Anna Ziębińska-Witek

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The monograph is the result of research conducted between 2014 and 2018 in historical museums in Central and Eastern Europe. The main goal of the book is to verify the thesis about the existence of supranational collective memory in societies affected by the shared experience of totalitarianism.
The analysis of the extensive research material allowed the author to distinguish social practices and types of exhibitions. Historical policies conducted by individual states exhibit features in common, their goal being to accustom people to the difficult past, to shape the positive images of the countries and to create the cultural founding myths of the post-communist states. Historical museum exhibitions become the executors of these ideas by introducing official interpretations of the communist period.

The Author
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Musealisation of Communism in Poland and East Central Europe

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Anna Ziębińska-Witek

Musealisation of Communism in Poland and East Central Europe

Translated by Alex Shannon

NATIONAL
PROGRAMME
FOR THE
**DEVELOPMENT
OF HUMANITIES**

Cover illustration: Courtesy of Benjamin Ben Chaim.

Motto: Sharon Macdonald: Memorylands. Heritage and
Identity in Europe Today, Routledge 2013, 109.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

Welcome to Memorylands, the European heritage theme park!

Sharon Macdonald

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Introduction to the English-Language Edition

The fact that my book, translated by Alex Shannon, is being made available to a wide range of readers is, for me, both a source of satisfaction and a challenge. This monograph is the result of research I conducted in 2014–2018 in Polish and European historical museums devoted to communism. Its main goal is to verify the existence of a supranational collective memory within societies connected by a shared experience with totalitarianism.

Before countries in East Central Europe were occupied in whole or part by the Red Army in 1945 and then either drawn into the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and communist ideology (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia) or integrated as Soviet republics (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine), they were not politically, economically, or culturally homogeneous. Rather, they had different historical experiences (even in terms of the immediate past, i.e. the Second World War). In the postwar period, these countries underwent a transformation aimed at integrating them into a unified bloc characterized by ideological, political, and economic homogeneity. Although the effects of these activities were not the same in every country, many of the mechanisms used by the Soviet Union (centralization of the economy, planned activities of secret services, educational monopoly, control of the media, indoctrination, and subordination to Moscow) were implemented in a comparable manner. In this book, I do not deal with the history of communism in individual countries (though I write about it in some detail in the Introduction), but in order to make it easier for readers from outside Central and Eastern Europe to understand the importance of certain issues, I have supplemented the text with footnotes containing historical and biographical facts about events or characters key to a given part of the work.

The primary aim of this book is to answer questions about the ways in which those events have been presented in the historical museums of a region once separated from the West by the "Iron Curtain." Has this recent past been remembered by different nations of Central and Eastern Europe in a similar way? What are the similarities and differences in the stories, topoi, interpretative patterns, and political myths developed in each country? Answers to the above questions have allowed me to paint a portrait which shows not only the common features of the identity narrative structures developed in various countries of Central and Eastern Europe but also the ways the past has been interpreted so as to meet the contemporary needs in terms of both meaning and orientation.

The conclusions presented in this work concern recent history, i.e. a particularly sensitive period involving events whose participants and witnesses are still alive. This is a special moment when the societies of the former Eastern Bloc have created stories that integrate the community and establish new, post-communist identities. Historical exhibitions are a key element in these processes. Future generations will remember communism only through various kinds of representations, among which the most important (next to academic historiography) will be museums. For many people, a visit to the museum will be the only form of contact with past reality, which means that it is worth knowing what visions of the communist system are created by exhibitions and how various European museums differ from one another. This issue is particularly important in the context of the construction of a common European identity.

