and civilians in flight. He hoped by doing so, if possible, to also spur a lasting alienation between the Allies – which in the best case from a German perspective might result in a common cause with the Anglo-Saxons against the Soviets. But, by no means could Eisenhower display any interest in this manoeuvre by the Reich leadership in Flensburg that ran contrary to the formula of unconditional surrender. The war was not yet over and a Soviet intervention against the Japanese was still pending in the Far East. After Eisenhower's rejection of his questionable offer, Dönitz had no other choice but to authorize Jodl, awaiting further instructions in Reims by radio in the early morning of 7 May , to agree to a total surrender of the German armed forces on all fronts, effective from 8 May . The transcript of the surrender was witnessed by the Soviet General Ivan Susloparov, attached to the Western Allied Headquarters in Reims, as well as well as by the French General François Sevez. The U.S. Gen. Bedell Smith then signed for the Western Allies and General Susloparov for the Soviet High Command.

On the evening of 8 May, just a half hour before the stroke of midnight, more signatures were affixed to the Reims instrument of surrender at Soviet headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst. The ceremony amounted to a formal ratification due to the presence of representatives of all German armed forces. Grand Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg, General Stumpff as Luftwaffe Chief, and Field Marshal Keitel (Army) signed for the German Wehrmacht High Command. On the Allied side, four witnesses placed their names on the document: British Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder for the Western Allies, Marshal Zhukov for the General Staff of the Soviet Army, General Carl A. Spaatz as Commander of the U.S. Army Air Force and, last of the four, General de Lattre de Tassigny as Commander of the French First Army.

The presence of Jean de Lattre de Tassigny had particular symbolism. In his person, he gave symbolic expression to the recently resolved internal tensions in France between Vichy and London and to the strengthening French will at the war's end to retain the French colonial empire, under threat of being lost, in the hands of the mother country at all costs. As a participant in the Rif war in Morocco in 1924–25, de Lattre de Tassigny was familiar with the forms of colonial warfare. He displayed heroic resistance against the German army on the front in Champagne until the armistice in 1940 and then served as Division Commander of Vichy forces in Tunisia. Due to his refusal to accept the German occupation of the previously unoccupied southern zone of France in 1942, he was arrested and imprisoned. In 1943, he succeeded in escaping, which led him via London

to Algiers, where de Gaulle entrusted him with the command of the so-called B-Army. His units participated in the liberation of France from the south and the occupation of southern Germany. At the beginning of the 1950s, he was the High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in Indochina and East Asia and died in January 1952. He did not live to experience the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu or the onset of the Algerian uprising against the French colonial power in 1954.

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The common ground of the Allies captured in the image of the German surrender in Reims and Karlshorst was soon to disintegrate in the face of a looming new reality. The Anglo-Saxons played their chosen role as preceptor of the liberal and parliamentary values of the West, whilst the Soviet Union was striving to establish a system of impermeable domination. Meanwhile, France, which choreographically had tended to be relegated to a back seat in that ceremony, sought to compensate for its lost dignity on the continent in 1940 by striving to retain its overseas possessions, already attempting to break free from the colonial yoke.

Alienation within the Alliance was to display its first manifest sign in the differently dated festivities in West and East to commemorate the German surrender. Although the end of hostilities was marked by the date of 8 May, the Soviet Union (as well as its successor, the Russian Federation) celebrated 9 May as the day of victory over Nazi Germany. Differing assessments of the war and its end that immediately crystallised in West and East as well as conflicting memories associated with subsequent events have found their respective, differently calibrated foundational event in the iconography of that double capitulation – in Reims and Karlshorst.

The victory documented on 9 May 1945 provided a huge historical bonus to the Soviet Union. Invaded by Hitler's Germany in June 1941, it had to pay a high price in blood until the surrender of the German Reich – a far greater loss in dead and wounded than any other of its Alliance partners. Ultimately, among the powers of the Grand Alliance, the Soviet army bore the brunt of particularly heavy carnage in ground combat. This was expressed *de facto* and symbolically in the battle for Berlin, a goal that Eisenhower, only due to the huge anticipated losses, had left to Gen. Zhukov. The crimes of the Nazi regime exposed after the war, the liberation of the concentration camps and the devastating sight of mountains of corpses also imbued the Soviet victory over Hitler's Germany a high international prestige value. Moscow registered a gain in power and moral standing. This prestige bound with 1945 served to conceal the crimes of

the Stalin regime known already in the 1930s. On the whole, in view of 9 May condensing into an icon of memory, the Soviet Union appeared to reap the benefit of a historic absolution for past injustices – in any case in the West.

The Eastern image of the end of the war on 9 May 1945 differs fundamentally from that of the West on 8 May. A form of domination was imposed on the states of Eastern Europe entirely against their will, an order of rule that subjugated them to a binary occupation: by a regime (communist) and by a restored empire (the Soviet Union). This duality is reflected in the Soviet interpretation of the event: it was the victory of Soviet arms over Hitler's Germany that led to the defeat of the German invaders. That was one half of the binary. At the same time, this victory was also more ideologically infused: it comprised a military ratification of a revolutionary mission. The much-vaunted world-historical superiority of socialism appeared to be confirmed by the victory over Hitler's fascism. This becomes visible in the choreographic similarity between celebrations to glorify the October Revolution and the grand parades to commemorate 9 May 1945. By demonstrative dint of their show of arms in Red Square, they merge into a single event even though commemorating events on different dates. In the post-communist period and in the countries of the Baltic region, both are rejected: the Communist regime as well as commemoration of the victory over Hitler's Germany as staged by the Soviet Union and its successor, Russia.

Memories were formed in the course of the post-war period in Eastern Europe that seemed to resist Soviet rule. It is obvious that such unofficial memories in the communist-dominated past could find no public expression. They existed in secret. Retreating into the private sphere, those who dissented sought to elude the grasp of organs of the state and ruling party, their surveillance and control. Only with the demise of communism and the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1989–91 would these silenced memories surface, as the peoples of East-Central Europe who were Sovietised at the end of the war, in particular, the annexed Baltic countries, regained their state sovereignty. This would also become markedly manifest in the routinised Soviet-style ritual in connection with a 9 May that continued to be commemorated. Outside of Russia, the victory over Nazi Germany celebrated with the usual festive pomp sparked and continues to elicit publicly articulated opposition. It grew into an actual protest on the 60th anniversary of 9 May 1945, when elected representatives of states of the former so-called 'Europe in between' (i.e. lying between Germany and Russia) refused to pay their respect on an anniversary day that was celebrated with particularly elaborate festivities in Moscow. The Baltic states most specifically rejected the suggestion that they should see Soviet rule restored with the end of the Second World War in 1944–45 in their countries as a liberation. Instead, memories there demanded a hearing that drew a very different picture of the war and the post-war period. Apart from the few surviving Nazi victims for whom the westward advance of Soviet army was life-saving, this period was marked in their perception by occupation, annexation, repression and deportation. Whereas freedom and democracy were self-evident consequences of the Western Allied victory in the West, Soviet rule was imposed further to the East. Both reference dates of VE-Day – 8 May in the West and 9 May in the East – thus necessarily entailed different realms of memory.

The emblematic-inflated elevation of 9 May 1945 possessed an aura of negativity for those peoples, who either once again or for the first time fell under Soviet rule in 1944–45. Seen against the backdrop of decade-long communist rule, that regime of domination seems to have engendered even more bitter memories than the Nazi German occupation. Such a tendency was not only nourished by the experiences of Soviet rule in 1940–41 and 1944–45. It arises far more from a nationally inspired constellation dating back to the events of 1941. This applies especially to the Baltic States. Mostly Latvians and Lithuanians, but also Galicians in Western Ukraine as well as Poles in certain places, who incurred a burden of guilt with regard to their Jewish neighbors when that summer they welcomed the German invaders with their cruel pogroms against local Jews. In the Baltic, but also in the area of the Eastern Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, ethnic nationalism and a brutal anti-Semitism fused with an anti-communism radicalised by the brief yet no less brutal Sovietisation of these countries to form an explosive mix of hatred and perfidy.

The residue of that damaged past impacts present debates about the Soviet era. Thus, in the Baltic states after 1989–90, the emergent nationalist and anti-totalitarian self-conception, in its conscious reversal of Soviet communism, gravitates into a highly questionable proximity to apologetic, Nazi-friendly attitudes. Where cultivation of the collective national memory oriented to the future is concerned, in a number of places, praise voiced for the participation of their own units on the German side in the fight against the Soviets neglects due homage to the otherwise loudly proclaimed anti-totalitarian credo. Such an attitude tends to see an emblem of their own nation's defeat in the Soviet victory over Hitler's Germany, as symbolically condensed in the emblematic *lieu de mémoire* of 9 May.

Thus, 9 May is likewise an icon of memory for the Baltic states, but one with a negative radiant power. In the memory of Poland, a far more complex constellation emerges, because Poland was equally subjected to two reigns of terror, Nazi German and Soviet. Invaded by Germany and Russia in 1939, occupied and divided, the newly Sovietised eastern part of the country fell in 1941 under the grip of a rapidly intensifying National Socialist rule. Although Nazi occupation was longer and also more brutal than the previous Russian rule, the latter appears to dominate memory, for example, the events in Katyń in 1940, when Polish officers in Soviet captivity were liquidated en masse by Soviet special forces in a forest near Smolensk. This event is deeply etched into Polish memory.

Such a hyperbolic icon in memory's realm can perhaps be superficially understood as an appropriate reaction to the prescribed national amnesia of the communist regime in the post-war period. However, it may fail to address the political-theological depth effect of the event. This action evokes early layers of collective memory – strata that are more far-reaching than the empirical reality of the crime in Katyń. The mangled body of the Polish nation is symbolised in the disturbing image of slaughtered Polish officers. The political-theological depth effect of the event that is sunk into the collective memory can only be revealed in its full significance when understood as an emblem of a complex national iconography. The collective corpse of the murdered officers represents nothing

other than the crucified body of Jesus (Corpus Christi) perceived against the backdrop of the traditional Polish self-image of "Poland as Christ among the Nations."

The situation was completely different in the former Czechoslovakia. There, the memory and commemoration date of 9 May 1945, with its strong Soviet connotations, was quite positive and beyond ideological requirements and expectations. The bourgeois Czechoslovak government of Edward Beneš exiled in London was favorrably inclined toward the Soviet Union by dint of a traditional Slavic affinity extending back to the 19th century, coupled with a geopolitical proximity due to necessity. This was because the memory of the Munich Agreement of 1938 as well as the destruction of 'rump Czechoslovakia' in March 1939 made it drastically clear to the Czechoslovak leadership, in light of the demonstrated inaction of the Western powers, that close relations with the Soviet Union were absolutely necessary. This insight resulted in the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1943, wherein the Soviet Union declared itself a guarantor of a future restored Czechoslovakia, admittedly at the cost of Carpatho-Ukraine being relinquished to Moscow. With the loss of this area, Czechoslovakia now bordered, unlike in the preceding interwar years, directly on the Soviet Union. The precarious experiences at the end of the 1930s contributed to Czechoslovakia entrusting to in dubious friendship with the Soviets.

But it was not only the requirements of external security that seemed to warrant a special closeness to Moscow. Internal circumstances also evidently spurred of the policy implemented by Prague at the war's end to rid the nation of its German minority. Thus, external rapprochement by the bourgeois Czechoslovak government toward the Soviet Union found its internal counterpart in the politics of ethnic homogenisation in which what was termed 'external resettlement' meant expulsion of the German population and to a lesser extent the Hungarians across the border. The fact that the takeover of power by Czechoslovak communists in February 1948 by threat or sporadic use of force – the 'Prague defenestration' of Jan Masaryk – went so smoothly was also due to a special constellation on the banks of the Vltava: the fact that German property had just been taken over in the nationwide process of nationalisation and collectivisation that was soon to follow. The so-called transfer of values and goods into public 'people's property' thus took on a double meaning, both ethnic and social.

As for the meaning of 9 May 1945 in the collective memory of the community of East European states from 1945 to 1990, Czechoslovakia was so to speak at the opposite end of the sympathy scale in contrast to the Sovietised Baltic republics. For Prague, whose state destroyed by Hitler Germany was restored in significant measure through support from the Soviet Union, this date for a long time stood for liberation rather than external rule by local agents of Moscow. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in a concerted bid to violently crush the reform-communist project in August 1968 in any event put a swift end to this tradition. Moscow's brutal approach weakened not only the radiance of 9 May 1945 in Czech-Czechoslovak memory, but also clouded beyond recognition the traditional Slavophile image of Russia among Czechs that extended from the 19th into the 20th century.

The Russian Federation, the new Russia, still adheres to the myth of 9 May. Despite the change of regime in Moscow in 1990–91, a residue of the past worthy

of commemoration appears preserved in the date of the end of the Second World War. This is primarily due to the historical significance of an event celebrated as the Great Patriotic War, i.e. the Second World War in its Russian patriotic colouring, and narrative linkage to a history of Russian suffering and deprivation extending back far into the past. Thus, during the war, the self-understanding of the internationalist-minded communist regime fused with the self-image of an imperial nation. The constitutive vessel of empire valid for both variants of Russian self-identity appears to find its symbol in the memory icon 9 May 1945. So, it is not surprising that former communist symbols of the now extinct Soviet Union are recognised and co-opted as national ones in the new Russia to the extent that they give expression to the memory of the Great Patriotic War.

The reaction in post-Soviet society to crimes committed during Stalinism resembles in some respects a state in the wake of a traumatic civil war: it maintains silence about what happened.

Another additional factor in the equation here is one that elsewhere is met with incomprehension: the evidently indifferent acceptance of the horrendous crimes perpetrated by the communist regime. This has occurred in complete contrast to post-Nazi Germany, which internationally has been accorded a certificate of evident excellence in dealing with its past.

The reasons for this striking difference probably lie less likely in possible differing features of culture between Germans and Russians; rather they are rooted in the very nature of the crimes committed. Thus, it is striking that the overwhelming majority of victims of the National Socialist regime were singled out as others, i.e., those who were alien, did 'not belong'. The crimes significant for the character of the regime were perpetrated almost exclusively by Germans against non-German populations or populations declared to be non-Aryan. With such a distinction on the horizontal axis between one and an other collective, the crimes committed in this connection are also collectivised: they enter into the respective collective memory as collective crimes, thus, as crimes of the nation. For that reason, they also pass into the arsenal of collective memory and as such are transmitted from one generation to the next.

In the Soviet Union, especially at the highpoint of Stalinism, the line of differentiation was drawn differently. The declared enemy was probably not horizontal, i.e. not along, where possible, an ethnic line of distinction between Russians and non-Russians, but rather was conceived in vertical terms: a purported distinction between classes and beyond any national category of belonging. But even this ostensible social distinction evinced no consistency. Given the regime's own arbitrariness, anyone could be declared a class enemy and be thrown into the

death mills of the state, party and security service. Individuals, who one day were involved in executions and mass killings, and thus regime crimes, could themselves for reasons inexplicable to them become the victims of these same organs. Even the highest representatives of the party and regime were not spared from such arbitrary accusations of being the enemy. It seemed that the insatiable juggernaut consumed its own even with a certain predilection. Stalin himself was not immune to fears circulating in the corridors of power. This distinctive trait arising from the arbitrary nature of the regime led specifically to the astonishing phenomenon that in the post-Soviet period, no 'ethnically' grounded memory of victimisation was able to crystallise that extended from one generation to the next. This can perhaps be understood as a reaction to the fact that there was no viable attribution, however construed, of perpetrators and victims. Thus, it can well come to pass in a post-Soviet family that the fates of perpetrators and victims are equally remembered side by side. At times the victims themselves were former perpetrators. Such a configuration renders remembrance difficult and makes it equally as hard to construct a binding collective memory.

The reaction in post-Soviet society to crimes committed during Stalinism resembles in some respects a state in the wake of a traumatic civil war: it maintains silence about what happened.

Such a seal of silence on the past was observable in Spain, not only in the transition phase immediately after the death of Franco, but also during the long reign of the Socialists that followed. The memory of the Spanish Civil War – an exceptional conflagration and perhaps the ultimate iconic political event of the 20th century – seemed to have been passed on everywhere except at the actual scene of those events. This was due to various reasons, such as the pervasive and always discernible fact that internally restored peace after sharp discord that has torn a polity apart must be preserved as though by means of a silent agreement, a type of amnesia. Only after a long duration of prescribed or self-imposed silence and requisite generational distance can the narrative of events be allowed to return to the public sphere. Justice for which redress is sought can now safely be compensated, both symbolically and materially, for the internal peace of the polity.

In Spain, the memory of the Civil War returned more than 60 years after its end. The trigger was a parliamentary act on material restitution. It sparked a nationwide discourse on memory about the Civil War. The law itself follows an evident pan-European tendency to recall mass crimes. This recollection serves the continent as a moral imperative for its unification. It is paradoxical that Spain has taken part so late in the canon of the Europeanising narrative. For decades, the Spanish Civil War was a traditionally emblematic configuration for the universal memory of the Second World War. This presumably first event on the road toward the European catastrophe was the last in a series of restored pan-European memories.

The fact that Spain was so belated is not just a consequence of amnesic memories of a previous Civil War constellation. It also springs from that transformation of the image of the Second World War that has occurred in the meantime. Whereas in the more immediate post-war period of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the notion of an ideological global civil war or struggle between fascism and

anti-fascism was predominant as a scheme of interpretation with increasing importance of the Holocaust, this picture has altered. In its wake, genocide and mass atrocities replace the ideologically dichotomous scheme as a reference point of remembrance. This helps diminish the dominance of the Spanish Civil War in interpretation of what happened in the 20th century. Conversely, there is a growing trend in interpretation of the Spanish Civil War to detach it from its formerly ideological antagonism marked by class conflict and instead emphasise regional or even ethnic differences.

The late entry of Spain into the European space of memory is also attributable to the fact that the country was also spared the ravages of the Second World War. Thus, it was neither drawn into the undertow of the memory icon of 8 May nor that of 9 May 1945. Should that nevertheless occur, the Spanish Civil War – as an anticipatory event shifted spatially and in time far to the West and heralding an imminent Second World War – actually belongs within the memory landscape of a type of 9 May before 9 May. This to the extent that the Spanish Civil War can be read as the external remotely, shifted side of the internal Soviet 'civil war' waged in 1937–8 against supposed internal enemies of the Party: saboteurs, subversives, traitors, Trotskyites and alleged fascists. What would emerge in the late post-war era in Eastern Europe as the voices of dissidence had its forerunners in those termed 'renegades' in the Spanish experience. The victory over Nazi Germany associated with the name of the Soviet Union and fears about what years thereafter would be adapted into the memory icon of the Holocaust has helped obliterate the memory of the Stalin regime's atrocities committed at the same time as the Spanish Civil War. The culture of memory in Spain therefore stands outside the imaging of history bound up with 8 May or proceeding from 9 May 1945.

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European Caesuras 1914–1939–1989. Dominant Remembrance Narratives in Europe

GYÖRGY DALOS

Ladies and gentlemen, I will speak off the cuff in making my remarks. I believe that there is already something, of course, in numbers, dates and calendar. Dates generally play an important role in Hungarian history and that of Eastern Europe. It is as if they somehow mandate us to do something, as if medieval history, for example, required Hungary and Poland to do something.

Hungarian dates are mostly tragic because we have a tragic national consciousness. Of course, the Serbs or our neighbours, the Czechs or Slovaks, can provide similar dates. In Hungary, it is the battle of Mohács of 28 August 1526, as it marked the collapse of the Hungarian medieval state. Practically, this battle ended the country's independence for about 250 years. Yes, this is, of course, always a day of mourning; a good and decent Hungarian always mourns on this day. But, historians have always been a bit suspicious of how this was possible? On 28 August 1526, the Hungarian army was defeated, King Ludwig died in this battle, and then the town of Buda was captured by Ottoman troops in 1541. The vital question for Hungarian history – for historians, not for everyday consciousness – was what happened during these 15 years? Why this great mourning when for 15 years the Turks cannot be found in Hungary? They left because they robbed the country. Nevertheless, Mohács is a day of mourning.

There are incredible historical paintings and romantic stories, as the king asks his cook in the early morning whether we will eat lunch that day. There is talk about what was to blame for this and one knows, of course, that here as well a detective can uncover quite a bit. For example, the Hungarians had an army of 20,000, whereas the Ottoman army had 80,000. But, about a day away – I think it cannot be measured in kilometres – at a distance of one day there was a Hungarian army of 100,000 under the leadership of a Transylvanian

prince. Why did he not rush to help the king? What is a nobleman who does not support his king? This is also suspicious in this great moment of sadness. Of course, this is tied to the Hungarians' claim that Europe is actually responsible for this defeat because Europe should always help Christians in other countries, including Hungary. This is the Hungarian self-image and this is what Europe failed to do. Historians, in turn, know how this failure came about. First is the fact that the threat to Hungary from the Ottoman Empire was not the main theme at the Council in Speyer. It is also clear that the Pope and all western European rulers promised aid to Hungary, particularly financial assistance and weapons. However, they had a problem – they were not quite sure whether the Hungarians would instead use this money to fight against each other or against the Fuggers who took root in northern Hungary. So there actually was not much help, but this created the idea still with us to this day that Europe abandons us. Such abandonment created this legend, a mythology that is so firmly anchored in the national consciousness that it must be taken seriously. It began with the Mongols in 1241 when they attacked, robbed, and then left Hungary, which had its population cut in half and was left in ruins.

Now, the Hungarian self-image is as follows: we defended Europe against the Mongols. Several centuries later, we defended it against the Ottoman Empire. There is no evidence that Genghis Khan wanted to reach London at all cost, but this nevertheless reinforces us, our pride, our self-satisfaction. When we speak with friends from other countries we hear similar stories. Bulgarians also claim that they were preoccupied for 400 years with defending Europe and Christianity against the Ottoman Empire.

These legends must, of course, be treated somewhat ironically, otherwise they are unbearable. On the other hand, they belong to us. As a child I lived, so to speak, with this heroic image of Hungary as it fought the Turks and the Habsburgs. Of course, and by the way, Ms. Kaminski, I do not need pity because I am 70, which means that these images have also been in my family, in history.

Yes, the Turks' time in Hungary lasted 150 years net, as I always say. But, in gross this time of the Turks continues to this day. Hungarian television thrived for decades on soap operas and movies in which the brave Hungarians fought the Turks. There is also a hatred of the Turks of Hungary, of the Ottoman Empire. If they provided this fantastic opportunity, they also won. Otherwise, our history in the Hungarian self-image has consisted of only defeats. This is true compared, say, to Sweden. Compared to Bulgaria, we were rather successful. But the big problem is that everything lives on in almost mysterious and mystical ways.

By the way, our positive legends and mythology are related to Poland. All Hungarians know, even those who know no other language than Hungarian, the saying: "Polak, Węgier, dwa bratanki – i do szabli, i do szklanki". We were always friends, which also stems from the fact that we rarely shared borders. We were always truly friends and that friendship has played, I would even say, a positive role in many historical situations. Not only because we at times had such guest kings as the Jagiellons in Hungary or Batory in Poland, but because the Hungarian nation somehow felt an obligation toward the Poles. Polish participation in the revolution of 1848 and Polish solidarity with Hungary in 1956 enriched our national consciousness and in a way also soothed it.

There was even a very specific situation in 1939 when Hitler's Germany attacked Poland while Hungary befriended Hitler's Germany. We were more than allies, as we expected the Germans to revive the Treaty of Trianon of 1919. We had to be very good friends with the Germans, somewhat more friendly than necessary. This, of course, chimed with another mentality, the aristocratic mentality – according to which we are faithful and honest. Then, Horthy, our deeply conservative and anti-Semitic Prime Minister, a totally reactionary politician, suddenly addressed the question of Poland. We cannot go along with Germany on this issue because friendship with Poland is so deeply anchored in the Hungarian nation. Permission was given for Polish refugees to pass beyond Hungary. This is a low point and it will be discussed, of course. Again, monuments will be sought with an attempt to idealise these people. Teleki, a Hungarian count, put a bullet in his head when Hungary attacked Serbia and Yugoslavia because he was a Hungarian noble. He did not forget that six months earlier we had signed a treaty of eternal friendship. We know this from later times and also what it can mean. A treaty of eternal friendship exists with Yugoslavia, thus, we cannot attack Yugoslavia. So, he killed himself. I believe this was, as for a Hungarian aristocrat, a duel with himself. It was Russian roulette; he lost and it ended in suicide.

Regarding Poland, I believe it was more a merit than suicide. In such a case, it would be natural that a Romanian politician would have at the same time said one thing and done something else. For a Hungarian politician from this nobility, the noble sphere of course, it was either suicide or collaboration. One half, the smaller half, instead chose suicide and another, collaboration, whereby collaboration was also suicide.

Naturally, therein lies the whole tragedy of history when there is a choice. Hungary also found itself between great powers, aggressive superpowers, just as Poland did, although we, of course, did not have any strategic importance. Hitler allowed us more because he knew that it was better to allow this somewhat conservative medieval folk a bit more. Also, Khrushchev allowed more because Hungary was not so important. It does not sound good, but the EU also allows us a bit more than we deserved because we are not important. But this awful feeling of not being important is something that lies behind this Hungarian dream, this fear of falling out of Europe. It is linked to mentality and this mentality is forged by a phenomenon, which, I believe, is less pronounced among other peoples in Central Europe, namely linguistic isolation. It made Hungarians the loner of Central Europe. They were neither truly East nor West. They were Christian, but this Christianity needed about 250 years. We already had Holy Kings, but the people were still pagans. The liquidation of paganism lasted about 200 years in Hungary, something that reflects all the paradoxes of Hungarian history.

Yes, we had similarities with Poland, but the Poles had 300 years of absolutely no statehood under these similarities and I believe they barely even dreamed of a state. Hungarians had a state, but they also dreamed of a state. They wanted a Hungarian empire. They called this hodgepodge that they desired the Hungarian Constitution: The Thousand Year Constitution. Whoever correctly reads the Hungarian *corpus iuris* finds no 1,000 year constitution. There was none. Communists wrote the first truly modern constitution for Hungary. It was a typical Soviet

constitution where all rights were promised without warranty. Yes, everything was free except the citizens. In 1989, this constitution was suddenly questioned, not the thousand year one, but the one from 1949. The Justice Minister at the time was asked on the radio, as this was already Glasnost, what would remain of the old in a new constitution and he said in a single sentence: 'Budapest is the capital city of the country'. This is the entire frailty. Our history consists of frailties. It is true, in returning to the subject a bit, that the Ottoman Empire occupied Hungary for 150 years. But it is also true that the Habsburgs arrived, the Habsburg dominion, and that a new heroic struggle arose with Hungary against the Habsburgs. This already shows a certain ambivalence which culminated with the Hungarian's noble resistance, the reforms of Maria Theresia and with Joseph II. They wanted to Germanise Hungary a bit, not entirely, but at least the higher classes. At the same time they wanted to introduce modern enlightened reforms. They partly did so with enormous resistance, namely because Joseph II was not crowned as a Hungarian king. The nation mocked him as a king in a hat. Also, of course, the Hungarian nobility did not want to pay taxes and this tax issue was therefore a main issue in the Hungarian war of independence. There was then no desire to pay tax and this also continues to this day.

Hungary also found itself between great powers, aggressive superpowers, just as Poland did, although we, of course, did not have any strategic importance.

This, so to speak, was a part of the resistance, the desire to naturally preserve Hungary while also retaining its own privileges. From the outset there was a curious duality of Hungarian feeling: to be modern, but not really western. We do not want to be Austrian. Incidentally, the Austrians were not called Austrians, but Germans. These were Germans. As for the Germans, there were only Prussians and Swabians. Hungarians felt themselves to be in this situation, as was stated during the Turkish period, of being between two heathens seeking a homeland. The heathens were the Austrians and the Turks.

In the 20th century these conflicts worsened greatly when Hungary became involved in two world wars. Here, by the way, is the huge difference with Poland. We were willy-nilly allies, it must of course be emphasised, but nevertheless were Hitler's allies. This means that everything that was aggressive, unbearable and terrible in Hungarian society was integrated into this loyal alliance. When the alliance ended as it did, the Germans were the only culprits. Suddenly. Why is this so important? Because in 1956 there were approximately 13 days during which Hungary promised to offer something qualitatively better, something European. But this curious duality of Hungarian consciousness remained. At the level of mentalities this had roughly two aspects. The first was the national pathos, an emotion-laden political reference to history, and the other being scepticism. In 1956 the Hungarians last lived their great illusion that the West would help us. This illusion was, of course, an illusion of despair, as Europe's attitude was clear.

It was obvious where the Soviet army was, namely with its tanks on the streets. But one wanted to believe that the Soviets succeeded in something that no one else would have achieved, namely communists and anti-communists being in the same camp at the end of October 1956 and believing that UN forces would help us. This illusion extended so far that even the communist Prime Minister in early November, partly from despair, partly out of spite and Hungarian pride, declared the country's neutrality and its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Newspapers called the Soviet ambassador at the time His Excellency, not comrade. This was, I believe, even though this whole concern with neutrality was an absolute crackpot idea, the greatest and finest that the nation achieved. Then naturally came what should come – 32 years of partial terror and partial consumption. Terror – consumption, 1958, a year when the execution of Imre Nagy was carried out and when a giant concert was held in Hungary, when grocery stores were full and people did not think about history or politics. One must understand this to understand the country's present problems. These problems are, indeed, I would say commented on in a very media-oriented form, but are nevertheless there. Also, at the turn of 1989 our cramped historical awareness could not really change during these great moments. If we look at today's Hungarian problems beyond politics, they indeed lie with this duality of national consciousness. What do we choose? Are we pathetic, sceptical, romantic, or sentimental?

I think that at this point I will stop and that we will then continue the conversation, no?

GYÖRGY DALOS is a Hungarian writer and historian. He studied history at the Lomonossov University in Moscow. After his return to his home city of Budapest, he worked as a museologist. In 1968, Dalos was accused of 'Maoist activities' and was subjected to a profession and publication ban forcing him to work as an interpreter. In 1977, he was a founder of the opposition movement against the communist regime in Hungary. In 1988–89, he was co-editor of the East German underground opposition paper *Ostkreuz*. From 1995 to 1999 Dalos headed the Institute for Hungarian Culture in Berlin. Since 2009, he has been a member of the International Council of the Austrian Service Abroad. He has received several prizes, most recently the 2010 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding.

How to Come to a European Remembrance

GESINE SCHWAN

Thank you for the warm welcome as well as for the invitation. I believe it is extremely important for this network, which cultivates European memory, to prosper and flourish. There are alternatives that I do not find pleasing, to êxpress it in a completely non-academic way. Thus, it is very beneficial that you counter them with your work in the spirit that you do. You have had many individual presentations and discussions and it is never good when one arrives at the end without being present their at the start and perhaps either state something that has already been discussed 26 times or something out of context. I could not take part in the entire meeting and simply hope for clemency.

I see few people with headphones and am thereby somewhat reassured because I was originally going to speak in English and then I was told I could do it in German. Simultaneous translation is always difficult, but it will work. I have a total of 18 points and hope that this will also be a bit of a *tour d'horizon* in relation to what you have covered. The dual need to speak slowly so that you receive a good translation and for the audience to also comprehend my thoughts more fully is quite beneficial.

Since the 1970s, there has been an increasingly intense discussion of memory and the politics of memory in different European countries, especially in Germany, but also, for example, in France. A central role has been played by Pierre Nora, who particularly in a discussion of memory introduced the notion of *lieux de mémoire*, places of memory. I have also seen the concept of places of memory in your new publications. Professor Robert Traba has co-edited the *German-Polish places of memory*, whereas Hagen Schulze and Etienne Francois have written about German places of memory. This is, of course, fantastic if one as a scholar is so conceptually productive as Pierre Nora.

At that time he meant, inter alia, to maintain locations in French memory that represent a strong reminder and symbolic value for French national memory and the cohesion of French society, as well as its self-esteem. That was a very clear national and a quite social-psychological intention.

My places are not only geographical places, but also literary or artistic symbols in this context. Thus, the Fables of La Fontaine were a French place of remembrance, one could say. The concept of 'places of memory' was introduced in a context of growing public debate in France about the times of the Third Reich and the Second World War and when so-called 'white spots', i.e. unpleasant and discredited aspects of history and memory, increasingly came to the fore. For Germany this was at hand, as Nazism, Auschwitz, and the Second World War became symbols of a unique crime against humanity perpetrated by Germans. Since the 1960s, in particular, the new themes increasingly involved intra-family conflict between generations, especially between fathers and sons, but also between daughters and fathers and daughters and mothers in Germany, over personal involvement and guilt in criminal actions. Much was written in historical accounts, but now a personal concern was added: 'My father was a concentration camp guard' was so to speak a new level that was reached through well-known trials: the Einsatzgruppe trial, the Auschwitz trial, the Eichmann trial, etc.

Theoretically, it is important to highlight that national memories play an important role for the individual as well as for collective national self-esteem. I cannot stress this enough. Whenever we remember individually or collectively there is always a subtext related to the self-esteem of those involved. It renders this matter so passionate and tricky, so critical and so difficult.

The virulence and aggressiveness of the upheaval that took place in Germany in 1968 can be explained by this existential dimension of the struggle over the past of parents. The year 1968 was essentially a worldwide phenomenon. Britain was the only country that actually had no '1968'. This is interesting, but Japan, for example, and many other countries had a 1968. America had an ongoing 1968 and I believe that in Germany, and also partly in France, this had to do with involvement, with collaboration in France, and in Germany, of course, with Nazism and the extermination policy. The self-interpretation of West Germans changed as a result of this discussion, moving from being victims of National Socialist seduction and war – as this was the initial self-definition of Germans after the Second World War – to being orderly accomplices to Nazism and the war, with each being differentiated. From victims to accomplices with

increasing awareness of their own involvement. In East Germany, the Germans apart from certain exposed perpetrators were tendentiously cast as victims in official propaganda. This period of capitalism, within the framework of the Marxist theory of capitalism, was the root cause of fascism (it was usually called fascism, and not National Socialism). In West Germany, the Italian Mussolini regime was called fascist, but Nazism in the Marxist explanation was called fascism. The issue of personal responsibility, particularly for the Holocaust officially in the background, was not the main line of examination of the past in the GDR. Such issues of personal guilt were limited to a small circle. This is an interesting analogy between West and East Germany, also with regard to different lines of interpretation.

In France, the self-image of a nation of general resistance, which de Gaulle quite deliberately, manipulatively and politically formulated as the *resistance*, changed to one of considerable collaboration. De Gaulle deliberately addressed the French this way after returning from England in order to legitimise the new French Republic after Vichy. Not much room remained for a differentiation between resisters, collaborators and hangers-on. Vichy, and later also Algeria, were at the centre of the history and memory debates at this time to which I now refer. It is perhaps interesting to see how interpretations of history are quite central to the legitimacy of political systems. Those in power do not wish to offer anything bitter to their people, but rather something that maintains self-esteem. By the way, this also applies to present-day elections, as the last German election campaign did not seek to impart to Germans their share of responsibility for the European financial crisis. It was carefully avoided to make this explicit. So this mechanism has not been overcome and continues to exist: those upon whom one relies should be not be overly challenged and burdened with sensitive responsibilities.

Theoretically, it is important to highlight that national memories play an important role for the individual as well as for collective national self-esteem. I cannot stress this enough. Whenever we remember individually or collectively there is always a subtext related to the self-esteem of those involved. It renders this matter so passionate and tricky, so critical and so difficult.

Individual, living, everyday memories of people, which Jan Assmann calls communicative memory, as well as so-called cultural memory that is designated for official commemorations, always include messages of self-esteem in the background for those involved. Guilt or criminal experiences diminish the self-esteem of victims as well as offenders. To acknowledge one's own fault requires a considerable distance from self, strength and general ability and is thereby a constructive and truly liberating action, not simply suppression. I feel that it cannot be stressed enough that these issues of self-esteem are central to memory.

As some of you know, I had some disputes with Erika Steinbach, among others, in a parliament committee in which she sat at the time. Her colleague initially wanted to actually make quite friendly and authentic conversation with me, even though I was truly a *persona non grata*. Then she came to and was far less charming, which I actually understand, since we women are more direct in these things, something we have in common. It was interesting that many from the Federal Association of German Expellees who sat in this committee initially

expressed to me that they were all for a good relationship with Poland. They had wonderful experiences with Poles and were always so nice and friendly with them individually. Discourse, however, changed with time to the point where Ms Steinbach wanted it, namely to state that Poles should also take blame upon themselves (not only the Germans) and that they should finally come to terms with it. That was the real message! The fact that there had already been discussion about this in Poland in the 1990s was not grasped at all by Ms. Steinbach and the others.

From initial views – we are so closed, Poles are so nice, we want to contribute to peace, etc. – the conversation reached the point where Poles were also to blame. I expected this, all contributing to the sense that we Germans feel better once again. Therefore, individuals and the collective submit to the private and also political temptation not to see the past clearly, but rather to banish its negative aspects from memory. In film, if something is recalled in which one was somehow directly or collectively involved, there is always a film with the question mark: what role did I play there and how was it? Was it really good? This is what stands behind it.

At the same time, memory, in individuals as in groups and national collectives, is the basic fabric of what we call identity. This is a very difficult term in the individual and collective sense that is nevertheless central to this topic. We deal with ourselves and others through the intuition that we are indeed one and the same person in different situations and times. We have changed, have grey hair, but are somehow one and the same person. We do not feel that we simply disintegrate into individual actions or that we are a collection of situations that we experienced.

At the same time, memory, in individuals as in groups and national collectives, is the basic fabric of what we call identity.

When I say something to my friend today I think that he remembers it tomorrow when I speak to him about it again. The opposite is frightening when you speak to someone who either actually or apparently does not at all remember what you did together previously. This is a very difficult situation, as no communication can actually take place.

Our personal identity whose sameness (identical form), despite any change, is created from bonding memory of our lives – it does not exist, but is created. It is no revealed fact, but rather our individual and collective achievement. This is important to me, as identity is often described as a fact, an affiliation with something, and not an achievement. The worse we recollect, the more gaps in our memory, especially those avoiding the unpleasant; thus, the weaker and less reliable our identity and all the less reliable partners we may be for others. Also, vice versa: the more coherent our memory, the less invasive and more reliable a partner we can be and the better we can communicate with each other and contribute to mutual understanding.

This is especially important in conflicts. If I no longer remember that I harmed my colleague and do so the next day as if nothing ever happened, he will then not trust me because he cannot count on my reliability in relation to the common past. He will not want to have anything more to do with me. This individual and socio-psychological mechanism, which I would say is almost an anthropological equivalent just like the relationship between memory, identity and self-esteem, becomes important when one seeks to clarify what European remembrance could be. I say almost a constant, as there are also other areas, for example, investigations of memory in Japan or the relationship between Japan and China. It is also not entirely uninteresting which sections of society in Japan share such considerations other than those who are Christian-influenced. Those who deeply live in ancestor worship naturally have it much harder because ancestors are to be venerated *eo ipso*. A religious dilemma arises when one then has an ancestor who abused Chinese women. Context is not ahistorically anthropological, but very heavily influenced by an entire world and self-view, which is also religious. This is not limited to Europe.

This individual and socio-psychological mechanism, which I would say is almost an anthropological equivalent just like the relationship between memory, identity and self-esteem, becomes important when one seeks to clarify what European remembrance could be.

European remembrance is difficult to establish, as it is still difficult to write a European history and not only national histories in Europe. There are all sorts of collections and national histories, but not a European history. This would not simply be an arithmetical sum of individual national histories, but would have to focus on trans and international relations interlacing with the national, or intra-society relationship. There should be an interlacing and it is also clear that it cannot be only one, but at least 25. So, now it again becomes quite complicated when we do not have only a collection of national histories. Basically, a methodological problem again arises with national history that is also simply not clear.

There is not only one point of view through which such networks and interlocking European, political, military, social, cultural, etc. events and relationships can be described, but many different ones. One can academically refer European history and memory only to what is common, for example, common external relations with third parties, for example, the United States, because there has been a European anti-Americanism. But then, there is as it were an amalgamation of what is European and what focuses on the United States. Or one can focus on colonial Africa or on inner, cultural, literary, musical or other artistic contexts and influences. There are many different art or music histories that describe

influences of various currents. This is jointly a positive connotation, but actually lacks the drama of the question: what is European memory?

For a future common Europe that grows together, as the European Union, while at the same time being a responsible global player, it would be a matter of developing shared memories of past enmities and conflicts in order to attain a common European identity. I have therefore now let the cat out of the bag as to what concerns me. One cannot create a common European memory without one's own normative horizon. If one sees this Europe as a hodgepodge of extravaganzas and conflicts, European remembrance will be differently recorded than if a democratic European integration is desired as a normative idea. At present, there are completely different questions that are raised without manipulating the interpretation of facts. Other questions on such a European history are simply posed. Currently, in the completely open situation in Europe and the European Union where there is clearly not only the 'Alternative for Germany' party, but also tendencies toward renationalisation, there are, for example, integrative institutions and opportunities for joint debate and action in the Commission or the European Parliament, that are almost to be disposed of, because they are reduced in favour of the European Council. But, this is nevertheless an assembly of national governments with all their national re-election interests. A re-nationalised Europe is a different Europe, as it focuses again on national players and seeks no integrated European memory.

However, if one desires further European integration and wants it to be very clearly normative for many reasons, one must first work out the different perspectives of the personal, communicative memory of individuals, as well as national and cultural memory, share them with each other and find a level where these differences can meet.

Also, in national and collective memory there has been and continues to be such a comparison of perspectives, for example, between victims and perpetrators where integration usually takes place through an official representative. Victim and perpetrator is a category distinction that was made very early on, for example, by the French President Chirac, who in the late 1990s as President assumed French responsibility for the arrest of Jews under Vichy and asked the Jews for forgiveness. That was long, long after the end of Vichy.

Or the German President Richard von Weizsäcker, when in 1985 he called 8 May the day of defeat as well as of liberation and thereby joined two contrasting interpretations of experience.

As for the transnational perspective, this work has been achieved, for example, in the German-French Eckhart-Institute in Braunschweig, the German-Polish school book commission, as well as in the *German-Polish places of remembrance* to which I will return. However, the result has thus far found little input in respective national debates, but has remained a kind of treasure for specialists. Yet in the meantime there have been many common German-French conferences on the First World War and the time of the Weimar Republic, which in relation to the German-Polish relationship, for example, is much more intensive with regard to the interwar period, since much more can still be done.

If we want to develop a European memory that thereby strengthens a European identity, so that the diversity of perspectives and their encircling

affiliations and loyalties face each other and reach a common value base, we must then deal with sore historical experiences in Europe that are milestones for history as well as official remembrance. I wish to once again point out that loyalties are very important. This problem arises, for example, in the Middle East. This concerns not only individual affinities, but also what one stands for, familial loyalties in conflicts, as well as social, geographical, political loyalties.

Relevant international confrontations have usually led to this view. This is, among others, the result of interdisciplinary research I carried out in 2004 with a group of Polish, French and German researchers and later published, together with work by historians as well as sociologists and political scientists, on how societies in a post-dictatorial society (can) find themselves turning to a democratic political culture. The issue of remembrance naturally is quite weighty here. These are sensitive experiences and the result of this discussion is that the scale of assessment is not purely national, but entails universal human rights. They crystallise as respective priorities superseding the national level if we wish to address these various, even juxtaposing, perspectives. In other words, this should not only be seen from the perspective of one's own 'nation', which is viewed as a homogeneous body.

European memories develop, thus exposing themselves to arduous and sometimes painful confrontations with intra-European sensitive conflicts and their different perceptions and experiences.

By the way, this was also an experience that I had in practice when I debated several years in a row for the German Bundestag on Auschwitz day on 27 January with young people from France, Germany and Poland. They visited memorials for a week and were, of course, confronted with all that took place in these countries. But the young Germans were no longer, as they say, 'Organic Germans'. They sometimes had grandparents in Turkey or North Africa or somewhere else, so why should they feel responsible for the SS? This situation is quite typical now in our societies that are increasingly heterogeneous, cosmopolitan in a certain sense, not always cosmopolitan in attitude perhaps, but in any case global in the sense that totally different origins come together. If you see schools, for example, in Stuttgart today, you will notice that one-half are not of 'originally German origin'. This, of course, has tremendous meaning for and effect on remembrance. By the way, I find it salutary because it is pluralising.

For example, it turned out during studies at the German-Polish places of remembrance that so-called national memories were by no means homogeneous even before globalisation. They depended on generations, gender, political orientations, regional affiliations, religious beliefs, etc. That was reflected in the German-Polish places of remembrance. This promotes understanding and makes it possible to uncover new common ground in Europe. I had an interesting

experience in this regard with Adam Michnik, a really longstanding and good friend. We sat in Warsaw somewhere together on a panel and he – who actually was meant to moderate it, although it was hard for him because he actually had to engage in the discussion, as is also clear – said that there will be no common German-Polish memory of Bismarck. It cannot be. I then responded, 'Do you have any idea?' German Catholics, especially social democrats, remember Bismarck unlike national-liberal Prussians. They are closer to any Polish memory than to national Prussian memories. In other words, there are religious and political affiliations. Bismarck had neither Catholics nor socialists on his side and this is useful for German-Polish understanding. One never knows what is good for something. So, Adam had to admit, as he laughed very nicely, that this dissolution of uniformity of national memory is very important.

European memories develop, thus exposing themselves to arduous and sometimes painful confrontations with intra-European sensitive conflicts and their different perceptions and experiences. They are worked through together to reach a historically saturated and truly vital normative consensus in Europe that is enshrined in human rights. Maybe even beyond. This requires courage and at times a certain confidence. The question can sometimes be raised: Oh dear, can this succeed given the conflicts and matters being tested? We therefore need courage and confidence without which the European Union cannot anyhow succeed. It is up to us to manifest them. Thank you for your attention.

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RAGUE 2014

9–11 April

◄ Participants of the 3rd European Remembrance Symposium, visit to Lidice Memorial. The Czech village Lidice, burnt down on 10 June 1942

Turning Points in European History. Europe between War and Peace 1914–2004

Participants of the 3rd European Remembrance Symposium. From the left: Pieter Lagrou, (Free University of Brussels)


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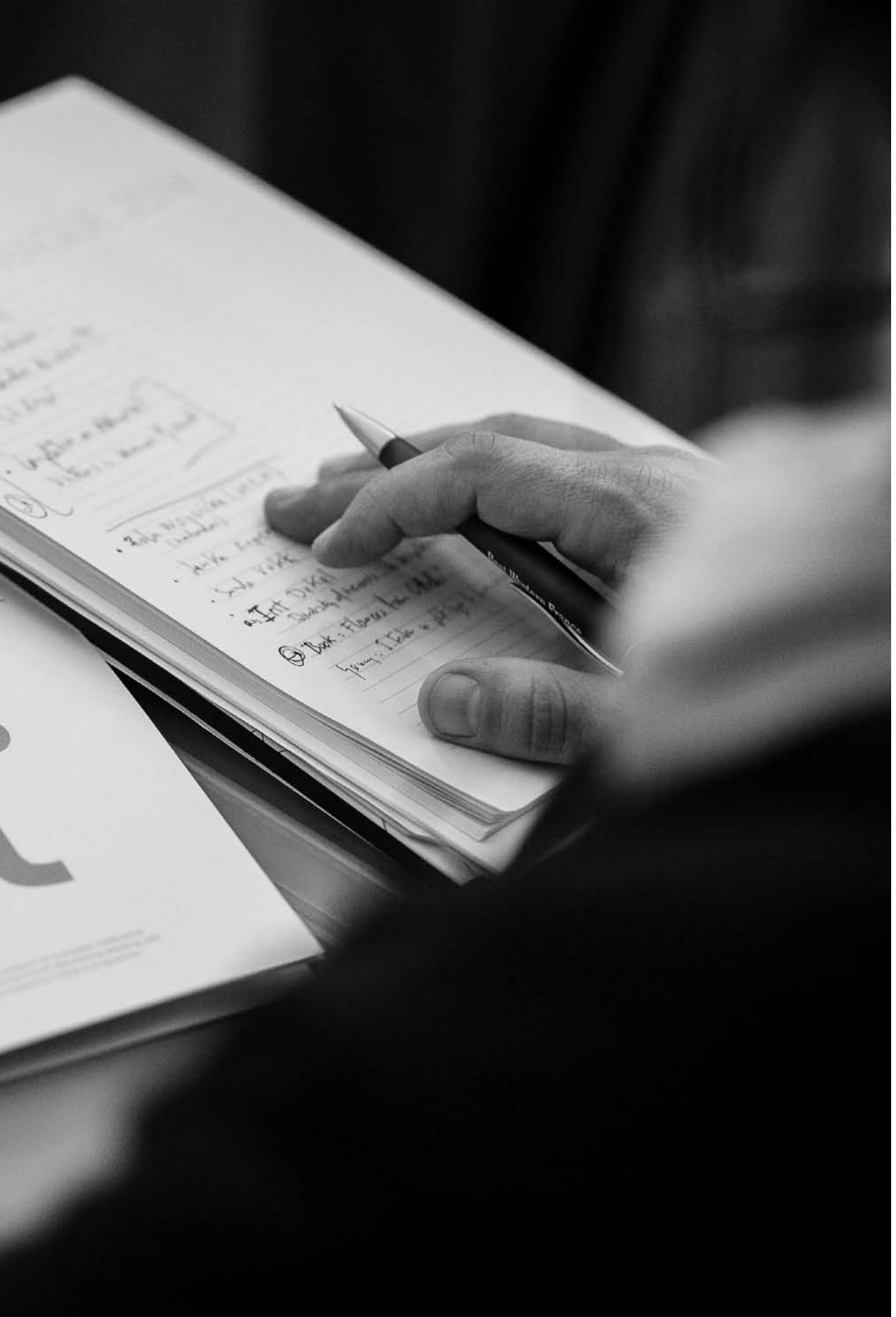

Participants of the 3rd European Remembrance Symposium

Turning Points in European History: 1914–1939–1945–1989–2004

MARCI SHORE

Let me begin with the late British historian A.G.P. Taylor, who famously described 1848, the springtime of nations, as 'the turning point at which history failed to turn'. The 19th century in that narrative, then, became a kind of lazy aftermath to the excitement of the French revolution. In the 20th century, on the contrary, history turned. In fact, there were arguably far too many points at which history did indeed turn, and sometimes too much: 1914, 1939, 1945, 1968.

Now, we are here today because of 20th century Europe's last turning point, which was 1989. Like these other turning points, 1914, 1939 – 1989 was a kind of wrinkle in time. I borrow that phrase from a famous American children's novel by Madeleine L'Engle entitled *A Wrinkle in Time*, first published in 1962. It was a science fiction fantasy novel in which the heroine, Meg, her brother and her friend are transported through space to rescue their father who was on a planet controlled by a disembodied evil brain called It.

The way they travel is by wrinkling time. It is a kind of bending of the space-time continuum that allows for dramatic leaps that appear to encompass both the temporal and spatial.

Thus, 1989 was a wrinkle in time in the sense of bending the time-space continuum and a moment that reveals the way in which spatiality is bound up with temporality.

Back in 1848, when, according to A.G.P. Taylor, 'history failed to turn', Marx and Engels published a text that began with the line: 'A spectre is haunting Europe–the spectre of communism'.

Now, over a century and a half later, communism, no longer a spectre to come, has remained no less haunting a spectre from the past. When communism in

this part of Europe fell in 1989, Vaclav Havel became a spiritual leader of the revolution with the slogan: 'Pravda zvítězí–the truth will prevail'.

When I first came to Eastern Europe in the 1990s as an aspiring historian, I wanted to experience a happy ending, a fairy tale. The wicked witch was dead, censorship was lifted, the archives were open, and the dark spectres were vanquished. Now, everyone would bask in the light of truth. The truth would prevail and everyone would live happily ever after.

Of course, what I discovered is that there would be no basking in the light of truth. Marx was engaged in a certain rivalry with Sigmund Freud for the hearts and minds of modern Europe. In that great battle between Marx and Freud, Marx promises 'happily ever after' and Freud promises no such thing. Unfortunately, Freud was proven right. Civilization is based on repression and there is no other way. For Freud the unconscious, which in some sense is at the heart of the misery of our human condition, is like a dark psychic closet in which everything too disturbing for the conscious mind is thrown. Communist party archives turned out to be like the Freudian unconsciousness. They were like that dark psychic closet in which everything too disturbing for the conscious mind was thrown. Now, what Freud knew is that coaxing the contents of that dark psychic closest was not going to be pleasant. Psychoanalysis was never meant to be enjoyable.

What exactly was in that closet? The Polish film director Agnieszka Holland (whom I believe some of you may be thinking of this past year more than before because of her remarkable film about Jan Palach) in interviews about her previous film, *W ciemności* (In Darkness), set in Lviv during the Holocaust, described wanting to illuminate the fragility of the border between good and evil. She comes from a country, Poland, which in the 20th century was a laboratory of that fragility.

There were moments when there were no innocent choices, when all choices involved the betrayal of someone or something. Nevertheless, one had to choose. In this way, tragedy was endemic. That leads to the question of why, then, we should or should not open that dark psychic closet?

Back in that long boring 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote an essay in 1874 called *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*. Nietzsche was especially sceptical about basking in the light of truth when it came to historical truth. 'Why can we not be happy?', he poses the question. Because – he answered – we are chained to the past. We cling to it. The past returns as a ghost, it always returns. Nietzsche writes: 'It is always the same thing that makes happiness "happiness": the ability to forget. The capacity to feel un-historically.' 'He', Nietzsche writes, 'who cannot sink down to the threshold of the moment and forget the entire past will never know what happiness is. Worse, he will never do anything to make others happy.'

In short, consciousness of history, or rather our inability to be wholly unconscious of history, condemns us to unhappiness. For Nietzsche dealing with the past demanded what he called 'plastic power'. Only the strong had the elasticity to handle a lot of history. There was a danger, Nietzsche warns us, of digesting too much history, which was like overeating: it could produce nausea. History was for those with an iron stomach. And it is true that the history of the European 20th century is unbearable.

Let me just briefly mention what I think is arguably the single best work of fiction (or non-fiction, as the case may be) about Auschwitz, which is Tadeusz Borowski's story *Proszę państwa do gazu (This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen)*. At the beginning of that story Tadeusz Borowski narrates a scene in which a young pretty Jewish woman gets off the transport at Auschwitz. She begins walking quickly, energetically. She wants to show the Germans that she is healthy, energetic, that she can still work, that she should live. A little boy is running after her, saying: 'Mamo, mamo, nie uciekaj' (Mommy, mommy, don't run away!). She rejects the child because she wants to live.

For years I taught that story to my undergraduates. I still think it is arguably the best piece of literature written about Auschwitz. But after my son was born, I could no longer face it; I took it off my syllabus. That was the European 20th century.

For Nietzsche the only hope was youth. History, an excess of history, the burden of history, could emasculate youth. Nietzsche believed that youth's vitality needed to be preserved, that youth needed to be protected from a historical education that was too emasculating. Now, I would like to juxtapose this vision of Nietzsche with an idea that Václav Havel had, which is that only when a new generation comes of age, a generation entirely untainted by communism, unencumbered by this history, can we have hope for the creation of new values.

Nietzsche was concerned, among other things, with the Romantic version of history, history as monumental, with the great deeds of our ancestors that make us look small and insignificant in comparison.

In the post-communist period what Havel was thinking of was a past not only as monumental in Nietzsche's sense of heroic, but also monumental as in Borowski's sense, as unbearable, a nightmare.

The post-communist form of being tied to the past, of engaging with the past, has often been a kind of accounting with the past, a settling of scores. It is an understandable form of historical consciousness. I would like to argue here, though, that the desire to account with the past, to establish guilt or innocence, to achieve moral clarity, can sometimes blind us and distract us from questions arising from tragedy, the exploration of which could help us to more deeply understand our human condition. I want to look very briefly at three cases, which I think some of you may be very familiar with and others not. So, I will introduce them briefly.

The first is the Milan Kundera affair, which I am sure many of you in this room know intimately. For the benefit of those who do not: in autumn 2008 a very young Czech historian was working as a researcher at the Prague-based Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. He was investigating a story of an aspiring fighter pilot, Miroslav Dvořáček. When the communists took power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Dvořáček was 20 years old. At that time he and nearly 100 other young cadets were expelled from the Airborne Military Academy for 'lacking a positive attitude towards the new people's democracy'. Dvořáček was among a group of expelled cadets who, after defecting from communist Czechoslovakia to the American-occupied zone in Germany, subsequently became couriers for the Western-sponsored anti-communist Czechoslovak intelligence service. The Czech general who recruited the young men promised

them that once they completed their assignments, he would arrange for them to become military pilots in the West. These boys were formed by the Second World War. They wanted to fly. In the West, the young Miroslav Dvořáček was given some six weeks of training. He was taught how to read a map and how to communicate by Morse code.

Then, his instructors gave him a compass, false identification papers and a bottle of whisky and sent him across the border. He was not especially experienced at intelligence work. He was not especially skilled at it either. During his second trip back to Czechoslovakia in March 1950 he was riding a tram across the Vltava River when he spotted an old friend named Iva. Excited to see her again, he got off the tram and went along with her to her student dormitory. Then, he left his suitcase in her room and went off to find the person he had been sent to contact. In the meantime Iva told her boyfriend that he could not come to spend the night with her because Miroslav Dvořáček was visiting.

Thus, 1989 was a wrinkle in time in the sense of bending the time-space continuum and in the sense of a moment that reveals the way in which spatiality is bound up with temporality.

Iva's boyfriend, who could not have been pleased, mentioned this to his friend, Milan Kundera, who also lived in the dormitory. Later in the day Miroslav Dvořáček returned to Iva's dormitory room. There the police arrested him.

Digging around in the secret police archives, the young Czech historian found a police document naming Milan Kundera as the student who had reported Dvořáček's presence in the dormitory. In *The Art of the Novel* Kundera described Prague as a city of the weak. Miroslav Dvořáček spent 14 years in a communist prison camp. In October 2008, the story was published in the Czech journal *Respekt* and was met with outrage on all sides. Then a debate began. Was Milan Kundera guilty? Kundera reacted with shocking indifference and silence.

I wondered: was he truly surprised? He himself had written that the legacy of totalitarianism was the spirit of the trial. One very well respected Slovak editor, a colleague of mine, argued that Milan Kundera may have been a communist in those years, but surely had not denounced Miroslav Dvořáček. After all, Kundera was from a cultured family in Brno. His father was a classical pianist and he was raised among the bourgeois intelligentsia, amidst Hapsburg liberalism. Someone this cultured and sensitive could never have been so barbaric.

This was, I would argue, a misunderstanding: a childhood spent listening to Mozart offered one no immunity against Stalinism. The other point of view was represented by the editor of the journal *Respekt*, who published the story. His point of view was that archives do not lie. Therefore, we must accept that Kundera is guilty.

This, in turn, was a misunderstanding about the nature of archives. No archive is 100% trustworthy. Documents always conceal, as well as reveal. The

author of any given report can always be proven to have been manipulative, self-interested, or simply stupid, sloppy, or confused. There is no such thing as a perfectly objective source produced outside of time and place and with no possibility of human frailty.

In 1950, Milan Kundera, like so many other young Czechs whose political consciousness was formed by the betrayal of Munich and the Nazi occupation that followed, was an impassioned young Stalinist deeply committed to building communism in Czechoslovakia. In accordance with the world view that he himself fully espoused publically at that time, reporting the presence of a foreign agent in his dormitory would not have been a crime, but, on the contrary, a moral imperative.

Kundera's sympathies in those years were not at all a secret. His poetry was published in Stalinist literary newspapers.

It was a very painful debate. The question was: 'Was he guilty?' with a follow-up question: 'If so, does he still deserve to be considered a great writer?'

I would argue that other questions should have been posed. Czechoslovakia was the only East European successor state formed after the First World War to maintain some kind of a functioning democracy throughout the inter-war period, the only one to maintain a core group of liberal-minded intellectuals close to power. How and why, then, did Czechoslovakia end up having the bloodiest experience of Stalinism?

Why did the communists win 38% of the vote in genuinely free elections in 1946? Why did so many of the greatest minds of Kundera's generation become Stalinists in their youth? And when those young Stalinists, those bright young people, once they became bitterly disillusioned, how were they able – or not able – to live with guilt?

Kundera wrote in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*: 'When the communists took power in Czechoslovakia, it was not in bloodshed and violence, but to the cheers of about half the population. 'Please note', he writes, 'that half the cheer was from the more dynamic, more intelligent and better half.' The Kundera affair should have been an impetus for a public discussion about precisely this. But it was not.

The second case I want to talk about is that of Lesław Maleszka in Poland. I take you back to Kraków in the mid-1970s. There were three friends, students at the university: Bronisław Wildstein, Stanisław Pyjas and Lesław Maleszka. They were university students, bright young men interested in the communist regime and censored literature. They were arrested.

Maleszka was turned during their arrest. He was young and scared. The secret police intimidated him. The room was dark and the interrogation brutal, the light shining directly in his eyes. The three interrogators came at him in constant rotation. They promised to beat him. He wanted to stay at the university. 'Coś za coś', they said. 'You don't get something for nothing.'

At that time, after those three young men were released, the wider circle of their friends began receiving anonymous letters accusing Pyjas, one of the three, of being a secret police informer. The secret police was playing a game with the students: someone was an informer and no one knew who. The letters contained personal information with intimate details that only someone very

close to them would know. They were letters written by someone who could see into their bedrooms.

In 1977, Pyjas was murdered in all probability by the secret police. Maleszka, who was then a secret police informer, quite possibly bears some responsibility for his friend's death. Maleszka's double life lasted a very long time. After university he remained within dissident circles and in the service of the secret police. The truth emerged only more than a decade after communism had ended when the archives began to open. For twenty years the third friend, Bronisław Wildstein, was obsessed with finding out who was responsible for his friend's death. It turned out to be their closest friend.

Now, when Maleszka began to work for the secret police, he had to choose a pseudonym. He chose Ketman, which originates from Czesław Miłosz's famous book, *The Captive Mind*. Describing those intellectuals in Poland who lent their support after the war to the Stalinist regime, 'Ketman' suggested a kind of splitting of the self, an intersection of opportunism and belief.

The filmmakers who now interviewed Maleszka in the 21st century asked him again and again: *why?* Why had he betrayed his closest friends? Why had he kept silent for so long? Again and again Maleszka answered: '*To doskonałe pytanie.*' It's an excellent question. It's an excellent question.

In 1962, when the Polish poet, Aleksander Wat, was living in exile in France, his old avant-gardist friend Adam Ważyk, no longer a Stalinist, came to visit him. They sat in a café and talked about Stalinism. They had both been in the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Wat sat in a Stalinist prison for a long time and wanted to know from his old friend: after everything Ważyk had experienced in the Soviet Union during the war, how had he returned to Poland after the war still a Stalinist? Ważyk answered: "Cierpiałem na rozszczepienie jaźni – I suffered from a splitting of the self". This was true of Maleszka as well: he suffered from a splitting of the self.

All of modern philosophy and social science has in some ways been obsessed with the problem of subjectivity. This is a case that should lead us into much deeper questions about subjectivity: once a self is split in two, is either half real? Does any authentic self remain? Who was left of Maleszka? Did Maleszka himself know? Could a real self be recovered? If not, what does that teach us about the nature of the self? Is there any diachronic and synchronic constancy of the 'I'? These are the questions that perhaps should have been posed, but have not yet been.

Let me briefly talk about a third case, the case of the Jedwabne massacre. It took place in early July 1941 in a small town in Poland's eastern province that for the previous 21 months had been under Soviet occupation. Now, Hitler unilaterally broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and attacked the Soviet Union. The Red Army retreated from Jedwabne. The Wehrmacht arrived, but had not yet set up an occupation regime. For some days this town was caught in a space of anarchy between two totalitarian occupiers. The newly arrived Germans told the townspeople during this window of semi-anarchy that they had several days and could and should take care of the Jews.

It began with stoning and lynching, with murders using farm tools. Later, the townspeople forced several dozen of the strongest Jewish men to take down Lenin's statue erected during the Soviet occupation and to carry it to a barn to

dig a grave for its burial. Then, the Poles threw the bodies of those Jewish men into the same grave. On the afternoon of 10 July 1941, the local Poles forced Jedwabne's several hundred remaining Jews from their homes and into the town square. They herded them, their neighbours, into a barn and set it on fire.

After Jan Gross published a small book in the spring of 2000, a micro-history in Polish entitled *Neighbours*, a debate began to rage around the question: Did the Poles, as opposed to the Germans, kill their Jewish neighbours? If so, did they have a choice or were they forced by the Germans? Were – are – the Poles anti-Semites? These of course are important questions. But equally important questions, I would argue, were obscured in this debate.

One of the things that Jan Gross noticed in his book is that the most enthusiastic collaborators with the German occupiers, the most enthusiastic perpetrators of the massacre, were precisely those same townspeople who previously collaborated with the Soviet regime.

That raises a question: Do collaborators tend to collaborate? Is it a personality trait? Are collaborators formed by their collaboration with one regime in such a way that predisposes them to collaborate with the next regime? Or is it that collaborators with one regime have a special incentive to collaborate with the next because they are potentially most at risk?

Another set of questions may be posed that have to do with multiple occupations. Jedwabne was a tiny town far from Moscow and Berlin, even far from Warsaw. These were the provinces, rural areas that experienced multiple occupations, which were passed back and forth between the Nazis and the Stalinists several times. These were social engineering experiments on an unprecedented scale. Experiments aimed not only at re-making political regimes, but also at re-making human souls.

What does that do to people? Miłosz writes in that same book, *The Captive Mind*: 'The habit of civilisation is fragile'. Freud wrote that in the absence of the repressive force of civilisation, what drives us is Eros and Thanatos. Arguably the most interesting question raised, or which should have been raised about the Jedwabne case, is the relationship between totalitarianism and intimacy.

I think the most ingenious response to Jedwabne was the Polish playwright Tadeusz Słobodzianek's play *Nasza klasa (Our Class)*. Theatre has to be extraordinary to stage a massacre and not have it be in bad taste. This was indeed extraordinary. It is not only a play about brutalisation and cruelty, but more profoundly a play about intimacy. It is a kind of fictionalised milieu biography. The play follows ten classmates through three totalitarian occupations and the arc of their lives. We are taken into a tiny town far from any metropolis where everyone knows everyone else and where everyone is caught up in everyone else's lives. We meet adolescents who tease and develop crushes on one another, as well as humiliate, fantasize and fall in love with one another.

All of these characters, in Nietzsche's phrase, are human, 'all too human'. They all have complicated friendships, romances and rivalries. They act out of ambiguous motives in which the political-ideological and the spontaneous emotional are all entangled.

The handsome young Pole, Rysiek, who aspires to fly airplanes, has a crush on a Jewish girl in his class named Dora. He sends her a love poem in the shape

of a heart. When the others find it, they make fun and laugh at him. Dora likes Rysiek, even a lot, and feels sorry for his humiliation. But, she says nothing when the others mock him. Later during the war Rysiek is caught and tortured by the Soviets. Still later, he and two other classmates rape Dora. We are then taken to 10 July 1941, a very hot summer day, and Dora together with other Jews is forced to weed the town square with a spoon, holding her baby who is crying for milk. Dora cannot give her any milk; she is desperate for water for herself. She sees a friend, her Polish classmate from school, calls to her and asks the young woman to bring water. She pleads with her to take her baby. Her friend wavers, but in the end what can she do? She cannot bring home a Jewish baby to her older husband. So she runs away.

It is Dora's neighbours, her classmates like Rysiek, who once sent her a love poem, who herd her and her baby into the barn. It is they who set the barn on fire. 'I knew all of them', Dora says in this play. Inside the barn there is not enough air, it's unbearably hot. Dora smelled gasoline and begins to cough, suffocate and vomit. She drops her baby.

How, we have to ask ourselves, did these totalitarian experiments change the relationship between public and private? Between the political and intimate? Long before he wrote *Neighbours*, when studying in Poland under the Soviet occupation, Jan Gross was already struck by the countless cases in which victim and perpetrator knew each other personally. Mechanisms of terror put at the disposal of a new regime's adherents were used to settle personal scores. The ever-present possibility of informing meant that every person was threatened at every moment. Anyone could become his neighbour's executioner. Anyone could be denounced by his neighbour.

I ask you for a moment to think about the fact that Jan Gross's book about Jedwabne was entitled *Neighbours*. But, let us step away from Poles and Jews and think about neighbours as such. The Polish-Jewish émigré who survived the war in the Soviet Union, Alex Schenker, a long standings professor at Yale, now emeritus, after a lecture at Yale by Jan Gross asked him: 'Why do you find the fact that neighbours killed neighbours so shocking? After all, whom do we hate, if not our neighbours?'

This reminded me of the philosopher Jay Bernstein's reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: namely that what is at stake in the master-slave relationship is not life and death, but dependence and independence. What the master is misrecognising is something about himself: the master is failing to recognise his dependence on the other. What we cannot bear in our lives is all the levels of our dependencies on others, even those we despise. So, the master is not making a cognitive error about the other. He is self-deceived about himself, his own dependency. It is no accident, Jay Bernstein points out, that most murders are domestic. Why would you want to kill a stranger? You want to kill the other who binds you.

As I move towards a conclusion, I want to push this exploration of intimacy and inter-subjectivity a bit further. We are longing here, and it is perhaps especially articulate or palpable in these 25 years since communism has fallen in Europe, for moral clarity and differentiation. We are longing to draw lines between the guilty and the innocent. We are longing for the absence of moral ambiguity.

I want to turn here to the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, who at the end of his life found himself at the centre of a dissident milieu that in some significant part was composed of former Stalinists and victims of Stalinism. His famous idea of the *solidarita otřesených* –'the solidarity of the shaken' comes from this period, this late period in his life, the 1970s. In one of his so-called *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History*, circulated in *samizdat* in the mid-1970s, Patočka moves towards an existential analysis of the experience of the front in the First World War. He speaks about the front not as an immediate trauma, but as a fundamental transformation of human existence.

There is something he finds in the trenches that was positive and infinitely meaningful, although indescribable, an experience of meaningfulness that follows the experience of utter horror and utter meaninglessness. In that last heretical essay Patočka tries to describe the fact that the forces of day and of light and life actually rely upon death. Thus, Patočka writes (and I will give you this quote in both English and Czech because I would not expect the poor translators to do be able to do justice to this improvisation): 'The most profound discovery of the frontline is that life leans out into the night, into struggle and death. That it cannot do without this component of life, which from the standpoint of day appears as a mere non-existence, the transformation of the meaning of life which here trips on nothingness, on a boundary over which it cannot step, along which everything is transformed.'

This is the basis for a truly ontological inter-subjectivity and it is a dark one. 'Europe' – in this whole line of continental philosophy from Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger to Patočka – was in some sense the embodiment of reason in history. Europe stood for world civilisation; it was the only civilisation that counted. But Europe in the 20th century was a bloodbath. European solidarity for Patočka could no longer be based on those who have forgiven and forgotten. It could only be based on the 'solidarity of the shaken, of those who *understand*. *Solidarita otřesených* is the solidarity of those who understand, who have passed through this confrontation with mortality and nothingness and have emerged transformed.

I think there is something in that which might allow us to reflect on things like the phenomenon of what is a kind of enormous mutual attraction or fascination between young Israelis and Germans. One young Israeli graduate student I spoke to told me when I brought this up to him: 'Of course, all my closest friends are German. They're the ones who understand what it means to come from a country you have to be ashamed of.'

I think that is something that can help us understand Polish-Ukrainian solidarity today. No one in Europe understands Ukraine or is more sympathetic to Ukraine today than the Poles. And no one in Europe has a greater reason to have bitter memories of their relations with the Ukrainians than the Poles. There was a brutal and bloody episode of ethnic cleansing between Ukrainians and Poles between 1943 and 1947. Again, this is the 'solidarity of the shaken' and not the solidarity of those who have forgiven and forgotten, rather the solidarity of those who passed through the night, who tripped on the mortality that was nothingness, the solidarity of those who understand.

In his third *Heretical Essay* Patočka insisted that meaning, absolute meaning, a meaning embracing totality was the condition for human life. In its absence we

descended into nihilism. Yet history as such, Patočka believed, begins precisely with this shaking of accepted meaning. 'Shaking' is a key category for Patočka. This shaking for him is good in the painful way that Heidegger suggested that confrontation with nothingness and death was good.

As a result of such a confrontation, we return to a problematical world, a world in which we have lost our naïve certainty of meaningfulness and are forced to seek meaningfulness anew. For Patočka what mattered was the seeking; accepting responsibility meant posing the question of meaning to ourselves. This search for meaning was our responsibility.

I want to just briefly note here a law that was passed in the Polish Sejm in 2007 concerning the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland. That statute included the provision: 'Whoever publically imputes that the Polish nation participated, organised or is responsible for communist or Nazi crimes is liable to imprisonment for up to three years.'

The Polish historian Dariusz Stola, who is now the director of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, warned legislators who passed that law at that time, who were so concerned with Poland's reputation, that this would have the opposite effect. Well, now we know – Dariusz Stola wrote – that everything bad that happened in Poland was done by somebody else, perhaps by Martians.

This law and this Institute of National Remembrance was a project designed as nation-building on ashes. It was about defining guilt. I would argue that too often this accounting of the past has taken the form of a certain abdication of responsibility. Remembrance is a responsibility and it is a responsibility to ask precisely those questions we do not want to ask. I would argue further that the most profound historical questions are ultimately universal questions about human existence and that nationalism is a certain form of an evasion of responsibility, a giving up on the search for meaning in the false belief that meaning has been found, an attempted psychic consolation through the exporting of guilt.

Several years ago, the American political scientist Daniel Goldhagen published a book called *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that argued for the inherent and intrinsic anti-Semitism among Germans. The Germans had long been deeply anti-Semitic and possessed a natural inclination to kill Jews. This was an argument against people like Hannah Arendt who wrote late in the war: 'For many years now we have met Germans who declared that they are ashamed to be Germans. I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human.'

So, as long as we are not close to any bad Germans, if Goldhagen is right, we can all sleep soundly. Now, because, alas, Goldhagen was wrong and Arendt was right, we can never sleep soundly again. Because – to return to Freud's psychic closet – what threatens us is never securely outside ourselves. What we fear is also inside ourselves. There is no safe place; that is our human condition.

I would like to conclude with a story that was recently published in *The New Yorker* by an American Jewish novelist called Nathan Englander. It is a story in some sense about the Holocaust by someone who is now a third generation removed. The title of the story is 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank.' The main protagonists in the story are two women, Deb and Lauren. They were best friends from an Orthodox Jewish high school in New York. Deb married the narrator, a secular Jew, moved to Miami, and became secular herself.

Lauren married Mark, the child of Holocaust survivors, moved to Jerusalem and became ultra-Orthodox. Deb and the narrator, the secular ones, have one teenage son. Mark and Lauren have ten daughters.

Twenty years pass and the two women meet again at Deb's home in Miami after not having seen each other for two decades. The two couples are now together. They begin to reminisce and drink vodka. Then they begin to smoke marijuana, reminiscing about their childhood years. Then, Lauren, the woman who became ultra-Orthodox in Jerusalem, brought up a game that she and her friend Deb used to play in high school: the Anne Frank game. It meant that they had to imagine, in the event of another Holocaust, which of their Christian friends would hide them. Now, drunk and high, in middle age, these two couples, both of them married for some twenty years, begin to play this game again. They begin to imagine another Holocaust and which of their Christian friends would hide them, who would save them. Then they begin to play with one another. Deb has to imagine her husband not being a Jew and another Holocaust and ask herself if he would save her. She looks at him and says: yes, he would. Then, Lauren has to look at Mark, her husband, the father of her ten children, the child of Holocaust survivors, and has to imagine another Holocaust and Mark not being a Jew. She looks at him and also says: yes, he would save me. But, at that moment all four of them realise that this is not true, that Lauren does not believe it. That actually she is not quite sure. Now, that which can never be said becomes the source of silent terror in the room.

Many of our attempts at remembrance have implicitly been an attempt to find a safe place for ourselves in the world. But there is no safe place because, as Patočka wrote, 'Life leans out into the night.' If remembrance is to have any value, it must be remembrance of precisely that. Thank you.

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The Gospel of the Superiority of the Present over the Past. Reclaiming the Critical Potential after 1989

PIETER LAGROU

Why are we in this business? We, that is, social scientists, museum curators, documentary makers, educators, civil servants of the European Commission and various national and regional governments, as well as historians. This business, that is, of not just talking about European history in general, but about the mass-crimes committed in the 20th century. We can make different claims, but probably not all at the same time. Firstly, we can conceive our work as that of social workers alleviating the pain of victims by creating spaces for their stories and by providing recognition for their suffering. That is, if there are still survivors around to be listened to, which is very often not the case. The discourse of generational transmission of victimhood is altogether a very different reality that has to do with collective identities and historical claims and not with direct individual suffering in the first place.

Secondly, we can be very ambitious and posture as the guardians of both the past and the future, which tends to be expressed differently. One way of putting it is through the much over-quoted phrase by George Santayana: 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' This is a very strange affirmation indeed. History never repeats itself. In this phrase, Santayana seems to imply a cyclical conception of time, which no historian today can take seriously. Did the Second World War repeat the First World War and, if so, was this because contemporaries did not remember the First World War enough in the 1920s and 1930s? Another way of putting it is through the categorical imperative of memory, *le devoir de mémoire*. This idea is even stranger. Elementary psychology teaches us that forgetting is at least as important as remembering. An individual who remembers everything goes insane. Memory is not ruled by obligation, but by selection. Any observer of contemporary culture will agree

that forgetfulness is an unlikely danger today. Instead of widespread neglect for the past, we instead seem to be living through a fit of memory obsession. Underlying this is again a very problematic representation, as if we are faced with a binary choice, a single switch that is either in the position 'remember' or 'forget.' Remembrance is all about competition for more or less public attention, not a matter of all or nothing. What should we remember in 2014: Sarajevo, 1914? Warsaw, 1944? Berlin, 1989? Kigali, 1994? Enlargement, 2004? Memory is therefore not ruled by a categorical imperative either, but by an ultimately normal political – and one would hope, democratic – process of competition for public attention and public money as well, to build those memorials and museums, to organise lavish conferences, to pay for innovative smart phone memory apps, web sites, oral history collections, educational books and shiny folders. It is to be able, also, to highjack high school classes for some compulsory visits and readings.

Memory is not ruled by obligation, but by selection. Any observer of contemporary culture will agree that forgetfulness is an unlikely danger today.

Thirdly and lastly, we can legitimise our endeavours more generally under the heading of prevention. Educating for peace and tolerance is, of course, a most noble aim, but is it also effective? The effect of any form of treatment generally depends on the administered dose. The cure can be counter-productive or even fatal if the dose is too strong. This brings us back to our last point, the democratic criteria for selection of which past serves to educate us for a better future. I do not primarily refer here to the match between Nazism and Stalinism, Holocaust or Holodomor. It just seems that peace and tolerance educators rather rarely have recourse to the example of the 14 million Germans expelled from their homes after 1945 – three million of whom were from this country – and never, as far as I know, to the murder and expulsion of five million Muslims from Europe between 1855 and 1923 from places like Crimea, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece.

Basically, in whatever claim we make – deserving public attention and public money for doing what we do – we do not advertise the merit of talking about the past for the past's sake, but very much of talking about the past to improve our present. Obviously, then, different pasts have different impacts on our present and it may be useful to acknowledge this. No one who has been following the news in the last several weeks can pretend that there are no major political stakes in the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. At stake are the legitimacy of the increasingly authoritarian and personal rule of Paul Kagame and his policy of memory. At stake are also social and political relations in Rwandan society today, as well as Rwanda's relations with its neighbours, after 20 years of lingering war and more than three million dead, with its former coloniser, Belgium, and with the protector of the former

Habyarimana regime, France. It would be difficult to pretend that debates on the communist past do not have an instant political impact in Poland, Romania, Albania, or Ukraine. Undeniably, any discussion of the future internal order and coexistence of the former Yugoslav republics are very much tied to a discussion of Yugoslav history in the 1990s, but also in the 1940s and earlier. Generalissimo Franco died four decades ago, but debates on his historical legacy still profoundly divide Spanish politics and society. Even in the case of Italy, we can admit that the debate on the legacy of fascism is still to some extent a political debate (thank you, Mr. Berlusconi).[1] In each and every of these local contexts, social scientists and historians, museum directors and movie makers, civil servants and politicians have a crucial role as critical intellectuals and citizens and, therefore, ultimately, a political role to play.

It is much less obvious that the same would be attempted when dealing with Vichy in France, the history of the Third Reich in Germany, the Nazi occupation of Belgium, the Netherlands or Norway and even less the memory of the genocide of the Jews in places where this does not correspond to any local experience – say, in Sweden, the United Kingdom or the United States. In many of these places, historians have played a crucial role in shaking up self-serving narratives of the ruling elites, but their courageous battles are now behind us.[2] Konrad Adenauer may have been a great statesman and European, but his politics of memory – both *Vergangenheitspolitik* and *Geschichtspolitik* – were highly problematic. Charles de Gaulle may have been a man with considerable vision and courage, but his politics of memory were hardly better. There was a heroic generation of historians in the 1970s and 1980s who led the frontal attack against the *Wir haben es nicht gewusst* (we did not know) of the generation in power, both in government and in the university in Germany. Their peers in France meanwhile utterly destroyed the myth of a French nation united in resistance against fascism and with it the discourse of historical legitimacy of Gaullist governments composed of *compagnons de la liberation*. This was history with guts, leading a generational revolt, a battle for the opening of archives, which amounted to a European civil rights movement of sorts to include minorities such as Jews, immigrants and even the majority, that is, women, into national history and touching upon some Cold War dogma while the Cold War was still raging. This was very much a political battle reclaiming history for democratic debate from its appropriation by ruling elites and their policies of official memory. The memory battles of the last two decades of the Cold War in Western Europe also probably widened the gap with Central and Eastern Europe where official dogma lived on until 1989, even if by then it had lost all credibility. The battle, however, was fought courageously and was won. It was an important battle, but historians should not be confounded by enthusiasts of a reenactment of historical battles, amateurs of a touching, but slightly pathetic hobby. Let us rather move on to the next battle.

What turns a proposition into a political proposition is its partisan nature. A proposition is political because it is controversial, because it divides and creates opposition. Affirming that the earth is a globe, not a pancake, is therefore not a political proposition, except perhaps in some counties in the Bible Belt of the American Midwest. Saying that Vichy's anti-Semitic policies were its own

1 See Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tdesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Roma, Laterza, 2013)

2 See Pieter Lagrou, 'De l'histoire du temps présent à l'histoire des autres. Comment une discipline critique devint complaisante.' *Vingtième Siècle* n° 118, Avril 2013, pp. 101–119.

initiative and not a concession to the German occupier is similarly no longer a genuinely political proposition. Saying that the German population knew, approved, benefitted from and participated in Nazi racist policies is likewise ever less political. They end up being a ritual affirmation that underlines consensus rather than creating division. They become a celebration of communalities and, especially, a celebration of the superiority of the present over the past. On this side of the time-line we have democracy, human rights and European integration. On the other side we had world wars, totalitarianism, holocaust, slavery and witchcraft. History is increasingly used as a scarecrow. Read a history book and close it with a sense of relief. 'Lucky me to be living in the present!' History then has become a lullaby, rather than a wake-up call. The more we admit that we have been nasty in the past, the stronger we also affirm that we have become nice ever since. When the right-wing president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, ordered that the farewell letter of a communist resistance fighter sentenced to death be read out aloud in all French classrooms, it seemed obvious that the political contestation over the memory of the war years in France had reached its terminus.

Memory debates are thus relevant when they are about claiming contested public space and stop being so when there is nothing left to be contested. But the public spaces we have dealt with so far are national public spaces. What happens if we lift these debates to a European level, since there is not yet a genuinely European public space ? What could be the relevance of a European policy of memory enacted by the European Commission or the European Parliament ?

One recent example illustrates the problematic linkages that can be established between national commemoration and European politics. A major national exhibit on the Great War, *'14 –'18, c'est notre histoire,* opened last February at the national military museum of Brussels in the *Cinquantenaire* just opposite the seats of the European Commission, Council and Parliament. Like most exhibits, the way the First World War is depicted here has its merits and shortcomings. Things go seriously astray in the final section supposed to be the culminating point of the visit. A black-and-white movie presents the remainder of the 20th century, once the canons fell silent on the Western Front in 1918, in fast-forward mode. The signing of the Versailles Treaty, the Nuremberg party days, the invasion of Poland, the allied landing in Normandy, the gate of Auschwitz, the atomic mushroom above Hiroshima, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the liberation of Nelson Mandela and then, slowly, the screen turns heavenly blue and yellow stars start to twinkle as Herman Van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso take the stage to receive the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the European Union. The 20th century in a nutshell: from Verdun to Van Rompuy, or should we understand: Van Rompuy or Verdun, Barroso or Birkenau?

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is obviously committed to the promotion of peace, not to the writing of good history. The award ceremony speech thus states: 'After two world wars in the last century, the world had to turn away from nationalism and move in the direction of international cooperation. The United Nations were formed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. For Europe, where both world wars had broken out, the new internationalism

had to be a binding commitment. It had to build on human rights, democracy, and enforceable principles of the rule of law, as well as on economic cooperation aimed at making countries equal partners in the European marketplace. By these means the countries would be bound together so as to make new wars impossible.'[3] That the history of European integration would thus have been driven by pacifism and the promotion of human rights is an improbable claim. For at least two decades, the promotion of human rights and European economic integration were entirely disconnected processes.[4] The former began in 1950 with the European declaration of human rights and its application was entrusted to the Council of Europe, an institution with no real world power. The latter was set up by the Treaty of Paris on coal and steel in 1951 and more prominently by the Rome Treaty in 1957 creating the European Communities, institutions with considerable real world clout and devoted to 'economic and social progress', but unbothered by human rights. Members committed themselves to 'the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade', not to democratic government or respect of the individual rights of their citizens. Nothing in the wording of the Rome Treaty prevented Franco from applying for membership, which he effectively did. French foreign minister Georges Bidault, a man with pure anti-fascist credentials as former president of the French National Resistance Council, famously said as early as 1947: 'There are no fascist oranges, there are only oranges.' It took a long and enduring campaign by political exiles and their allies to drive home the point that Spain and, after the coup *d'état* of 1967, Greece, could not join the European Communities as long as they systematically violated the most elementary democratic and human rights. As Samuel Moyn convincingly shows, human rights did not impose themselves on the political agenda immediately after 1945, but only thirty years later with the Helsinki agreements in 1977. Beyond the chronology, Moyn also challenges the human rights discourse as a sufficient political agenda. Human rights, writes Moyn, are 'about suffering abroad', not to be confounded with civil rights, which address the issue of 'citizenship at home'.[5] Historically, human rights were not at the heart of the past process of European integration. Politically, the European Union today may harbour other ambitions than to abstain from gross human rights violations.

What about peace and reconciliation, then? It is hard to deny that the process of economic integration indirectly contributed to the absence of military conflict between member states of the European Communities, later the European Union. But it certainly took the round-about way to get there. The European Community for Coal and Steel had every bit as much to do with rearmament and military mobilisation against the Soviet Union and its allies as it had to do with Franco-German reconciliation. Pacifism or disarmament was most explicitly not on the agenda. Reconciliation also seemed premature in the early 1950s; witness the spectacular failure of the European Defence Community. For French and Italian members of parliament and their voters the German military still embodied the enemy, rather than an indispensible ally in the fight against world communism. Linking European integration first and foremost to the promotion of peace is, historically, no less inadequate than linking it to the promotion of human rights. European commemorative discourses are loquacious on what

3 www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/presentation-speech.html

4 See Victor Fernandez-Soriano, *Le fusil et l'olivier. Les droits de l'homme en Europe face aux dictatures méditerranéennes (1949–1977)* (Editions de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2015).

5 Samuel Moyn, *The last utopia : human rights in history* (Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

European integration was ultimately not about and very sparse in their comments on what stood at the heart of the process: the building up of a European welfare state.

Never before had the social sciences been so self-confident in their capacity to offer adequate prognoses of social and political evolutions. Never before did they fail so miserably.

It seems difficult indeed to turn European policies on coal, steel and agriculture into success stories. From this angle, European integration appears more like a form of palliative care for economic sectors that were terminally ill than a forward looking and dynamic process. The history of the European Community for Coal and Steel primarily reads as a history of mine closures and dismantling of steel mills.[6] The Common Agricultural Policy on its part managed to spend between 80 and 50% of the European budget between 1960 and 2000, while reducing the part of the active population employed in agriculture in its member states from 30 to 3%. But, economic reconversion of the heartland of the 19th century industrial revolution and, more importantly still, the elimination of subsistence farming, by far the most wide-spread and enduring source of poverty in Europe and beyond, were daunting political challenges that European nation states could hardly face alone. They therefore pooled their resources to build a European welfare state that dealt with the issues of industrial decline and land reform in a more just, democratic and peaceful way than was the case elsewhere. It suffices to mention that the slogan of Lenin's Bolshevik party was all about land and bread, that Mussolini's *squadri fascisti* built their reputation by spurring poor peasants entitled under the Visocchi decree to seize land uncultivated by landowners, the Azana land reform and its role in the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, the reforms enacted or attempted by Stamboliyski, Pilsudski, Zogu, Tito and Hoxha, not to mention the link between rural crisis, uncontrolled urbanisation, guerrilla activity and military dictatorship in Latin America. But this is a story that remains very much untold in museum exhibits, schoolbooks and Nobel Peace Prize conferment speeches.

How can history then reclaim its critical potential 25 years after 1989? It is easy to see the self-satisfied narrative of 1989 at work in Western Europe. 'You guys have been living in the dark night of the past: communism, totalitarianism, the Iron Curtain and all that. Welcome to the bright present that we have had the privilege to live in since 1945.' And especially: 'Don't worry, we'll explain to you how the present works.' A more self-critical reading might be appropriate. First of all, as far as 1989 is concerned: we did not see it coming. Never before had so many social scientists, economists, historians, Kremlin watchers, foreign policy analysts and intelligence agencies been paid by their public authorities to scrutinise the internal affairs of foreign countries as in the 1970s and 1980s.

6 Nicolas Verschueren, *Fermer les mines en construisant l'Europe: une histoire sociale de l'intégration européenne* (Bruxelles: P. Lang, 2013).

Never before had the social sciences been so self-confident in their capacity to offer adequate prognoses of social and political evolutions. Never before did they fail so miserably. This was not so much a case of spectacular collective incompetence as of spectacularly inadequate conceptual tools starting with the model of the totalitarian state. The idea of the totalitarian state was premised upon a parallel between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It bore crucially on possible end-scenarios. Nazi Germany showed, quite astoundingly, that internal dissent or revolt was unthinkable in a totalitarian state. How else could one understand that Germany fought itself to near death when defeat had become the only possible outcome? Two thirds of German war losses occurred between July 1944 and May 1945 and, unlike 1917, there had not been a hint of popular protest. Total control of public opinion and draconian repression seemed to provide the answer to this enigma. That quite legitimate expectations of total revenge go much further to explain German collective behaviour – that is, others will do to us what we did to them, in which case fighting to the death was an attractive alternative – did not figure prominently in analyses of Germany's war end. Faced with a comparable enemy, comparable strategic choices seemed obvious: only total military defeat and unconditional surrender could bring the game to an end. Negotiating with a totalitarian enemy – remember Munich – or betting on internal dissent were naïve or dangerous fallacies and in any case a waste of time. Unhindered by any attempt to analyse the collective failure of Western social sciences to predict the implosion of communist regimes in 1989, the very same scholars instantly and eagerly offered their expertise as 'transitologists'. We did not see it coming, but we perfectly know how to fix it.

Celebrating 1989 as the simple triumph of human rights over dictatorship therefore falls short of a full understanding of its place in 20th century history. We can rewrite the history of the 1970s and 1980s as the prologue to final collapse in 1989, but can only do so if we can demonstrate that the causes of the crises in communist states apply to them and to them only. The same decades were also a period of enduring economic and political crisis in Western Europe. In spite of the proselytizing of self-appointed transitologists, the model they tried to sell abroad was fundamentally challenged at home. The Europe that emerged after 1989 was a radically new Europe in the West too. National politics had changed beyond recognition in countries like Italy, the Netherlands, Austria and France. European integration had been profoundly transformed by the twin reforms of German political unification and European monetary unification. Claiming that the West simply and triumphantly exported its political and economic model to the East is an ideological, not a historical statement.

How can we then turn a European remembrance of the 20th century into a politically relevant discourse, one capable of engaging in a debate and not just a consensual and self-congratulatory celebration? For a start, we may want to emancipate ourselves from the master-narrative reducing contemporary history in Europe to the protracted struggle between democracy and its enemies. Democracy is not a stable form of government invented in 1789 that then took two centuries to finally triumph over its enemies in 1989. Democracy is a fragile compromise of contradictory principles: popular sovereignty and individual rights,

nationalism and universalism. We abhor the brutal rule of the majority disposing of minorities, but we equally distrust a democracy that would be reduced to a regime of individual constitutional rights, conferring ultimate arbitration to courts rather than to parliaments. The challenge for the European Union today and for each and every one of the democracies that compose it is not so much to define themselves negatively against the ghosts of the past, but to reinvent a new compromise between individual rights and popular sovereignty. If the European Union is just a set of common norms and negative liberties of human rights, unable to also formulate an ambitious agenda of civil rights and increasingly unable of continue providing what has been the key to its success – that is, not the promotion of peace and human rights, but the build-up of a European welfare state including popular sovereignty over market forces, it will end up resembling Napoleonic Europe, epoch-making with its metric system, civil code and penal code, but short on popular sovereignty. The upcoming European elections may then become the European Union's Waterloo and that may also be a battle we do not want to re-enact.

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◄ From the left: Richard Overy (University of Exeter), Dragoș Petrescu (University of Bucharest) and Florin Abraham (member of the ENRS Steering Committee) during the 4th European Remembrance Symposium

Remembrance of the Second World War 70 Years Later. Winners, Losers, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders

Opening Address by Heinz Fischer, President of the Republic of Austria

Participants
of the 4th European
Remembrance
Symposium

Participants of the 4th European Remembrance Symposium during a visit to the Heldentor Memorial

Memorial
for the Victims
of Nazi Military
Justice in Vienna

Opening Address By Heinz Fischer, President of the Republic of Austria

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am very pleased that the European Remembrance Symposium this year is held in Vienna on the 70th anniversary of the surrender of the German Wehrmacht and, thereby, the end of the Second World War. In other words, it is held at a time when historical debates are particularly relevant and intense.

Discussion of history is also the question of whether and what we can learn from history. I myself am one of those who are convinced, which I have on many occasions pointed out, that Ingeborg Bachmann's famous pessimistic saying that history constantly teaches, but finds no students, is a misnomer. I instead believe that people learn a great deal from history and that some of its lessons are so emphatic and intense that people can only learn them from history.

It is, for example, my firm belief that the history of the Second Republic in Austria has taken such a positive course due to many lessons and experiences from the First Republic. The Second Republic is an anti-thesis to the First Republic, whereby errors of the First Republic were avoided.

Seventy years ago, the Allied victory over the German army marked the end of the Second World War in Europe, the end of the Nazi dictatorship and the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria.

This war that ended 70 years ago was certainly the greatest European tragedy in the 20th century. Such a mega-tragedy had to raise the question: who was responsible, who were the victims and who were the perpetrators? In the case of Austria the realisation has prevailed that Austria was at the same time both a nation of victims and perpetrators.

Some saw Austria as the first victim of Nazi Germany, whereas others could not forget that most people in this country joyously welcomed Hitler's entry. Along with this was the active participation of a disproportionately large number of Austrians in the crimes of the Nazi regime, at times in leading positions.

This disunity had the effect of taking a long time until the view of the years between the Anschluss and war's end was free of euphemisms and relativism, but also free of further repression.

Much has been thought about, researched and published on how it could be possible for the 'first victim theory' in Austria to be so effective and to last so long as the prevailing interpretation.

Please allow me to comment:

The biggest reason was probably that the so-called Anschluss was actually consummated by the German army's invasion of the territory of the Republic of Austria, an act under international law with victims and perpetrators. The perpetrator was the German army or the German Reich and the victim was the Republic of Austria. Therein is the core of the victim theory.

However, the fact that the Austrian army did not fire a single shot in defence of the territory of the Republic of Austria, that the populace hailed advancing German troops in the same shameful as undeniable manner and that there were no significant acts or talk of resistance in the first weeks and months of this Anschluss are the other side of the coin.

The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity is an important and valuable contribution to broadening narrow national treatments of history. This is a particularly significant challenge between countries that are linked by a difficult history.

Also, there are the formulations of the Moscow Declaration of 1943. This Declaration promised Austrians that Austria would be restored to its 1938 borders after victory over Hitler's Germany, but a corresponding share of the fight against fascism and resistance against the Nazi system was demanded of Austria.

After the defeat of Hitler and declaration of independence on 27 April 1945 the Soviets as well as the newly formed Austrian government made reference to the Moscow Declaration and the victim theory was thus once again underscored. This not only fit the emotional state of anti-fascists in Austria, but was also at this time in the interest of all accomplices and supporters of the Hitler regime in Austria: the greater the number of victims, the fewer of those guilty. Ideally, this was a nation of victims and subordinates.

This was supported by the fact that in establishing the Second Republic political leaders – all of whom still experienced the faults and failure of the First

Republic – did not want to repeat the errors of the interwar period. Specifically, efforts were made during the extremely difficult and even dangerous phase of government, legal, economic and social reconstruction after 1945 to eliminate or at least curb the danger of vicious party struggle as much as possible. Thus arose the concept of an all-party government and from 1945 the coalition philosophy as a state political philosophy. Hence, the concept of a non-partisan trade union confederation. Hence, also the concept of punishing serious and evident Nazi crimes while at the same time involving as much of the populace in the construction of a new state as possible.

When I am asked why certain matters are now seen much clearer from a distance of 70 years than in the first post-war years, even though at that time the temporal distance from events before and after 1945 was much smaller than today, the following thought comes to mind: in April and May 1945 there was a total change in the political system in relation to the Nazi period. More or less overnight, a democratic republic and independent state arose from under a Nazi dictatorship and province of the greater German Reich called Ostmark.

The idea of Anschluss was dead.

People who shortly before were still in prison, who suffered in concentration camps, or who retreated from any political activity without rights took over the most important political offices overnight. Radical changes took place within days and weeks.

But what had not changed or changed little between mid-April and mid-May 1945 was the configuration of the populace in this country, of certain thought patterns. Also, there was a fear of 'collapse' and Bolshevism among those men and women who were sorely disappointed by National Socialism and who repented having so blindly trusted Hitler, Göring or Goebbels and their propaganda. Fear of the 'enemy' was much greater than the hope for peace and democracy.

There was a widespread feeling that the hundreds of thousands of Austrians who served in the German army had 'only done their duty'. That there was such huge pressure to fulfil their so-called duty – indeed intense pressure – cannot be denied. However, this was duty to a wrong cause and, therefore, a criminal matter.

It took quite some time until a new self-critical way of thinking arose in the minds of Austrians. Even today the question remains of what room for manoeuvre a soldier in the German army had, which is not so easy to answer. But that is not the first and most important point. It is not a question of what was possible at the time, but rather what was right at the time.

I believe that academic historical research still has much to investigate, study and clarify. The objectivity of relevant historiography can certainly be increased through transnational European efforts.

Internationalisation in historical research has, in fact, brought new forms here and made great progress. A different perspective leads to a departure from a seemingly obvious approach and allows for new ideas and insights. There were and are different initiatives to promote such a "European" view of contemporary history, individual events, as well as entire paths of development. Their work also serves this purpose.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity is an important and valuable contribution to broadening narrow national treatments of history. This is a particularly significant challenge between countries that are linked by a difficult history.

I am pleased that this year's conference is taking place now for the first time in Austria. Indeed, efforts to attain a European teaching of history are welcome and necessary in Austria.

I wish you stimulating discussions and interesting findings in your upcoming deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.

HEINZ FISCHER is an Austrian politician. He took office as President of Austria on 8 July 2004 and was re-elected for a second and last term on 25 April 2010, leaving office on 8 July 2016. Fischer previously served as Minister of Science from 1983 to 1987 and as President of the National Council of Austria from 1990 to 2002. A member of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), he suspended his party membership for the duration of his presidency. Apart from being a politician, Fischer also pursued an academic career, and became a professor of Political Sciences at the University of Innsbruck in 1993.

About the Power of Memory

MARTIN POLLACK

History is more easily comprehensible if we approach it from below, so to speak, from the perspective of individual experiences, observations and even tragedies. It is for this reason that recollections are so important when dealing with the past. This includes the memories of victims and perpetrators, as well as of onlookers, whether involved or not. All of these witnesses convey individual viewpoints on certain events, albeit influenced and coloured by a respective national narrative. They tell personal stories and observations that do not always have to match official historiography and which are at times contradictory. If we then piece together various testimonies like a puzzle to obtain a larger picture, we can with some luck to at least begin to understand the often seemingly inexplicable and incomprehensible recent history of our countries. Dry figures and dates do not allow this.

Of course, we must bear in mind that memories can be deceptive. This does not require any evil intent or deliberate effort to distort or conceal anything. Our memory can for whatever reason reflect distorted facts, hide certain events or encounters or even 'invent' others or mix up times. In brief, we should not always trust our memory. Psychology has a term for this false memory of a disturbing experience that probably every one of us has experienced.

At times, memories lead us into dangerous minefields through which we move with trepidation, gently taking one step at a time because we have to be constantly aware of encountering unexpected, terrifying images and findings that threaten to disrupt our mental balance. We then face the question of whether it would have been perhaps better to leave alone the past that we have stirred with these memories and not to stir it further, even though we of course know that silence and looking the other way do not make problems disappear.

I would like to relate such an experience. This will require a return to 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising. My father at that time was stationed in Poland as head of a special unit at a palace called Radziejowice about 40 kilometres southwest of Warsaw. He took over the unit several weeks earlier in the vicinity of Białystok in eastern Poland and retreated to Warsaw before the rapidly advancing Russians. Somewhere en route the Bast special unit, as it was named after its commander, my father, Dr Gerhard Bast, who was SS-Sturmbannführer and Chief Officer of the Gestapo, took a group of elderly Poles as hostages, perhaps, for protection against partisan attacks on the road. The hostages were led to Radziejowice. From here certain members of the unit, including my father, took part in the fighting in Warsaw. But that is a different story. In mid-September 1944, Special Unit 7a was moved from Poland to Slovakia to take part in suppressing the Slovak uprising. Before a train was loaded with all its weapons and vehicles, the hostages were shot in the courtyard of the Radziejowice palace, as was usual in such cases, and dumped on the spot into previously dug pits.

If we then piece together various testimonies like a puzzle to obtain a larger picture, we can with some luck to at least begin to understand the often seemingly inexplicable and often incomprehensible recent history of our countries. Dry figures and dates do not allow this.

My father as the unit commander could also have released the Polish prisoners and sent them home, but apparently this option was not taken into consideration. Hostages not needed any longer – what could one do with Polish hostages in Slovakia? – were shot. I only learned about the murder of 15 to 20 Poles, as the exact number is unknown, from testimony of a unit member before an investigative magistrate in Flensburg. Proceedings, however, concerned other operations and Radziejowice was merely mentioned on the side. I wrote about the hostage shooting more than ten years ago in a book about my father. At that time I also tried to find out more about these events. I learned that the palace, once owned by the Krasiński family, is now a holiday home for artists and writers. So I made contact with its director, who knew nothing about any execution in its courtyard. He, in turn, made inquiries, searched documents and chronicles and interviewed witnesses, but without success. In the end, he even voiced doubt as to whether the shooting mentioned in my book had actually taken place.

Shortly before I travelled to Poland in April of this year to present a translation of a book in which I write about hidden mass graves, the director of the artists' home called me with surprising news that a witness had surfaced. He was an eyewitness, who was present in 1945 during the exhumation of victims in the Radziejowice palace park. I met him at a café in Poznań. He arrived in

the company of the Radziejowice director. A vigorous man, about 80, who one immediately notices, he spent a good part of his life outdoors as a former senior forestry official and a passionate hunter. He spoke in a lively and vivid manner about those events as if they were yesterday. Several months after the war when only 12 years old he was told by his uncle, a priest, to accompany him as an altar boy to an exhumation of Nazi victims. They were Poles shot and buried by a German unit in the Radziejowice palace park. This was a hidden mass grave in the palace park that was apparently filled with the hostages that my father left to be liquidated. My interlocutor could remember details that I honestly would have preferred not to hear. The death pit opened by German prisoners of war filled so quickly with water that the bodies in it floated, all face down. This image followed him for many years, said the witness. He could not say where the dead, who no one knew, were brought for proper burial. He never spoke about these events after the exhumation with either his uncle, the priest, or with anyone else up to the present day.

My father as the unit commander could also have released the Polish prisoners and sent them home, but apparently this option was not taken into consideration.

He then added that why he remained silent for so long was even a mystery to him. He now blames himself. His fault lay in never mentioning these incidents, even as an adult. It would then still have been possible several years afterwards to find out who the people were who met their death in Radziejowice. Today, it is probably too late for that. Nevertheless, he now finally told this terrible story after so many years because his conscience dictated that the memory of those murdered must not be lost. They must be remembered in Radziejowice in any form, perhaps with a plaque. Otherwise, the perpetrators would have achieved their goal, even afterwards, of depriving the murdered of their names and history, stealing their identity and rendering them anonymous and in total oblivion, thus completely wiping them out. No one would remember and any memory of them would be extinguished forever.

We should not allow that. After all, the dead to whom his uncle gave their last rites in Radziejowice shortly after the war, left behind women and children, parents, siblings and friends in the unknown village from which they were dragged. Relatives had certainly searched for years for them with increasing desperation because they could not imagine that close ones could disappear without a trace forever or without notice, be it only a terse note somewhere of their violent death.

As I sat opposite the two men, the late witness and the director of Radziejowice, I tried to imagine what occurred at that time more than 70 years ago that had driven my father and his people to shoot these innocent people, just like that. I tried to imagine how events had transpired. Who dug the pit? Who fired the shots? The former altar boy knew some additional details, for example,

that the shootings – he spoke of several executions – according to witnesses present at the exhumation in Radziejowice always took place at night and were accompanied by noise from howling engines with which the perpetrators may have perhaps wanted to drown out the shots. He stressed several times that he could exactly pinpoint the location where the dead were dug out of the ground at that time. As a forester he learned how to orient himself in open terrain. It was all the more surprising to himself that he had been silent for so long. This fact tormented him visibly.

Often, people seem to wait for someone to ask them a question, provide an impetus, and then begin to speak and provide details, names, and dates that often amaze even themselves.

Why did I keep my knowledge to myself for so long, he asked time and again, more to himself than us. Why did I not talk about the events I saw in 1945 much earlier? Why did my uncle, who, after all as a priest was an educated man, a man of the word and pen, never speak or write about them? The director of Radziejowice noted that the priest for many years had a detailed chronicle that has been preserved. It made no mention of the exhumation in the palace park. As he heard this, the old man shook his head in disbelief.

Everyone remained silent as if taking a vow. The former altar boy, who was then 12 years old, his uncle the priest, and other witnesses who knew about the shootings in 1945 and who could report them. If the director of Radziejowice could be believed – and there is no reason to doubt his testimony – the people who knew about the crime never spoke about it. At least not publicly. Although they themselves were not among the perpetrators or their henchmen, but rather closer to the victims who themselves expected to be shot for no reason at any time, they kept their knowledge to themselves over many years. Until 70 years later, when the man who now sat opposite me broke the silence and began to speak. Why now, actually? He himself could not explain, but seemed glad to finally speak about the events at the time.

This episode shows how long it often takes until people are willing to talk about traumatic experiences. Memories are buried for many years, perhaps pushed out, forgotten, but suddenly find their way and break forth, at times without apparent reason. Often, people seem to wait for someone to ask them a question, provide an impetus, and then begin to speak and provide details, names, and dates that often amaze even themselves. Why do I suddenly remember this now?

This is true not only for victims and other witnesses, but also at times for perpetrators who long remain silent due to fear of punishment. We know of many such cases when a perpetrator unexpectedly begins to speak, sometimes literally risking his neck. This is then usually the credit of a sensitive interviewer's

ability to elicit important stories from even the most withdrawn interlocutors. In some cases, perpetrators shortly thereafter became victims. This can be a reason that they break their silence and unleash their memories.

However, this is often very selective, as there is much that is left out, mixed up or exaggerated. People understandably prefer to speak about their own victimhood than their own sins. There is a rather gracious silence about the breadth of perpetrators, as well as the society from which they originate. In such cases memories often prove to be incredibly sketchy, since much is covered up and reinterpreted, embellished or simply denied. It wasn't like that; you who were not there have no idea, you have no right to judge us or to even force the issue. I know this from personal experience. In my father's family all were without exception committed Nazis and some were very deeply involved. My father, grandfather, uncle, my father's younger brother. But they regarded themselves as victims rather than perpetrators. And much was eagerly said about this. They all lost much after 1945, as they never tired of relating, including possessions and professional positions. My grandparents spoke about looting and other attacks, arrests and stays in prisons and internment camps, of allegedly inhuman prison conditions and work prohibitions that they and their peers had to endure after 1945. Unjustly, as they constantly stressed, because they themselves were not open to any blame.

People understandably prefer to speak about their own victimhood than their own sins.

Events such as those in Radziejowice were naturally never mentioned in these circles. They were not part of the stories I was fed as a child and teenager. I also never asked later. At some point I severed contact with my family and only years later began research on what my father, grandfather, uncle and other family members did during the years we refer to here. I never got to hear personal memories from that time. Afterwards, I never asked. I never asked what my father did in Poland or Slovakia. Perhaps it would have been useless anyhow, as I presumably would have faced a wall of silence. But I could have made the attempt anyway. My father was murdered while on the run in 1947 and my grandfather died when I was young, but my grandmother and uncle lived long enough to provide information. They professed loyalty to National Socialism until their death, but wanted to know nothing about crimes, the murder of Jews, the expulsion of Slovenes, or the executions of hostages. Maybe I should at some point have begun talking about it. Maybe I should have asked the right questions. Perhaps I was previously afraid because I had an idea of what I would hear. However, I slammed the door shut and broke off the conversation to protect myself.

I thought of this missed opportunity during the encounter with the old man in Poznań, who suddenly began to talk about matters that he carefully preserved for 70 years within himself, as in a safe. He may be the last who can authentically

report on events, as everything else is hearsay, second- and third-hand, or the result of research in archives, as I recounted them in the book about my father. I can now thank the witnesses at Radziejowice for being able to fill in a stain in my father's history with depictions of an exhumation that took place shortly after the war, together with seemingly extraneous details that are nevertheless essential in order for me to understand certain things. That is the point, even if images often hurt, as they hurt me in the case of Radziejowice. As I sat opposite the old man, I imagined how it would have been if my grandmother or uncle suddenly began to speak. Decades later. They knew much. But I never wanted to hear their recollections, probably because I was afraid to learn about horrible events. Much took place in the family that I already found to be bad when they were still alive. Tortuous. Evil. I did not want to know in detail and preferred to leave a lot in the dark.

Now I blame myself for this failure. We should not be affected by such motivations and should not close our eyes and ears if faced with memories from that time. Certainly not if these are memories of offenders, who are at the same time our next of kin.

MARTIN POLLACK is an Austrian writer, journalist and translator of Polish literature. He studied Slavic literature and the history of Eastern Europe. He was a correspondent of *Der Spiegiel* in Warsaw and Vienna, and has published a number of books, including a famous publication about his father who was a member of SS and a war criminal: *The Dead Man in the Bunker: Discovering My Father* (published in 2004 in German, English translation in 2008). Mr. Pollack has received several awards for his books and Polish-German translations.

Remembering the Second World War 70 Years Later: Winners, Losers, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders Introductory remarks

KRZYSZTOF ZAMORSKI

Never in my life had I asked anyone whom I helped about their views. What do I care? Am I helping the views or a dying person?

Władysław Bartoszewski, interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 April 2015 (the Professor's last interview)

70 years after the War. A timeframe to observe and remember

We have found ourselves today at a point that in every interesting respect memory and memorialising as well as research of the past are worth a brief classification. On one hand, war passes with increasing relentlessness from the realm of the near to that of the distant past. On the other hand, we are fully aware that the Second World War, as a historical occurrence and more so as a human experience, cannot succumb to a failure of remembering. Its consequences are still visible in interpersonal contacts and in various relations determining the shape of our region and continent today. This insecure distancing poses new problems with it in the latter regard and raises new challenges before us.

The 70th anniversary may have been the last round anniversary in which witnesses of the war could take an active part in commemorations. We deal with a situation in which the third generation born after the Second World War is coming to the fore of public life. We will faced paradoxes more often, ones that the Polish press wrote about in the last several days. Reporter Filip Chajzer from the quite popular television programme *Good Morning* TVN (Dzień dobry TVN) asked Varsovians about the meaning of the 'SS' symbol. Young people who

were surveyed said that it is 'some sort of lightning bolt', perhaps a number – 44. Out of 41 people surveyed 11 barely provided the correct response. Many from all over the world, not only reporters or publicists, but prominent politicians as well, do not see a problem with references to the Second World War on Polish territory and use of the term 'Polish death camps' in relation to Nazi German death camps. In response to countless protests, we learn that this is a result of purely geographic connotations. I propose the following hypothesis: in many cases it is not about denying the past, but just about simple forgetfulness. The historical space of the Second World War is increasingly becoming an imagined space, one that is not experienced and also recognising current boundaries and political divisions. Is memory failing us?

On the other hand, however, 'memory revolution' included and includes within it certain important shortcomings. The most important of these was the tendency to reduce history to a past existing in the present, to memory. This occurred more often than not, despite the intentions of this revolution's creators. Pierre Nora himself was a signatory of the famous document dated 1 December 2005 that was known to French historians and published in *Liberation*. Authors of the manifesto symptomatically entitled it *Freedom for History*. In one of the programme's points they clearly warn of equating history and memory:

> *History is not a slave of the present. The historian does not stain the past with contemporary ideological schematics and does not introduce modern events into erstwhile feelings.*

He also added:

> *History is not memory. In heeding an academic calling, the historian collects people's recollections, compares them to each other, refers to documents, things, and traces and establishes facts. The historian understands the weight of memory, but does not limit himself to it.*

In my opinion, it is not irrelevant that the previously mentioned memory revolution occurred in the 1980s when eyewitnesses of the past, the generation of people who initially experienced the war – the generation of 'holdovers' as some of its representatives described it – became aware of a slow departure from the scene of life and noticed a process of forgetting. Slowly, the children of those who survived the war are preparing to leave the active scene, this world. For them, memories of the war are memories of their parents. Despite every effort, the process of forgetting was not delayed and still has its natural rhythm despite all efforts to halt it. The war is more boldly used to exploit particular political objectives. It becomes a tool of the fashionable and uncompromisingly growing 'political history' of today's world, not to mention history teaching programmes…

For history, the most important thing in this situation is to ask what and how the process of successfully commemorating the events of seventy years ago can be helped? I believe that it is necessary to continue intense research into Hayden White's 'practical past', which I call the first human reflection of the past. However, it is necessary to see that one cannot solely rely on memory in the present social and cultural presence of history. I believe that it would be worthwhile here to reach toward 'human historicity' – a concept well known in philosophy, if only German hermeneutical philosophy. Historicity is understood as the totality of factors that are present in the representation of the past. In

this sense, memory will be one of those factors. We cannot forget about the roles of understanding that emerged on the foundation of critical reflections of history, of sources in which the past is codified, of historical consciousness and of tradition with all the ambiguity of these concepts, particularly in relation to memory. I see sense in this because more often we will have to deal not only with representation of the past through recollections, but with the need to teach people to read memoirs! Such phenomena accompany 'post memory,' or more precisely 'post-post memory,' if we are to use proper terminology.

In this spirit I believe that we can consider the present categories of our references to war, about the Second World War, in the categories of 'winners and losers, perpetrators and victims as well as bystanders and therefore in detail attempt to provide answers to the problems presented to us by our meeting's organisers.

Memory, memorialising and the historical narrative

Let us begin with one of the most important questions posed to us. May I remind you that it asks whether the memory of the Holocaust during the Second World War and of events shortly thereafter created a parallel narrative rather than led to the creation of a common history.

From the perspective of historical theory, the main problem in this question lies in asking whether it is at all possible and appropriate to speak of the Holocaust in categories widely adopted in the historical narrative.

According to Michael Rothberg, two approaches can be distinguished in Holocaust research: realistic and anti-realistic. The first assumes the possibility of meeting and presenting the history of the Holocaust through the classic historical narrative method. I suspect that these possibilities present the opportunity for a shared narrative about which the organisers asked. The second position, according to the classification of Rothberg, is anti-realistic. It addresses the Holocaust in categories of classical historiography. What does this mean?

Here, it is worthwhile to refer to one of the most classical texts on this question drafted by the Dutch historical theoretician Franklin Ankersmit.

In his work entitled 'Remembering the Holocaust: Mourning and Melancholia', which appeared in his book *Historical Representation* (Stanford University Press, 2001), one reads the following:

'Writing about the Holocaust has its own specific difficulties. Ordinarily, it is sufficient for a theorist to respect the truth and be intelligent, although, as we all know, that is difficult enough. But, writing about the Holocaust additionally requires tact and a talent for knowing when and how to avoid pitfalls of inappropriateness. Every discussion of the Holocaust runs the risk of getting ensnared in a vicious circle where misunderstanding and immortality mutually promote and reinforce each other' .

He indicates that the commonly accepted practice of historical language – the language of historical presentation based primarily on metamorphosis – does not meet requirements posed by current non-presentation. Indeed, the Holocaust forces existing and future generations to convey the highest traumatic scale. Such a presentation expressing the essence of what happened would leave the

1 M. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism. The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Minneapolis-London 200; see also A. Ziębińska Witek, *Problemy reprezentacji Holokaustu, in: Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i przedstawiania*, Poznań 2009, p. 141.

2 F. R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation*, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 176

memory of it as eternal, in essence, as suffering not extolled. He writes: 'The memory of the Holocaust must be an illness, a mental disorder from which we can never cease to suffer.'

It appears to me that (at least in Poland) we are presently at a level of reception with regard to various experiences and the slow work of memory that leads to an initiation to the mechanisms of rational events. The current state, in the third generation after the war, creates a chance to intently listen to the experiences of Poles, Jews, Germans and Ukrainians with the intention of hearing each other.

In writing this I have in mind, for example, a solution adopted at the Oscar Schindler Enamel Factory Museum in Kraków. The narrative premise of the programme there offers three paths (in the literal and metaphorical sense) or experiences. One path is dedicated to the German occupation of Kraków through a German experience, including that of Oscar Schindler, another is dedicated to experiences of the Jews of Kraków and the third is a Polish experience path. The trauma ends at a space recalling the memory of Holocaust victims. Next, we step into a space in which two books are on display: a book of the deserving and a book of the damned. The German occupation of Kraków and the war itself are presented here in traumatic categories in which those who survived could find themselves in one of the two books. The question remains with regard to those who do not find themselves in either book. Are these bystanders?

This solution, which brought the exposition much success, also inherently contains a suggestive response within it to one of the questions posed to us, namely, what plays an essential role in creating different historiographical narratives in parallel narratives? It draws our attention to the issue of personal experience as the central point in reference to every solid historical narrative, as well as to the cultural problems associated with presentation of these experiences. It searches for the most direct path concentrated on the core of personal experience by providing the recipient stories about the past and the possibility of direct contact with witness memory. Our recipient, however, is culturally, mentally and spatially remote and to this end the experiences arrive from certain positions.

Winners and losers

As many of us here today may remember, this topic was the leading issue at the last congress of German historians. It would be difficult for me to return to the number of issues and questions then raised. We are all aware that the issue of victory and defeat in the Second World War is a point of reference for many considerations at the level of military or political, social and economic history. Already, however, even in this macro perspective, the issue of volatility begins to appear, particularly the volatility of time and an understanding of the winner and loser. As it appears, the smallest problem is determining who the real winner was in military matters. In the political sense, the winners were in some way designated by Yalta and Potsdam. An analysis of every other sphere of life, especially from the perspective of 70 years, carries with it increasing doubt in determining the winners and losers, whereas even the undisputed winners are questioned about the value of that victory. A question is posed about the price of this victory. Debates on this topic make sense and take place primarily in

3 Ibid. p. 193.

terms of knowledge. It appears within them through Braudel's methodological historical research of short and long dialectic duration; most meaningful here are comments found in the currently widely discussed *History Manifesto* by Joe Guldi and David Armitage.[4]

If I were to look at this issue from the perspective of my country, then I would say that apart from the long and assiduous ideas of triumph over the 'Polish eternal enemy' that were inculcated in us after the war by the communist authorities, into a generation of people who experienced war, it would be difficult to find those who could say that they are winners.

With reference to the question of how to memorialise the memory of perpetrators who themselves stood as victims, we face examples that often transcend the possibilities of traditional historical interpretation with which, thanks to memory narration, it begins to become increasingly better. However, is only memory narration enough here?

As for questions frequently asked today about the victims' feelings about hundreds of thousands of Soviet army troops who perished on Polish soil during Poland's 'liberation', I wish to say that no reasonable person in Poland questions that sacrifice. The Red Army ended the suffering inflicted upon Polish citizens by German occupiers. No reasonable person questions the sacrifice of the common Red Army soldier, also remembering that alongside those recruited were many Polish volunteers who served in Polish units of the Soviet army. A problem emerged, however, when news began to spread about what was happening to soldiers of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) during and after the war. The 'democratic' elections of January 1947 tested the credibility of allied Soviet Russia in relation to Potsdam commitments while thousands were imprisoned simply as a result of being involved 'on the wrong side'. In this context what was telling for thousands of Polish soldiers who fought on the Allied side was the ban on taking part in the victory parade in London.

Although Nazi Germany lay in ruins, the Polish state theoretically gained a piece of its territory, but... lost a portion of its own. Who were the winners? Our Jewish Poles? Our parents who also searched for loved ones and who often kept silent when speaking about those who remained in the West or whose thoughts faded about those who remained in the East? Did the post-war repatriations of Poles from our former eastern territories bring the Easterners (such a term was used to describe those Poles who arrived from the former eastern borderlands of the Republic – *Kresy*) a feeling of victory?

4 J. Guldi, D. Armitage, *History Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

I believe that the memories of the second post-war generation, my generation, are best reflected in the words of my professor, Helena Madurowicz-Urbańska, a native of Lwów (she regarded herself as a Lvovian her entire life) and prisoner of Majdanek, Ravensbrück and Buchenwald (spending a total of two years in these camps). She spoke of her camp experiences very reluctantly and rarely. Once, she told me, and I quote from memory: 'Christopher, I do not know what was worse – the camp or the return from the camp?' These words remained firmly in my mind because they are probably typical for memory of the war for my generation of Poles.

As much as we can think of the historical micro-perspective and tempt ourselves to create a common narration, so too can the level of experience once again stand as a parallel narrative. Fully aware of the 'charm' of juxtaposing 'winners and losers', I would, however, as a historian, prefer a turn toward the direction of human wartime experiences as the most important and serious category rendering time-varying twists and turns of the human condition. In the case of the Second World War, the only appropriate term is 'survivors'.

Perpetrators and victims. Bystanders

I think that we must once again measure the questions posed by organisers of this conference with the inadequacy of classical and common references relating to these concepts.

With reference to the question of how to memorialise the memory of perpetrators who themselves stood as victims, we face examples that often transcend the possibilities of traditional historical interpretation with which, thanks to memory narration, it begins to increasingly improve. However, is only memory narration enough here?

Let us cite examples. In accordance with principles governing the humanities, there should in theory be no problem with honouring the memory of enemy soldiers who perished during wartime hostilities. The tradition of war cemeteries in a way fulfils this sense. The situation is worse when dealing with the civilian population and civilian cemeteries. It is very apparent that the simple divisions of victorious and vanquished nations, especially so typical immediately after the war through the principle of collective responsibility, began to lose meaning over the years. Allow me to cite the example of the history of German civil cemeteries on Poland's present territory, even though this is a wider problem. In the case of Poland it also reflects Ukrainian cemeteries in south-eastern Poland or Polish cemeteries in western Ukraine.

In the case of German civilian cemeteries in Poland, the principle change was not only in memory, but also in the human attitudes of working memory and how the Second World War became the subject of reception by the second generation born after the war, how we distanced ourselves from the war. Here, a key role was played by politics, particularly politics following the fall of communism. The symbolic meeting in Krzyżowa between Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki reignited Poland's internal debate on this topic. Slowly and systematically, the attitude towards German civilian cemeteries has changed. They are not only becoming the subject of care by local authorities, but also of social energy based on spontaneous local civic action that has been

liberated. Apart from the appearance of these obvious and sure symptoms of change, the question remains: is the outcome of the Second World War not its own drama, one in which we can question when and in what conditions the descendants of both perpetrators and victims will be able to experience empathy through their experience of war?

The issue of war memory after the war brings us to another dimension, to a situation posing a question about the memory of victims during the war – a problem generally and perhaps fortuitously referred to as 'bystanders'.

This question can refer to many social and political attitudes of the Second World War in various and numerous European countries. In relation to the Holocaust, even to the Great Powers themselves, allow me to remind ourselves of a report presented by the Polish government-in-exile's special emissary, Jan Karski, during his meeting at the White House with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 28 July 1943. During this meeting he presented a report prepared by the Polish underground on the situation of Jews on Polish territory. This report was also known to other allied nations. However, it did not lead to even a single bomb being dropped on railroad tracks leading to the death camps.

Here, I wish to shed some light on this issue based on the Polish example and our debate on the issue of the Holocaust. There is no doubt today, or even then in relation to Polish wartime laws, that all aid to perpetrators, including the many cases of murder and more numerous instances of revelation or outright sale of Jews to Germans, reduces these helpers to the role of executioners. The Polish underground state punished such collaboration with death sentences. This responsibility cannot be, is not and was not questioned. On the other hand, these attitudes should be juxtaposed to help extended to the Jewish population. The Council for the Aid of Jews (Żegota) functioned alongside the delegate of the government-in-exile for the country. We are proud of the fact that 6,500 Poles are among the 25,000 individuals from 45 countries that were honoured after the war as Righteous among the Nations. Here, we point to the Council for the Aid of Jews (Żegota).

As much as the category of executioner and helper does not raise any doubts, a question emerges about the attitude of the vast majority of Poles who were not torturers or their assistants, but witnesses of the Holocaust. Were they uniform or conscious assistants to the perpetrators? Were they at fault?

In accepted categories of understanding, a main problem becomes the reference to direct experience. On the basis of experiences of Jewish Poles, it is justified to ask: why were there so few given the immensity of the tragedy? This question clashes with an answer based on the fact that any aid given to Jews on Polish territory meant death or in the best of circumstances a concentration camp. It concerns the type of support, expressed even in empathy, which was possible and which is cited in numerous examples of anti-Semitic attitudes and human indifference. I believe that the words of Zygmunt Bauman best describe this dilemma when he wrote:

'Let us consider that the murder of Jewish Poles was carried out by the occupiers in front of Poles, thus posing that same moral dilemma before them that was unknown to most people in countries conquered by the Nazis – dilemmas without a solution or good way out, in stark contradiction to the teaching of

5 Z. Bauman, *Świat nawiedzony*, In: Zagłada, p. 23/4.

the will of Kant, and ones that oppose the dictates of reason and precepts of ethics. Let us think, let us all think: what would we do if a ragged and emaciated stranger knocked on our door and asked for shelter; shelter that if provided carried with it the threat of instant death or slow agony in a camp?'

For my generation and for today's debate it is important that the broadly understood problem of Polish societal attitudes towards Jews during the Holocaust was not left alone in the Third Republic. In opposition to the many voices claiming that this debate was only possible after Poland regained independence, I underscore that this is not true. The question of mutual Polish-Jewish relations, similar to Polish-German or to a smaller yet also important degree Polish-Ukrainian relations, emerged after the founding of 'Solidarity' when during conflict the second post-war generation began to question memory, but also began to think about the future. This occurred exactly during the mid-1980s. Following the memorable visit of Pope John Paul II to a synagogue in Rome on 13 April 1986, an article by Piotr Błoński appeared the following year in "Tygodnik Powszechny" that touched upon this topic. The article was symbolically entitled "The Poor Poles Look at the Jews" ("Biedni Polacy patrzą na Żydów"). It caused a stir and appeared in a vanguard of works addressing Polish-Jewish relations. Experts on this issue point, *inter alia,* to many literary works. It is noticeable that over 120 books on the Jewish topic appeared in 1987–1988. Since that time, it has not disappeared from Polish public debate. Recently, controversy over the books of Jan Gross contributed to that debate.[6]

If we are to question the nature of that debate, it is necessary to state that it is still a parallel presented problem. I find it hard to resist the impression that this is a dramatic conversation between two post-war generations, children and grandchildren of the victims, two victims of war: Poles and Jews. In this debate, an immense role was played until recently by a man whose words were the motto for my presentation today. Does this debate make sense? Does it bear fruit? I think that it does. Testaments to this are the thousands of non-Jews who take part in Kraków's festival of Jewish culture that will begin on 25 June for the 25th time. A testament to this is the Schindler Factory Museum or the newly opened Museum of the History of Poland's Jews – Polin.

6 P. Czapliński, *Prześladowcy, pomocnicy, świadkowie. Zagłada i polska literatura późnej nowoczesności*, p.155/6; J. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton University Press, 2001; J. Gross, *Fear: Anti–Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*, Random House,2006.

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An Artist Looks at the War

ANDA ROTTENBERG

Artists' reactions to the Second World War already appeared in 1939. At first, there were detached observations 'from a distance' like those captured in a series of drawings by Władysław Strzemiński that he began as early as 1939 – in them he diagnosed the total war by pointing at its most devastating effect: the degradation of the human being. However, it was not until 1945 and his series *To My Friends, the Jews*, that the characters in Strzemiński's drawings – until then marked by a certain atrophy – began to assume more precise shapes. This series was also the only one in which the artist introduced photographic quotations from reality. One of the first books giving personal evidence of war oppression was the account of Seweryna Szmaglewska, a survivor of Auschwitz, entitled *Smoke Over Birkenau,* first published in 1945. The first movie was *The Last Stage* by Wanda Jakubowska in 1947. One of the survivors, Tadeusz Borowski, wrote the influential collection of short stories *World of Stone* referring to human degradation in Nazi camps that was published in 1948. Among many other survivors, we can list such writers as Zofia Posmysz, Jean Améry, Imre Kertesz and Primo Levi, who wrote a significant statement: 'We, who survived, are not the real and reliable witnesses. The only holders of the awful truth are those who were drowned, annihilated, submerged. We are speaking on their behalf. We, the rescued, are re-telling the concentration camp experience of those who no longer exist.' (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 1986).

The body of literature is constantly growing and a new generations of authors draws upon not only the accounts of survivors, but also the confessions of tormenters such as that of Lisa, a death camp Aufseherin described by the aforementioned Zofia Posmysz in her 1962 novel, *The Passenger*. This encounter between Lisa, a former oppressor and her victim, was an unlikely chance to

hear arguments of the 'other side'. At that time, such a confrontation was an unprecedented act. The novel written by Zofia Posmysz was adapted into a film with the same title. *The Passenger* was released in 1963 in unfinished form due to the tragic death of its director, Andrzej Munk. Therefore, the film was left rigid in form, similar to the documentary *Night and Fog* from 1955 by Alain Resnais. Speaking of Polish literature one should also note the exceptional contribution of Leon Kruczkowski, whose drama *The Germans* from 1949 listed an entire spectrum of German attitudes towards Nazism that rendered feelings of guilt and responsibility increasingly relative. Kruczkowski was also a co-author of the screenplay for *Tonight a City Will Die*, a film by Jan Rybkowski, in which he went as far as to accuse Allied forces of being responsible for the destruction of Dresden (1961).

Survivors shared their trauma in different ways. Jean Améry wrote his indictment against the Nazi system of repression as a collection of essays *At the Mind's Limits: Beyond Guilt and Atonement*. In their subsequent books, Imre Kertesz and Primo Levi exhumed memories, digging up still new details and elements of *that other life*. For Paul Celan, it took merely a handful of poems that came to be widely remembered for the oxymoron 'Schwarze Milch der Frühe' and his pairs of notions such as 'Mohn und Gedächtnis' (poppy and memory) are still analysed by subsequent generations of scholars. The Polish artist Józef Szajna, Auschwitz prisoner number 18729, first noted the horror of death camps on tiny slips of paper, only to return to them later – in his environment-piece *Reminiscences* that conjured up phantoms of the dead and the objects they left behind – both in the gallery as well as on the theatre stage. Jonasz Stern used rags with the colour of mud or applied animal or fish bones on the surface of his paintings. For Szajna and Stern, it took years to reach the point at which they were able to translate their trauma into art. Up until that point, their practice was an affirmation of life. Szajna, a survivor of Auschwitz, and Stern, who narrowly escaped execution, were reluctant to speak about death for a long time. This was also the case of Alina Szapocznikow, who could consider herself lucky – as a young girl she ended up in Prague after having passed by Bergen Belsen and Auschwitz. These artists felt that their fate was exceptional, not because they were thrown into camps, ghettoes, or prisons. And not because they faced a firing squad or stood above a grave they had to dig for themselves. It was a time when such situations could be considered the norm. What was really exceptional was the fact that they managed to stay alive. This was the very reason why they chose to turn toward the future and develop concepts associated with the modernist paradigm that was violently disturbed by the war – a paradigm that removed the gloomy terror of their recent experience from the horizon. The war appeared as chaos that brutally upturned the existing order and not as a rigorous and, therefore, dead order that took the place of the dynamism and motion as symptoms of life. Only half a century later, Zygmunt Bauman analysed the relationship between totalitarian systems and the notion of modernity. At more or less the same time Gerhard Richter grasped the true meaning of the series of his own paintings based on photographs from his family albums such as *Tante Marianne* and *Familie am Meer*. One could say that it was relatively early when Richter reckoned with his youthful fascinations (*Stukas*, *Onkel Rudi*) and pointed

at those who were guilty of violence against their own nation (*Herr Heyde*). He also began collecting materials documenting the death camps that he would include in his *Atlas* since 1963. But, these themes only found their culminating point in Richter's four oil paintings from 2015 referring to documentary photos secretly taken by prisoners in Auschwitz. Dangers lurking in rigidly formatted logistics of modern life were addressed by Mirosław Bałka in the historic district of Zamość, a city in the south-east of Poland founded in the 16th century as an 'ideal settlement', where he introduced a replica of the wall of a kitchen building from the Auschwitz camp. This is how the utopias of the Renaissance and modernity found a common denominator in an extermination camp.

In order to address the most dramatic questions, artistic substance had to be stripped of excessive illusion to an even greater extent than the language of literature. This was how the work of art established links with outer and extra--artistic reality. On the border between art and non-art, artwork became more physical, or, as one could say, more tangible. Only then could its form and matter accommodate the artist's message and place it in the realm of the universal.

Andrzej Wróblewski, an active participant of the post-war struggle for the shape of modernity, witnessed the war still as an adolescent boy and depicted it later as a phenomenon that disturbed existing harmony. In his paintings, harmony relates to the structure of the human body that is deprived of its form by death. In these moments of transition, the human figure can collapse into a pile of fragmented remains or 'evaporate' from its clothes, which are left as a trace of a still-living shape. The body can also become its own shadow or a blue afterimage. The notion of afterimage was used by Władysław Strzemiński to describe an image that stays 'under the eyelids' once we close our eyes. This temporal aspect is extremely important, in particular, the adverbs 'before' and 'after'. In the case of Wróblewski, the concept refers to an essential distinction between life and death. This change, the transition from the living to the dead, is often represented with nothing else but the blue colour – this is how the artist conveyed the very moment when the memory of the eye retains the image of a living person, even though that person is already dead.

Andrzej Wajda, a peer and friend of Andrzej Wróblewski, was marked by equally tragic experiences. In his output as a film director, the war is the main focus of ten works, the first four of which account for his entire early oeuvre

from 1955 to 1959. Although the echoes of war are still to be found in later films addressing contemporary themes – notably *Everything for Sale* which features Wróblewski's paintings – Wajda's initial works already tell a bitter tale of Polish fate. In *A Generation*, released in 1955, the death of the main character puts an end to a sudden outburst of youth resistance under the German occupation. An attempt to escape from the hell of the Warsaw uprising in *Kanał*, from 1957, is bound to fail. In turn, in *Ashes and Diamonds* from 1958, a survivor from the uprising dies on 'Victory Day' marking the last day of the war. The fate of the characters portrayed in these films was already sealed in September 1939, a fact that was also confirmed in the film *Lotna*, released in 1959, which pictures the German invasion of Poland from the standpoint of a Polish mounted cavalry squadron. Last but not least, there is *Samson* from 1961 – a symbolic closure of this entire series of Wajda's early works. It addresses the Holocaust from the perspective of a Biblical parable. Two other characters from Wajda's movies die accidentally just after the end of the war: the young Jewish girl Maria in the *Landscape after the Battle*, 1970, based on Tadeusz Borowski's short story, and the alter ego of Wajda himself in *Katyń*, 2007. This dramatic determinism, which forces the chosen ones, the survivors, to share the fate of the victims, carries a significant message about the inevitability of roles scripted by history. This fact is also attested to by the books of such German-speaking authors as Thomas Bernhard, Siegfried Lenz, Gunther Grass, Winifried Georg Sebald, Martin Pollack, or Klaus Theweleit. They all speak about the costs of the war in a language less modest than that of Paul Celan – who likewise wrote in German.

Among the readers of works by the Romanian poet was the artist Anselm Kiefer. His own *Mohn und Gedaechtnis* took the form of a lead airplane – a motionless vehicle of memory sinking into the ground under its own weight. Kiefer is neither a witness, nor a participant. He belongs to that second generation that inherited the memory of the victims and perpetrators. Or perhaps inherited guilt itself much like Felix Droese, the author of the piece *I Killed Anna Frank* (1981), and Jochen Gerz, who in his work summarises the crimes of the generation of his fathers.

In order to address the most dramatic questions, artistic substance had to be stripped of excessive illusion to an even greater extent than the language of literature. This was how the work of art established links with outer and extra-artistic reality. On the border between art and non-art, artwork became more physical, or, as one could say, more tangible. Only then could its form and matter accommodate the artist's message and place it in the realm of the universal. Alina Szapocznikow became a sculptor. First marked with the stigma of racial impurity, then after the war burdened with an irreversible deficiency from genital tuberculosis from which she suffered, Szapocznikow established a conversation about death in the context of life because decay only becomes apparent in the context of a complete whole. In order to make her message clear, the artist highlighted the biological aspects of human existence: by dismembering a figure, tearing apart form, disintegrating material, and disturbing the existing canons of art. Legs, lips, breasts, and sections of faces are all parts of a dismembered and ever incomplete body. These fragments were extracted from the whole and reduced to the role of an object-fetish, which captured the artist's body

in a 'negative cast', multiplying it and letting it circulate freely. By focusing on selected elements Szapocznikow soon discovered the sphere of absence, which spurred reflection about such notions as wholeness or completeness that were removed from perspective – like the body that once touched a wrinkled shirt that is now merely a memory of an imprinted buttock in *Requiem pour le cul*. But, one can already notice a touch of death in her body-like shapes, torsos submerged in formless folds of black polyurethane, even though they were created before the artist was diagnosed with a terminal disease that she later tried to tame in a series of works known as *Tumours*. The adverbs 'before' and 'after' – much like the blue afterimages of human figures in Wróblewski's paintings – convey a state of being between life and death that was characteristic of *that* time. This is the state of a chronic disease, shared by all survivors and passed down to their spiritual successors.

Among these successors is Mirosław Bałka. His work *37.1*, presented at the Venice Biennale in 1993, speaks of a raised body temperature not yet a fever. This temperature, conveyed in the work's title, was translated into a sculpture made from terrazzo – a material traditionally used in Polish tombstones. It communicates a specific notion of 'memory' through temperature and proportion. Further works of this artist were equally ascetic in their allusions to the experience of an individual subjected to oppression and pain. First and foremost, this was through associations triggered by specific material such as terrazzo, ash, soap, or salt. These were soon supplemented with an ambient soundtrack and moving image. Removed from their original context and contrasted together, these elements became material for art that refers as much to intuition as to the knowledge passed down as part of the war legacy. Marked with this knowledge, we see more than we are actually shown. As individuals defined by culture, we are able to find allegories in simple statements such as the flight of a moth over the floor of a railway car in the work *Tanz*, or the hiss of gas burning on a kitchen stove burner in *Blue gas eyes*. The artist leads us down concrete passageways or into metal cages, subjecting us to noise, exposing us to a reversed stream of air, or restraining our movements. These are the moments when we experience works physically – participating in a ceremony that seeks to conjure up and strengthen the sense of a bond with the absent *Others*.

The contagious memory of war has also spread to other Polish artists. A recurring motif in the work of Artur Żmijewski is the concept of 'being marked', which relates not only to the inheritance of trauma, but also to specific patterns of behaviour from the time of the war, as in the videos *Game of Tag* from 1999. The agent that reinforces and supports these patterns in the collective consciousness is, quite expectedly, the media. The media create a secondary transformed knowledge and shape a similar attractive image of the participants of *those* events from the past – this concerns both victims and perpetrators, but perpetrators in particular. These media personalities, superimposed on the forgotten faces of actual criminals, are so deeply rooted in the collective imagination that all gestures aimed at disrupting the mechanism in which the real past is being substituted for a present fiction meet with resistance and aggression. Here, it suffices to recall the political and press debate over *The Nazis* – a Warsaw exhibition of Piotr Uklański in 2000 – sparked by the artist's decision to present a collection

of photographs of celebrated actors taken at the time when they played the roles of Nazi officers. Equally violent was the initial reaction to Zbigniew Libera's *Lego Auschwitz* – a work conceived as a comment on the dangers arising from making the Holocaust a common and ordinary theme, which was eventually withdrawn by the Polish curator from an exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1997. Libera's piece points at the media as the key instrument in the process of turning evil into a banality.

Therefore, it would seem that the most intriguing phenomenon for contemporary artists is not the hell of the war itself, but the mechanism in which facts are repressed and replaced by fiction, as well as the inevitable process of effacing the memory of actual events. We can trace this approach in paintings by the Belgian artist Luc Tuymans. Faded like old photographs they capture desolate interiors 'of no qualities', seemingly dull and uninteresting landscapes, or people devoid of any characteristic features. In order to reach the deeper meaning of these works, one needs to reach for facts from the past, decode messages hidden under the names of towns or villages, and refer to the knowledge of practices and preferences of followers of the Third Reich. Barely visible characters and events looming in the distance or enlarged details, out of scale and context, act as reminders in the paintings of Wilhelm Sasnal. But not of facts themselves – they allude to recent books and movies based on them that have already become a part of history. The subject of repressed and blurred memories returns in a film by Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal *It Looks Pretty from a Distance* from 2012, which speaks of how evil is passed on from generation to generation. Similar themes are found in the works of younger Polish directors: *Aftermath* by Władysław Pasikowski from 2012 and *Ida* by Paweł Pawlikowski from 2013.

In addition, we have seen the arrival of films that present the drama of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 in a new light such as *Warsaw '44* by Jan Komasa that was released in 2014.

In light of the above, the debate on present-day consequences of German occupation is still very much alive in Poland. One contributing factor to this situation is ongoing academic research that systematises historical materials. There is no sign that this topic will fade away any time soon.

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Different Memories of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe: How to Speak about the Crimes of the 20th Century without Equalising Them

RICHARD OVERY

Over the past twenty years there has been a radical change in the way in which the major totalitarian regimes involved in the Second World War have been remembered and recorded. Before then there was a clear separation in the public mind, certainly in Western states, between the criminal nature of the German wars and the Soviet Union's just war of defence against invasion. That difference lay in the outcome of the conflict: National Socialist Germany was a defeated state and its leaders were put on trial for a range of crimes. The Soviet Union, in turn, was one of the victorious Allies and for years was able to deny any accusations that some of its pre-war and wartime actions resembled the crimes of which National Socialist leaders were accused – aggressive war, harsh occupation policies, the murder of prisoners-of-war and so on. The opening up of the former Soviet archives to historical scrutiny, as well as the collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, made it possible since the 1990s to talk more openly and honestly about the nature of the Soviet dictatorship and its wartime behaviour.

The result of these changed perspectives on the Soviet Union during the 1940s has been to encourage a type of equivalence between the criminal characteristics of totalitarian regimes, however they are defined. The publication in France of the *Black Book of Communism* in 1997 was a milestone in rejection of the idea that the Soviet Union had been a progressive force in the Stalin years, in contrast to the reactionary racism and crude imperialism of Hitler's Reich. Since then there has been a plethora of publications highlighting the atrocious nature of the Soviet dictatorship. In Poland, for example, historians demonstrated that differences between German and Soviet occupations between 1939 and 1941 were

differences of degree with both sides characterised by deportations, the seizure of property, anti-Semitism, suppression of the national elite and police terror. Marek Chodakiewicz has argued that German terror was harsher and less pragmatic than Soviet terror, but for the victims this is a largely academic distinction.

The opening up of the former Soviet archives to historical scrutiny, as well as the collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, has made it possible since the 1990s to talk more openly and honestly about the nature of the Soviet dictatorship and its wartime behaviour.

There are obvious commonalities between the two dictatorships in the period of the World War. Some commentators have tried to count the number of dead under the two systems to see which of the dictators, Hitler or Stalin, was the more murderous. This is scarcely a useful exercise, since it explains nothing even if acknowledging how murderous the two regimes were. The irony of the protracted argument about the murders at Katyn is that either side could have committed them, even if in this case Soviet responsibility is now beyond doubt. Nevertheless, there are obvious common features in the way the two dictatorships worked and the impact they had on the area described by Timothy Snyder as the 'Blood lands', the swath of territory between Germans and Russians in Eastern Europe. Each dictatorship set its own moral standard to achieve a distant utopia: the moral imperative for the German dictatorship was a biological one, to preserve the German race at the expense of all others, whereas that of the Soviet system was sociological, to construct a social system that privileged workers, poor peasants and party intellectuals. Those who were included in the system were (relatively) safe, protected by what Vladimir Tismaneanu has called the 'delusional vision of mandatory happiness', but in reality these were dangerous and vengeful systems, even for those within the community. Indeed, the most common feature of the two systems was the desire to absolutely control the cultural expression, political outlook and personal values of the populations under their respective rule. For those who tested the limits of this control or who were the wrong class or race, there was a spectacularly cruel system of concentration camps, police terror, censorship and discrimination. Historians now talk of 'entanglements' when they explain relations between different systems and it is not difficult to argue that these two systems learned something from each other.

Yet, in important ways the totalitarian regimes were different: equivalent in practice, but historically distinct. They were shaped by unique historical circumstances and experiences. The German dictatorship was the product of a society profoundly affected by resentment at German treatment in 1919 and

desperate to revive German economic and international fortunes. Most Germans did not realize that the end product of support for Hitlerism would be imperial war and genocide, but that was the outcome. By the late 1930s Hitler hoped that he could construct his new Europe by waging a short imperial war. The Soviet Union by contrast was the product of the crisis in Russia at the end of the First World War and, more significantly, of the lengthy and destructive civil war that followed. The consolidation of the Soviet regime and the desire to export Moscow's version of communism produced not a short imperial war, but a long Cold War with the Western world from the 1920s to the 1980s in the course of which German aggression opened the way to a form of Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. These differing experiences affect the way the two dictatorships are remembered and make a simplistic equivalence unhelpful if sense is to be made of the particular forms of atrocity or political oppression associated with the two systems. To brand the two as 'totalitarian' – and it should not be forgotten that this is a term first coined by the Italian dictatorship in the 1920s – covers up historical contrasts and makes explanation too easy and too vague.

There is no constant or common memory, but a variety of perspectives that have changed over time as historical circumstances have changed and as a fuller historical understanding has emerged.

The important issue in remembering the two dictatorships is the historical perspective of the particular communities that recall them. There is no constant or common memory, but a variety of perspectives that have changed over time as historical circumstances have changed and as a fuller historical understanding has emerged. The Western memory of the two dictatorships has been coloured by a complete rejection of the totalitarian model, whether National Socialist or Soviet yet, for a long time there was always greater sympathy for the Soviet experiment, which was seen as progressive though flawed, while the Hitler dictatorship was always viewed (and by many people still is) as an expression of human evil. Recent writing on the Soviet Union, however, has been coloured by a powerful Western tradition of hostility towards communism, particularly Soviet communism, whose evil now appears to be as explicit as that of the Third Reich.

The German memory of the two dictatorships is by contrast profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand there is widespread public recognition of the criminal nature of the Hitler regime and of those who actively profited from it; on the other there is the problem that Germans can be seen as victims too, not only of the dictatorship, but of the bombing and post-war expulsions. The idea of German victimhood suggests a moral equivalence between the combatant powers. Among other things, Allied bombing and the mass rapes perpetrated by the Red Army can be used to make German responsibility for crime seem more ambiguous, even

reactive. Moreover, the division of Germany in 1949 allowed Germans, then and now, to contrast the Federal Republic, a model of Western liberal capitalism, with communist oppression in the Democratic Republic, whose totalitarian practices meant that a fraction of the German population was hostage to dictatorial oppression for almost sixty years. In the DDR, National Socialist dictatorship elided into Soviet dictatorship, thus making it possible since 1990 to merge the memory of both systems as equally oppressive. There is a similar ambiguity in the Austrian memory of the dictatorship, depending on whether Austria is regarded as having been liberated from German rule, complicit with the aims of the dictatorship, or both.

The perspective from those areas that suffered double occupation, first as a product of German imperialism, then as a consequence of Soviet victory in the Second World War, is self-evidently distinct from memory in the rest of Europe because here the peoples of the region experienced first hand and for years a domination by one oppressive system after another. The idea that the so-called 'People's Democracies', or regions forced under direct Soviet rule, were the beneficiaries of liberation in 1944–45 has a hollow ring to it. But, that was the official position expressed in official histories and public memory until the collapse of the entire order in 1989–90. Only now can the memory of the long period of national extinction or political oppression be confronted with greater historical honesty. Here, too, little is served by simply condemning Axis or Soviet domination as varieties of the same impulse to control and terrorise in the name of utopian fantasies about the future, as if differing historical experiences over this long period were equivalent. To borrow Jay Winter's phrase, there are at least three different 'sites of memory' for this region. The first involves the sacrifices imposed on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, from the Baltic States in the north to Greece in the south, through the construction of the Axis' 'New Order'. This involved a combination of national extinction, genocidal strategies of ethnic cleansing, economic spoliation, and the suppression of all political and cultural institutions that did not serve the interests of the imperial power. It was characterised by the claim made by the head of the RSHA, Reinhard Heydrich, that the peoples of the occupied areas would become 'helots' for their German masters. In this sense, German domination in important respects resembled the pattern of European imperialism practised by other European states, in particular, Italy.

The second 'site of memory' concerns the impact of the Soviet invasion and occupation of the region as the Red Army destroyed the brief exercise of German imperial rule. This experience was itself divided between immediate occupation and the establishment of regimes sympathetic to Moscow (with the exception of Yugoslavia) between 1945 and 1948 and the subsequent creation of 'People's Democracies' over time. In the case of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and what is now Moldova, Soviet domination meant national extinction, though not a complete loss of specific identity under the 'federal' nature of the Soviet state. Elsewhere, national sovereignty of a kind was restored, economic growth was stimulated, and official culture was allowed to flourish. Freedom of expression and individual liberty were not respected and secret police forces lurked behind the façade of public unity, but the system was not the same as the violent, exploitative and genocidal empire established during the war by the Axis states. This does not make communist domination any easier to accept as

a historical legacy, but memory of the Soviet era is not equivalent to that of the German-dominated occupation.

The third 'site of memory' is different again and here there is an obvious common link between recollections of life under the two dictatorships. The common thread is popular resistance to dictatorship, whether German or Soviet. There was resistance, of course, in Italy after 1943 and in France, the Low Countries and Norway, but all of this was in the expectation and realisation of liberation by Western armies. In Eastern Europe, resistance began under German domination in present-day Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic States, Ukraine and Belarus and continued in some cases on to the early 1950s against the imposition or re-imposition of communist rule. Resistance in its active armed form was cruelly treated by both dictatorships, as with the fate of Warsaw after the rising in August 1944 or the fate of Ukrainian nationalists fighting against both dictatorships for the ideal of a national Ukrainian state. Perhaps 250,000 died in Warsaw as a result of the rising. According to Alexander Statiev, an estimated 133,000 were killed in the anti-Soviet insurgencies between 1944 and 1946. How many died resisting in the cross-fire between the two systems during the war will never be known with certainty. The difference between resistance here and resistance in Western and Southern Europe is that it failed to overturn either system and was extinguished with a harsh brutality by both dictatorships. In this sense there is equivalence in remembering those who struggled against both totalitarian systems as bold forerunners of the eventual movement to liberate the former communist bloc from communist authoritarianism. Memory even here can be problematic, since in some cases the earlier insurgents were hardly models of tolerant democratic values.

Historical honesty on all sides means acceptance of facts that fit uncomfortably with established traditions of memory or public history, but there seems little prospect of reconciling different memory cultures without directly confronting those issues that continue to define acts of remembrance as contested 'sites of memory'.

When talking about the memory of the totalitarian regimes it is necessary to disaggregate the different elements of memory and the differing historical circumstances that shaped them. It is also necessary to recognize that within each area of memory culture there remain awkward differences of view as well as ambiguities in a historical record that embraces perpetrators as well as victims, collaborators along with resisters. There are nevertheless ways in which it is possible to move forward in remembering the experience of totalitarian rule and wartime atrocity without necessarily imposing a crude equivalence

on the crimes of the regimes involved. First, it is important to accept the need for honesty in confronting a difficult history. Of course, no historical writing is perfect and history continues to change over time with changing perspectives and scholarly interests. But nothing is to be gained by denial or sophistry when dealing with the historical reality of the dictatorships. Historical honesty on all sides means acceptance of facts that fit uncomfortably with established traditions of memory or public history, but there seems little prospect of reconciling different memory cultures without directly confronting those issues that continue to define acts of remembrance as contested 'sites of memory'.

Second, it is unhelpful to ignore the differing historical circumstances that shaped the actions of the dictatorships and the way that individuals responded to them. A proper historicisation of the wartime period and role of the dictatorial regimes is an essential foundation for moving on to understand what prompted and sustained the often atrocious behaviour of these regimes towards those involuntarily brought under their rule or domination. Terror does not equal terror any more than a concentration camp, labour camp or extermination camp are identical phenomena. A proper historical understanding of the nature of the different totalitarian regimes, the purposes of their terror systems and categories of victims is a precondition for understanding why the regimes acted as they did and why the populations under their control adopted a variety of responses in order to survive, but seldom confronted the regimes head-on. Memory is not the same as history, indeed it will often deny that history distorts or mythologises it because of the psychological or social function that collective memory performs. However, memory of these experiences will in the end be better served by a fuller historical understanding than by embedded prejudices and preferences in interpreting the past.

Finally, there is one sense in which memory of these regimes prompts a moral equivalence. At the heart of the dilemma posed by remembrance is the argument about who is remembered and who is remembering. Yet, the history of the German and Soviet totalitarian systems (not forgetting the Italian dictatorship which flourished alongside) highlights the need to endorse the principles of this European Network. Namely, remembrance serves the purpose of a common humanity transcending historical distinctions of regimes in order to assert a contemporary commitment to protect an individual's freedom of expression and the freedom to choose from the resurrection or renewal of any totalitarian menace.

RICHARD OVERY is a historian at the University of Exeter. His research interests include many aspects of the history of the Third Reich and the Second World War and, more recently, of Stalin's Soviet Union and the Soviet war effort. In his work he has focused on such themes related to the period of the Second World War as: bombing and its impact, morbid culture and the war and the German economy under Hitler's rule. He has published a number of books, including: *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945* (2013), *The Third Reich: A Chronicle* (2010), *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars* (2009), *1939: Count Down to War* (2009), *Times History of the World* (2004), *Dictators: Hitler's and Stalin's Russia* (2004).

DAPEST 2016

24–26 May

◄ From the left: Magdalena Gawin (Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland), Zoltán Balog (Minister of Human Capacities of Hungary), László Lovász (President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences during the welcome note at the 5th European Remembrance Symposium

1956: Contexts, Impact, Remembrance

From the left: Norman Stone (Bilkent University) and Andrzej Nowak (member of the ENRS Academic Council) during the closing panel

Participants
of the 5th European
Remembrance
Symposium

Participants during a visit to the House of Terror Museum and State Security Archives

Participants during a visit to the House of Terror Museum and State Security Archives

Letter from the President of Hungary, János Áder

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

It would be hard to list all the crucial turning points in the history of more than a thousand years in the region. In this history the relationship of the Hungarian and Polish nations is an outstanding chapter, which started with the conversion to Christianity and arriving at a spiritual Europe. A quarter of decade ago Central Europe returned to where it always belonged at heart: to the West and the democratic world.

This journey was not a short one, but nations here never succumbed to dictatorships. This was reflected in what happened in Berlin in 1953. This can be seen in the movements of 1956: in Poznań and the Hungarian revolution that shook the whole Soviet empire. This was present in Prague in 1968. Every nation had a different way of achieving freedom, but one thing is certain: we put an end to tyranny together that we suffered together. At the turn of 1989–1990 the peoples of the region regained their sovereignty and new democratic regimes were established.

The changes at that time could not have been achieved without the inspiringly beautiful and tragic wonder of 1956. For that, a joint effort of the Polish and Hungarian people was needed. The Hungarian revolution, which was the most promising movement and which caused the greatest bloodshed and aroused the broadest international interest, began in Poznań. It could not prevail, but the fight restarted a decade and a half later in Gdańsk. This sense of belonging together was shown in the first slogan of university students, who took a major part in the outbreak of the revolution, at a demonstration on 23 October 1956: „Lengyelország példát mutat, kövessük a magyar utat!" [Poland sets an example, let's follow the Hungarian way!]

Days of joy, hope and freedom were followed by years of frozen silence due to the restored dictatorship. This silence was a relief for the oppressors and anguish for supporters of the revolution. Not much could be seen from the faith of the revolution in the decades to come. Yet, once again it was proven that man was born to be free and that time helps achieve this desire.

The dictatorial regime disappeared in history and democracy has become an everyday reality – to such an extent that sometimes we do not appreciate it enough. That is why we must talk about it, that is why we must restore the dignity of freedom and justice together.

I wish you all fruitful conversations, new thoughts and successful joint research.

János Áder

President of Hungary

JÁNOS ÁDER has been President of Hungary since 2012. He is a leading Hungarian politician for change of the political system. He attended the historic 1987 Lakitelek-meeting and later the 1989 Opposition and National Roundtable Talks at which he played an important role in development of a democratic election system. He was elected a Member of Parliament for the Alliance of Young Democrats at the first free parliamentary elections in 1990 and re-elected to three consecutive terms in the independent constituency of his hometown of Csorna. János Áder participated in work of the constitutional, legislative and justice committees of the National Assembly. In 1998, he was elected Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, an office held until 2002. During his term in office as Speaker of the House, he also contributed to a strengthening of international recognition of Hungary. In 2009, Dr János Áder was elected member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. On 16 April 2012, Dr Áder was selected by a majority of Parliament and became the President of Hungary.

Letter from the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda

Organisers and Participants
of the 5th European Remembrance Symposium
1956. Contexts, Impact, Remembrance
in Budapest
Honourable Ministers!
Distinguished Scholars!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

On the occasion of the 5th edition of the European Remembrance Symposium organised by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, I would like to express my appreciation for all institutions and researchers involved in this valued initiative. The route along which the Symposium has travelled – from Gdańsk, through Berlin, Prague, Vienna, to Budapest – represents a symbolic sense of your initiative, which countries with a different experience of history engages in a dialogue.

Preserving this route of remembrance, especially in context of the dramatic history of the past century, is one of the ways for building [a sense] of community today and in the future. I am pleased to see that so many institutions, including institutions of culture, participate in this meeting and further inspire reflection on the best way in of inscribing the experience of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the history of their struggle for independence in European memory. Many events from our history can make us rightfully proud. I find it important for knowledge about these facts and heroic deeds to function in the public space, also international, as it contributes to the strengthening of our countries' position.

The year 1956 never fades from the memory of Hungarians and Poles alike. On behalf of the Republic of Poland, I want to pay homage to participants and victims of the Hungarian Revolution, to all those who stood up to the Soviet dictatorship, who set firm conditions, who came forth in defence of human freedom and dignity, and who – albeit only for a short while – 'defeated' the Red Army, thus successfully challenging the myth of the invincible Soviet empire and debunking the illusion of its peaceful intentions. The events of Poznań June, October thaw, and the Hungarian Uprising feature in the history of our societies' resistance against communist ideology and communist oppression. May the warm heartfelt memory about the brotherhood of Poles and Hungarians rooted deep in our shared history serve to invigorate a cultural exchange and good relations between young generations. Thanks to your efforts, these young generations of today receive a chance to learn about events they cannot remember, but which may inspire them to join forces in cooperation for the common good of both our countries and all of Europe.

I trust that the European Remembrance Symposium in Budapest will restore focus on values for which Hungarians sacrificed their lives in 1956 and inspire reflection on putting them in practice now. I extend my heartfelt greetings to participants from other countries, especially those from our part of Europe. I want to thank you all for creating an atmosphere conducive to solidifying the bond between our countries. I also wish all esteemed guests to find inspiration for further initiatives aimed at strengthening European solidarity through the exchange of thought, recollections, and meetings during this event.

With kind regards
Andrzej Duda

ANDRZEJ DUDA, President of the Republic of Poland since 6 August 2015, is a highly regarded Polish politician and doctor of laws. He was born in Kraków in 1972 and graduated from the Department of Law and Administration at Jagiellonian University. In 2005, he became a legislation expert of the Law and Justice parliamentary caucus. In 2006, he served as Deputy Minister of Justice in a government headed by Jarosław Kaczyński and in 2007 was appointed to the State Tribunal. In 2008, President Lech Kaczyński nominated him to the position of Undersecretary of State at the Chancellery of the President. In 2010, he was a city councillor in Kraków and in 2011 became a member of Parliament and Deputy Chair of the Constitutional Liability Committee. In 2013, he acted as press spokesman for the Law and Justice party and in 2014 managed the Law and Justice party campaign in elections for the European Parliament, where he became an MEP. On 24 May, 2015, he was elected President of the Republic of Poland.

Welcome speech by Zoltán Balog, Minister of Human Capacities of Hungary

Mr Chairman, Madam Chair, dear Guests!

This meeting of ours is – first and foremost – an encounter with history. Various history workshops are about to present their work that was carried out with honour and decency, as required by professional standards. History does not just pass and we cannot 'make a clean slate of the past' – as in the words of the Internationale that we had to sing. We can also see today that history has not ended as some historians – Fukuyama – predicted about 25 years ago. The history of Europe goes on and we can now claim that the challenges are no less than they were 25 years ago.

Naturally, many things follow from history, but first comes remembrance. Remembering all that happened to our family, our communities, our nation, Europe and mankind. Remembering, in order to see good decisions and bad ones, successful methods and impracticable ones. One of the most obvious ways of seeking freedom – a precondition, I might add – is knowing history.

Hungary has three anniversaries this year. It is the anniversary year of the First World War that we started in 1914. It is also an anniversary year for the victims of Soviet work camps, the Gulag. Third, our main focus over the next few days is the anniversary year of 1956 – as we commemorate what happened 60 years ago.

The First World War, universal history, the Great War; Hungary was part of this shared disaster – from its own point of view, anyhow. The old order of Europe turned upside down. There are still memories in our family histories and we experienced what a national tragedy that meant. At the same time,

we must see that for other nations in Europe it brought independence and a sovereign state.

Then, there is another anniversary year, that of the Gulag. For those deported to the Soviet Union to do forced labour I would also say that it is universal history. One of its lessons is that a better future cannot be built against the people's will or beliefs, against human communities. Communities and people cannot be viewed as chess pieces. A so-called better future cannot be built against human and divine laws. An autocratic missionary zeal leads to the harshest form of tyranny.

The third anniversary year is 1956. The regime of existing socialism was being constructed from the Elbe to Vladivostok and back. It was inconceivable that there would be a crack in it, but the peoples of East Central Europe, East Germans, Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs periodically rebelled against dictatorship. In 1956, fear in Budapest disappeared as if by magic and the regime melted. After 1956, if we look at the crisis of the left wing in Western Europe, we can claim that no thinking person in either the West or East could possibly believe that communism is good and can work well, is not dictatorial or serves the people's interests.

These three stories together are the history of the 20th century: the First World War at the start, the Gulag and 1956, as well as the so-called political transition or turn at the end of the century. Words of the great French thinker, Camus, who we like very much, are undoubtedly true for them: they are already withering in our memories. None of them is a press sensation today. However, for us, who now can live in the free world, these are essential stories with eternal lessons, ones without which our present world cannot be understood and without which we would be heading toward newer totalitarian dictatorships with possibly more sophisticated means or towards arrogant policies of power. That is why we need to remember and to remind.

Many things follow from remembrance: if we are honest, it leads to improved self-knowledge. We want to have better knowledge and understanding of what moves the world, how humans act, how one acts if Hungarian, Polish, German or Czech and what happens if order is shaken. If moral laws are breached, if a national or human community is made uncertain of what is right and what is wrong, those nations seemingly benefitting from this disintegration also inevitably suffer harm. Let me quote Albert Camus again: 'In Europe's isolation today' – as he wrote about 1956 in 1957 – 'we have only one way of being true to Hungary and that is never to betray, among ourselves and everywhere, what the Hungarian heroes died for, never to condone, among ourselves and everywhere, even indirectly, those who killed them.' 'The Blood of the Hungarians' is the title of that quote.

If we are honest, action follows remembrance. First and foremost, we never condone either killers or dictatorships or even their methods, not to mention their beneficiaries, supporters or leaders. If we are honest, action follows from remembrance – we stand up for the values of freedom, for the principle of sovereignty of the people, the public good, protection of minorities and for those who are oppressed, pursued or whose human dignity was violated. It follows that when we fight for social justice, we also fight for freedom and never play the two off against each other.

It is about universal history. Whether we talk about communism or resistance against communism, it is not solely an internal affair of East or East-Central Europe. The events of 1956 and years of communist dictatorship are not private matters of countries under Soviet occupation at the time and of East Central Europe. It is not some private story involving East Germans, Poles, Baltic nations, peoples of the Balkans, Hungary or Central-Europe. It is a concern of Western Europe as well – so I am especially glad to see the ambassador of the Netherlands here – just as much as the First and Second World Wars and the tragedy of the Shoah are our shared history.

The heritage of communism is also poisonous in places where it did not prevail. Please allow me this bitter joke that we keep re-telling: you know what is worst in communism? What follows: consequences. In minds and hearts, in destroyed communities, in decent remembering that is hard to restore. The legacy of communism is also dangerous in places where it did not prevail, where it did not form a social-political regime. So, the anti-communist freedom fight of East Central European peoples is also a lesson for those who were able to live in the free world after 1945.

It was not our choice – East-Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks and Czechs – it was not our choice not to live in the free world after 1945 or 1948. It cannot be a coincidence – and this is one of my supposedly provocative claims towards the end – that countries in the East Central European region reacted differently and more sensitively to the migration crisis than the political elite of Western Europe. They are much more sensitive to the issue of national sovereignty and retention of identity.

All of this cannot be comprehended without knowing the history of the past 70 years – with careful calculation it is 45+25. Our reactions cannot be understood. The migration crisis restored the gap between the countries of Western Europe, the free world of the time, and those in the Soviet occupation zone, which existed at the time and which still exists today in terms of mentality and way of thinking. Without knowing the past 70 years, one cannot understand why these countries react differently to the migration crisis. It cannot be understood in Brussels, Washington, or even in Berlin, even though it used to be a part of East Germany.

It is a universal history, not a private matter of East Central Europe. If we remember and act together, we can experience a sense of belonging together, despite different histories. We belong together; we must belong together in terms of freedom. If we consider freedom a priority, we will respect each other's freedom. We will respect not only others' rights, choices of faith and beliefs, and not only appreciate values that are to be appreciated, but will also be able to discuss great issues of the time and join our forces with a common will to resolve them in a common Europe.

Freedom and peace – 'AND' is capitalised. That was the slogan of Chancellor Kohl, one of the most important figures in the reunification of Europe and chancellor during the fall of the Iron Curtain. Freedom and peace. Freedom and peace here as well; that is why it is possible to have discussions about our history, about one that is different, about a particular one, and the one we share. You as academics and academics who became politicians or politicians who became

academics, bear the important role of being involved in a discipline that helps us remember decently and honestly. It therefore helps us do the right thing, in school, culture, the economy, politics and in our common European life as such. Thank you all for coming and honouring this conference with your presence.

I wish you successful work at this meeting.

ZOLTÁN BALOG is a Calvinist pastor, who since 2012 has been the Hungarian Minister of Human Capacities responsible for family and youth issues, culture, education, sports, social inclusion, public health services, the Church, ethnic and civil relations, and EU development policy. Also, he has been a member of the National Assembly since 2006. From 2006 to 2010 he acted as chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minority, Civic and Religious Affairs. He was also a Member of the Supervisory Board of the 20th Century Institute Foundation for Research in Central- and Eastern European History and Society. He currently chairs the First World War Centenary Memorial Committee as well as the 1956 Revolution and War of Independence Memorial Committee. Since 2012, he has been a member of the Hungarian Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Committee and, as Minister of Human Resources, has also been the honourary chairman of the Hungarian – American Commission for the Educational Exchange Board.

Welcome speech by László Regéczy-Nagy, former participant of the 1956 revolution, sentenced to prison, now chair of the Committee for Historical Justice

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Guests!

'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' This is how L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* begins. Hopefully, after 60 years, new points of view will be offered to everyone for putting past matters into a right perspective. In being neither a historian nor a politician, but rather a contemporary, eyewitness and survivor, I dare to put forward an opinion based on my personal experience. In 1945, Hungary was formed out of a European, an East European country, into a province of a truly provincial superpower of Asiatic variance. What a degradation this was and we had to hail it as the greatest gift of our 1,000-year history.

According to a note by the Hungarian writer, Sándor Márai and an entry in his diary: 'The Hungarians have never been more genuinely European than when admitting the soldiers of the Red Army. Two worlds, two countries then met at the Danube and the Red victor did not like anything he found here.' The communists were right: the Hungarians were not suited to fit into the Red world, to give up their religion, history, private property, and freedom; that is, anything that they that far had held as important.

Another observation by Márai: the communists were never really Marxists, not even Leninists or Stalinists. They used their ideology only as a fig leaf to cover and hide their desire for full ownership of the world. That is why they failed to shed many tears for the Red Empire drowning in the sceptic tank of history. It was the communists' turn. Meanwhile, top party officials quickly changed sides, that is, by becoming capitalist exploiters overnight. If they could not conquer the world with Lenin's method, then it was to be tried through a capitalist alliance – this appears to be the latest recipe.

The roots of my observation reach as far down as my interrogation that lasted almost 14 months in 1957 and 1958. I, a naive bourgeois, was shocked by the ease with which political police officers threw ideologically sound and politically correct ideas overboard for the sake of obvious lies. Useful lies of the Party or Moscow superseded the truth, whereas Soviet hegemony was the only truth they served. Professor István Bibó, the primary defendant at our trial, was right. Lies make no sound to a nation in any political system. Similarly, the working class was also right in 1957: that the Bolshevik gang had to be sent packing.

I had the honour of seeing communists jump into lifeboats with their loot and row quickly away to Western shores. It is hard to believe nowadays that communist propaganda kept stressing its famous slogan until its bitter end. Capitalism is the hotbed for fascism. One wonders what communists are doing now in the nicest beds of capitalism. It is a hard fight to win the heart and hand of a beautiful lady. But, the real task comes later – to make her happy for the rest of her life. This also applies to freedom. Rousseau added as follows: 'Liberty is a food easy to eat, but hard to digest.'

I wish you all a good appetite and sound digestion of our Hungarian goulash.

LÁSZLÓ REGÉCZY-NAGY in 1945 fell into British captivity as a Hungarian officer from which he was released in 1946. From 1948 onwards he worked as a driver at the British Legation in Budapest. In 1956, he participated in the revolution and freedom fight. After the Soviet intervention Regéczy-Nagy handed over documents written by Imre Nagy and István Bibó to the British Minister. In 1958, he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison from which he was released in 1963. Since 1996, he is chair of the Committee for Historical Justice (TIB), an organisation representing former freedom fighters.

1956. Context, Impact, Remembrance

ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI

First of all, I would like to thank the organisers for the invitation to participate in the conference and the opportunity to share with you some thoughts on the historical significance of the events of 1956. The topic I was assigned coincides with the title of our entire meeting and there is no way to fully address it during this short speech. I am convinced that many problems will reappear during subsequent panels. In our discussions, we will also address issues not mentioned in this lecture.

The first and basic context of the history of 1956 is the experience of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. All other issues, including the international situation and changes in the Soviet leadership after Stalin's death, must only be deemed secondary. The year 1956 was a reaction to the communist dictatorship – that is, to terror and repression, economic exploitation, propaganda, loss of independence, godlessness of society, etc. In my opinion, this experience must be the starting point for any analysis of the situation of 1956. If we fail to understand what the experience of the first decade of communism really was for Hungarians, Poles and other nations, we will not be able to understand what actually occurred 60 years ago.

Undoubtedly, the Stalinist period was a time of the greatest pressure on communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe. This was achieved not only by terror, but also through propaganda. However, does this mean that the communists were able to make a permanent change in attitudes, ways of thinking, or value systems of individual nations? The answer to this question can be found when we look at the uprising in Poznań on 28 June 1956. It started with demands of a typically economic nature. After only several hours were they followed by political and religious ones such as free elections, the release

of Primate Wyszyński, and a return of religious instruction in schools. When the fight began, independence slogans took over, a basic demand being a break from Soviet domination.

The year 1956 was a reaction to the communist dictatorship – that is, to terror and repression, economic exploitation, propaganda, loss of independence, godlessness of society, etc.

How to explain such a rapid transformation in the nature of this protest over only several hours? It did not have any leadership, so the change came spontaneously. It is hard to assume that the views of Poznań residents had changed so quickly. We should instead accept the fact that rebels began to reveal their true beliefs and desires with growth of a sense of their strength. A similar mechanism appeared in Budapest on 23 October 1956. This indicates a complete failure of communists to shape a 'new man'. This does not mean, however, that the Stalinist period did not have a lasting impact on the attitude of individual nations, but I will return to this issue later.

Another important element in the context of the events of 1956 is earlier protests in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in June 1953. They had a direct impact, particularly on the situation in Hungary (I mean the first government of Imre Nagy and liberalisation of the system). But, I wish to draw your attention to another aspect of these events. Their outcome in both countries stemmed not only from repression, but also due to a change in policy of the communists, especially in economic matters. They brought improvement to the situation facing society and, therefore, weakened any potential rebellion. In 1956, the position of the Communist parties in both countries was much stronger than three years earlier.

In this way, public feeling in Poland and Hungary at the time of crisis somehow 'missed' this in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Also, calls for change did appear in these countries, but the communists easily regained control of the situation. This is an important context for any discussion of whether a collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe was already possible in 1956. Such a scenario would have been quite likely were it not for the bad timing of social protests in these four countries. Of course, we cannot be sure that they would have occurred in 1956 if there had no strikes or demonstrations in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1953, but this seems probable.

Another element in the context of events in 1956, of course, was the situation within the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party after Stalin's death. It influenced the course of events in both Hungary and Poland, but in a different way. In the first case, the impact of Stalin's death was felt earlier in the form of a weakening of the influence of Mátyás Rákosi and the appointment of the

aforementioned first government of Imre Nagy and its pursuit of a 'new course' policy. In Poland at the same time, there was actually a tightening of repression instead of any signs of liberalization, a fact symbolized by the imprisonment of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in September 1953.

Since that time, the systematic revival of social activity did not cease even after the bloody pacification of the revolt in Poznań.

The situation in Poland was significantly influenced by the next phase of the struggle for power in the Soviet leadership. Khrushchev's secret speech in which he condemned some of Stalin's crimes ultimately served to strengthen the position of the First Secretary of the Soviet party. In the case of Poland, however, it contributed to a deepening of the crisis in the Communist party due to the sudden death in Moscow of Bolesław Bierut. Only in Poland was Khrushchev's speech printed in a relatively large run and read during open meetings of party organisations. Although the publication was confidential in nature, it could soon be purchased on the black market. When the effects of this action were realised, it was too late. Many communist activists, especially the young, experienced a great shock. They learned that the man they revered almost as a god was a criminal. The situation when so-called 'errors and distortions' were disclosed at the highest level also gave way to discussions about changes in Poland.

Most important, however, was the social aspect. At these meetings, non-party members repeatedly asked questions, for instance, about the Katyń massacre, lack of support for the Warsaw Uprising, lands taken by the Soviet Union after the war, economic exploitation of the country by Moscow, or the fate of Primate Wyszyński. The last time this type of outpouring occurred on such a scale was ten years earlier. This meant that the barrier of fear that was paralysing Poles was finally overcome. Since that time, the systematic revival of social activity did not cease, even after the bloody pacification of the revolt in Poznań. The culmination of this activity was in October and November 1956.

The context of the struggle for leadership in the Soviet Union should not be limited, however, to the genesis of events 60 years ago. It is worth considering the extent to which the ongoing precarious position of Khrushchev influenced decisions taken in autumn 1956, first in relation to the situation in Poland, then Hungary.

Briefly, I would like to point out another important context created by the policy of the West, especially the United States. Between 1953 and 1956, a fundamental change in approaching the Eastern bloc took place together with a willingness to confront events. The focus of competition between the two blocs increasingly shifted beyond Europe. In the sphere of verbal statements, however, it was maintained that the goal was at least a 'peaceful liberation of oppressed peoples', as John F. Dulles put it in December 1955. The people of

Central and Eastern Europe lived with the illusion that the West was willing to engage in support of their aspirations for freedom, something that increased the pain of disappointment during the events of autumn 1956.

From today's perspective, we usually present the events of 1956 as part of a logical sequence leading to the final collapse of the communist system. At times, this manifests itself in a visualisation of 'dominos' symbolising successive crises of the system as steps in the collapse of communism. Is this really how we should see the impact of 1956 on the history of the communist system? In my opinion, a different interpretation is worth considering. The overcoming of crises may be also seen as an element of system strengthening. Their effect was at least a temporary weakening of resistance, mobilisation of the Communist party, and the introduction of reforms, which usually resulted in at least temporary improvement in living conditions of the population. In overcoming successive crises and adapting to a new situation, the communists extended their rule.

The focus of competition between the two blocs increasingly shifted beyond Europe.

The above mechanism may be seen in the example, familiar to us all, of developments in Hungary after the revolution was suppressed. After several years of massive repression, Kádár's regime began to reform, which resulted in improved living standards. As a result, the system was stable for more than a quarter of a century while the opposition that formed in the late 1970s failed to mobilise the public to launch mass protests. In addition, this stability was achieved at a considerably lower cost than prior to 1956. A similar mechanism was used in Czechoslovakia after suppression of the Prague Spring.

On the other hand, with the Polish example we can point to consequences of the events of 1956, which in the long run undoubtedly impacted the subsequent collapse of the system. The two most important ones were the restoration of independence and role of the Catholic Church, as well as the continued de-collectivisation of agriculture.

When taking stock of particular crises we should take both aspects into account and consider the extent to which they either weakened or actually strengthened the communist system.

In 1956, a large part of the populace of Central and Eastern Europe for the last time (before 1989) and at least for a moment believed that the fall of the communist system and a regaining of freedom were possible. The consequences of the dashing of this hope after the second Soviet intervention in Hungary were significant. An attitude of adaptation strengthened, whereas engagement on the side of communism gained a new rationale – not ideological or based on fear, but rather pragmatic. Many people felt that if regime change was not possible, one should then act within its framework. This change in attitude could be seen in subsequent crises – in Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968 and in Poland in 1970.

Despite the passage of only a dozen or so years since 1956, slogans for reform of the system, and not its change, dominated. Also, opposition movements emerging over decades took this situation into consideration, most without making radical demands to overthrow the communist regime.

It is impossible not to notice that this consequence of 1956 also strengthened the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe.

In this context, I would argue that starting from 1956 the communists also received a sort of 'dividend' from the previous terror. The events of 1956 remained in the public memory, strengthening fear of any activity that could be interpreted as anti-communist, and also affecting relations between Moscow and its satellites. Of course, the process of change in these relations had already begun, but the events of 60 years ago played a key role here. The margin of autonomy of individual leaders, especially in domestic politics, increased. The Soviet Union abandoned an inefficient system of detailed control over all spheres of life in Eastern bloc countries. The symbol of the recognised position of local communist party leaders was a series of consultations that Khrushchev held before the second intervention in Hungary. Economic relations changed as well with interests of individual Soviet bloc countries being considered to a greater extent. In this way, Moscow retained control over its sphere of influence, but at a much lower cost.

In anticipating a possible question, I do remember the conflict with China, later supported by Albania. I agree that also in this case the events of 1956 and their consequences played an important role, but they were not of a key nature. The causes of the Sino-Soviet dispute were much deeper and the schism would have occurred anyhow.

The events in Poland and Hungary also affected resignation by the United States, in the European context, from the policy of containing communism. This took place despite efforts of military circles (Joint Chiefs of Staff), which sought at least a theoretical possibility in American doctrine of support to certain Eastern bloc countries in case of Soviet aggression. In this way, influenced by the events of 1956, the West finally accepted the division of Europe into spheres of influence. The Cold War did not end, however, as other parts of the world became the primary battlefield between the two political and military blocs.

To conclude this part of my speech I draw your attention to the fact that despite the bloody suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and its thousands of victims, the crisis in the world communist movement was much smaller than after the intervention in Czechoslovakia 12 years later. The break with Moscow concerned individuals, including some intellectuals and minority groups, and not entire Communist parties, as was the case after 1968. This tells us a lot about the nature of the 'captive mind', to refer to the term introduced by Czesław Miłosz. Apparently, for an idealistic communist it was easier to come to terms with the massacre of 'counterrevolutionaries' than to face a crushing of the dream of 'socialism with a human face'.

Memory is the main theme of our symposium, so please allow me to dedicate more attention to it than to the problems of context and impact of the events of 1956. I will mainly focus on the Polish case, although some of my conclusions probably have a universal nature.

The fight for the memory of events in Poznań began immediately after fighting ceased. The communist authorities launched a gigantic propaganda campaign referring to the events in Poznań as a provocation, a counter-revolutionary rebellion of 'hostile elements' inspired by 'agents of imperialism'. The founding element of this version of events was the funeral of some victims at the Citadel. Apart from security apparatus officers and soldiers, several civilians treated as innocent victims of counter-revolution were buried. In this way, a lasting impression of the official version of memory was created. This narrative collided with a legend, passed on by word of mouth, describing the June protest as a heroic struggle for freedom fought by the heroic residents of Poznań against the Soviets and Polish communists. Rumours from this period for many years became a foundation for the memory of Poles of the events on 28 June 1956. In initial months, this mobilised public resistance.

It is impossible not to notice that this consequence of 1956 also strengthened the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe.

The official version of events changed in October 1956. In his first speech after taking office, Władysław Gomułka encumbered members of the previous government with responsibility for the protests, claiming that they had failed to communicate with the workers. Moreover, Gomułka declared the protest to be justified and 'a painful lesson' for the party. He saw in it a manifestation of the 'class wisdom' of workers, who thus got the Party back on track. At the same time, he stressed that the rebellion was not directed against socialism. Gomułka completely rejected the existing interpretation by saying: 'The inept attempt to present the painful tragedy of Poznań as the work of imperialist agents and provocateurs was great political naiveté'.

Gomułka's speech produced concrete consequences in the form of a halt to repression against participants of these events, as well as initial analyses. In following months, several articles devoted to June 1956 were officially published, as was as a poem by Kazimiera Iłłakowiczówna *My heart was executed*. There were also demands for the construction of a monument that even appeared in the press. Gradually, however, the number of such publications was limited by intensified censorship. Reconciling the memory of an anti-communist uprising with the official narrative of the Communist Party was, in fact, not possible in the long run. Finally, a policy of oblivion was decreed by the Communist Party leader, who shortly before the first anniversary of the protest met with workers at the Cegielski factory. Gomułka found that the memory of the uprising in Poznań 'feeds black reaction' and urged the fallen not to be considered heroes, but rather to 'draw a mournful veil' over the entire story.

Following these directions the authorities sought to restrict anniversary celebrations to the laying of wreaths on the victims' graves. Independent commemoration was largely paralysed by the communist security apparatus. For

instance, the idea of naming a street '28th of June 1956' was not executed. On a broader scale, there were only religious celebrations in the form of masses for the victims of pacification. In subsequent years, the memory of events in Poznań was pushed to the private sphere and the church. Official studies of the history of the Polish People's Republic only provided cryptic references to unspecified 'disturbances' and 'accidents'.

Memory has survived, however, in the public consciousness, as evidenced by numerous references to the Poznań uprising in statements of Poles carefully reported by the secret police in subsequent years. For a group of so-called 'revisionists', i.e. supporters of a liberalisation of Communist Party policy, the memory of the events of autumn 1956 became important. It was not one, however, of anti-communist demonstrations or common solidarity with struggling Hungary, but rather that of the erstwhile situation in the party and the so-called 'achievements of October' of which most were later repealed. The culmination of this phenomenon was a meeting at Warsaw University on the tenth anniversary of the events at which Leszek Kołakowski delivered a famous speech. As a consequence, the philosopher was expelled from the Party, together with a group of writers supporting him.

The memory of 1956 was revived in the second half of the 1970s by the opposition. In June 1976, leaflets appeared in Warsaw calling for attendance at a mass held on the anniversary of the protests in Poznań. References to 1956 appeared in programme declarations of the opposition. June in Poznań and Polish October 1956 were mentioned in the works of emerging independent publishers.

A true explosion of memory occurred after the strikes of August 1980 and founding of the 'Solidarity' movement. The union press published hundreds of articles on events in June and October. Many exhibitions devoted to this subject were organised as well. For 'Solidarity' the year 1956 and subsequent mass protests were an element of its genealogy, while also providing historical legitimacy to the social movement. The power of memory was so great that it prompted authorities to make concessions. Also, books dedicated to the events of 1956 appeared in official publishing houses. Most important was, however, the unveiling of a monument in the form of two crosses in the centre of Poznań. The opening ceremony on 28 June 1981 was attended by 'Solidarity' delegations from throughout the country that amassed nearly 200,000 people. The memory of 1956, alongside that of 1970, was then at the heart of Polish memory.

It is worth emphasising that the Hungarian Revolution was also remembered. The union press and underground publishers issued texts of historians and eyewitness accounts of the events in Hungary. For instance, *The Hungarian Diary* by Wiktor Woroszylski had seven editions in the 1980s and a report by Sándor Kopácsi up to fifteen! The memory of the fate of Hungarians on one hand showed the nature of the communist system and on the other hand was a kind of memento. Along with the memory of the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, it became the source of a phenomenon that Jacek Kuroń called the 'self-limiting revolution'. In seeking to avoid Soviet aggression, 'Solidarity' abandoned far-reaching demands such as independence, free elections, etc.

This attitude, however, did not prevent the imposition of martial law in December 1981. In subsequent years, the memory of 1956 became an element of

the struggle of underground 'Solidarity' with communist authorities. Often, it was led in a literal way, for example, during demonstrations organised at the foot of the monument in Poznań. The communists were no longer able to win, despite their continued concessions. They issued, among others, more books about 1956 presenting an official version of events, but still different than in the past.

During the collapse of the communist system the memory of these events did not play a major role, unlike in Hungary. It was not an essential point of reference for either the opposition or the authorities.

After 1989, the events of 1956 became the theme of several films, many books, and even rock and hip-hop songs, which were present in each synthesis of the history of Poland and in school textbooks. These events, however, lost their past prominent place in Polish memory. Initially, they were displaced by issues related to the founding of "Solidarity" and martial law such as the Wujek mine massacre. Today, the symbol of the fate of Poles under communist rule is rather soldiers of the anti-communist underground of whom thousands were killed and buried in unknown locations.

For 'Solidarity' the year 1956 and subsequent mass protests were an element of its genealogy, while also providing historical legitimacy to the social movement.

Regardless of this process, it is worth dealing with some other phenomena. Access to previously closed archives allowed a broader description of the events of autumn 1956 such as anti-communist demonstrations, the overturning of Soviet monuments and aid-campaigns for Hungary. In many places these events found their place in local memory. Celebrations have been organised, plaques unveiled and heroes honoured. Another phenomenon that is interesting from the standpoint of memory studies is a rivalry of two versions of the memory of 1956. The first may be called anti-communist with the dominant element being the uprising in Poznań, together with other smaller protests in autumn 1956. The second, much simplified, can be called post-communist, although it is also close to some representatives of the former opposition. It refers to the history of a reformist movement in the party and the Communist Youth Association, workers' councils and student committees active in the autumn of 1956, as well as the threats of Soviet intervention in October. This second memory prevailed in the mid-1990s and was particularly evident in 1996 when post-communists were in power. Over time, it was displaced by the 'anti-communist' memory symbolised by large-scale commemorations in Poznań in June 2006.

In comparison to Hungary, the memory of 1956 in Poland plays a much smaller role. It did not become a canvas for any significant political disputes. Nor did a debate about Władysław Gomułka take place in contrast to that surrounding Imre Nagy. Small discussions of this issue were led by historians, but most Poles

remember Gomułka not as a momentary hero in the autumn of 1956, but rather as a dictator responsible for the massacre of December 1970.

Our reflection of 1956 should not be confined to its context, impact and remembrance. It is also worth considering what kind of legacy was left to us by the participants of these events. There can be many answers. One of them was given by Albert Camus, who at that time was deeply supportive of the Poles and Hungarians. Two weeks after the bloody suppression of the uprising in Poznań, the French writer stated:

> *I would never encourage the people in whose fight I cannot participate to fight and revolt. But now, when these people revolted at the end of their humiliation and were then murdered – I would feel contempt to myself if I dared to display the least restraint in assessing murder and not give all my respect to the victims of repression and express total solidarity with them. They certainly do not need our congratulations. They only expect that wherever there is general freedom, their cry be widely echoed so that others can see their despair, that the eyes of the whole world open, that everyone gets to know and respect their decision.*

A year later in a text entitled *The Blood of the Hungarians*, Camus wrote: 'It would indeed be difficult for us to be worthy of such sacrifices. But we can try to be so [...] if their distress is ours, their hope is also ours. In spite of their misery, their chains, their exile, they have left us a glorious heritage that we must deserve: freedom, which they did not win, but which in one single day they gave back to us'.

This is our heritage – freedom, solidarity and lack of indifference. It depends on us whether we will be worthy of that sacrifice.

ŁUKASZ KAMIŃSKI is a historian and was chairman of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) from 2011 to 2016. Since assuming his duties, he initiated the publication of a fundamental selection of documents from East European archives on the reaction of Soviet bloc countries to the crisis in Poland from 1980 to 1981. Together with Grzegorz Waligóra, he released the following collections of documents on the activities of security services aimed at opposition groups and organisations in the 1970s and 1980s: Fighting Solidarity in Documents, Codename Vassals: the Security Service with regard to Solidarity Student Committees in 1977–1980, Codename Pegasus: the Security Service in relation to the Society of Academic Training in 1978–1980. Łukasz Kamiński established international academic cooperation on the recent history of Central and Eastern Europe and initiated numerous seminars and conferences devoted to issues of the socio-political crises in Soviet bloc countries. He has also co-organised several major international academic conferences on the communist system and its repression apparatus.

1956 – Approaches, Interpretations and Unresolved Questions

RÉKA FÖLDVÁRYNÉ KISS

Mr Chairman, Mr President, Honourable Representatives, Your Excellency the Ambassador, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me to open my presentation with the following words:

East Berlin, Poznań, Budapest... A gigantic myth collapsed. A certain truth, which had long been disguised, burst upon the world. And if the present is still spattered with blood and the future still dark, at least we know that the era of ideologies is over, and the force of resistance, together with the value of freedom, gives us new reasons for living.

These words were spoken by the internationally renowned figure in world literature, a literary celebrity as he would be called today, Albert Camus – in an interview (by the future Nobel laureate) given in October 1957 on the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution.

Whether the prophecy made by the French writer, disillusioned with the idea of communism, has come true, namely that the era of ideologies is indeed over, is open to debate. Nevertheless, Camus' argument can for us historians be an important reference point for two reasons. As a contemporary witness, Camus provides us with an almost coincidental and remarkably precise assessment of the situation by pointing out that East Berlin, Poznań, and Budapest were successive moments in an unbroken historical continuity and that this process reached its apex in Budapest in October 1956. To put it another way: if we can speak of Central and Eastern Europe having a distinct collective memory, then 1956 constitutes one of the most important crystallisation points in this region's collective memory of the 20th century. Nineteen fifty-six is a shared historical experience of the urge for freedom felt by societies brought into the Soviet sphere of imperial interest by force of arms and suffering under the oppression of communist tyranny.

The concluding statement of Camus' interview is of equal importance: '*the force of resistance, together with the value of freedom, gives us new reasons for living.*' In other words, the resistance and struggle for freedom put up by Central Europe could morally revitalise a disillusioned West. Indeed, it can be argued that the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and, in particular, its brutal crushing, brought about a radical change in the mentality of generations. The ideas to which Camus gave public expression have acquired canonical significance: 1956 has become a universal symbol of the urge for freedom overriding any consideration of *Realpolitik*. This date, however, in addition to symbolising the urge for freedom, has also became synonymous with the cruelty of reprisals, the vindictiveness of communist powers and, it should be added, the dilemma of political conscience experienced by the free Western world. Nineteen fifty-six was therefore more than a shared historical experience: it became a universal cultural code on both sides of the Iron Curtain as well as in countries of the Soviet bloc. This code remained fully operational until the collapse of the communist dictatorships.

Nevertheless, as we move away from the political changes of 1989–90 and the collapse of the Soviet system, it seems that the common symbolic and referential aspects of 1956 have begun to fade. Competing interpretations of 1956, once confined to private discourse among narrow circles of emigres, have now received broad publicity resulting in varied perspectives of the revolution

A quarter century has now passed since the change of political system, whilst the sixtieth anniversary of 1956 compels us to assess the events in two important ways. On one hand, what do historians now know about 1956 with the opening of state archives and access to documents pertaining to the revolution? Has our image of 1956 become clearer as a result of public discussion following regime change? Have we reached a new consensus in evaluating 1956? Likewise, what issues remain open and contested in historical discourse on the era? On the other hand, what is our position today regarding remembrance of 1956? What is our attitude toward these memories now? We are presently on the cusp of a generational change, yet are especially fortunate in having many contemporary witnesses of 1956 still with us today – former freedom fighters as well as the victims of post-revolutionary reprisals. At the same time, there is now a generation of adults who not only did not experience 1956 – including us – but who were also born after the regime change of 1989. This generation has no personal experience of dictatorship, the change in regime or the important symbolic role that 1956 played in ushering in this political change. In the words of renowned cultural researcher, Jan Assmann: the hot memories of 1956 are gradually cooling and the collective experience of a generation will eventually become mere history. This process affects ideas, themes and perspectives of historical scholarship as well as the notion of cultural and historical memory. Therefore, key issues and themes of this symposium were deliberately selected with these two approaches in mind. As such, please allow me to briefly reflect on both.

The first key issue of our symposium concerns the reasons and historical circumstances that led to the revolution. Why did the most powerful and most influential armed uprising against the Soviet empire specifically take place in Budapest and in October 1956? The answer is far from simple, as the citizens and nations of Central and Eastern Europe suffered equally at the hands of

dictatorships that forcibly intruded into every aspect of life. Moreover, by the start of the 1950s, the Stalinist system began showing signs of similar pending crises everywhere, whereas Moscow's plans for maintaining power in the Soviet bloc nations had already commenced through the implementation of minor structural changes and crisis management measures. Naturally, these measures were typically introduced and executed by the same individuals who imposed the Soviet system in the first place (it should be noted, however, that Hungary, where the Soviets replaced Mátyás Rákosi with Imre Nagy, was an exception to this particular rule). What were the characteristics of the Stalinist system and how did the process of de-Stalinisation take place in the other nations of Central and Eastern Europe?

Why did the most powerful and most influential armed uprising against the Soviet Empire specifically take place in Budapest and in October 1956?

International comparative studies, a comparison of general characteristics and local specificities, analysis of power struggles taking place within the Moscow core and among local party leaders in satellite states, as well as a comparison of policy decisions and their consequences – for which this symposium serves as an important source of inspiration – will provide a wealth of new information for a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of historical events in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1950s.

In addition to analysis of shifts and changes in the centres of power leading to the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution, increasing attention has also recently been paid to some aspects of 20th century Hungarian history that distinguish it from other states in the region.

I would like to highlight three of these developments, in particular.

First, beyond the common regional experience of violated basic human rights and the use of mass terror against the population after 1945, it was perhaps Hungary, on the losing end of the Second World War, that suffered most in terms of serious violations of national values and sentiments by the newly established communist regime.

For the Hungarian communists, however, one of the most crucial conclusions drawn from 1956 was that long-term consolidation of society could never be attained without at least the superficial employment of national values. After the revolution was quelled, the newly-installed General Secretary János Kádár stated at a closed-party meeting: 'after 1956 I have learned to respect not only the crimson (red), but also the red-white-and-green' (it is worth noting that prominence was given among revolutionary demands to the amelioration of national grievances that were also clearly expressed at a symbolic level). One need only note the hated Soviet crests torn from the Hungarian tri-colour flags or the rapid spread of the traditional Kossuth coat of arms in reference to the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.

Another unique characteristic of Hungarian 'pre-history' of the revolution, which distinguishes it from other states in the region, is that Hungary still possessed a glimmer of hope for the possibility of parliamentary democracy after 1945, no matter how brief or fragile. In 1945, Hungary held free yet limited elections in which the communists were defeated and the right-wing Smallholders Party obtained more than 50% of the vote. In retrospect, of course, we now know that the idea of a democratic transformation was not realistic in the face of Soviet occupation and that the Soviet leadership assisted the dynamic expansion of the Hungarian communists. Nevertheless, this brief and uneven personal experience of democracy remained an important inspiration for Hungarian society well into the 1950s.

The end of the war in 1945 brought even more radical structural changes to Hungarian society and the decade prior to 1956 witnessed intense violent social transformations having a primarily negative impact on almost every social stratum and almost every family in Hungary.

The third noteworthy characteristic of Hungary's internal historical development usually mentioned in a pre-1956 context is that Hungary experienced the greatest number of political changes in 20th century European history: revolutions, counter-revolutions and violent external interventions in rapid succession. All of this, in conjunction with frequent changes in international power configurations on one hand and the rise and fall of ever new elites on the other, contributed to a perpetual traumatisation of Hungarian society while simultaneously failing to offer solutions to fundamental problems of social and political life. The end of the war in 1945 brought even more radical structural changes to Hungarian society and the decade prior to 1956 witnessed intense violent social transformations having a primarily negative impact on almost every social stratum and almost every family in Hungary. Strictly speaking, the Hungarian Stalinist dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi entered into a confrontation with the entirety of Hungarian society. Not only was a significant portion of the old political, economic and cultural elite forcibly eliminated, but even new elites that emerged after 1945 suffered major losses – including those that had originally sympathised with the idea of radical social and political change, together with those that temporarily gained power. It was in this atmosphere of insecurity and vulnerability that the return of Mátyás Rákosi in 1955 following the fall of Imre Nagy was met with a sense of fear.

What then led to the revolution? This is one of the most fundamental questions relating to 1956: one which stands at the cross-roads of competing historiographic traditions. A long dominant viewpoint was that Stalin's death ushered in the beginning of the revolutionary period, as it inevitably led to the rise of Imre Nagy

as premier, the consequent power struggle that unfolded at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the reforms of the intellectual Petőfi Circle, and to 23 October itself. This historical interpretation therefore saw the antecedents of the revolution in the political infighting and numerous dissensions among the communists, as well as failed attempts at reforms. In other words, a split within the ruling elite served as the main catalyst for the outbreak of tumultuous events.

Recently, however, more emphasis has been given to approaches focusing on society, more specifically, a detailed analysis of attitudes, conceptions and actions of various social groups, as the cause of the revolution. This change in perspective focuses much more attention on the notion of social action. According to this approach, just as the violent process of social transformation affected almost every social stratum and almost every family in Hungary, research into the social history of the revolution also shows that almost every social group in some way took part in the revolution. In fact, one of the major characteristics of 1956 was its broad social support. One need only consider the key role played by university students in formulating the demands of the revolution, the workers' councils established by skilled workers, the various organisations of the intelligentsia, the armed militias often recruited from among unskilled workers, and the role of the peasantry in establishing self-government in rural Hungary. To provide just one example, in one Nógrád county village of 750 inhabitants, one in ten residents were members of the National Committee formed during the revolution, which means that virtually every family was represented on the local committee. It is also worth noting that this kind of social diversity, a specific characteristic of the 1956 Revolution, is far from common in the history of contemporary revolutions.

Another very important aspect of the Hungarian revolution was that it was not directed by any single political centre (a discussion of factional disputes between the reform communist Imre Nagy and the hard-line Rákosi party leaders, as well as the former's dynamic and complex relations with the insurgents, of course, exceeds the scope of this presentation). During the revolution capable leaders spontaneously emerged from armed groups as well as from among those who were committed to establishing and operating democratic institutions with the support of their local communities. This was perhaps one of the most important features of the Hungarian revolution – the existence of autonomous and diverse social organisations primarily represented by workers' councils and rural national committees. The significance of the latter can best be understood by the fact that while armed struggle was waged against Soviet troops in Budapest, the Soviet-style council system was abolished in the countryside within a few days and replaced by genuine self-government. The consequences of this development, incidentally, may also be traced to reprisals following the revolution: the autonomously self-governing local elites were the third most targeted group for reprisals alongside armed revolutionaries and prominent members of the party opposition. It was these individuals whom the newly established dictatorship after 1956 rightly presumed were capable of leading any new legitimate democratic movement.

This point, the issue of reprisals after the revolution, brings us to the second major theme of this symposium: evaluating the revolution's consequences. What

was its immediate effect on neighbouring countries? What movements did it inspire? What was the reaction of local authorities? How did the events of 1956 influence Soviet policies and de-Stalinization? Did it accelerate the process or temporarily halt or even reverse it? How did the experiences of 1956 affect how the Soviets handled the crises of 1968 or even 1980–81? Also, how did all these developments affect the West? From these innumerable questions, I now wish to draw your attention to several thoughts on how the reprisals of 1956 affected Hungarian society. First, there are certain aspects of internal retributions and reprisals following the revolution that are relevant in an international context and, second, it is my experience that the issue of reprisals following 1956 is hardly ever mentioned in international historical literature. While relatively frequent and diverse discussions of the narrative history of 1956 – 'its major international contexts and consequences' – appear in academic discourse, reprisals following the revolution other than the trial of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs now seem a mere tragic episode in historical overviews and textbooks, despite the ruthless application of instruments of terror.

In fact, one of the major characteristics of 1956 was its broad social support. One need only consider the key role played by university students in formulating the demands of the revolution, the workers' councils established by skilled workers, the various organisations of the intelligentsia, the armed militias often recruited from among unskilled workers, and the role of the peasantry in establishing self-government in rural Hungary.

It was at the onset of the Kádár era, however, that state violence became a widespread social experience. As Camus' thoughts illustrate, it was this brutal suppression of the revolution that gave a final push to 'disillusionment' among Western intellectuals and internal disintegration within Communist parties. How was an institutionalised system of reprisals established and its required personnel assembled? In studying the internal affairs of judicial and military personnel that participated in the reprisals, what can be said about its pre-1956 socialisation and later careers during the Kádár era? Was there continuity between political leadership and its executive bodies before and after 1956 and, if so, to what degree? These issues raise another element warranting our attention: how did the political leadership establish the required institutional system and legal

framework with which to carry out mass reprisals against the participants of 1956? Moreover, in what ways were the Kádár era reprisals comparable to the previous Stalinist period?

To be brief, I would like to merely mention one example that may shed light on these important issues. In the spring of 1957, the reprisals intensified after Janos Kádár's visit to Moscow. At the same time, special People's Courts were established on a regional basis to examine political cases. These authorities had extensive powers of judicial review allowing them to 'legally' reopen any case whose adjudication did not accord with the interests of the political leadership. The cruellest measure implemented by the political leadership, however, was a decree allowing an extension of the death penalty to anyone 16 years of age or older at the time of an alleged criminal act. This provision was used in the case of Péter Mansfeld, the youngest and one of the best known victims of judicial reprisal. These political 'courts' were thereby an additional instrument at Kádár's disposal providing an external semblance of real and legitimate judicial councils, while in reality serving only the interests and will of the political leadership as a vehicle for ensuring unlimited retribution.

Another aspect of the reprisals worth further examination are the sorts of cases that were focused upon during a given period. I already mentioned the main target groups for reprisals. Now, I would like to highlight two lesser known areas of research that also influenced the international community's judgment of the Kádár regime. One such issue concerns the time period of the reprisals. The end of this process is usually associated with 1963, when János Kádár declared a general amnesty. The granting of such an amnesty for political prisoners was one of the prerequisites for removing the 'Hungarian question' from the agenda of the United Nations. Nevertheless, although many were indeed released at that time, a significant number of those who fought at the barricades remained imprisoned, as the decree did not cover recidivists or those freedom fighters whom the authorities deemed common criminals such as those who took part in armed uprisings and were convicted of murder. Therefore, while Kádár enjoyed major international and diplomatic success in declaring a general amnesty, many participants of 1956 remained imprisoned until the 1970s.

However, this is not the only dilemma in determining the end of the reprisals. Further research is also required into the lesser known fact that people were still being convicted and imprisoned on charges relating to 1956 even after the 1963 amnesty. In the absence of a detailed presentation, we can only note the fact that on the 10th anniversary of the revolution the political police engaged in a campaign of mass arrests resulting in a new series of criminal trials related to the revolution. Additional research also discloses that peasants who resisted forced collectivisation of agriculture had their activities in 1956 brought into court as aggravating circumstances. This information likewise focuses our attention on other rarely examined political trials that took place in Kádár's 'happiest barracks in the socialist camp' and their potential connection to the events of 1956. This once more elicits the question of continuity: can a sharp distinction be made between the early Kádár era of reprisals and the subsequently entrenched Kádár regime known as 'Goulash Communism?' This is highly debatable with respect to reprisals related to the events of 1956.

There is one more facet that should be addressed in connection with the reprisals due to its far-reaching impact as well as the extent of academic debate that it has generated, even with respect to the most infamous trials pertaining to 1956. This concerns the fact that one of the most important collections of sources on the history of the revolution and subsequent reprisals consists of documents created by the authority that suppressed the revolution in the first place. How reliable are these sources? Can we actually reconstruct the events of 1956 on the basis of these judicial documents? Do historians of the revolution only have access to those historical documents that the repressive authorities selected and developed for their own specific criteria and according to their own needs? These needs, of course, were a given: to convince the international community, as well as the Hungarian people that what occurred in 1956 was actually a counter-revolution, and to do so in the most convincing manner possible.

What was its immediate effect on neighbouring countries? What movements did it inspire? What was the reaction of local authorities? How did the events of 1956 influence Soviet policies and de-Stalinisation? Did it accelerate the process or temporarily halt or even reverse it? How did the experiences of 1956 affect how the Soviets handled the crises of 1968 or even 1980–81? Also, how did all these developments affect the West?

At this point, I turn to those issues relating to an international assessment of the Hungarian revolution and the role it played in world politics. According to available documentation, the European status quo that emerged after the Second World War, together with a bipolar global order characterised by confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, basically sealed the fate of Central and Eastern Europe and determined the outcome of the Hungarian revolution. To put it simply, the Hungarian revolution of 23 October 1956 was both unexpected and inconvenient for Western governments. At the same time, in the context of Cold War relations, foreign policy events were inseparably intertwined with ideological conflicts – thus, the *Hungarian issue*, despite its limited significance in international politics, played an important role in ongoing debates about communism in Western domestic politics. Paradoxically, it would seem, the events of 1956 primarily had internal political consequences in the West. In an era of mass media, news of the revolution and the brutal actions

of the Soviets had a serious effect on public opinion and the attitude towards, Western communist parties.

The 'eastern' communists, however, also recognised the impact of propaganda and through the creation of a 'counter-myth' to 1956, the use of photographs depicting the brutality of the revolution along with trial evidence, sought to compete in interpreting and exploiting 1956. Sixty years later, however, we can say that they only achieved partial and temporary success in achieving their goals. For the nations and peoples of Central and Eastern Europe oppressed by the Soviet empire, 1956 was and remains a powerful and fundamental symbol of the desire for freedom.

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De-Stalinisation and the Genesis of the 1956 Crises

MARK KRAMER

The year 1956 was momentous for the Soviet bloc. In February 1956, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, delivered a 'secret speech' at the 20th Soviet Party Congress in which he denounced many of the excesses and crimes of his predecessor, Joseph Stalin, who died three years earlier. Repercussions from Khrushchev's speech quickly extended far beyond the Soviet Union. Widespread ferment and instability arose in most East European states, especially Poland and Hungary. By the fall of 1956 the Soviet Union confronted serious political crises in both countries. Although the Soviet-Polish crisis was resolved peacefully, Soviet troops intervened in Hungary to dislodge the revolutionary government of Imre Nagy and to crush all popular resistance.

In my presentation, I will explore how de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union affected the entire Soviet bloc, spawning acute unrest that nearly brought down the Communist edifice in the fall of 1956. Specific events of the Hungarian revolution and the October 1956 Soviet-Polish confrontation will be covered by other speakers at our symposium today and tomorrow and therefore do not need to be covered by me now. Instead, I will discuss how these crises originated. In particular, I will highlight the crucial importance of the Soviet Union's de-Stalinisation campaign for the entire Eastern bloc.

The Early Post-Stalin Period

The death of the long-time ruler of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, in March 1953 soon led to momentous changes in the European communist bloc. Within weeks of Stalin's death, his successors encouraged (and, when necessary, ordered) East European governments to enact wide-ranging 'New Courses' of political and

economic reform. The abrupt introduction of these changes and the sharp rise of public expectations in Eastern Europe spawned strikes and mass demonstrations in Bulgaria in May 1953, a rebellion in Czechoslovakia in early June, and a much larger uprising in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) two weeks later.[1] Czechoslovak authorities succeeded in quelling a violent revolt in Plzeň and mass unrest in other cities on 1–2 June, but in East Germany the government and security forces quickly lost control of the situation on 17 June when hundreds of thousands of people rose up against communist rule. Faced with the prospect of 'losing' a vital ally, Soviet army troops and security forces in the GDR had to intervene en masse to crush the revolt and restore a modicum of public order.

Reforms in East-bloc countries after June 1953 were not as far-reaching as those proposed before Beria's ouster, but still represented a notable departure from Stalinism.

The Soviet Union's decisive response to the East German crisis was motivated in part by a concern that destabilising unrest could spread to other East European countries and even to the USSR itself unless urgent steps were taken. The spate of protests and strikes in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania in the spring of 1953 and the much larger uprising in Czechoslovakia in early June demonstrated the potential for wider turmoil. As soon as Soviet officials in East Germany informed Khrushchev and other leaders in Moscow about the uprising on 17 June, the Soviet minister of internal affairs, Lavrentii Beria, contacted Soviet foreign intelligence station chiefs in all other East European countries and warned them that they would 'pay with [their] heads if anything like this happens' in their assigned countries.[2] He ordered them to send status reports directly to him every few hours and to work with local governments to prevent mass unrest and subdue any demonstrations in support of the East German protesters.

The use of Soviet military power in East Germany eliminated the immediate problem facing the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, but suppression of the East German uprising did not impart greater consistency to Soviet policy or eliminate the prospect of further turmoil in the Soviet bloc. Although the downfall of Beria in late June 1953 and the formal appointment of Nikita Khrushchev as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in September 1953 helped mitigate instability in Soviet domestic politics, the leadership struggle in Moscow continued to buffet Soviet-East European relations over the next several years.[3] During the brief tenure of Georgii Malenkov as Soviet prime minister from March 1953 to February 1955, the Soviet government encouraged a significant relaxation of economic and political controls in Eastern Europe similar to the changes being adopted in the USSR itself. Violent mass terror in the region came to an end and vast numbers of political prisoners were released. Reforms in East-bloc countries after June 1953 were not as far-reaching as those proposed

1 For more on this unrest, see Mark Kramer, "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in East-Central Europe: Internal-External Linkages in Soviet Policy Making (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 3–55.

2 These emergency directives were recounted by Vitalii Chernyavskii, who in June 1953 served as the Soviet intelligence station chief in Bucharest, in a lengthy interview in Moscow in 2005. See also Leonid Mlechin, "Moi pervyi nachal'nik podpolkovnik Chernyavskii," *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie* (Moscow), No. 26 (15 July 2005), p. 7.

3 On the general course of the Soviet leadership struggle, see William C. Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), pp. 264–269.

before Beria's ouster, but still represented a notable departure from Stalinism. In a region such as Eastern Europe, which had been so tightly oppressed during the Stalin era, sudden liberalisation greatly magnified the potential for social and political upheaval.[4] Leaders in Moscow, however, were still preoccupied with domestic affairs and the ongoing struggle for power and failed to appreciate increasingly volatile conditions in the Eastern bloc. Most of them simply hoped that the uprisings in Czechoslovakia and the GDR in June 1953 were an anomaly and not a portent of more explosive unrest to come.

Vacillation and Change under Khrushchev

The extent to which Soviet leaders misjudged the situation in Eastern Europe was evidenced by the contradictory policies that Malenkov's chief rival, Nikita Khrushchev, initially adopted. To outflank Malenkov in the leadership struggle in late 1954 and early 1955, Khrushchev temporarily sided with hardliners on the CPSU Presidium, whereby this shift was promptly reflected throughout the Soviet bloc. At Khrushchev's behest, East European governments slowed or reversed many of the economic and political reforms they implemented after Stalin's death. In Hungary the reformist prime minister, Imre Nagy, was removed in April 1955 by the neo-Stalinist leader of the Hungarian Workers' Party, Mátyás Rákosi, who was forced to yield the prime ministerial post to Nagy two years earlier under Soviet pressure. Because the new Hungarian prime minister, András Hegedüs, was a much weaker figure than Nagy, Rákosi was able to reacquire a dominant political role in the country and undo many of the recently enacted reforms. Khrushchev later acknowledged in a conversation with Chinese communist leaders that one of his 'most serious mistakes' in 1955 was when he began 'supporting that idiot Rákosi again.'[5]

Most of them simply hoped that the uprisings in Czechoslovakia and the GDR in June 1953 were an anomaly and not a portent of more explosive unrest to come.

The sudden dampening of popular expectations in Hungary and other East European countries – raised by the New Courses of the previous two years – helped generate strong currents of public discontent. Malenkov was able to avoid the emergence of widespread political unrest in Eastern Europe after June 1953 by continuing steps to improve living conditions, boost consumer output, and provide for greater official responsiveness to public concern on a wide range of matters. However, after Khrushchev forced Malenkov to the side-lines in early 1955 (replacing him as prime minister with the more cautious Nikolai Bulganin) and began curtailing the scope and pace of post-Stalin reforms, he inadvertently heightened the potential for mass protests and destabilisation in Eastern Europe.

4 See Yurii Aksyutin, *Khrushchevskaya 'ottepel' i obshchestvennye nastroeniya v SSSR, 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), pp. 58–59, 101–103, 112, 147, 178–182, 201–202, 257–263, 311, 319–320. See also Yurii Aksyutin, *Pyatyi prem'er, ili Pochemu Malenkov ne uderzhal bremya vlasti*, *Rodina* (Moscow), No. 5 (May 1994), pp. 81–88.

5 "Zapis' besedy tovarishcha Khrushcheva N. S. s Predsedatelem TsK KPK Mao Tsze-Dunom, zamestitelyami Predsedatelya TsK KPS Lyu Shao-tsi, Chzou En'-Laem, Czhu De, Lin' Byao, chlenami Politbyuro TsK KPK Pyn Czhenem, Chen' I i chlenom Sekretariata Van Tszya-syanom 2 oktyabrya 1959 goda," Osobaya papka (Strictly Secret/ Special Dossier), 2 October 1959, in Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (APRF), Moscow, Fond (F.) 45, Opis' (Op.) 1, Delo (D.) 331, Listy (Ll.) 12–13.

The threat of political instability in Eastern Europe was not as easy to defuse as during the Stalin era. The Soviet Union no longer had recourse to Stalinist methods of ensuring bloc conformity. Although economic retrenchment was possible, a return to pervasive terror was not; nor would Khrushchev and his colleagues have desired it. Hence, Khrushchev altered his approach somewhat as he sought to replace the political subordination of Eastern Europe, which was possible in Stalin's time, with economic and ideological cohesion. He advanced the concept of a 'socialist commonwealth' (*sotsialisticheskoe sodruzhestvo*) in which the East European Communist parties would have the right to follow their 'own paths to socialism' – that is, to have somewhat greater leeway on internal matters – as long as they continued to 'base all their activities on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism.'[6] Khrushchev apparently believed that popular support for the East European governments would increase if they were given greater independence in domestic policymaking, but sought to ensure that the Soviet Union would maintain long-term control of the bloc by promoting economic and military integration. In keeping with these goals, Khrushchev attempted to mend relations with Yugoslavia and bring it closer to the Soviet camp, give greater substance to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, which Stalin created in 1949), and foster a more concrete Soviet-East European military relationship, most notably through establishment of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation in May 1955.

The bid for a rapprochement with Yugoslavia was of particular importance to Khrushchev, in part because he was able to use the issue as a wedge against one of his domestic rivals, Vyacheslav Molotov. Stalin and Molotov had provoked a bitter split with Yugoslavia in 1948 and subsequently tried to remove the Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito. These efforts ultimately proved futile, but Stalin remained fiercely hostile toward Yugoslavia to the very end and may have been contemplating an invasion in the final two years of his life. Within several months of Stalin's death, however, his successors decided to restore diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and sent a formal request to Tito in this regard on 16 June 1953, the day before the East German uprising. This gesture marked a striking turnaround in Soviet policy after five years of vehement polemics and recriminations with Yugoslav leaders.

Nevertheless, significance of the move was limited because it did not yet entail a resumption of formal ties between the two countries' Communist parties. Molotov and several other hardliners in the CPSU remained adamantly opposed to any suggestion of seeking full reconciliation with the Yugoslav communists. Sharp exchanges ensued whenever the issue of Yugoslavia arose at CPSU Presidium meetings in 1954 and the first few months of 1955, as Molotov repeatedly tried to introduce language into Presidium resolutions and other documents that would effectively derail efforts to improve relations with Belgrade.[7]

Khrushchev began laying the groundwork in 1954 for a much fuller rapprochement with Yugoslavia and stepped up his efforts in the spring of 1955 to overcome obstruction by Molotov. On 26 May 1955, ten days after Khrushchev returned from Poland for signing of the Warsaw Pact, he travelled to Belgrade and held an extended series of meetings with Tito and other Yugoslav leaders.

6 "Zayavlenie tovarishcha N. S. Khrushcheva na aerodrome v Belgrade," *Pravda* (Moscow), 27 May 1955, p. 1.

7 See, for example, "Protokol No. 120: Zasedanie Prezidiuma TsK KPSS, 19 maya 1955 g.," Notes from CPSU Presidium meeting (Top Secret), in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), F. 3, Op. 8, D. 388, Ll. 40–42ob.

The sessions at times were awkward and tense and Tito was not always receptive to Soviet blandishments. However, the high-profile visit overall achieved what Khrushchev was seeking. The communiqué issued by the two sides on 2 June at the end of discussions – a document that came to be known as the Belgrade Declaration – pledged respect for their 'differences in internal complexion, social systems, and forms of socialist development.'[8] The declaration also committed each side not to interfere in the other's internal affairs 'for any reason whatsoever.' The visit and joint declaration were politically valuable for Khrushchev not only in giving him another conspicuous foreign policy accomplishment, but also in allowing him to step up his political attacks against Molotov. At a CPSU Central Committee plenum in July 1955, which Khrushchev convened shortly after returning from Belgrade, delegates praised Khrushchev's meetings with Tito and voiced a torrent of criticism about Molotov's 'ridiculous', 'deeply misguided', 'long outdated', and 'erroneous' views on Soviet-Yugoslav relations.[9]

Khrushchev apparently believed that popular support for the East European governments would increase if they were given greater independence in domestic policymaking, but sought to ensure that the Soviet Union would maintain long-term control of the bloc by promoting economic and military integration.

The USSR's relationship with Yugoslavia continued to improve over the next several months as a result of Khrushchev's ostensibly 'secret' speech at the 20th CPSU Congress in February 1956. It explicitly condemned Stalin's policy toward Yugoslavia, describing it as 'arbitrary' and 'mistaken'.[10] A summary of the secret speech, along with highly favourable commentary, was published in the main Yugoslav daily, *Borba*, on 20 March. The following month, Khrushchev agreed to dissolve the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), the Soviet-dominated organisation from which Yugoslavia was expelled by Stalin in June 1948. Although the Cominform mostly became a figurehead entity after Yugoslavia's expulsion, its dismantling was clearly aimed at alleviating Yugoslav leaders' concerns about 'future excommunications'.[11] By the time Tito paid a lengthy reciprocal visit to the Soviet Union in June 1956 (a visit that Khrushchev avidly sought), reconciliation between the two sides proceeded far enough to issue a joint communiqué praising the 'diversity of forms of socialist development' and affirming the 'right of different [communist] countries to pursue different paths of socialist development'. The communiqué repudiated the Stalinist legacy by stating that neither country would

8 "Deklaratsiya Pravitel'stv Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Federativnoi Narodnoi Respubliki Yugoslavii," *Pravda* (Moscow), 3 June 1955, pp. 1–2.

9 "Plenum TsK KPSS – XIX Sozyv, 4–12 iyulya 1955 g." Verbatim Transcript (Strictly Secret), 4–12 July 1955, in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 1, Dd. 139–180.

10 The text of the speech appeared promptly in the West, but was not published in the Soviet Union until 1989. See "O kul'te lichnosti i ego posledstviyakh: Doklad pervogo sekretarya TsK KPSS tov. Khrushcheva N. S. XX S"ezdu Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil* (Moscow), No. 11 (June 1989), pp. 63–92.

11 "Informatsionnoe soobshchenie o prekrashchenii deyatel'nosti Informatsionnogo Byuro kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partii," *Pravda* (Moscow), 18 April 1956, p. 3.

'attempt to impose its own views about socialist development on the other side'.[12]

Khrushchev proved equally successful in achieving a settlement in Austria, a country that had been a major point of contention between East and West after the end of the Second World War. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union consistently linked proposals for an Austrian peace treaty with other issues such as a settlement of the Trieste dispute and a resolution of the German question. The option of neutrality for Austria, which was first floated in the 1940s, was attractive to some officials in Moscow as well as in most Western capitals and Austria itself.[13] However, hardliners in Moscow such as Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich were firmly opposed to the idea if it meant that the Soviet Union would have to pull all its troops out of Austria.[14] Khrushchev as well was initially unwilling to accept proposals for Austrian neutrality and a troop withdrawal, but by early 1955 came to view a settlement of the Austrian question as a way of defusing a potential East-West flashpoint, thus eliminating the U.S., British, and French troop presence in Central Europe, and spurring progress in long-stalled East-West negotiations on Germany by using the Austrian case as an example of how neutrality could be applied to a united German state.

The signing of the Pact was mainly intended as a symbolic countermove to the admission of West Germany into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), but the legitimacy it conferred on the Soviet troop presence was part of a larger Soviet effort to codify the basic political and military structures of Soviet--East European relations.

In closed forums, Molotov and several other Soviet officials still heatedly opposed a prospective withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Austria and Molotov sought to quash proposals for an Austrian treaty in early 1955 when the CPSU Presidium discussed the matter.[15] In the end, however, Khrushchev and his supporters were able to face down the hardliners by arguing that the removal of U.S., British, and French troops from Austria would more than compensate for the withdrawal of Soviet forces, not least because the United States geographically was much further from Austria than was the Soviet Union. Khrushchev alleged that Molotov's 'insistence on keeping our troops in Austria' must stem from 'a desire to start a war'.[16] Having overcome the main domestic obstacles, the Soviet leader pursued bilateral talks with the Austrian government in March and April 1955 in ironing out what neutrality would mean in practice and how it would affect the rights of outside powers, including the USSR. These bilateral talks were soon followed by

12 "Pust' zhivet i protsvetaet bratskaya sovetsko-yugoslavskaya druzhba!" *Pravda* (Moscow), 22 June 1956, p. 1.

13 For an analysis of this issue, see Michael Gehler, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality: Austria's Transformation during the First East-West Détente," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall 2005), pp. 104–136.

14 See, for example, the large volume of documents on this matter in Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRF), F. 06, Op. 14, Papka (Pap.) 9, Dd. 107 and 116.

15 "Plenum TsK KPSS -- XIX Sozyv: Stenogramma trinadtsatogo zasedaniya 11 iyulya 1955 g. (vechernogo)," 11 July 1955 (Strictly Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 175, L. 178. See also A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva: Vospominaniya diplomata, sovetnika A. A. Gromyko* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994), p. 95.

16 "Plenum TsK KPSS -- XIX Sozyv: Stenogramma trinadtsatogo zasedaniya 11 iyulya 1955 g. (vechernogo)," L. 178.

a four-power conference and the formal signing of the Austrian State Treaty on 15 May 1955.[17] The settlement marked a triumph for Khrushchev personally as well as for Soviet foreign policy.

The USSR's vacillations between reform and retrenchment both at home and abroad, far from promoting either 'viability' or 'cohesion' in the Eastern bloc, directly contributed to a surge of instability in the region, especially in Hungary and Poland.

Moreover, the establishment of the Warsaw Pact on 14 May 1955, the day before signature of the Austrian State Treaty, forestalled any concerns that Khrushchev's domestic opponents may have raised about implications of the Soviet troop pull-out from Austria.[18] Until May 1955, the ostensible justification for Soviet military deployments in both Hungary and Romania was the need to preserve logistical and communications links with Soviet forces in Austria. Creation of the Warsaw Pact provided a rationale for maintaining deployments in Hungary and Romania even after all Soviet troops left Austria. The signing of the Pact was mainly intended as a symbolic countermove to the admission of West Germany into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), but the legitimacy it conferred on the Soviet troop presence was part of a larger Soviet effort to codify the basic political and military structures of Soviet-East European relations. Rather than simply preserving mechanisms devised by Stalin, who disproportionately relied on terror and coercion, Khrushchev sought a less domineering approach that he hoped would permit greater domestic 'viability' in Eastern Europe.

At the same time, Khrushchev did not want to sacrifice 'cohesion' of the Soviet bloc. He hoped that viability and cohesion would go hand-in-hand in Eastern Europe, but in practice this was not always the case.[19] As the Soviet Union gradually loosened its tight grip on East European countries after Stalin's

17 For an analysis of Soviet policy in the lead-up to the treaty (though focusing predominantly on the Stalin period), based in part on declassified Soviet documentation, see Wolfgang Mueller, *Die sowjetische Besatzung in Österreich 1945–1955 und ihre politische Mission* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005). See also two valuable (and somewhat overlapping) collections of declassified Soviet documents pertaining to Soviet policy vis-à-vis Austria from 1945 to 1955: Stefan Karner and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds., *Die Rote Armee in Österreich: Sowjetische Besatzung 1945–1955.*(Graz: Ludwig Boltzmann-Institut für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung, 2005); and Wolfgang Mueller et al., eds., *Sowjetische Politik in Österreich 1945–1955: Dokumente aus russischen Archiven* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005). Unfortunately, the relatively small number of documents in these two volumes from the post-Stalin era shed almost no light on Soviet policymaking and high-level debates. Two recent essays on this topic – Aleksei Filitov, "The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and the Austrian State Treaty," in Arnold Suppan, Gerald Stourzh, and Wolfgang Mueller, eds., *Der österreichische Staatsvertrag 1955: Internationale Strategie, rechtliche Relevanz, nationale Identität* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2006), pp. 121–143, and Mikhail Prozumenshchikov, "Nach Stalins Tod: Sowjetische Österreich-Politik, 1953–1955," in Stefan Karner and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds., *Die rote Armee in Österreich: Sowjetische Besatzung, 1945–1955: Beiträge* (Vienna: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005), pp. 729–753 – are intriguing, but a good deal of murkiness remains. For a definitive history of the Austrian State Treaty, along with valuable appendices of documents and an extensive bibliography, see Gerald Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit: Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945–1955*, 5th ed. (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005).

18 "Podpisanie dogovora o druzhbe, sotrudnichestve i vzaimnoi pomoshchi," *Pravda* (Moscow), 15 May 1955, p. 1, and the text of the treaty on p. 2.

19 The notion of a trade-off between "viability" and "cohesion" is well presented in James F. Brown, *Relations between the Soviet Union and Its East European Allies: A Survey*, R-1742-PR (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1975).

death to bolster their regimes' viability, internal pressures in the region 'from below' and 'from above' threatened to erode or even undermine cohesion of the bloc. The apparent trade-off between viability and cohesion in Eastern Europe plagued Soviet policymakers over the next year-and-a-half.

Confusion and Turmoil

Despite successful overtures to Yugoslavia, conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty, and establishment of the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev's approach to Eastern Europe as a whole remained erratic. The USSR's vacillations between reform and retrenchment both at home and abroad, far from promoting either 'viability' or 'cohesion' in the Eastern bloc, directly contributed to a surge of instability in the region, especially in Hungary and Poland. By early 1956, socio-political pressures in Eastern Europe sparked protests and ferment in the region and the degree of political restiveness increased still further after Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Soviet Party Congress. Its content quickly became known in Eastern Europe, especially Poland, where the full text of the speech was unofficially on sale by April.

Although the secret speech was overwhelmingly geared toward developments within the Soviet Union, it could not help but undercut the position of many East European leaders such as Mátyás Rákosi and Bolesław Bierut in Hungary and Poland, respectively, who rigidly adhered to Stalinist principles[20] (Rákosi was ultimately ousted in July 1956 and had to take permanent refuge in the Soviet Union and Bierut may have met the same fate had he not suddenly died of heart failure and pneumonia in March 1956). In East Germany as well, the Stalinist leader Walter Ulbricht came under serious challenge. Khrushchev's speech also emboldened dissenters and critics within the East European regimes and led to open hints of unrest in communist ranks. In Poland, the widespread popularity of one of the victims of the Stalin-era purges, Władysław Gomułka, and the continued influence in Hungary of the erstwhile prime minister, Imre Nagy, merely heightened instability. Political unrest thus became intertwined with economic discontent that followed the restoration of harsh economic policies in 1955.

When the unrest turned violent in the Polish city of Poznań in late June 1956, it ushered in a four-month period of growing turmoil. The Polish army and security forces managed to crush the uprising in Poznań, but two days of fighting left at least 74 people dead and more than 700 seriously wounded.[21] The clashes also caused damage in the tens of millions of złotys to buildings, transportation systems, and other state property. At least thirty Polish army main battle tanks, ten armoured personnel carriers, and dozens of military trucks were destroyed or rendered unusable during the operation – an indication of fighting intensity. It is now known that several Polish military officers tried to resist the decision to open fire, but their opposition proved futile because security forces were willing to carry out orders while Soviet Army commanders (and their Polish allies) still dominated the Polish military establishment and were able to ensure that central orders were carried out.[22]

The lessons that Soviet leaders drew from the Poznań crisis were decidedly mixed. At a CPSU Presidium meeting on 12 July 1956, Khrushchev claimed that the rebellion was instigated by the 'subversive activities of

20 For the effects on Rákosi's position, see "Shifrtelegramma," Encrypted Telegram (Strictly Secret) from Yu. V. Andropov, the Soviet ambassador in Hungary, to the CPSU Presidium, 29 April 1956, in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 45, D. 1. For the effects in Poland, see two reports from P. Turpit'ko, counselor at the Soviet embassy in Poland, in AVPRF, F. Referentura po Pol'she, Op. 38, Por. 42, Pa. No. 127, D. 178, Ll. 1–11 and 12–24.

21 Some estimates of the death toll range as high as 120. The most reliable and detailed discussion of the varying estimates is in Edmund Makowski, *Poznański Czerwiec 1956: Pierwszy bunt społeczeństwa w* PRL (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2001), pp. 165–171. Estimates of the number wounded and the extent of material damage also vary considerably. See ibid., pp. 171–174.

22 See an analysis and valuable collection of declassified documents in Edward Jan Nalepa, *Pacyfikacja zbuntowanego miasta: Wojsko Polskie w Czerwca 1956 r. w Poznaniu w swietle dokumentow wojskowych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1992), pp. 72–74, 111–120.

imperialists, [who] want to foment disunity and destroy [the socialist countries] one by one'.[23] On the other hand, notes from the meeting show that Khrushchev and his colleagues were well aware of the explosive situation developing in both Hungary and Poland. The CPSU Presidium dispatched a senior Presidium member, Anastas Mikoyan, to Budapest on 13 July for a first-hand assessment of the growing political ferment in Hungary. Soon after arriving, Mikoyan, who was one of Khrushchev's closest advisers, oversaw the removal of Rákosi and his replacement by Ernő Gerő, who Soviet leaders hoped would be much better able to defuse mounting discontent. [23]

In Hungary, political ferment had been growing rapidly in the wake of the 20th Soviet Party Congress, especially among writers, students, and intellectuals.

Khrushchev and his colleagues also sent a group of high-ranking Soviet military officers to Hungary to inspect Soviet forces based there (the so-called Special Corps).[24] The officers, led by General Mikhail Malinin, a first deputy chief of the Soviet General Staff, discovered that the command staff of the Special Corps had not yet worked out a secret plan to prepare for large-scale internal disturbances in Hungary (in the wake of the 1953 East German uprising, the CPSU leadership ordered commanders of all Soviet military and state security forces in Eastern Europe to devise appropriate plans for anti-riot and counterinsurgency operations). When this omission was reported to Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Georgii Zhukov, he issued orders for requisite documents to be compiled immediately. A visiting delegation of Soviet generals helped the commander of Soviet forces in Hungary, General Petr Lashchenko, put together a 'Plan of Operations for the Special Corps to Restore Public Order in the Territory of Hungary', which was signed on 20 July 1956.[25] This plan, codenamed *Volna* (Wave), envisaged the use of tens of thousands of Soviet troops at very short notice (within three to six hours) to 'uphold and restore public order' in Hungary. The plan required a special signal (known as *Kompas*) to be put into effect, but the formulation of *Volna* at this stage indicates that Soviet leaders wanted a reliable fall-back option in case their attempts to bolster political stability in Hungary did not succeed.

Despite these precautions and growing recognition in Moscow of the unstable situation in Eastern Europe, Soviet policy in the region remained hesitant and uncertain over the next few months, in part because Khrushchev was still under pressure at home from hardliners in the CPSU, who forged close links with old-line Stalinist leaders in Eastern Europe. Fluctuations in Soviet domestic politics therefore continued to roil intra-bloc ties. This internal-external dynamic helped precipitate the severe political crises that gradually emerged in Poland and Hungary in the summer of 1956 and which came to a head in October 1956.

23 "Zapis' zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 9-ogo i 12-ogo iyulya 1956 g.," Notes from CPSU Presidium Session (Strictly Secret), 9–12 July 1956, in RGANI, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, Ll. 2-2ob.

24 See Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 163–214.

25 Lieutenant-General E. I. Malashenko, "Osobyi korpus v ogne Budapeshta (Part 1)," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (Moscow), No. 10 (October 1993), pp. 23–24. Malashenko, who in 1956 was a colonel, was the commander of the Special Corps.

26 "Plan deistvii Osobogo korpusa po vosstanovleniyu obshchestvennogo poryadka na territorii Vengrii," Operational Outline (Strictly Secret), 20 July 1956, recorded in Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborony, F. 32, Op. 701291, D. 15, Ll. 130–131.

The Secret Speech and the Growth of Unrest in Eastern Europe

De-Stalinisation began unofficially in the Soviet Union soon after Stalin's death in March 1953, but an official de-Stalinisation campaign did not get under way until Khrushchev delivered his secret speech on the evening of 25 February at a hastily-arranged closed session at the end of the 20th Soviet Party Congress. Khrushchev's forceful condemnation of Stalinist repressions, albeit selective, could not help but indict all East European leaders appointed under Stalin's auspices who had faithfully adhered to Stalinist principles.

Among the leaders implicated by the speech was the hard-line First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), Bolesław Bierut, who led the Polish delegation to Moscow for the 20th Congress and was given a text of the secret speech. His colleagues later stated that he was 'stunned' and 'utterly devastated' by Khrushchev's remarks. Since the reaction in Poland to the secret speech was so important and the growth of unrest there so rapid (even more so than in Hungary), it is worth focusing on the specific case of Poland in this section. Nevertheless, trends discussed here were present, although to lesser degrees, in all other Soviet-bloc countries in 1956, including the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Soviet Union itself.

Events in Poland moved with great speed after the 20th Soviet Party Congress. On 28 February 1956, several days after the congress ended, four high-ranking Polish officials who accompanied Bierut to Moscow – Jerzy Morawski, Jakub Berman, Józef Cyrankiewicz, and Aleksander Zawadzki – provided a detailed account of Khrushchev's secret speech to the PZPR Politburo. After receiving this information, the Politburo decided to convene a meeting of central party activists in Warsaw on 3–4 March to inform about the speech. When the session opened on 3 March, Morawski spoke at length about Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin. Then, he and his Politburo colleagues were forced to reply to heated questions from the floor and defend the regime's policies as best they could.

This initial meeting was followed three days later by a larger gathering in Warsaw of PZPR activists, who voiced harsh criticism of Bierut's reign and the continued presence of Stalinists on the PZPR Politburo. The full text of Khrushchev's secret speech had not yet been formally circulated within the PZPR (its distribution was not authorised until two weeks later), but so much of it had been disclosed by this point that it sparked a torrent of anti-Bierut comments. Bierut himself had fallen gravely ill during the Soviet Party Congress and stayed in Moscow afterward to recover. He kept in close touch with officials in Warsaw by telephone and therefore knew that his authority in Poland was rapidly dissipating. Yet, he was incapable of responding from afar. On 12 March, he suddenly died, apparently of heart failure and pneumonia, which may have been worsened by his acute emotional stress. His unexpected death, after nearly eight years of iron-fisted rule, gave a powerful fillip to de-Stalinisation in Poland.

Until Bierut's death was officially announced on 13 March, a large majority of Poles was unaware that he was ill or even that he was still in Moscow. The abrupt announcement that he died in the Soviet capital therefore caused a huge stir in Polish society. Within a day or two, security forces in almost every region of Poland reported uncovery of large quantities of 'anti-communist and

anti-Soviet' leaflets that castigated Bierut (often in extremely insulting terms), expressed delight that he was dead, and disparaged the Polish regime as a 'Russian-dominated government'. Graffiti of a similar nature appeared on the walls of buildings in Warsaw, particularly at Warsaw University, and in many other Polish cities. Rumours quickly spread that Bierut had been 'fatally poisoned by Soviet secret police agents at the behest of the CPSU leadership'. Some local officials in Poland openly claimed that 'Comrade Bierut was murdered on orders from the CPSU after the 20th Congress when it became inconvenient to have him around any longer'.

There was no concrete evidence to support these rumours, but the fact that many Poles were willing, on one hand, to condemn Bierut and, on the other, to accept allegations that he was murdered by the Soviet Union was indicative of a dramatic change in the country's political climate.

Edward Ochab, Bierut's successor as PZPR First Secretary, was a far more moderate figure who sought to curb political repression and reduce the party's heavy-handed control of the press. Ochab agreed with the suggestion by Stefan Staszewski, the reform-minded first secretary of the PZPR's Warsaw committee, that party leaders should permit and indeed encourage rank-and-file members to study Khrushchev's secret speech. On 21 March, the day after Ochab formally took office, the PZPR Secretariat (which he chaired) endorsed his proposal to distribute both the Russian text of the secret speech and a Polish translation.

Initially, the PZPR gave out only a small number of copies of the two documents to heads of regional and local party organisations around the country, who were instructed to read the translated text aloud at select gatherings of party members. The lively discussions that ensued over the next several days generated such widespread interest and speculation that on 27 March, at Ochab's behest, the Secretariat approved a sharp increase in distribution of the speech and ordered all regional and local party organisations to hold 'public meetings in urban and rural areas' to "ensure that participants are fully apprised of [Khrushchev's] report on 'the cult of personality and its consequences.'"

The decision to make Khrushchev's speech much more widely available was driven in part by circumstances beyond PZPR control. Starting in mid-March, Poles were able to listen to a detailed summary of the speech on the Polish service of Voice of America (VOA) and other Western short-wave radio stations. These 'forbidden' broadcasts proved exceedingly popular. By mid- to late March, local and regional party officials in Poland were expressing grave concern about the 'vast number of workers [who] are tuning in to bourgeois radio stations in order to hear repeated broadcasts of N. S. Khrushchev's [secret speech], as well as malevolent commentaries'. The first secretary of the PZPR committee in Szczecin, Józef Kisielewski, reported in late March that 'workers in Szczecin on many occasions over the past 3–4 weeks have been gathering en masse to listen to [coverage of Khrushchev's speech] on bourgeois radio stations and afterward continued talking about the speech in an unsavoury and blatantly hostile manner, with distinctly anti-Soviet overtones'. The head of the PZPR department responsible for the mass media, Tadeusz Goliński, acknowledged

that 'people everywhere in Poland are listening to Voice of America. Jamming it is pointless because Poles always find some way to tune in'.

Goliński, Kisielewski and other senior officials argued that the only way to offset the VOA broadcasts was by expanding, rather than curbing, the PZPR's own dissemination of the speech: 'If we do not convey this information to the people ourselves, the enemy will gladly do it for us… People throughout the country, even those who are not enemies [of the PZPR], will end up listening to Voice of America if we fail to tell them the truth or if we delay in telling it.' Citing the experience in Szczecin, Kisielewski emphasised that: 'unless we increase the distribution of N. S. Khrushchev's report, we will never be able to dissuade workers from listening to it on bourgeois radio stations'. He warned that failure to act on this matter 'as soon as possible' would exacerbate 'virulently anti-Soviet' and 'anti-socialist' sentiments that had been proliferating 'at an alarming rate' in Szczecin over the previous few months.

The pleas from Kisielewski, Goliński and other high-ranking party officials spurred the PZPR Secretariat to adopt its resolution on 27 March to increase distribution of Khrushchev's speech – a step that Polish leaders hoped would undercut (or at least mitigate) the influence and popularity of VOA. Some 3,000 additional copies of the secret speech were officially printed in Warsaw and another 15,000 to 20,000 'unofficial' copies were produced at Staszewski's initiative. Many unofficial copies (and even some official copies) were distributed outside the PZPR as well as to party members, resulting in a vast increase of the speech in circulation. By early April, copies were even reportedly on sale at Warsaw's Różycki market, where they were quickly bought up. As the number of PZPR members and ordinary Poles who learned about the speech grew in late March and early April, political ferment in Poland steadily increased, causing some Polish officials to worry that the situation may soon spin out of control. Although the PZPR Secretariat in mid-April tried to curtail official dissemination of the speech, this effort was much too limited and belated to stem the surge of political unrest. Even in the unlikely event that distribution of the speech through official channels could have been halted immediately, such a step would have been purely cosmetic unless the authorities had also been able to locate many thousands of illicit copies and block the VOA broadcasts – a daunting task, to say the least.

The Deepening of Anti-Soviet Sentiment

One of the unforeseen and, from the regime's perspective, highly undesirable consequences of the de-Stalinisation campaign in Poland was the rapid growth of popular hostility toward the Soviet Union. Kisielewski and other Polish officials hoped that the PZPR could curb the spread of anti-Soviet sentiments by augmenting distribution of Khrushchev's speech. As it turned out, the impact was just the opposite. When party and state organisations in Poland held meetings in March and early April to discuss Khrushchev's speech, many participants spoke scathingly about Soviet-Polish relations, a topic that had previously been taboo. Criticism of Soviet ties with Poland initially took the form of denunciations of Stalin and his harsh repression of Polish military and political elites, but discontent quickly evolved into what PZPR regional leaders described as 'visceral anti-Soviet statements and attacks'.

Growing signs of antipathy toward the USSR caused trepidation among Soviet Foreign Ministry officials, who feared that 'hostile elements' in Poland were gaining 'dangerous influence' over public opinion: "Under the guise of condemning the cult of personality, these individuals are trying to cast doubt on the entire policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union'. As the risk of reprisals steadily diminished, Poles were increasingly willing to vent their anger at the 'Soviet military occupation of Poland' and to demand the withdrawal of all Soviet troops. Even within the PZPR, many activists who had once seemed loyal to the Soviet regime were now inclined to dismiss Khrushchev's speech as a 'cheap political stunt' and to castigate the 'leaders of the CPSU' for 'trying to deny any responsibility for crimes they helped Stalin commit. They are blaming everything on him now that he is conveniently dead'.

Public animosity toward the Soviet Union became even more conspicuous during the next phase of Poland's de-Stalinisation encompassing almost every segment of Polish society. Regional party leaders reported that an 'enormous number' of workers, students and intellectuals were 'expressing contempt for the USSR' and were claiming that 'the ten years in which Poland has been a "protectorate" of the Soviet Union have been a completely wasted period for the country.' Soviet officials based in Poland sent gloomy memoranda to Moscow about the 'onslaught of fulminations against the USSR, the cascade of anti-Soviet statements and jokes, and the aspersions cast on the Soviet Union's policies'. These 'dismaying phenomena', they argued, 'would not have become so widespread if regional PZPR organisations and local party committees had taken a firmer and more coherent stand against the hostile elements' activities'.

The de-Stalinisation process in Poland was reinforced by an easing of restrictions on the Polish press, which in the spring of 1956 featured sharp criticism not only of the country's Stalinist system, but also of the existing polity and Polish-Soviet relations. The growing boldness of the press stirred anxiety within the PZPR about the publication of articles 'that are fundamentally at odds with the party's position'. Senior Polish officials complained that the PZPR's main newspaper, *Trybuna Ludu*, was 'no longer even attempting to wage an offensive on behalf of the central party organs' against 'nefarious elements that should be rebuffed'. Polish authorities did take some modest steps in late April and early May to try to limit the amount of criticism in the press, notably by confiscating copies of the May issue of *Nowa Kultura*, which featured what they regarded as a 'blatantly anti-socialist' article. Nonetheless, these measures were of little to no efficacy (for example, the order to confiscate the May issue of *Nowa Kultura* did not prevent a considerable number of copies from reaching subscribers). As a result, the Polish press continued to feature articles attacking Bierut's legacy in Poland and demanding a faster pace of reform – articles that, in turn, continued to provoke scathing criticism from hardliners in the PZPR.

Lively and unorthodox commentaries by Polish journalists also sparked consternation in Moscow, where leaders received frequent cables from Soviet diplomats in Poland about the 'pernicious role of the Polish press' in 'spreading anti-Soviet sentiments', 'abusing freedom of discussion to promote views antithetical to Marxism-Leninism', and in 'grossly distorting the CPSU's struggle against the cult of personality'. During a high-level meeting of Soviet and East

European officials in early May, Khrushchev angrily condemned the 'anti-socialist elements in Poland, who under Ochab are being given free rein' in the press to try to 'force the removal of Poland from the fraternal socialist community'. As time passed and Polish authorities failed to clamp down, Khrushchev and his colleagues feared that 'the [Polish] press organs have irrevocably eluded [the PZPR's] control' and 'have fallen under the pernicious influence of our enemies [who are acting] at the behest of the most reactionary forces'.

Despite growing misgivings in both Warsaw and Moscow, the pace of de-Stalinisation in Poland did not slacken. Khrushchev's secret speech set in motion a process of sweeping change in Poland that was not easily halted in the absence of a severe crisis that would clearly demonstrate the hazards of political liberalisation and potential for violent anti-Soviet unrest. Hard-line PZPR officials, who initially had kept a low profile after the 20th Soviet Party Congress, hoped they could eventually curtail the growth of social ferment and re-impose tight political control. However, their ability to act was increasingly limited by the emergence of factional splits at all levels of the party. The lack of consensus within the PZPR was a formidable barrier to any attempts to crack down. A senior Polish official, who was uncomfortable with some of the adopted reforms, summed up the situation well at the time:

> *In our country, unlike in the other countries of people's democracy, a prolonged process has been under way of so-called "grand discussion." This process has had no regulations and no fixed guidelines and it has been replete with unvarnished and at times mean-spirited criticism. The "discussion" has been free-ranging and no one has sought to control it. People say whatever they want whenever they like. The PZPR Central Committee has been staying on the side-lines. One can only marvel at how far things have gone.*

Politically, Poland remained far ahead of all other East European countries in moving away from Stalinism.

Economically, however, the situation in Poland was much less auspicious. The Polish economy improved relatively little in the first few years after Stalin's death. Although leeway for economic reform expanded a great deal after Bierut, Ochab and his colleagues remained hesitant about adopting far-reaching economic measures that could have alleviated severe privation resulting from Poland's crash industrialisation programme and forced campaign of agricultural collectivisation. Continued economic hardships in the country, combined with broad relaxation of political controls, produced an incendiary mix. In the spring of 1956, Polish workers in a number of cities undertook a series of brief but costly strikes. Blue-collar employees at large industrial plants accounted for the bulk of the labour protests, but other economic groups, including taxi drivers and teachers, also engaged in conspicuous work stoppages. In Kraków, for example, all municipal taxi drivers went on strike and nearly brought the city to a halt for two days in early April until the local government agreed to rescind an increased tax on earnings. Polish authorities tried to contain these incidents without violent repression, but their attempts to defuse labour grievances peacefully were of no avail in late June when a full-scale workers' rebellion erupted in Poznań, a large industrial city 270 kilometres west of Warsaw.

From Poznań to the October Crises

The Poznań crisis, which left at least 75 people dead and more than 700 seriously wounded in two days of fierce fighting, generated great anxiety elsewhere in the Soviet bloc – a pattern that was to recur during future bouts of mass labour unrest in Poland. Most East European leaders, who were holdovers from the Stalin era, feared that the violence in Poland would spill over into their own countries and precipitate a backlash against them.

This threat seemed to loom especially large in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the latter of which shared a long border with Poland. In Hungary, political ferment had been growing rapidly in the wake of the 20th Soviet Party Congress, especially among writers, students, and intellectuals. By mid-1956, as the 'winds of change' in Hungary gained further strength from the Poznań crisis, blue-collar workers and farm labourers were also increasingly willing to defy the communist regime, a change that was signalled on 12 July when thousands of workers at the enormous Mátyás Rákosi Steel Factory in the Csepel Island district of Budapest staged a protest rally to denounce the 'incomprehensible reductions in [their] pay' and demand that their 'wages be set through a regular system'.

The outbreak of unrest among Hungarian steel workers on 12 July seemed to bear out Rákosi's warnings about the prospect of a 'Hungarian Poznań'.

In Czechoslovakia, a wave of student protests erupted in January 1956, when thousands of university students in Prague and Bratislava spoke openly against the Czechoslovak regime's decision to require all male students to undergo a year of military service after completing their education. In a show of defiance that would have been inconceivable during the Stalinist years, student leaders in Bratislava organised a street demonstration demanding that the military service requirement be annulled. Unrest in Czechoslovakia intensified after the 20th CPSU Congress, notably in April 1956 when the Czechoslovak Writers' Union held its 2nd Congress. A group of reform-minded writers used the gathering as a public forum to call for sweeping political changes. The government forcefully rebuffed these proposals and punished the writers who had spoken out. However, political restiveness in Czechoslovakia continued to grow, reaching a peak during the Majáles student protests in May that nearly spun out of control.

In both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, official reactions to the Poznań crisis verged on panic. The First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP), Mátyás Rákosi, was particularly unnerved by the Poznań rebellion because it began only a day after a highly publicised meeting in Budapest of the Petőfi Circle, a group of reformist intellectuals increasingly defiant toward Rákosi and the MDP. An overflow crowd of more than 6,000 people attended the discussions,

which featured sweeping criticism of Rákosi's policies, condemnations of the Hungarian leader for his role in the Stalinist repressions of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and renewed calls for 'full freedom of the press'. The audience enthusiastically supported the denunciations of Rákosi.

The Petőfi Circle meeting received extensive coverage in the Hungarian press at the very moment when violence erupted in Poland. Even if the Poznań uprising had not occurred, Rákosi undoubtedly would have launched a vigorous offensive against the Petőfi Circle. Yet, the scale of bloodshed in Poland lent even greater stridency to his attack. When he convened an emergency session of the MDP Central Leadership (the party's Central Committee) on 30 June to discuss what to do about the Petőfi Circle and the Hungarian press, deliberations were overshadowed by the Poznań rebellion. Rákosi repeatedly cited the 'anti-socialist outrages in Poznań' when justifying his proposals to ban the Petőfi Circle and to reassert stringent control of the press. 'The Poznań provocation', he argued, 'has fuelled enemy activities in all the people's democracies, including our own', and 'is clearly intended to alienate the party from the masses of the working class'. He claimed that 'these sudden and unexpected events' – the Poznań revolt and the Petőfi Circle meeting – were 'two sides of the same coin' and that leading members of the Petőfi Circle had been making 'ideological preparations' for their own violent uprising in Hungary.

Rákosi's hard-line colleagues at the MDP Central Leadership plenum echoed his views about Poznań. The minister of domestic trade, János Tausz, claimed that 'after reading this morning's newspapers about the events in Poznań', he could now see that 'we have been too tolerant over the past few months toward right-wing elements, who purport to engage in open and honest criticism… in light of the recent events in Czechoslovakia and Poland, we must take decisive action [against the rightists] to ensure that workers accurately understand the party's line'. Prime Minister András Hegedüs concurred, adding that 'the events in Poland have grave implications for the whole international workers' movement. Can we imagine how serious it would be if events like those in Poland were to occur in the Soviet Union or in the other people's democracies? It would do irreparable damage to human progress and the cause of socialism.' The Central Leadership endorsed Rákosi's proposal to express its 'resolute condemnation' of the Petőfi Circle for conspiring with a 'malignant anti-party movement' to 'spread anti-party views, mislead public opinion, particularly younger people, and recruit followers among wavering elements' of the working class. 'The Poznań provocation', the Central Leadership declared, 'is a warning to every Hungarian worker and every honest patriot that they must firmly oppose attempts at trouble-making and… unite under the leadership of the [Communist] party and on the side of the government'.

The outbreak of unrest among Hungarian steel workers on 12 July seemed to bear out Rákosi's warnings about the prospect of a 'Hungarian Poznań'. But the turmoil also proved to be his undoing. By emphasising the dangers of the Poznań crisis, he hoped to ensure that Soviet leaders would support his continued tenure as MDP First Secretary. Rákosi was well aware that Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and other top officials in Moscow were 'alarmed about the fate of Hungary' (as well as Poland) in the wake of the Poznań uprising. Indeed, Mikoyan echoed Rákosi's

own sentiments in mid-July when he sent an urgent memorandum to the CPSU Presidium characterising the 'discussions of the Petőfi Circle [on 27 June] as an ideological Poznań without the gunshots'. In that same memorandum, Mikoyan emphasised that 'after the lessons of Poznań, we [in Moscow] would not want something similar to happen in Hungary'. Nonetheless, this did not mean that Soviet leaders viewed Rákosi as a guarantor of stability in Hungary. On the contrary, they concluded that as long as Rákosi remained in power, a 'Hungarian version of Poznań' could be a distinct possibility. Hence, on 13 July, the day after the steel workers in Budapest went on strike, Mikoyan travelled to Hungary and bluntly told Rákosi that he should step down. Rákosi had no choice but to comply with this unwelcome 'advice' and formally resigned five days later.

Ernő Gerő, a senior MDP official who had long been allied with Rákosi and held similar views, was designated by Mikoyan to become the new MDP first secretary. The MDP Central Leadership endorsed Gerő's appointment on 18 July. Upon taking office, Gerő assured the MDP Central Leadership (and officials in Moscow) that there would be 'no second Poznań' in Hungary. Echoing Soviet views, he stressed the role of sinister external forces that were 'trying to disrupt the unity of the socialist camp' both in Poznań and elsewhere:

> *American imperialism and other imperialist circles are seeking to exploit the current situation – a situation in which the elimination of Stalin's cult of personality and the development of socialist proletarian democracy have enabled elements that flourished under the old, anti-popular regimes to begin surfacing again in the people's democracies. The imperialists are attempting to mobilise these elements on behalf of their own reactionary interests by exploiting the opportunities afforded by democracy. The imperialists are doing everything in their power to stir up trouble in the people's democracies by relying on these internal reactionary elements and are also doing everything possible to undermine relations between the USSR and the people's democracies and to debilitate the socialist camp.*

Gerő warned his colleagues that 'the imperialist enemy is still openly seeking to foment 'Hungarian Poznań's.' He said: 'we were lucky that no Poznańs occurred in Hungary' under Rákosi, and emphasised that 'it would be a grave mistake now to overlook the lessons of the Poznań provocation', particularly with regard to the Petőfi Circle and others in Hungary who were allegedly hoping to 'incite the sort of bloodshed we saw in Poznań'. Gerő claimed that although the Petőfi Circle started out as a 'worthwhile' entity that 'included many honest people', it had been commandeered by 'hostile forces' intent on 'creating an alternative centre of political power that could dislodge the country's only legitimate political authority, the MDP Central Leadership'. It was 'not by accident', Gerő argued, that 'the imperialists have been proudly describing the Petőfi Circle discussions [of 27 June] as a "miniature Poznań."'

Official reactions in Czechoslovakia to the Poznań uprising were similar. On 30 June, the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) ordered all major Czechoslovak newspapers to publish a lead article the next day calling for an 'increase in revolutionary vigilance' and an 'intensified struggle against enemies of the people's democratic order, spies, and saboteurs' – the same

purported elements of society who had been targeted by the country's State Security (StB) apparatus during the Stalinist repressions. The article affirmed that 'enemies are operating inside the country' and that 'one of the recent signs of their activity was the uproar during the "Majáles" student celebrations,' which 'hostile agents wanted to exploit to turn the students against the party and the government'. The editorial warned that the violence in Poznań was a further manifestation of this 'slanderous campaign by internal and foreign reactionaries who are spreading nonsensical and inflammatory fabrications in order to sow confusion among the people . . . and undermine the successes we have achieved in the building of socialism'. KSČ officials repeated these same basic points in all their public commentaries about the Poznań crisis.

Yet even as Czechoslovak leaders sought to discredit and condemn the Poznań rebellion, they knew they faced a difficult task. Reports from the StB as well as regional and local party organisations revealed a 'major surge of activity by various hostile elements in Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the Poznań events'. Especially worrisome for the KSČ was a StB memorandum in early July indicating that a 'significant percentage' of workers in the Czech lands 'wholeheartedly welcome the provocations carried out by imperialist agents in Poznań'. This finding was corroborated by local party officials, who informed the KSČ Presidium that 'unsavoury sentiments have emerged' in almost every region of the country. In a typical case, the party organisation in Liberec reported that workers at the city's largest manufacturing plant, the Czechoslovak State Aircraft Factory, regarded the Poznań uprising as a 'display of the true opinion of ordinary people, who otherwise are unable to express their views openly'. Workers at the factory were convinced that 'if something similar were to happen in Czechoslovakia, a large proportion of our people would join in. We must ensure that what occurred in Poland will be replicated here'.

Czechoslovak leaders were further unnerved when they learned that 'the events in Poznań have had wide repercussions among ethnic Poles who live in the Ostrava region' of Czechoslovakia, along the border with Poland. In early July, the StB claimed to have found 'leaflets that have been circulated among the ethnic Polish community by the "Centre for Internal Resistance,"' which 'is seeking to provoke a more effective uprising [than in Poznań] and to carry it out in a number of different cities so that it will have a greater chance of success'. These leaflets reportedly 'called on ethnic Poles to form national groups and "wait for a signal to rise up"' against the Czechoslovak regime. Subsequently, the StB informed the KSČ Presidium that 'on 4 July more than 700 packages with printed leaflets were seized from mail boxes in Prague' just in time to prevent them from being shipped to 'hostile agents' in Ostrava.

Elsewhere in the Czech lands, party officials alleged that 'reactionary elements', especially 'among railway workers', were 'seeking to emulate the events in Poznań by inciting workers at various enterprises to stage protests demanding higher wages'. The government's anxiety about this matter was particularly acute because a long-planned increase in work norms had taken effect in Czechoslovakia on 30 June, at the very time of the Poznań uprising. The increase immediately spurred 120 workers at a factory in Středokluky on the outskirts of Prague to go on strike and demand that the measure be rescinded. Workers

at other factories in the region staged slowdowns and the employees of one enterprise sent a ten-man delegation to the Ministry of Heavy Machine-Building in Prague to push for the revocation of higher norms. In Plzeň, party officials learned that workers at transport factories were 'discussing whether it is "a good time to show our leaders" the same thing' that the Poznań workers did. The supervisors of these factories hurriedly granted pay increases to forestall a threatened strike.

As reports about labour discontent continued to stream in, Czechoslovak leaders feared that the growing unrest would soon provoke 'our own version of Poznań'. They ordered lower-level officials to 'temporarily refrain from setting higher work norms at enterprises where insufficient political preparations have been made'. They also ordered reductions in prices for basic consumer goods in the most volatile parts of the country and approved pay increases for workers at key plants in Plzeň, Prague and other cities. At the same time, the KSČ Presidium ordered the StB to bolster the 'vigilance and combat readiness' of its forces, enabling them to quash any attempts by 'bourgeois agents to create a parallel with the Poznań events'. In addition, Czechoslovak leaders launched a new press campaign denouncing the 'malicious provocations in Poznań' and demanding that 'all the ringleaders be held fully accountable'.

Reverberations from the Poznań uprising were felt not only in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but also in China. A delegation of senior Chinese officials happened to be in Poznań in late June 1956 to take part in the city's international trade fair and sign a 41-million ruble trade deal with the Polish government. The Chinese delegation witnessed the revolt first-hand and sent vivid reports to Beijing describing the scale and intensity of the violence. The dispatches and subsequent briefings came as a jolt to the Chinese communist authorities and sparked a 'heated discussion among broad segments of Chinese society about the reasons' for the rebellion. The Soviet ambassador in Beijing, Pavel Yudin, reported that, in the wake of the Poznań crisis, Chinese 'blue-collar workers, office employees, and intellectuals' were 'much more inclined to voice strong feelings of dissatisfaction with the slow growth of income and living standards, the scarcity of goods on sale in stores, and persistent shortages of housing'. Chinese leaders later acknowledged that dozens of strikes and protests occurred in China in the summer and fall of 1956. Tens of thousands of workers, including some who explicitly invoked the Poznań uprising, took part in these disturbances. The Chinese government forcibly quelled many of the incidents.

Protests by Chinese workers and intellectuals in 1956 were less dramatic than the bloodshed in Poznań, but bold displays of public defiance were a remarkable development in China's rigidly controlled political system. Spontaneous political discussions and labour unrest had been essentially non-existent in China since the communist takeover in 1949. Yet, suddenly, as a result of the Poznań rebellion, Chinese workers, students, and intellectuals were willing to express 'the most diverse and often muddled views' about the 'severe problems' within their own society. When the Chinese Communist leader, Mao Zedong, addressed a conference of senior party officials in January 1957, he emphasised the 'insidious effect' of the Poznań uprising on the socio-political situation in China:

Both inside and outside the [Chinese] Communist Party, certain people heaped praise on the Polish events. Every time they opened their mouths they spoke enthusiastically about Poznań . . . in the process they exposed their true colours for everyone to see. These ants emerged from their holes and the turtles and other scum of the earth came out of their hiding places [and] were lured into the open.

Spill-over from the Poznań revolt into China, as well as into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, underscored the distinctive political role of the Polish labour movement. In June 1956, as in several future crises, actions of Polish workers generated turmoil that ultimately threatened the stability of the entire Soviet bloc.

In Poland itself, the June 1956 uprising also had far-reaching consequences. Polish leaders' awareness of the 'inexcusable mistakes' that helped provoke the Poznań crisis caused them to worry that another crisis might erupt unless workers' grievances were quickly redressed, which would again require the use of large-scale repression. Top-secret reports and memoranda compiled for the PZPR Politburo in the summer of 1956 by Polish security forces and the central party apparatus revealed that popular sentiment toward the regime had become much more negative as a result of the crackdown. Students and intellectuals began advocating fundamental changes to Poland's political and economic system. The wave of discontent that preceded the Poznań uprising took on a more rebellious and overtly political cast. In a conversation with Soviet officials on 11 July, the head of the PZPR propaganda and agitation department, Andrzej Werblan, argued that mass labour unrest might flare up again:

Meetings held at state enterprises all over Poland to discuss the Poznań events indicate that although workers condemn the events there for having turned violent, they believe that the Poznań workers were justified in putting forth the demands they did. We face the real threat that strikes and unrest will break out again and should not try to pretend otherwise.

Werblan was especially concerned about the potential for violent turmoil in Łódź and Białystok, which had experienced prolonged labour protests in 1947 and 1951: 'Last month it was the workers in Poznań who rose up, but their living conditions are actually better than those facing workers in Łódź and Białystok.' The risk of new upheavals was also stressed by Polish state security official, who warned that the political situation in Poland remained 'highly volatile' and that a 'repetition of the Poznań events' was a distinct possibility.

The potential for renewed unrest was magnified by public resentment of heavy-handed Soviet policies. Reports from the UB and senior party officials indicated that anti-Soviet sentiments, which had proven so explosive before and during the Poznań uprising, were stronger than ever. Although the Poznań revolt was quelled without direct Soviet military intervention, the prominent role of Soviet generals in commanding the operation underscored the extent of Soviet control over the Polish armed forces. Rumours circulated in Poland that 'Soviet troops wearing Polish uniforms took part in suppression of the Poznań rebellion' and that 'disguised Soviet soldiers were the first to open fire' on demonstrators at the UB building and elsewhere. Other rumours spread that Soviet and Polish forces had 'killed more than 1,000 people in Poznań'. The Polish government tried to dispel these rumours, but with little success.

Suspicions of the USSR also continued to surface in the Polish press, much to Moscow's irritation.

The Polish authorities initially downplayed the extent of public antipathy toward the USSR, but in private conversations with Soviet officials in mid-August finally acknowledged that 'powerful currents of anti-Soviet hostility' were gaining strength in Poland, and not diminishing. One high-ranking PZPR official told Soviet diplomats that 'never in People's Poland have I heard as many sarcastic anti-Soviet remarks and jokes as I am hearing now'. Another Polish official warned Moscow that 'the Poznań events have done great political damage not only to Poland and the USSR, but to the whole socialist camp by impeding the establishment of contacts between the [East European Communist] parties' and the CPSU. Local party organisations in Poland claimed that workers at many factories believed the best way to 'display solidarity with the provocateurs in Poznań' was by promoting 'anti-Soviet slogans and expressions of anti-Soviet sentiments'. The surge of animosity toward the USSR in the wake of the Poznań uprising was one of the main factors that precipitated a new Soviet-Polish crisis in October.

The Soviet-Polish confrontation itself and the revolution that broke out in Hungary will be examined in subsequent presentations at our European Remembrance Symposium. My aim here has been to show how the crucial decision to launch an official de-Stalinisation campaign in the Soviet Union in February 1956 led to turmoil through the entire Soviet bloc.

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The Revolution and War of Independence of 1956 and its Consequences

LÁSZLÓ BORHI

The revolution and war of independence of 1956 was Hungary's finest hour. Only slightly over a decade after the country emerged from the terrible devastation inflicted by the war that Hungary waged on the side of the Axis until the bitter end, the Hungarian nation challenged the most powerful military machine on the globe to re-establish independence and freedom. The events of 1956 were inspired by the memory of the anti-Habsburg revolution of 1848 and served as an inspiration for the peaceful revolution in 1989.

This presentation will be divided into three parts. First, we will briefly review the establishment of Soviet-type regimes and the conditions, domestic and international, in which 1956 took place. Second, we will discuss the impact of 1956 on international politics, as well as the Cold War conflict between the Soviet bloc and the West. Finally, we will deal with the main ways in which 1956 transformed the Hungarian domestic scene and how that internal transformation spilled over into a transformative effect on international politics.

In 1944–45, as a result of the defeat of Germany by the Red Army and the geopolitical rearrangement hammered out by the Allies, Central and Eastern Europe came under the imperial domination of the USSR. The Soviet Union's imperial expansion entailed the imposition of Stalinist political systems with the active participation of local elements who identified with the Kremlin's goals, nowhere more so than in Czechoslovakia. Moscow's empire by coercion imposed ideological and political uniformity on a historically, culturally and politically very diverse region. Eastern Europe became Soviet space; client states offered military and economic services to the imperial centre. Not all Stalinist regimes were equally repressive. Regionally, Hungary stood out most in this respect, while Poland may have been the least repressive of them all. The amount of assets

that the Soviet Union extracted from its new client states was staggering and may have equalled or exceeded that which the United States channelled into Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. The economies of the new Soviet client states were militarized, leading to severe shortages and a plummeting of living standards. This, coupled with the rapid pace of Bolshevization, caused unrest in the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria shortly after Stalin's death in March 1953. Unrest, particularly in the German Democratic Republic, caused anxiety in Moscow. Reforms were implemented around the Soviet bloc at the order of the new Kremlin rulers, but in Hungary, for instance, many of these reforms were rescinded at the instigation of party leader Mátyás Rákosi. Despite attempts to make the communist system palatable to the masses, the Soviet Union's control of the region remained tenuous. The nature of Soviet domination, in sum, was imperial and ideological. Both of these aspects of Moscow's rule came under attack in 1956.

By the time of the Hungarian revolution, the division of Europe was congealed. The coup in Czechoslovakia led to the establishment of a western security organisation for the first time in history. In 1955, the Soviet Union established a formal alliance of its own, in part to counter West Germany's membership in NATO, and also to enable continued stationing of troops in Hungary and Romania legally. Following Beria's demise, the 'collective' Soviet leadership discredited his foreign policy initiatives and the prospect of German unification evaporated. By then, the war in Korea launched a nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States that would not wind down until the time of Gorbachev and Reagan. West Europeans were comfortable with the status quo in Europe so long as the United States was willing to guarantee and pay for their security. On the other hand, the American approach was changing in this regard. The Grand Alliance was dead by 1946 at the latest. Until the communist takeover in Prague, the Truman administration, albeit grudgingly, accepted the division of the continent as the basis for cooperation with Stalin. The Czechoslovak coup changed this calculus, as the Truman administration began to feel the extension of Soviet power to the heart of Europe as a security threat. The Stalin-Tito schism in 1948 appeared to provide a recipe for splitting the Soviet bloc, while more aggressive projects envisioned a rollback of the Soviet Union. Subverting the Soviet bloc became official albeit clandestine American policy. In 1952, the Eisenhower administration campaigned under the policy of liberation. There is a misunderstanding regarding this point. In 1953, the uprising in East Germany failed to trigger American involvement. This and a war-game, Operation Solarium, seemed to take liberation off the agenda and some historians argue that the policy was abandoned altogether. However, documents reveal that, although direct intervention was ruled out as a viable option, other forms of subversion were not excluded. Liberation and rollback remained the goal of the US administration's policy through 1956. In fact, it was the failure of Hungarian self-liberation in 1956 that dealt the liberation policy a final blow.

The Soviet response to the Hungarian uprising of 1956 laid bare American impotence and vindicated the pragmatism of West Europeans. Moscow's inferior nuclear arsenal deterred the far larger American one. Decision-makers in Moscow understood that their counterparts in the US were afraid of them. No one wanted

to risk a nuclear war in the middle of Europe and the Soviets were aware of this. Several lessons emerged from the experience of 1956. First, it was exposed as reckless to incite people behind the Iron Curtain to rise against their foreign and domestic masters if there was no prospect of helping them. The sight of Soviet panzers rolling into the streets of Budapest would haunt presidents through George H. W. Bush. As a consequence, Radio Free Europe, America's news station broadcasting to East Central Europe, was barred from encouraging the Czechoslovaks to fight the Soviets during the Prague Spring in 1968. There was another lesson, which, on the other hand, went unheeded. This had to do with nuclear sufficiency, namely, that one did not need to be on par with the adversary for the nuclear deterrent to work.

Communist movements in Western Europe lost some of their popularity and Moscow was debunked as an imperial power in the Third World.

The Soviets did pay a political price for their military crackdown. Communist movements in Western Europe lost some of their popularity and Moscow was debunked as an imperial power in the Third World. On the other hand, the European scene proved to be remarkably stable. First and foremost, it became readily apparent that Eastern Europe was a captive of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. No external power could challenge Soviet control without risking war, as the Soviets would go to any lengths to keep their zone. Although leaders in Vienna were concerned with a spill-over of the crisis into Austria, it was contained in Hungary. As it turned out, neutrality, which was held out as a ray of hope in the wake of the Austrian Treaty, was not a realistic goal. Despite fears to the contrary, the conflict also did not spread into other bloc states. Even though shockwaves from Budapest were felt in other localities behind the Iron Curtain, communist regimes turned out to be remarkably resilient. Poland as well, where discontent began in 1956, was stabilised. All of this suggested that the post-war system may have become durable and that the status quo, which rested on Soviet hegemony in the eastern part of the continent, would be lasting. In the next decade or so, US strategy toward the Soviet bloc underwent a profound transformation. According to internal government memoranda, by the mid to late 1960s stability was no longer considered incompatible with Soviet control. In fact, some thought that the rollback of Soviet power could even lead to destabilisation. The goal was no longer continental unification, thus, Washington's strategy toward the Soviet bloc also changed accordingly. Henceforth, the US supported the consolidation of communist regimes rather than seeking to destabilise them. Communist states were urged to be more autonomous. Thus, Romania's independent line was supported, but not to the extent that it would lead to Soviet intervention. In fits and starts, détente replaced confrontation and, even when détente failed, Washington's basic position on Eastern Europe did not change. Paradoxically, the revolution of 1956 strengthened the Soviet

Union's bid for international recognition of 'post war realities' in Europe. This process culminated in the Helsinki agreement in 1975.

The revolution launched a shift in the Soviet Union's relationship with client states, which mellowed from domination to hegemony. Stalinist methods had proven counter-productive. One result of this was a multilateralisation of the Warsaw Pact. More importantly, the more relaxed Soviet approach led to the return of more regional diversity. While Romania exploited the emerging Sino-Soviet and Soviet-Albanian rift to extract greater latitude in foreign policy and to assert its national interest, Hungary used the opportunity for internal liberalisation and the use of external resources for economic modernisation. Although there was concern within the ranks of the party leadership in Budapest that opening the country to foreign influence could undermine the political system, there was no other option. In order to avoid the recurrence of massive unrest and the possibility of another Soviet intervention, the economy needed to aid politics by elevating the standard of living. This, it was believed, would lead to popular approval or at least tacit acceptance of the regime. The intended outcome of opening up to the West was a consolidation of the political system. The fact that this decision ended up undermining it is another issue.

Party leader János Kádár's decision to externally finance modernisation coincided with a paradigm shift in the US away from isolation to bridge-building, together with West German efforts to open up the Soviet bloc. By the 1980s, Hungary was utterly dependent on the Western world financially and was hovering on the brink of financial bankruptcy. Even as the party leadership struggled to stay afloat financially, 1956 hovered above it like a sword of Damocles. The economic basis for Kádár's social contract was rapidly eroding, therefore, any economic policy that would solve the problem at the expense of reducing the standard of living was eschewed. This, in turn, led to the deterioration of external finances to an almost critical level by the summer of 1989. A small illustration of how the memory of 1956 contributed to the regime's downfall was passport liberalisation. In an attempt to placate the people in the midst of a palpable decline of economic conditions, passport and travel regulations were relaxed. In 1989, as much as USD 1 billion was expended abroad to purchase consumer goods, which, in turn, caused serious harm to the country's external balance. Hence, an effort to stabilise the political system helped undermine it.

Evocation of 1956 drove the final nail into the coffin of the one-party system in other ways. Imre Pozsgay's announcement regarding the nature of 1956 delegitimised not only the political system, but also the Soviet Union's role as the regional hegemon. This, coupled with Imre Nagy's funeral, rocked the political foundations of a system that had already lost its economic footing. Poland was the first country to eject the communist system and thereby contributed to the rapid disintegration of the Soviet bloc, all the more so as Gorbachev made it clear that Soviet arms would no longer salvage it. Hungary's input into the transformation of the post-war European system was equally significant: the opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border to East German refugees undermined the GDR and put German reunification back on the international agenda.

The events of 1989 were not bound to happen. They stemmed from an 'anti-Yalta' agreement among the superpowers. They were not the desire of

Gorbachev nor any Western powers, all of which envisioned a longer period of democratic transformation and continued Soviet involvement in East Central Europe. Domestic changes in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe generated a transformation of the international regime. The revolution and war of independence in 1956 did not directly bring about failure of the communist system or the demise of bipolar Europe. The transformations it helped launch in Hungary and in the Soviet relationship with client states, however, contributed to a fatal weakening of the communist system in Hungary and indirectly elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. Dealing with 1956 in 1989 was a part of the political erosion process that led to multi-party democracy and the release of the Germans. Indirectly, 1956 facilitated an end to communism in Europe and contributed to a reunification of the continent.

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Consequences of 1956: Short-term, Long-term, Remembrance

JÁNOS M. RAINER

My speech features two main sections followed by a short appendix. In the first part, I will discuss the direct short-term consequences of the 1956 revolution, such as emigration and campaigns waged in Hungary and Eastern Europe to exact retribution for revolutionary activities. The second section will examine the role of 1956 within the internal history of a Soviet-type regime, namely what János Kornai called 'the shift' from the classical [type of] regime. I will address several issues in the appendix concerning the remembrance of 1956.

1.

A. From the end of November to the start of December 1956, the wave of emigration that ensued in the aftermath of the Hungarian revolution reached its peak. Nearly 200,000 individuals left Hungary for the West, most of whom were not only young, but also well-trained. This event therefore was the largest movement of people on the continent since the mass exodus that swept Europe following the Second World War. Not counting the special case of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), this was also the largest mass of people to pass through the Iron Curtain. After spending a brief (or sometimes lengthy) amount of time at camps in Yugoslavia or Austria, most Hungarian refugees settled in North America or Western Europe. Great attention was paid to the plight of Hungarian refugees, who were greeted with a great willingness to support their stay in the West. Even nations whose policies on immigration had previously been far less welcoming in nature – such as Canada or Switzerland – showed few reservations in opening their doors. The proportion of those who later returned to Hungary was actually less than 10%.

At the same time, these Hungarian refugees had not only witnessed events surrounding the revolution, but also possessed an enormous amount of information

about daily life in a Soviet-type regime, thus, experiences that were gained first-hand. This opportunity was seized by numerous research centres and secret services throughout the West. Large-scale research projects appeared as a result, including the best known one, the Columbia University Research Project on Hungary (CURPH) directed by Paul Lazarsfeld. To this day, the role played by CURPH has yet to be examined in detail. Along with other institutions, Rutgers University was similarly involved in this effort.

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Most Hungarians at the time had very little information about the West; the little they did know was a distorted image pieced together from scattered fragments. After this massive wave of emigration, Hungary's population could no longer be sealed off from the outer world: an untold number of relatives, friends and acquaintances suddenly received regular access to facts about daily events in that 'other world'. From the start of the 1960s, Hungary's unique travel policies made it possible for some to go abroad. Information sent home generally spoke of success, while their own experiences were positive. Quite a few factors contributed to this circumstance, including the manner in which the West assuaged its guilt by extending an unusually high level of aid, or the refugees' own sociological and psychological make-up. One thing is certain: from this time on, Hungary's socialist regime found it much harder to boast that it surpassed its opponents in all respects.

B. The period of reprisals in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution represented the last Stalinist type of campaign of political retribution in Eastern Europe. In contrast to political purges conducted in Moscow during the 1930s (later followed by others from 1948 to 1952 in Eastern Europe), show trials after 1956 were firmly conducted behind closed doors. The trial of Imre Nagy was no exception to this way of dealing with events. Originally intended as a public spectacle, it also ultimately remained closed. This is precisely why reprisals in Hungary bear a *closer* resemblance to secret operations led against Poland's Home Army or Ukraine's White partisans, etc. From the end of 1956 to 1959, at least 35,000 people were investigated by the police or prosecutor's office for suspected participation in political 'acts of crime'. Some 26,000 were sent to court, while the number of those actually sentenced was roughly 22,000. Most were convicted of taking part in either the revolution or the brief period of resistance that followed. A smaller percentage was sentenced for attempting to cross the border illegally. Approximately 13,000 individuals were placed in newly opened internment camps such as those in Tököl or Kistarcsa. In total, this oppression most certainly affected more than 100,000 people, a number that would be far higher if family members were also included. Between December

1956 and the summer of 1961, 230 people were executed for their role in the revolution.

In contrast to the Rákosi regime's undifferentiated approach to meting out terror, repercussions from 1956 were visited upon fairly exact targets. Three main categories can be defined within this group. The first consisted of young people between the ages of 18 and 25, who mainly lacked training and were for the most part unskilled factory workers existing on the social periphery, industrial apprentices, or soldiers from the general ranks. These individuals either actively fought in armed conflicts during the revolution or were connected to military units that rebelled. While this group constitutes a smaller numerical percentage of court convictions, it was by far the greatest number of individuals to face summary courts or a people's tribune. This category also suffered the most executions in addition to being given the harshest prison sentences. It must not be forgotten that most revolutionaries left Hungary. Retribution was therefore dealt out to those who remained behind, either because they possessed the greatest resolve or were the most naive.

After this massive wave of emigration, Hungary's population could no longer be sealed off from the outer world: an untold number of relatives, friends and acquaintances suddenly received regular access to facts about daily events in that 'other world'.

The second largest category consisted of those serving on factory worker or local revolutionary committees. Most of these individuals were 28–35 years old and held jobs as factory workers, shift bosses in charge of production, or farmers. A small number were white-collar workers (such as primary or secondary school teachers) and held respected positions within their own immediate community. They formed the revolution's self-organising local elite and were usually tried at regular courts, where they also received lighter sentences. It was for good reason that this group was viewed as having the moral and human reserves necessary to act as leaders and activists of any future democratic movement.

The third smaller 'targeted group' was comprised of intellectuals who belonged to opposition parties before 1956. These people thoroughly identified with the revolution's democratic and national objectives and also took part in resistance after the Soviet Army's occupation of Budapest on 4 November. While the mechanisms of oppression made great efforts to root out and punish anyone connected to the first group, a certain kind of 'selection' was employed when handling those in the other two categories; this was especially true in the case of the third group. This process was generally not based on any sort of principle: according to the regime's interpretation, the 1956 revolution was no more than a conspiratorial plot to overthrow the government, the effort of a small,

anti-communist, reactionary group attempting to undermine the regime. In the course of their secret proceedings and closed hearings, examiners and courts usually based accusations on actual events, thereby regarding the defendants' actions as criminal without establishing intent or taking any other circumstances into consideration. There were cases, however, when false elements were added to evidence, just as each aspect of other court proceedings was geared toward proving and supporting the political interpretation of 1956 as a conscious organised attempt at counter-revolution. During the revolution, the trial of Hungary's Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, and his associates is an example of the latter.

The wave of reprisals that followed the defeat of the 1956 revolution extended beyond Hungary's borders, thus placing this period into the realm of international history. In Soviet bloc countries, any expression of solidarity was thoroughly repressed. Legal proceedings were initiated against approximately 100,000 people in the GDR as well as in the Sub-Carpathian area of the Soviet Union. In Czechoslovakia, this number rose to nearly 7,000, while almost 10,000 people were subjected to criminal justice in Romania, eventually resulting in dozens of executions. Of those incarcerated, only 10 to 15% were actually Hungarian. Leaders and societies (or at least their most active and well-informed members) within Soviet-type systems were fully aware of the fact that 1956 was a collective event. It can honestly be stated that the Hungarian revolution represented one of the few historical events in modern memory that did not divide nations in this region. All individuals facing oppression as a result of 1956 were victims of the Hungarian revolution, whether they suffered in Timișoara, Moscow, East Berlin, a Sub-Carpathian village, or Budapest – just as those who battled Soviet tanks on the streets of Budapest in 1956 fought not only to free Hungary, but to liberate the entire region from Soviet control.

2.

A. As far as its *political influences* are concerned, the Hungarian revolution represented a new challenge to the Soviet Union's political leaders – one that was not to be merely short-term in its effects. This much can be inferred from insights voiced after the revolution was crushed. No one ever openly rescinded the principles declared on 30 October 1956: while the regime's system of institutions and basic principles was imposed by Soviet control, their practice changed. Moscow was at least as eager to avoid a repeat of the 1956 Hungarian crisis as were János Kádár and his political associates. However, when the system found itself facing a new crisis, it was handled according to the paradigm established in response to the 1956 Hungarian revolution: 'scripts' employed in 1968, 1979 and 1981 all followed the analogous route of first applying pressure, then resorting to military intervention.

After 1956, military force no longer represented the primary means of maintaining Moscow's imperial sphere secure. The system instead sought leaders who were loyal, yet also familiar with and capable of understanding local concerns; leaders could even represent these interests to a certain extent. János Kádár fulfilled these expectations perfectly and can even be viewed as the archetype of exactly the sort of partner desired by the Soviet Union's post-Stalin leadership. He combined utter loyalty, a willingness to take the initiative, total servility of an

underling and a sense of personal autonomy in a mixture so successful that it is best described as 'a model state of Khrushchevism', a phrase coined by Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller. Following the period of direct pacification, institutions most clearly connected to Soviet influence and control were dispersed in Hungary. With the exception of state security and military leadership, advisors were recalled from every position and a 'standard' agreement between nations was reached regarding the presence of Soviet occupying forces. Soviet influence no longer had genuinely offensive aims in the case of Hungary: intent instead focused on preserving an already existing position.

In 1956, freedom throughout the entire region of Eastern Europe was not attained. The Hungarian revolution's defeat made it patently obvious that the status quo established in 1945 was entrenched with every appearance of permanence not only militarily, but also in a constitutional and political sense. While 1956 somewhat heightened tensions between the world's superpowers, the Suez crisis also proved that the United States and the Soviet Union could reach agreement in world politics. The orientation of regions released from the yoke of colonialism naturally raised the stakes once again by creating a new Cold War arena. Events in 1956 did not halt this softening of positions. On the contrary, it understandably provided new momentum: Soviet leaders were relieved after being given proof that the United States would not question their authority over regions seized during the Second World War.

B. The popular movements that arose in Hungary and Eastern Europe in 1956 influenced the internal realm of the Soviet Union as well. This change was not initiated in 1956, but partially began at the end of the Second World War and would only come to the fore at the time of Stalin's death. The technique of applying brute force to alter the social framework was supplanted. The role of ideology and the intensity of enforced social movements lessened. Instead of rapid and quixotic changes that were its trademark characteristics, the system stabilised while its bureaucracy entered a phase of normalisation. Utopian goals (such as building socialism, or even communism) were replaced by the concrete task of *modernisation*. Once it took control, the political elite took steps to tighten its grasp. Events in 1956 forced this leadership to recognise that raising the level of living standards and consumption within Soviet systems would also forestall future internal conflicts.

In the era before the Second World War, the Soviet Union's prestige was high throughout the entire world and attracted numerous supporters from left-wing intellectual circles in Western Europe and North America. After 1945, liberation as well as the extreme human and financial sacrifices of the Soviets during the war only increased this attraction. However, 1956 did much damage to this image. Liberal, conservative, and even socialist critics could rightfully point out that the Soviet Union totally ignored the will of the Hungarian people and instead acted as an imperialist aggressor. In the West, support of communist movements decreased while an internal debate erupted among communist or other leftist intellectuals: can the underlying concepts of Marxist socialism be reconciled with Soviet practices? The lessons reaped by the Hungarian revolution, however, only marked the first important step to be taken down this path. In 1968, the reform

programme initiated by Czechoslovakia's communists as well as left-wing student movements in Western Europe and the United States aptly demonstrated that any criticism of the overly bureaucratic and imperialist Soviet Union could be quite suitably reconciled with existing visions of Marxism. Certain aspects of Hungary's 1956 revolution, for example, workers' committees, the conduct of reform communist or socialist intellectuals, or even the role played by the communist reformer Imre Nagy, could be interpreted in the light of these hopes.

While 1956 somewhat heightened tensions between the world's superpowers, the Suez crisis also proved that the United States and the Soviet Union could reach agreement in world politics.

In his famous speech of 27 October 1956, the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, spoke of a united and free Europe which would – at some distant future time – bridge the gulf between America's current allies in the West and other nations not even considered as potential allies. The 1956 revolution's defeat obscured this desired interpretation of Europe: integration of its western half accelerated, while the eastern half remained within the Soviet zone outside of Europe. A good 15 years were to pass before leaders on both sides, among others, János Kádár, the leader responsible for crushing the 1956 revolution, began to mention the natural and positive affinity existing between Europe's two halves. Genuine change, however, would only occur after 1989. The Hungarian revolution did not become an example of how to defeat the Soviets; it also did not contribute to destroying the old or to building a new system. This was demonstrated first by 1968, then by the Polish revolution from 1980 to 1981. The history of 1989 also underscores this claim. No other comparable event occurred: the example of Hungary's 1956 revolution served more as a deterrent than a positive model.

After 1956, Hungary was the last place where things could go back to 'the way they had been'. The hidden might of a subjugated society, the experience of clashing openly against this might, as well as other frightening memories of 1956 were all thoughts that never left decision makers. Society's active members, on the other hand, were left with the bitterness of defeat and demands dictated by 'reality'. Added to this were the constant feelings of (self-)justification expressed by outsiders and observers alike who had 'known all along' that nothing would come of it.... Kádárism, the political style employed to wield power, mould thought patterns and define social interaction and opinions was heavily influenced by 1956. In Hungary's history, the 1956 revolution was not considered a success, but (if for anything at all) was held as the type of influence that defines the end of an era. While the post-1956 period is a separate history, the pivotal point of 1956 still functions as the coordinates for its micro-world.

c. According to the greatest master of German conceptual history, Reinhart Kosseleck, a *historical event* denotes a series (sequence) of elemental events regarded as significant by contemporaries (as well as by future narrators), while additionally eliciting a definitive and lasting reconfiguration of structures. Recognition of this phenomenon naturally takes a long time: it can never be certain that posterity will agree with contemporary opinion. After 1989, the 1956 Hungarian revolution's historical significance was generally seen by historians writing in the post-communist world of 1995 as an event that shook the Soviet empire, rendered Soviet socialism's political and philosophical dogma invalid and provided a model for revolutionary social movements that put an end to totalitarianism. This is a typically teleological interpretation: in other words, the road traversed from 1989 to 1991 leads directly back to 1956. The Hungarian revolution is therefore no more than the opening overture to this lengthy structural shift.

After 1989, the 1956 Hungarian revolution's historical significance was generally seen by historians writing in the post-communist world of 1995 as an event that shook the Soviet empire, rendered Soviet socialism's political and philosophical dogma invalid and provided a model for revolutionary social movements that put an end to totalitarianism.

According to others – myself included – 1956 *did not bring about fundamental changes* to the *structures* of a Soviet-type regime. Theories surrounding the regime's post-totalitarian or authoritarian period claim that totalitarian institutions remained unchanged: the practice and style in which they were utilised was different. The enormous changes that occurred in 1989 cannot be simply *derived* from events that took place in the mid-1950s. On the other hand, even if 1956 did not *permanently* alter these structures, it still changed how they were *experienced*. The mental framework, namely the workings of dictatorship as a psychological condition, changed. This facet is most apparent in individual and communal strategies adopted toward daily life. The best example of this is evinced by the extent to which society judges its current system as lasting or temporary. *Herein* lies the change wrought on Hungary by 1956: the revolution's defeat forced Hungarians to realise that they must coexist with some type or variation of a Soviet-style system and the Soviet empire. From this point on, Hungary viewed the world differently–more *realistically*. Therefore, 1956 put an end to all expectations of a miracle, all hopes based on the idea that the democratic West would rush to liberate the nation – or at least offer effective help – if the Hungarians simply rose to fight for freedom. To experience 1956

was to experience a paradox: while the revolution indicated that change was *possible*, it also proved that change in Hungary was *still impossible* in the end when the nation was left to its own resources, whether abandoned by or in defiance of the world's superpowers.

D. 'Standing at the point of origin for every great democracy is revolution, a revolution that may have caused the heads of kings to roll', wrote István Bibó in 1945. 'This revolution is not bound to any period of social or economic development: transitions in social or economic progress can occur without widespread political upheaval, but the revolution of human dignity […] must at some point occur for democracy to emerge' *(Hung. Minden nagy demokrácia kiindulópontjánál forradalom áll, forradalom, amelynek során esetleg királyok fejei hulltak le […]. Ez a forradalom nincs kötve társadalmi és gazdasági fejlődési időszakhoz: a társadalmi* és *gazdasági fejlődési átmenetek megtörténhetnek nagyobb politikai megrázkódtatások nélkül is, de az emberi méltóság egyetlen forradalmának […] valamikor le kell zajlania ahhoz, hogy demokráciáról beszélhessünk)*. Modern political revolution can be defined as a kind of great turning point accompanied by mass participation and, frequently, violence, and motivated (as during the 1789 French Revolution) by frighteningly hypnotic images of political and civil freedom, legal equality based on representation and regulated election processes – in other words, the achievements of democracy. This kind of revolution can be tied to concepts of modernity and progress. While both are obviously possible in other political systems, democracy provides the most worthy framework for the people involved. The 1956 revolution fits this definition. Even if only temporarily, it still destroyed a political system that adopted an uncertain utopia to restrict political freedom, failed to provide equal liberties or representation and replaced regulated legal proceedings with despotic rule. In addition, all of this was done while binding the nation to the culture of a foreign empire. Any new development that the 1956 revolution would have initiated instead (had it succeeded) remained untapped. The history of 1956 therefore remains eternally *open*. It can be interpreted as an attempt to revolt against totalitarian subjugation, a return to liberal democracy, an effort to build some form of new self-governing socialism, or even as a struggle fought by a nation determined to reclaim its wounded autonomy.

3.

The 1956 revolution strongly influenced the world's opinion of Hungary in the 20th century. Previously, the image of 20th century Hungary was not very flattering. Impressions of Hungarians were generally negative at the turn of the 19th century, a fact that the decades between Europe's two world wars did little to improve. Hungary's alliance with Hitler during the Second World War worsened the situation even more. Needless to say, Hungary's image was not aided by Soviet invasion either.

In 1956, however, the revolution changed all this. Not only did a positive image of Hungary arise, but for a long time was signified by the double digits of *56*. *Budapest* became a code word for the refusal of subjugated nations to remain under the yoke of Soviet-type regimes. To summarise its effect in one simple instance: the nationalism that previously branded Hungarians as instigators

of unrest in the region (a claim often unjust and overly exaggerated) did not emerge during the revolution. In the West, 1956 was a mark of 'distinction' for Hungary, thus clothing it in bright colours in welcome contrast to the grey uniform hulk of 'Eastern Europe'. This was how it remained for a long time, while Hungarian society's contribution to the fall of the Soviet system in 1989 burnished this image even further. The memory of the 1956 revolution played a key role in defining Hungary's transformation to a democratic society. This image, however, belongs to the past just as described in the lyrics of a popular Hungarian song: '[…] now it's passing… I see a bird/glide overheadbarbed wire in its gaping heart/ a bit of straw in its beak' *(hung. most múlik pontosan… Látom hogy elsuhan/ felettem egy madár/ tátongó szívében szögesdrót/ csőrében szalma szál)*. Sadly, Hungary's image today is a shadow hanging over the celebration of freedom that engulfed Budapest in 1956.

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1956 in Poznań and Budapest: Short- and Long-term Consequences in Poland

JAN RYDEL

Like the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the events of the same year commonly known as the 'Poznań June' and 'Polish October' had a large impact on the awareness of Poles and played a massive role in shaping modern political thought in my home country. However, the consequences of events in Poznań and Budapest, particularly when viewed in a short-term perspective, fall into two separate categories.

According to most recent reports, the day-long Poznań skirmishes and fighting on 28–29 June 1956 resulted in 58 deaths, including 50 protesters, four soldiers and four members of the militia and security officers, while a total of around 600 were injured, including 28 soldiers, 15 security officers and seven members of the militia. On the night of 28 to 29 June, the militia conducted mass arrests of more than 700 people. Many detainees were beaten and tortured during the investigation.

In September 1956, indictments against 123 participants of the Poznań protests reached the courts. Prior to the subsequent political breakthrough in Poland, two trials took place with 12 individuals sentenced to several years' imprisonment. The third trial and all others were interrupted. Only three of those convicted served their entire prison term.

These trials proved to be one of the most glorious chapters in the history of the Polish bar in communist Poland, in particular, in the city of Poznań. The brilliant lawyer, Dr Stanisław Hejmowski, exposed the injustice and unreliability of prosecutors and skilfully proved government guilt for the bloodshed in Poznań. The communist regime did not forget its defeat, however, and Hejmowski in a way became one of the longest oppressed victims of Poznań June by being kept under surveillance and persecuted until his death in 1969.

Although the brutality of the Poznań riots and the number of deaths were certainly significant for a one-day struggle in a medium-sized city, they cannot in any way be compared to the number of victims of the Hungarian Uprising or the cruelty of its ensuing repression: 2,500 dead and over 20,000 injured Hungarians. Nearly 700 Soviet soldiers were also killed. More than 20,000 people were put on trial and convicted and over 300 were executed.

In awareness of the (dis-)proportion of these two tragedies, the poet Tadeusz Śliwiak wrote the following in his 1956 poem *A word about blood*, which, incidentally, stands the test of comparison with the best Romantic political poetry:

The blood which do not flow on Vistula
When our people crumbling walls of lies
The blood which do not flow on Vistula
A hundred times belongs to you.

The problem was expressed somewhat differently by Zbigniew Herbert in his bitter poem conveying the sense of helplessness, which was entitled *To Hungarians*:

We stand on the border,
that is called reason,
and we gaze into a fire,
and we marvel at death.

The key to explaining the qualitative difference between how the regimes responded to social protest and the pro-freedom uprising is – naturally – the different standing of those in power in Poland and Hungary, respectively, after the events in question. In October 1956, in the face of a split within the party and growing social opposition, Władysław Gomułka removed the post-Stalinist group against which the pro-freedom uprising in Poznań was staged and which suppressed it. For that reason, the June protesters as if by default became allies of the new party leadership, as those who exposed the despicability of previous leaders and who were repressed by them, as Gomułka was in Stalinist times, took power. Already in his first speech as the party leader, Gomułka revised the attitude of the communist authorities to the Poznań revolt by blaming it on the previous party leadership rather than branding it an anti-socialist plot of counter-revolutionaries and the mob. Whether prepared or already initiated, trials were halted and officials laid wreaths on the victims' graves in June 1957.

In Budapest, in turn, reform-minded communist party activists led the protests, thus making the Hungarian revolution incomparably more dynamic than the Poznań events, as well as more political, an aspect missing in Poznań. When the situation changed, as those opposed to reforms crushed the uprising with Russian tanks and bayonets, these favourable factors began to work to the detriment of the Hungarian protesters who were subjected to cruel criminal repression.

As is known, the roles of Gomułka in Poland and János Kádár in Hungary were reversed several years later. A previously fêted reformer, Gomułka became a symbol of communist hardliners and of stagnation, something described as a 'rule of simpletons', while Kádár, previously the suppressor of a pro-freedom uprising and head of a repressive regime, turned into a pragmatic and enlightened absolutist ruler. If Kádár remained on the throne *de facto* until his natural death,

Gomułka was removed from power in Poland by another workers' revolt strangely similar to the June 1956 events of Poznań. The reason for strike action and riots on the Polish coast in December 1970 was – just as in Poznań – economic and not overtly political. Yet again it was suppressed with firearms used against the demonstrators with similarly high numbers killed, injured and detained. Repression following the December 1970 events was relatively lenient because yet again the Communist party blamed the former leader.

The memory of Poznań June soon died out. The events ceased to excite not only Poles from other regions, but even Poznań residents. Naturally, it was to a large degree a result of action and pressure of the state apparatus and political police. This was made easier by the fact that generally all actors during the Poznań events on the government side – with the exception of the top party leadership – remained in power and were headed by Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, who retained his post until the 1970 bloody workers' revolt on the Baltic coast.

Worse still, the experiences of both Budapest and largely Prague showed that conflict on such a large scale led to these countries becoming as quiet as cemeteries, losing hope and abandoning the vision of freedom for many years, sometimes even longer than a generation.

Interestingly, the memory or even myth of the Hungarian Revolution has proven to be much stronger and is most frequently accompanied by the memory of Polish solidarity. It seems that this has not been researched in Poland, so I will offer my own reflections here. I remember very well how in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when I was 10, 11 or perhaps 12 years old, my parents would tell me about an uprising in Hungary, its many victims, the fate of the Hungarian soccer *Wunderteam* (no wonder) and blood collections for the Hungarians. Let me explain that my parents were typically humble representatives of the Polish intelligentsia with experiences of the Home Army, who were furthest removed from communism or the party, yet certainly not high-ranking opposition figures. Interestingly, I now become aware that what I remember so well is not facts cited by them, but the fact that they became emotional when talking about Hungary and that what they recounted was very important to them. In any case, from then on I knew the name Imre Nagy and also get emotional every time I hear it. I learned the name Romek Strzałkowski, the most famous victim of Poznań June, only much later. The memory of the Hungarian Uprising was considerably reinforced when our family went to Hungary in the summer of 1973 and an elderly Pole, a local resident we met in Budapest, offered us an almost secret tour of sites of the particularly hard fight against the Soviets and spoke in a hushed voice.

Advanced social amnesia in remembering the Poznań events did not mean, however, that they failed to shape the political imagination of Poles, or at least those interested in Poland's future and politics. Curiously, the political experience of Poznań, I believe, has always been contemplated jointly with the political experience generated by the Hungarian Uprising. These two events, as Rafał Drozdowski and Marek Ziółkowski write, for years programmed *both the very shape of political and social aspirations of Polish society and its imagination as regards possible strategies (potentially most effective, least 'foolhardy' and best 'cost-effective' etc.) for coping with unwanted authorities devoid of legitimacy.*

There is one more historical event that shaped that horizon of Polish aspirations and imagination concerning an optimal strategy. This was obviously the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, which together with the Hungarian Uprising and Poznań June (at times also called an uprising), constituted a sort of gradation of political points of reference in Poland. I am certain that everyone who took part in *the Poles' long deliberations through the night* about freedom and the prospects of regaining it in Poland in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s quoted these historical reference points on many occasions. What was their function?

The Warsaw Uprising was a symbol of a universal heroic struggle prepared and fought by the mass armed underground. Due to the cruelty of the enemy as well as treason and indifference on the part of the Allies, that fight ended in defeat at a price of 200,000 lives, as well as a destroyed capital and large portion of Polish cultural heritage. The memory of the Warsaw Uprising evoked questions about whether it was possible in the given circumstances and historical time to mobilise society to such a degree and whether we were ready to take the risk of so much loss and damage. The answer was negative. The Hungarian Uprising was a very important experience, since it concerned the reality of the Soviet bloc. It answered the question of what could be achieved in the given geopolitical context by a mass pro-freedom public rising supported by some in the military and led by a political leadership enjoying much authority, yet *ad hoc*, guided by the objective of full sovereignty and independence. That was also a negative experience, mainly due to the treacherous and brutal military intervention of the Soviets and the indifference of the international community. In the late 1960s, the Hungarian experience was reinforced by the Prague Spring, which showed that those seeking to expand the area of freedom would not be rescued from Soviet intervention either by setting half-baked political goals (socialism with a human face) or renouncing armed resistance. Worse still, the experiences of both Budapest and largely Prague showed that conflict on such a large scale led to these countries becoming as quiet as cemeteries, losing hope and abandoning the vision of freedom for many years, sometimes even longer than a generation.

In light of such experiences, the Poznań June 1956 and December 1970 events, which were comparable in many respects, suggested that economically-motivated conflicts can seriously contribute to positive and sustained change, even if played out beyond a country's political centre, as long as Soviet intervention can be avoided. After all, Gomułka's rule after the Poznań June was generally less oppressive than the Stalinist regime, and Gierek's regime after the December events was less repressive than Gomułka's. One important indicator of that

long-term transformation is the evolution of the Catholic Church's position in Poland: from Stalinist trials of bishops to the papacy of John Paul II.

In the second half of the 1970s, as a result of internal changes in Poland and internationally as well, conditions appeared in Poland for a strong, agenda-diversified and permanent anti-system opposition that was able to draw lessons from the Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak experiences of fighting communism. It managed to develop a model of free trade unions, highly uncomfortable for the regime, and of an opposition rarely resorting to conspiracy. It also formed its own pluralistic leadership elite that was mature and strong enough to pursue a policy in conditions of self-limitation. [Unlike the ironic political recipe from *Sir Thaddeus* by A. Mickiewicz: 'There will be no lack of sabres; the gentry will mount their steeds, my nephew and I at the head, and somehow we'll manage it!']

Those cumulative experiences with the 1956 events having key importance led to the founding of the Solidarity movement in 1980. With nine million members, it was essentially an inch away from demolishing the communist regime without – as we now know– a real risk of a Soviet intervention. General Jaruzelski's martial law may have kept the regime alive for several years, but its ultimate fall was already foredoomed and evident.

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Farewell to a Myth, Waiting for a Myth

PIOTR JUSZKIEWICZ

Here and on the occasion of this particular anniversary, I probably do not need to recall you the famous water polo match at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, when the Hungarian team had one of the most dramatic experiences in its career. Certainly, it was not about sport. At that time and now too, everything was symbolic – the unyielding attitude of the Hungarians, the brutality of the Soviet team, blood from Ervin Zádor's forehead flowing down his cheek, the audience supporting the Hungarians and hating the Soviets and, finally, the triumphant victory of the former, 4 : 0. Still, in Poland that episode and the famous photograph of the bleeding Zádor would probably have been totally forgotten if not for Krisztina Goda's film, *Children of Glory,* from 2006, screened in Polish movie theatres only for a brief period of time. Do we not all need such moments that contribute to our individual and collective memory and identity?

I come to this meeting from Poznań, where during the first few months of 1980, when 'Solidarity' was in full bloom, a monument with the date 1956 was erected to commemorate a protest of workers and ensuing skirmishes of the people with the secret service, police, and the military, sometimes called the second Wielkopolska Uprising. The monument, situated on a central square in the city, consists of two crosses connected by a common horizontal beam and a piece of thick rope symbolising community and mutual support with reference to the Christian tradition. After 1989, a vertical sequence of historic Polish years of protest – 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980 – was supplemented with 1981, when martial law was imposed on Poland, whereby the inscription 'For liberty, law, and bread' was completed with 'God' at the beginning.

Some local intellectuals and artists were not quite happy with the monument, since they believed that it expressed a national-Catholic ideology which, in their

opinion, was as oppressive as the communist one and just as dangerous for democracy. Adam Graczyk's design, without a conventional vertical dominant, was criticised in comparison to that of Anna and Krystian Jarnuszkiewicz, who won the official competition. The symbolism of their design did not include any national or religious elements.

At any rate, 1956 at that time was a crucial reference point in Poznań for the ideas and practice of social resistance, an indispensable element of identity, and the sense of community of societies and peoples united against oppression by the USSR. It provided figures of memory such as images of fighting in Poznań or Budapest and the names of Romek Strzałkowski and Péter Mansfeld, the fallen Gavroches of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions.

Do we not all need such moments that contribute to our individual and collective memory and identity?

I was born in 1959, the year that many scholars mark as the end of the political thaw after 1956. I remember the reality of communism, but my formative experience was the period of 'Solidarity' and martial law, which is why I associate the Poznań monument not so much with tanks, a crowd of people in front of the university, and the noise of shooting near the secret service building in June 1956, but rather with the winter of 1982, when we – my friends and I – ran away from the approaching ZOMO riot police that did not want us to light candles before the crosses on February 13. The heritage of 1956 was important to us, yet the ensuing thaw was not 'our time', thus, I can now ask a few embarrassing questions.

Before I do so, however, it is necessary to explain why the title of my short presentation includes the word 'myth', which may be interpreted in different ways. Indeed, it is my intention to connect it to the names of Roland Barthes and Joseph Campbell, who defined it differently. According to Barthes, myth is a kind of veil imposed on reality and an instrument of detachment that is a result of a social process, at times consciously used to impose meanings on signs, texts, and images. In such a context, the scholar is an independent analyst, a destroyer of myths who wants to share his or her scepticism with the audience. According to Campbell, what is at stake is not the myth's truth value, but its role in human life and culture. Perhaps, with its truthfulness found at a different level, Campbell, inspired by Jung, approached myth both as an instrument of self-knowledge reaching to regenerate archetypes and the substance of the nomos, the 'sacred canopy' that protects us from nothingness, from the sense of the world's absurdity and contingency. 'At the most general level, myths […] express the idea of the ultimate order that establishes relations among concepts important to a given community by classifying them in hierarchical systems.' Consequently, we can briefly claim that in Barthes' view, myths are obstacles on the way to knowledge, while Campbell believes that they constitute its framework and support the process of identity-building.

In my opinion, the significance of 1956 in today's culture is actually mythical in both ways.

Assuming the role of the critical analyst of myths proposed by Barthes, I will start with the myth of modernism that is to an extent characteristic of all of East-Central Europe. One of the most important features of this myth is its approach to historical reality in binary terms whose elements are supposed to be coherent and uniform. On one hand, there is the power system designated by the Soviets, on the other, the host of artists who preferred the culture of Western Europe and who ideologically and politically opposed the regime. Allegedly, the latter supported socialist realism for ideological reasons, which means that the accepted model of art was concomitant with ideology – the foundation of institutional and political power.

On the other hand, this particular myth is based on the belief that the binary system forced authorities, as a result of a historical conflict, to allow greater freedom of creation and to accept modernist art as an element of the visual sphere. Support for modernism was a weapon used in that conflict, which means, as Jindrzich Chalupecky wrote, that it articulated resistance to the communist regime with the main role of the autonomous values of art opposed to its propaganda use.

On one hand, there is the power system designated by the Soviets, on the other, the host of artists who preferred the culture of Western Europe and who ideologically and politically opposed the regime.

In terms of that myth, a return to socialist realism, for instance, in Poland, was impossible after 1956 since the 'authorities began respecting reality', which means that they had to make certain concessions because culture kept developing and had to reluctantly accept some degree of artistic freedom. As well, those concessions were related to new and less violent forms of surveillance: direct ideological pressure sanctioned by death or prison sentences changed to a more flexible, economic and institutional control of the strictly demarcated cultural field. Moreover, modernism was accepted inasmuch as it legitimized the regime abroad as more or less enlightened. Still, regardless of the different timing of modernism in countries of the Soviet zone, according to the myth, its manifestations must be interpreted as acts of political resistance to communist power, thus endorsing the artistic values of Europe against Soviet dictatorship in culture. From such a standpoint, the artistic endorsement of modernism in art must be understood today as an essentially moral gesture – a protest against restrictions imposed on artistic freedom by pro-Soviet authorities.

Certainly, even as a myth-destroyer, I cannot deny, in reference to the Polish example, that art radically changed after 1956 and that this could be seen at first

glance. More or less stylised socialist realism was largely replaced by abstraction and painting of the matter. The pre-Second World War tradition of Polish modernism continued, while post-impressionism, considered by many artists and critics to represent the mainstream of European painting, returned to the top of the artistic hierarchy. At the same time, film directors such as Wajda, Munk, Has, and Kawalerowicz founded the so-called Polish School. Their films told stories about the previously forbidden topics of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the 1939 September campaign, and fighters of the post-war anti-communist guerrilla movement.

Yet, upon a closer look, the reconstructed myth begins to crumble. A destroyer of myths would argue that the modernisation of art was largely undertaken by former socialist realists, that Polish *informel* paintings had little to do with the French negation of culture as such – with muddy and scatological associations, and that their meanings remained close to the socialist realist idiom as analogues of academic research and effects of an analysis of modern life stimulated by technological progress. Similarly, the films of Polish directors did not really challenge the official ideology of the communist state: fighters of the anti-communist guerrilla were victims of a false idea of honour and ideological manipulation by their superiors, the 1939 defeat resulted from the mindless wasting of soldiers' lives, while the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising was caused by a refusal to treat Soviet troops waiting on the other side of Vistula as allies.

However, in analysing the connection of the 1956 watershed and the evolution of culture, the myth-destroyer must try to delve deeper into the relationship of art and politics at that time. The perspective should probably be changed with an abandonment of modernist ideas concerning art in favour of a more distanced approach critical of heroic narratives.

One must start from the level of global politics by remembering that Stalin's successors fought for power from his death in 1953 to the end of the decade. In fact, this was Khrushchev's struggle for domination with shifting alliances of his enemies and temporary supporters. Sometimes, both parties made risky moves, for instance, when Khrushchev's opponents almost managed to push him aside in 1957. Quite often, however, the effects of these moves were unpredictable, since particular members of the collective leadership did not have a full picture of the situation. The famous Khrushchev secret speech at the 20th communist party congress was such a move – it acquitted the speaker and others of the charge of complicity, yet still he hesitated on how far to go with his criticism of Stalin. He was not sure whether to make the speech classified for fear of turmoil in satellite countries or to perhaps publicise it to some extent. In some cases, that turmoil took rather unexpected forms. Among the 1956 protests, the earliest took place in Tbilisi. More than 60,000 people protested for four days and then, when the crowd stormed the local radio station, the military intervened – 20 protesters died, 60 were wounded and several hundred were arrested. The crowd wanted Georgia to leave the USSR, but, in fact, it was a riot against Khrushchev's speech and the defamation of Stalin's name. Tens of thousands put flowers under the dictator's statue, while hundreds cruised all over the city with his portraits shouting 'Down with Khrushchev! Molotov for Prime Minister, Molotov for General Secretary!'

From such a standpoint, 1956 can be referred to as a result of ongoing conflicts among members of the collective Soviet leadership in different ways attempting to gain control. Khrushchev enjoyed a temporary victory over the 'anti-party group' by sending Molotov on a diplomatic mission to Mongolia and Malenkov to northern Kazakhstan as the manager of a power station. Inner conflicts in satellite countries brought about different effects depending on local alliances and the support of particular fighters from Moscow, as well as on current goals in international politics chaotically pursued by the collective leadership. The chaos was caused by inner imbalance and the incompetence of Khrushchev, Bulganin or Kaganovich. Aside from competition with the US and relations with Western Europe, two issues were important. First, Khrushchev wanted to settle relations with Yugoslavia, which was a question of his personal ambition and fear that the Yugoslav version of national communism could spread disorder in the Soviet zone of influence. However, reciprocal visits in 1955 and 1956 (Tito visited Moscow in June 1956) did not bring any results. Also, failure in negotiations with Tito contributed to the decision to attack Hungary in November that year. Second, Khrushchev also failed to win the favours of Mao, which influenced Soviet tactics in dealing with Poland and Hungary.

In this case, the boundary of 1956 has become a crucial element of an entire historiographic model that is the core of a narrative related to mythologised assumptions and identity needs rooted in the desire to imagine a conflict between artistic modernity and the totalitarian communist state.

One realises a very important duality when approaching the political significance of 1956 from local internal viewpoints of countries reacting to dwindling Soviet control. In order to illustrate that duality, Piotr Semka, author of a recently published monumental history of anti-communist emotions, makes reference to a scene from Ryszard Bugajski's film *Interrogation*, which, finished in 1982, had to wait seven years to be screened in movie theatres. The female protagonist, released from a Stalinist prison, turns her face to the sun and at that moment is bumped by a passing girl wearing fashionable clothes, who looks at her as if she had been a 'loony hag'. Semka draws his readers' attention to a gap between the generation of 1935–1940 and that released from Stalinist prisons. The young generation, which did not know much about the recent past, also for safety reasons, was open to Western culture and followed new social trends, while its political opinions were formed by years of ideological indoctrination. The riots of 1956, particularly those in October, were often led by young Marxists. Semka believes that this is the only way to interpret the legend of *Po prostu*,

a weekly of the young intelligentsia that did not promote a struggle for independence, but rather a reform of socialism. Former prisoners found it hard to accept that new leaders were former Stalinists such as Władysław Gomułka, the communist party leader during the reign of terror directed against Home Army soldiers often continuing their fight in the anti-communist underground. Party revisionists, who took control over the October events in Poland, did not want radical de-Stalinisation since they would have had to be de-Stalinised themselves.

On the other hand, the dynamic of the June skirmishes in Poznań and demonstrations in other regions of Poland was transformed by social energy into a popular, anti-Soviet, and national revolution that also demanded the right to worship God. The crumbling wall of fear made people want the truth about Katyń, the return of eastern territories incorporated into the USSR, dismissal of Russian officers from the Polish army, political independence, and the release of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate, after more than three years of detention. Even though Poland did not experience that which occurred in Hungary, where pre-war parties were restored and where calls were made to leave the Warsaw Pact, the actual duality was distinct: anti-Soviet, national and religious turmoil was ignored by its activists, who thought in terms of revising socialist dogma. It was, writes Semka in quoting Wiesław Chrzanowski, a drama of a society without its elites since their members were either dead, killed in combat, in prison or under strict surveillance and could not become active in politics again. Thus, they were replaced by Marxists who became leaders of the revolution and changed its course.

Obviously, culture at that time related to internal politics and remained dependent on global politics as well. An attempt to ignore it produced a tragedy in Hungary, while Poland did not dare try. Under such circumstances, the myth-destroyer may call for replacement of the dominant myth of modernism with an alternative account. It would differ from the interpretation of modern art after 1956 as morally and politically significant activity that effectively opposed the totalitarian regime and forced it to increase the degree of artistic freedom. The myth-destroyer would rather claim, in the context of the duality in 1956 that I just discussed, that leading revisionists or former Stalinists arranged their relations with the world of art to make them match the dynamic of a particular moment of social turmoil, so as not, to endanger their own position as revolutionary leaders. That is why both then and now there have been no references to a national and popular uprising, since that would violate the internal and external consensus.

In conclusion, the myth-destroyer would postulate abandon ment of the still valid modernist myth and its revision in terms of contemporary scholarly research and artistic activity. For the time being, though, such appeals do not bring any notable results. Our students still learn that each modern artist by definition was an opponent of the totalitarian state, while art was an instrument of resistance, regardless of many historical instances that subvert this heroic narrative. By elevating artistic values and highly appreciating the world of art, the modernist myth generated a substitute area of activity where artistic acts replaced everyday life, thus changing the field of art into that of ambiguous compromise. What is most dangerous then is a loss of the former with its potential, instruments, and means of expression, which means that the most important

task is to prevent that loss, for instance, through compromise justified by the benefit of art.

In this case, the boundary of 1956 has become a crucial element of an entire historiographic model that is the core of a narrative related to mythologized assumptions and identity needs rooted in the desire to imagine a conflict between artistic modernity and the totalitarian communist state.

Perhaps by showing the tension between the myth of modernist art and the complex character of a historical event, which has been blurred by the former, I have managed to shed some light on the reasons why a Campbellian version of the myth of 1956 as the founding myth of democratic societies and states of Poland, Hungary, and other countries of East-Central Europe does not seem to be promoted now. To my knowledge, it is not a topic endorsed by modern art and has been rarely taken up by cinema after 1989. I already mentioned Krisztina Goda's film. Another one is the 2004 biography of Imre Nagy directed by Márta Mészáros. Even against this unimpressive background, Polish cinema offers almost nothing to discuss. In 1996, Filip Bajon made a small-scale film, *Poznań 56*, showing the June protest and the skirmishes of Poznań workers with the police and military. As well, there are some traces of 1956 in two other films: Bugajski's *Interrogation* and Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Accident* in which the protagonist, symbolically born in 1956, says good-bye to his Jewish friend who leaves Poland in 1968 and dies in a plane crash in 1981. Most likely, one could find more such traces in Polish and Hungarian cinema, but this does not alter the fact that attempts to tell the story of 1956 are few (there are some documentary films). No doubt, this is a pity, since for Hungary and Poland, as well as for other countries of the region, 1956 could provide an origin of many identity myths and figures of remembrance, while supplying social historical memory with examples of virtue.

No doubt, this is a pity, since for Hungary and Poland, as well as for other countries of the region, 1956 could provide an origin of many identity myths and figures of remembrance, while supplying social historical memory with examples of virtue.

Paradoxically, perhaps one of the obstacles to desirable exploitation and proliferation of the Campbellian idea of myth and a proper system of values is an inadequate amount of work on myth, which, by revealing the historical complexity of 1956, should provoke a debate about relations among various political aspects of events at that time: global politics with the interests of the superpowers at stake, internal politics with their space of rivalry in party elites and among factions trying to exploit the revolutionary mood and activity for their own purposes, as well as the outbreak of national and popular uprisings. In

such a historical context, the arts and other areas of cultural expression can also provide more profound insights into their roles at that time. Myths understood in the Campbellian manner can foster such enlightening discussions. Yet, what appears to be a necessary condition to launch them is a more comprehensive critique of the Barthesian mono-myth.

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Hungary, Then and Now

NORMAN STONE

I see I am billed as a Scottish historian, which allows me to address the subject of good nationalism and bad nationalism. I do not know what Scottish nationalism is about. Nationalisms are usually about something, but Scottish nationalism is just an embarrassment and a bore for which I am sorry. When I speak a foreign language I 'speak gibberish' otherwise known as British. I hope this nightmare goes away. I do not know what it is about modern Europe that creates these funny minority nationalisms. So, Flemish nationalism abolished the great University of Louvain – what for? Catalans and so on; down with it.

However, there is good nationalism, which is obviously the case with 1956. We must not forget that poor old Hungary had a truly dreadful time in the 20th century. Now, as it happens, I have been asked to write a brief history of Hungary since 1848. My Hungarian is sufficient to read your, frankly very good, historians. They are much better than the Austrians, who are boring. If you think back to 1867 when Hungary re-emerged on the map, Budapest was pent up with huge energy. Learning intelligently from abroad, Hungarians looked at the English underground and found it to be the best underground system of the 1860s. And it remained so. They got Bazalgette to come and tell them about sewage. Budapest must have been a building site for most of those thirty years, and what an achievement! I am afraid that it ends in tears. Perhaps Kossuth was right in saying 'Don't tie yourself to the Germans because they'll go mad in the end'. That was the tragedy of Hungary in both world wars. Then came communism on top of it. Now, perhaps we are returning to another version of 1867 when Hungary at last again has hope. This is a slightly tasteless thing to say, but I was reading Ignác Romsics' very good history of modern Hungary. I noticed that suicide statistics

are taken as a measure of national morale. I hope they will decrease, because Hungary is obviously moving forward.

I must not go on too long, but better explain how I became interested in Hungary. I am Scottish all the way through. By the way, there was a rather embarrassing episode in Transylvania when Calvinist circles gathered and demonstrated in favour of Scottish nationalism. I believe they thought that the Scots were somewhat oppressed because they are Calvinists, so they felt solidarity. No. Scottish nationalism is a product of mainly females and ex-Catholics. I cannot prove it, but so suspect. I became interested in Austria-Hungary and, as a student, went to the British Council and said 'have you got a scholarship for Austria?'. They said 'no, but something has just come in the post from Hungary'. This was 1962 and it was a language course in Debrecen, which I took in 1963. I arrived in Hegyeshalom where customs officers inspected everything. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself in the Grand Hotel in Margitsziget. There were ups and downs, the Astoria at one point, then some agricultural college in the province in Nyíregyháza. It was absolutely fascinating. I am considerably older than almost everyone in this room, so you probably do not remember or even know what Budapest was like in 1962. Dark. Grim. There would be one shop every thousand meters marked 'Green Stuff'. It was grim with signs of the siege, the bullets from 1956, the Mátyás Pince near ruin, the castle a ruin and the Elizabeth bridge only built in my last year here. But there was something about it that had some kind of life.

I believe that tragic memories of the 1944 uprising in Poland very much influenced decisions taken in Poland in 1956.

I returned in the 1980s. Professor Fodor was gloomy about the Kádár years, but I would slightly defend them because if you came with a foreign passport you met an outstanding intelligentsia here. People read everything, spoke languages, knew the national culture. I believe, precisely because public life was so boring, that people focused on things that mattered – family life, learning, playing a musical instrument at which Hungarians were superb. I would, in a sense, defend the Kádár system because at least one could travel, read and have the possibility of placing this extremely interesting country back on the map, whatever its temporary problems. Now, where does 1956 fit in? I would classify it simply as good nationalism. This country had been dreadfully humiliated throughout by the Germans and then by the Rákosi period. The Soviet embassy controlled everything and there was a sudden rebellion. I wonder if it is not true that Khrushchev or Andropov encouraged its early phase in order to get rid of Rákosi. I remember meeting an old man on a tram in Debrecen who spoke English in a sort of Edwardian way because he had English nannies. He was the son of the last Governor General of Pola in the Austro-Hungarian navy. His name was Guillaume and he said: "That revolution in 1956... everybody knows that when writers start protesting, they are pushed into it". He suspected some

kind of Soviet plot. I do not know whether this is in any way demonstrable, but it is a suggestion. Still, it turned into good nationalism and gave the Soviet system a shock. I think that this was part of the reason why by 1962 the Soviets told countries, Hungary above all, to 'build some kind of bridge to the West, invite your diasporas from Transylvania and the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. Get some students from the West and see if you can start building bridges and turning Hungary into a sort of Soviet version of Austria'. I wonder if this was not an effect of 1956. As far as Hungary was concerned, it did lead to progressive reforms of the Kádár years, the new economic mechanism, all this sort of thing, which meant that whatever happened you were not going to be Romania. And Romania was dismal. I went there in the early 1980s and saw that Hungary escaped that fate. So, I believe in the end that if there is hope it has something to do its 1956, and is not something to be forgotten at all. Good luck for the future.

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1956: Memories of Anti-Imperial Rebellions

ANDRZEJ NOWAK

Thank you very much for the invitation and for this occasion. A minute ago, we had a Scottish perspective on 1956. Now, I will reintroduce here, again, a Polish perspective related to a phenomenon that was mentioned in our chairman's introductory remarks. Namely, the public mood and its elements that are traceable in individual representations such as articles or memories recorded in 1956 or 1957. I selected one at the start: an article written by a Polish émigré writer, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, who in January 1957 published a review called 'Two revolutions – Warsaw and Hungary'. He published it in a Polish émigré journal in London. The main subject of a comparison of the two revolutions in 1956, the main element that was treated as common, was a specific feeling of bitterness or disillusionment toward the West, as expressed in the Hungarian case (not the Polish one this time). Herling-Grudziński, a famous prose-writer and author of one of the best descriptions of the Gulag system (*A World Apart* – published with an introduction by Bertrand Russell in 1951), stressed in his article that the cry from Budapest, the cry addressed to the West of 'we want weapons, not words', was something that reminded him of earlier Polish disillusionment with the same West. For example, the West did nothing to help in 1944 during the Polish Warsaw Uprising in which 200,000 people were killed by the Germans, while the Soviets stopped and watched from the other side of the Vistula. I think that this remark is especially interesting for the question of the role that common memory or public memory, or whatever you wish to call it, has or plays in affecting decisions in particular political situations? I believe that tragic memories of the 1944 uprising in Poland very much influenced decisions taken in Poland in 1956. The fact that the entire city was razed to the ground and that 200,000 people were killed acted like a powerful *caveat* to the Poles

and, at the same time, the Soviets. They, and here I mean both sides, did not want to repeat it if possible. Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, the head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe at that time, particularly stressed this element in his recollections of 1956. According to him, the horror of the Warsaw Uprising and memory that no one helped Poland at that tragic moment was something that Poles still remembered: they did not want another catastrophe in Warsaw. However, the Hungarians did not have any comparable memory in 1956, no uprising during the Second World War, no tragedy of that type. Their situation in the last stage of the war was obviously different than that of the Poles. But, in returning to the problem of disillusionment with the West and a comparison between Warsaw and Budapest in 1956, Herling-Grudziński concludes that many in Poland could sigh with relief – we managed to escape the tragedy that just occurred in Budapest, so maybe our Polish tradition of uprisings, of romantic rebellions against powerful enemies (Russians/Soviets or Germans) should be reassessed, as well as our hopes for any help from the West. Always or – to say it less categorically – usually, we experienced a heroic disaster when we hoped for immediate positive results from our great uprisings. So, maybe we should reflect on the lesson of Hungary and that of 1944 in Poland as well as on many other lessons that I will recall in a minute. Should we change our tradition, modify our perception of it and stop dreaming of other glorious rebellions that lead to military confrontation with all too powerful empires dominating our lives?

Always or – to say it less categorically – usually, we experienced a heroic disaster when we hoped for immediate positive results from our great uprisings.

This reflection, which was stressed in Herling-Grudziński's article on Budapest 1956, leads me to another set of more general questions: namely, how did the tradition of these rebellions arise? Why is there such a long chain of these rebellious patterns in Polish history and a similar relatively long tradition (perhaps less intense than the Polish one) in Hungary? Why do these two nations, as compared to their other Central and Eastern European neighbours, have such evident and important traditions of uprisings and rebellions against oppressive empires? Well, I believe the first element is, of course, the situation of oppression itself. If there is oppression, if there is a situation of foreign domination, political, economic, military, or cultural, then there are reasons to rebel. But, these reasons are not necessarily evident to everyone, as there is not only one public memory, but different public perceptions of oppression. For some segments of society foreign oppression can be bearable, for others, unbearable. Another element that therefore begs reflection here as a possible reason for specific rebellious traditions. Together with a specific (geopolitical) situation is a specific political culture, one within which the decision to rebel or take up

arms is reached. I feel that there is very close similarity between the political cultures of 'old good Hungary' (to use Norman Stone's eulogy) and of 'old good Poland'. What makes them common is a republican core of political values. This is a tradition of republican virtues that formed a basis for the political culture of both the late-medieval early-modern Hungarian Kingdom (dominated by the nobility) and, of course, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The dignity of a citizen was especially valued within such a particular political culture, something that differs from (economic) interest or from a perspective of what I would call a 'liberal burgher'. They (I mean republican values) are not connected so much to material interests as to very active participation in the political life of a republic, in particular, its defence against internal and external enemies of civil liberties. To put it briefly, following Quentin Skinner's ideas (Oxford historian), we can call it 'liberty (political/civic/republican) before liberalism (economic/democratic)' or a search for freedom from rather than liberty to... Hungary and Poland formed exceptionally developed models of a historically ingrained ethos of republican liberty. From this perspective, of course, any suppression of liberty, be it internal (by an evil king or magnate trying to dominate the political scene) or, even worse, by a foreign oppressor like the Russian, Habsburg or Ottoman Empires in the Hungarian case, provides an obvious reason to rebel and defend civil-republican dignity.

However, we should add a third element here that is also very important in providing reasons to rebel – in my view, it is historical memory. We have to have examples of rebellions in our memorial 'repository' that we want to emulate, which we want to continue or change, to improve, and not repeat the mistakes of our predecessors. There are, of course, classical examples of rebellions that made the foremost ideologue of the liberal West, Thomas Hobbes, suggest that they can never be taught at universities or schools. Why? Because these examples can provide reasons, exactly through heroic memories of the old Roman rebels against tyrants, to again rebel in contemporary situations, thus endangering the political order. Such historical memories tied to Brutus and other tyrant-murderers were, of course, very much valued within republican traditions. However, classical, cultural, or symbolic memories are not enough. What is much more important is a 'vivid' or 'living' memory, a memory that is transferred from one generation to the next. Here, I believe, there is a very interesting link between Hungary and Poland, a starting point of the 250-year long almost uninterrupted Polish tradition of uprisings. That link is formed by the Ferenc Rákóczi Uprising in the early 18th century. Unfortunately, it was never studied from that vantage point in Polish historiography, but I believe it should be because there were 8,000 to 11,000 Poles engaged in that Hungarian uprising. The Polish nobility actually understood the goals of the Hungarian anti-Habsburg uprising, the goals of civic liberty, Christianity, and, especially, national independence. They, I mean the Polish nobles who so actively participated in the Rákóczi uprising, still retained examples in their familial memories of the victorious uprising of their grandfathers against foreign oppressors – the so-called Tyszowce confederation of 1655–1656 that repelled Swedish invaders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Now, they employed their memory to help Hungarian insurgents. After the Rákóczi uprising was crushed and upon

return to their Polish homes, they extended the chain of rebellious tradition to their children and grandchildren, who, in turn, triggered the first Polish uprising of the 18th century, the one against imperial Russia in 1733 (because two Russian armies entered the realm of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility 'republic' to decide the outcome of the so-called 'free election' of the next king). It was an obvious end to Polish independence and it was exactly in this situation when people with memories of the Hungarian uprising decided that they should do it again, just more effectively, that it was their republican duty to defend liberty when it was openly trampled upon. From that moment on, there was a great Polish national uprising roughly every 30 years, indeed, until the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

An extra element has been added to that link. Since the end of the 18th century, new hopes for help from the West (the French revolutionary West or merely the liberal-constitutional as opposed in both variants to the illiberal, 'despotic' empires of the European Centre and East) were a part of calculations of the new insurgents. The West should behave according to its revolutionary/liberal/freedom loving standards. The problem of the West in perceiving rebellious elites in Eastern Europe or in East-Central Europe opened a new chapter with the French Revolution and the promises it made, not to Hungary or Poland, but to 'humanity' as such, that from then on new rules of international relations would be introduced: liberty to all liberty-seeking nations. This was a basis for elevated hopes of the great uprising of Kościuszko in 1794. These hopes were brutally dashed, ending with bitterness and disillusionment with the West. A series of comparable experiences would follow, to name another example, the 1830–31 Polish so-called November uprising against the Russian Empire. It erupted immediately after another revolution in France, the July 1830 revolution, carrying the same or perhaps less elevated promises, but nevertheless with a similar desire that constitutional order should prevail in Europe. The Polish uprising actually blocked Tsar Nicholas I's plan to militarily intervene in the West against the revolution in Belgium (also in 1830). So the Poles fought for constitutional order and served as an 'antemurale' (bulwark) of Western European liberty against any tyrannical intervention from tsarist Russia – but nevertheless did not receive any help from the West. Then, of course, came the 'Spring of Nations' of 1848–9, especially here in Hungary, but also in some parts of Poland. Again, they were preceded by a revolution in France and were followed with the same hopes of help from the West, deepened like a coastal shelf by bitterness and disillusionment in the aftermath. From that point on, through another great Polish uprising (1863), we finally reach the victorious West in the First World War, straight to Versailles, 1919. It was obviously a catastrophe – Trianon for Hungary (treated as a part of the Central European "tyrannical" empire, the one that lost the war). It was at the same time a high point of hopes of some other East-Central European nationalities – with the declarations of President Woodrow Wilson and Versailles as the start of a new era, an era of a peace in which lesser nations would be able to find their safe place under the sun. This was very quickly met with disillusionment, to cite only such examples as the 1938 Munich Conference and the infamous declaration by Neville Chamberlain on behalf of the British government that 'we [the British] should never start a war for a faraway country about which we know nothing'.

He meant Czechoslovakia – the 'faraway country' at the very centre of Europe..., a country with which France (also present at Munich) at that time had a binding alliance – and did nothing to help Prague in the face of Hitler's threats. Then, we come to Yalta, which reverberated here today. I am not speaking about what was actually discussed at Yalta. I refer to how it was perceived – this is no less important. It was perceived as nothing less than a betrayal and, of course, it was a betrayal when Franklin Delano Roosevelt said to Stalin that 'we always had problems with Poland for the last 600 years'. 'We', that is, the President of the United States, which existed less than 170 years at that time, who actually decided to 'solve' these 'problems' by handing over Poland to Stalin's sphere of domination and together with Poland – the rest of East-Central Europe. So, Yalta again left this memorial trace of disillusionment, adding its bitterness to experiences tied to September 1939 in Poland when Britain and France, although they declared war against Germany, never came to rescue Poland and, to recall August 1944 once again, when the Warsaw Uprising was left helpless in the face of German oppression and Soviet ally inactivity.

However, classical, cultural, or symbolic memories are not enough. What is much more important is a 'vivid' or 'living' memory, a memory that is transferred from one generation to the next.

With that observation we can return to the perspective of Gustaw Herling-Grudziński in analysing Budapest and Warsaw 1956. It offers a dual interpretation. On one hand, Herling-Grudziński finds the following new attitude of the Poles: we are more cautious now, we learned our historical and bitter lessons, we behave more reasonably... but, at the same time there is a feeling that we lost something, something important to our identity. We lost a part of our tradition. We look with horror at what happened in Hungary, but also in heroic Hungarians find a remembrance of ourselves, of our historical 'instincts' as republican defenders of liberty.

No one described this dual perspective of Poles on Budapest in 1956 better than Zbigniew Herbert. One of the most famous Polish poets of the second half of the 20th century addressed one of his poems simply: 'To the Hungarians'. This is the title of a poem from 1956. There, we can find these words: 'we stand on the border, / that is called reason, / and we gaze into a fire / and we marvel at death'. So we, the Poles, stopped in 1956 at the border called reason. We did not cross that border. Hungarians, unfortunately for themselves, did cross it. We marvel at their death, but feel that we somehow betrayed our tradition as staunch defenders of republican dignity, of Polish independence. So what can we do about this tradition? Should we finally discard it? Should we acknowledge that realism of power is the only natural and justified answer to any further

situations of oppression? If we are oppressed by more powerful empires, should we simply accept this – because no one will help and we are too weak to rebel effectively?

Zbigniew Herbert gave an additional, so to speak, answer to this question in his second poem related to Hungarian memories. This time, I refer to his poem from 1979. It is entitled 'In memoriam Nagy László' and is dedicated to the memory of a Hungarian poet and translator of Herbert's poems who died in 1978. However, this is not only about a particular person, but pertains to more general phenomena. Let us cite the ending of this poem. 'Our further life' – meaning that of László Nagy and Zbigniew Herbert, that of Hungarians and Poles, that of victims who died, as well as those who survived – 'our further life together will no doubt take shape / more geometrically to unbending parallel lines / unearthly patience and inhuman fidelity'. Those who fell represent the line of 'unearthly patience' – the patience to wait for their testament to be realised. Herbert meant all those who fell in the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the Warsaw Uprising, any Polish, Hungarian or other uprising against oppression, against all too powerful enemies. For us, the living, it leaves the line, the duty of 'inhuman fidelity'. This metaphor reminds us that most humans would, like our current chairman's granddaughter, prefer to get rid of all those 'bad' memories of old injuries, historical catastrophes and lost uprisings. But still, it leaves us with the problem of the memory of those who fell. Should we forget them, too? Get rid of them, as well? This is what was left as a kind of motto – or memento – for our political culture, or should we call this phenomenon a political ethos? Herbert's poems and memories of the Hungarian revolution played an important role in keeping this ethos alive and alerting us to new challenges. So, it was revived – in times of Solidarity, in times of martial law imposed by General Jaruzelski and opposed by our underground activities, and in times of other historical experiences we underwent to bring an end to the communist system.

Should we acknowledge that realism of power is the only natural and justified answer to any further situations of oppression? If we are oppressed by more powerful empires, should we simply accept this – because no one will help and we are too weak to rebel effectively?

But, when we finally underwent all these experiences, we stopped at a gate, the gate to the West, to the happy end of history – as the final destination of our journey. The gate invites us with this motto: 'Lasciate ogni reminiscenza voi ch'entrate' – get rid of all remembrances, you, who enter here. We can be part of the West. However, with this perspective, we were offered something

like a bargain: we should forget, we should get rid of exactly these 'bad' memories, these victims, heroes, and treasons. We should cease to perceive ourselves as victimised, as historically damaged by more powerful neighbours – because the post-historical West is not interested in that. It had already created another system of memorial signs for the new and eternal post-national Europe.

That situation provoked a series of memorial clashes, especially with new countries that joined the EU in 2004. It began with a famous scandal during the Leipzig Book Fair in 2004 when Sandra Kalniete, the new EU Commissar from Latvia, raised the problem of Gulag experiences and the more general memory of Soviet communist oppression unacknowledged in the West. She was vehemently criticised and accused of a relativisation of the Holocaust. This was not the only sign of incongruity between Eastern (or East-Central) and Western European memories. The latter are, so to speak, congealed and expressed as the only politically correct memories for all of Europe. Among those memories left out, not acknowledged, are exactly memories of another political culture, that is, of a republican political culture that developed in Hungary or in Poland as slightly different to the versions of mere merchant freedom that developed, let us say, in Luxembourg or Belgium. What is more important, however, is the fact that according to the system of official memories established by EU political correctness, it is almost forbidden to recollect victimisation in this part of Europe – victimisation stemming from Russia (not just the Soviet Union or from Soviet times), but from Imperial Russia in general. Why? Because Russia is a powerful partner, an important partner for Europe, for a 'true' Europe (which for many in Berlin, Brussels, Paris or Milan still ends on the eastern border of Germany).

This leaves us with a problem of whether we accept one memory or rather a 'prescriptive forgetting', or whether we can share our memories with the rest of Europe and find something like a 'recognition' of them? Should we accept realism of power as the only answer to political injustice, exactly the example of 1956, or should we stick to the motto of Zbigniew Herbert, one stemming from our political traditions? Here, I mean and intend to quote several lines from his other probably more famous poem entitled 'Transformations of Livy'. In it, Herbert describes how his grandfather and great grandfather read Livy in an Austrian school: 'how did they understand Livy, my grandfather and my great grandfather / certainly, they read him in high school […] / Reading the history of the City they surrendered to the illusion / that they are Romans or descendants of the Romans / these sons of the conquered themselves enslaved'. Herbert observes this misunderstanding, not only of his ancestors in Lwow/Lviv, but probably also similarly among their Hungarian contemporaries, namely, that we, Hungarians (or Poles), are true descendants and inheritors of these powerful imperial dreams and that we would revive (our) Empire again. But, Herbert continues: 'Only my father and myself after him / read Livy against Livy / carefully examining what is underneath the fresco / this is why the theatrical gesture of Scaevola evoked no echo in us'. I will not quote the rest of the poem, just its end: 'My father knew well and I also know / that one day on a remote boundary / without any signs in heaven in Pannonia Sarajevo or Trebizond' [Herbert alluded with that last

geographical name to Kurds, still fighting for their independence], 'in a city by a cold sea / or in a valley of Panshir [this was an obvious allusion to Afghanistan, fighting for its freedom from Soviet intervention] / a local conflagration will explode / and the empire will fall'.

So now, my two final questions are: where are empires nowadays and is the tradition of rebellion against imperial oppression obsolete?

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Pál Fodor: Closing remarks

Dear Presidents, Chairs, Directors, Colleagues, and Guests,

Welcome to the closing session of our conference. First, allow me to introduce myself: my name is Pál Fodor, I am a historian of the Ottoman Empire. I must admit that I am not here because I am great expert in this field. I am here because I am the head of one of the organising institutions and should be clever enough *ex officio* to say some important things regarding 1956. Unfortunately, however, that is not the case. So, please allow me to make some subjective remarks and summarise several impressions of the conference before I turn to true experts to deliver their closing addresses.

First comment: In listening to the lectures and having some knowledge about – mainly Hungarian – historiography, I wonder how much more we actually do know now (and how much more we want to know) about the antecedents, facts, and consequences of the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight of 1956 than we did ten years ago? Is the history of 1956 a key issue in contemporary Hungarian historiography? Most earlier studies dealt with leading personalities and political conflicts – research in the last decade resulted in a much broader understanding of the movements of society, particularly agrarian society, local events, effects on neighbouring countries and details of reprisal. However, our young colleagues are interested more in the quasi-consolidation of the Kádár or Horthy eras than in questions surrounding this revolutionary undertaking.

Second comment: As Réka Kiss also noted, the usual effect befell Hungary: as time passed, the remembrance of 1956 has diminished from 'hot' to 'cool'. Certain trends in Hungarian historiography, in treating the subject as a professional challenge, play a significant role in this process by producing one

interpretational framework after another. I have the impression that there is a growing discrepancy between these interpretations, on one hand, and contemporary readings of 1956 on the other. While those who actually experienced the event underline its absolutely communal/unifying nature, modern Hungarian historiography is inclined to consider this unprecedented national and social collaboration a mere myth and emphasises the diversity of the participants' goals and identities. This is probably in line with the logic of historical research, but hardly facilitates a reinforcement of social or national cohesion. This could be an undisputed cornerstone in the memory of 1956 – similarly, for example, to Jewish identity for which the exodus from Egypt is a cornerstone, regardless of its concrete facts (in this regard, I refer to the excellent works of Haim Yerushalmi). Moreover, there is an issue here that in my opinion every historian must face. In studying the history of past ages, one of my greatest problems has been the total lack of data or information on the public mood or general feeling in a certain age – like the Ottoman world of the 16th century. Therefore, I can only guess what it was. There are still plenty of people alive, however, who are able to inform us about the public mood in 1956, about the erstwhile attitude of the vast majority of Hungarian society, not to mention recorded memories. Historians born 20–30 years after an event and working only with their sources believe that most of what is recalled by people who actually remember is, in fact, a construction influenced by a number of factors. Therefore, they, the historians, know the events more intimately than those who were actually present. Is this excessive self-confidence justified? Is it justified to make something relative that was perhaps the most unambiguous event in Hungarian history? Is it really not a mistake if historians act like this?

We must always keep that in mind, since 1956 was a rare historical moment when a society almost universally committed itself and stepped up to the plate.

Third comment: The above raises the question: is the legacy of 1956 a defining factor in today's Hungarian public thinking and politics of remembrance? How can its content be defined? To what extent is 1956 considered the antecedent of 1989 in public remembrance? Although we no longer talk about it much, in the summer and fall of 1989 it was the memory of 1956 that garnered various political tendencies into a common platform, encouraging them to criticise the regime and to act. We must always keep that in mind, since 1956 was a rare historical moment when a society almost universally committed itself and stepped up to the plate. It was a force that was recognised even by previous oppressors and collaborators of dictatorship. To illustrate the hardships that Hungarian politics of remembrance will have to face as the events of 1956 become increasingly remote in our memory, let me tell you about something that occurred in my family. Last weekend we celebrated my wife's birthday with our larger family. After lunch one of my granddaughters, who is eight years old, noticed a small

Hungarian flag made from paper with a hole in the middle (which I brought home from a 1956 memorial celebration about 20 years ago) in a window of the house. Why is there a hole in the flag and why is it sooty? – she asked. We explained: in 1956, Hungarians revolted against the communists and cut out the Russian-imposed coat of arms from the flag. They fought valiantly, but unfortunately were defeated. However, we commemorate them every year with things like this flag, to which the eight year-old retorted: I'm bored with these celebrations, it is always some defeat we celebrate. What is there to celebrate about a defeat? Together with my son – her father – we tried to persuade her: ultimately, after 40 years, the revolution produced its result. But that explanation did not impress her and, of course, she did not understand this 'long durée' explanation. We can see that Hungarian education and historical science face a difficult task in preserving the memory of 1956.

I would like to emphasise that for me, the true significance of 1956 is in its moral substance. In my view, this was not simply a reaction against economic and other types of oppression; it was a fight in defence of human dignity.

Fourth comment: A great deal was said at our conference about the road to 1956. As pointed out by several scholars, the uprising was a reaction to oppression and one of the most important factors was hope (underlined by our colleague, Kamiński). I would like to emphasise that for me, the true significance of 1956 is in its moral substance. In my view, this was not simply a reaction against economic and other types of oppression; it was a fight in defence of human dignity. For me, 1956 is the most important proof of the fact that man is principally a moral being and that people who act on moral grounds are obviously and always brave. For me, 1956 is also evidence that, in paraphrasing Dostoyevsky, there is crime and there is punishment. The best example of this was the fate of János Kádár about whom it is a well-known fact that the execution of Imre Nagy was his decision. Kádár ruled for 30 years after suppression of the revolution, but, as it later turned out, the perturbing memory of Imre Nagy never left him for a minute. His last speech and actions in his final years clearly show that in the end it was this excruciating remorse that drove him crazy. This is a great comfort because we learned from Solzhenitsyn that communists have no conscience.

Fifth comment: I believe that 1956 in Hungary was also a fight for internal and external autonomy/self-governance. It was not a coincidence that Minister Balog highlighted this feature of the revolution and referred to the fact that we are still very sensitive when someone tries to limit our independence that we managed to regain after so many difficulties. We have learned from the lecture and other works by Professor Borhi that one of the major consequences of 1956 was a strengthening of the bipolar world system after the U.S. and the Western

powers (I wish to be deliberately ironic here) gradually became fond of the Eastern communist bloc and adopted a policy of 'compromise' (detente); so much so that – as Borhi also noted – they accepted a transformation of the 'old world order' only under duress due to Hungarian and Polish domestic political transitions at the end of the 1980s. From this perspective it is very unfair when Hungary is criticised today for its so-called independent policy with claims that it should be more grateful for its freedom allegedly provided by the West.

The real tragedy of 1956 is dual: failure itself plus destruction of the remnants of Hungarian civil (*bürgerlich*) society, the consequences of which can still be felt today.

Sixth comment: A serious debate took place yesterday on whether 1956 was a turning point, a key event in universal history or only an episode? Did the world change because of 1956? I agree with those who believe it did and who consider it a turning point. The lectures and other analyses also drew attention to the fact that the international influence of the Soviet Union strengthened for a while after the revolution. It turned out that it could interfere without serious consequences in order to maintain its sphere of interest. However, from the mid-1980s, the memory of 1956 no longer reinforced, but rather weakened, the great Soviet power, which was gradually forced to give up its empire. From the Hungarian point of view 1956 was an even greater and more important turning point, since the revolution did indeed force a complete redressing of the Hungarian communist leadership. This was – paradoxically – very successfully implemented for a while. Goulash communism managed to attain what Rákosi and his team failed to achieve with violence: 30 years of Kádárism erased the national spirit from the very national-minded Hungarians. By destroying the remnants of the middle class and rural society they pulled the ground up from under the thin bourgeois strata of Hungarian society. The real tragedy of 1956 is dual: failure itself plus destruction of the remnants of Hungarian civil (bürgerlich) society, the consequences of which can still be felt today.

Seventh and last comment: Once again, we have faced the uncertainties of terminology related to 1956 during our symposium. The same speakers at times spoke about an uprising, sometimes about revolt and at other times about revolution and the fight for freedom. What is even more interesting: we have seen no attempt at clarification. Some Hungarian historians believe that the events in 1956 can only be called a 'counter-revolution' as they erupted against a system that was regarded as revolutionary by its holders. However, if we accept the definition of Norman Davies that revolution is the overthrow of a governmental system with its social and cultural foundations, then calling the events of 1956 a revolution (and, of course, a war of independence) is completely legitimate. I consider the failure of the revolution to be one of the greatest

tragedies in Hungarian history – not because we lost the war of independence against the Soviets, but because of the consequences I mentioned previously. Unlike my very clever granddaughter, I believe that it is important to preserve its memory, so that we can never forget how much work should still be done to repair the damage.

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