This book's basic assumption is the thesis that museum exhibitions are not a neutral and objective way of conveying historical knowledge, and that the ways historical knowledge is presented differ not only depending on a country's experience during the Second World War (victim, perpetrator, liberator, liberated) but also its experience after the war and the influential role played by various kinds of resentment. Naturally, historical exhibitions possess immense potential for fostering a critical approach towards the past. However, they frequently tend to prioritize the celebration of specific facts, rituals, and commemorative narratives. Some museums embrace the idea of using various interpretations of the past as an instrument to achieve political goals. A historical national museum is understood not so much as one that most fully represents the history of a given community, but rather as one that shapes this community, making it easier for visitors to build a sense of belonging to a unique nation. Such exhibitions organize the world in such a way as to facilitate or impose on viewers specific meanings that depend on current needs, that legitimize and naturalize points of view consistent with the current "raison d'état." Historical exhibitions produce politically coherent stories, reflect the current context, try to respond to the audience's expectations, and – at the same time – convey desirable values (from the perspective of national identity). Topics that "spoil" the affirmative vision of history may be omitted from the representation.

Therefore, though the subject of this work concerns the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and their difficult past, the most important thing for me is to address the role historical museums play in modern societies. The "museumization" of the past, which has accelerated in recent years, is a great challenge for researchers, curators, and the public, as well as for museums themselves, which – in the face of changes brought about by the present – are (like other cultural institutions) trying, each in their own way, to implement

strategies that attract visitors and yet maintain the museum's traditional functions. To a large extent, the future of museums depends on demands that the public will place on them. My research conclusions indicate that visitors can and should insist that exhibitions be something more than strongly persuasive and didactic narratives, that they offer a message forcing visitors to reflect on their own national myths and cultural patterns.

Introduction

Based on Michel Foucault's theory, according to which cultural practices are interpreted in terms of the state's increasing regulation of culture through power-knowledge discourses, I consider museums as a combination of historical structures, narratives, exhibition practices and strategies, and the interests and imperatives of various (governing) ideologies.[1] From the very beginning, public museums have been institutions that promote specific pro-government values and serve the needs of the state and the dominant interest groups within it. Even though they are today the object of multifaceted transformation resulting mainly from the emergence of new socio-cultural rules and technologically advanced exhibition solutions, it is impossible not to notice the continuity that characterizes the museum's main assumptions and mission. This is especially true of historical museums, which eagerly present themselves as neutral and disengaged (ethically and politically), but which are in fact deeply interested in the power that comes with the assignment of meanings to the past and present, and with the representation and creation of the official versions of history that become (presumably) generally accepted views. Contrary to what modern theories like "new museology" say, museums do not want to share power and authority with the public. Instead, they want to maintain control over it. I would describe this control as "soft" because it consists mainly in granting oneself the right to represent a given society and its highest values, which also means the power to define the community and individuals functioning within it. Technologically modern solutions do not guarantee modernity throughout an entire exhibition; they may, at the same time, strengthen well-known and deeply traditional visions of the past, make use of old metaphors, and mask ideological involvement.

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1   The concept of power-knowledge (present explicitly or implicitly in all of Michel Foucault's works) implies that power operates at all levels of society, not just from the peaks (from rulers to the ruled). Knowledge cannot be separated from the activities of power, and science cannot be separated from ideology, because as a form of knowledge it is embedded in the structures of power. See Charles C. Lemert, Garth Gillan, *Michel Foucault. Teoria społeczna i transgresja*, trans. from the English Damian Leszczyński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1998), 89–121. Many researchers treat museums as a model combination of knowledge and power. See for example *Museum Culture. Histories-Discourses-Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

The analyses I present in this book focus on very recent history, i.e. a particularly sensitive period, one that includes events which members of the oldest living generation of a given society witnessed, or in which they participated. This recent past involves roughly the last 80–90 years. From this perspective, the thirty years that have passed since the fall of communism is not a long period of time, so it can be assumed that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are still in a state of transformation and working through the events of this recent era. The societies of the former Eastern bloc certainly also have greater needs in terms of self-identification and creating integrating stories than the stabilized Western democracies. Historical exhibitions are a key element in these processes as factors in the institutionalization (musealization) of history and as a reservoir for ways of representing the past.

The answer to the question of how to think about and remember the recent past depends on many elements, such as the course communism took in a given country, the degree to which the society was entangled in the regime, the intensity of resistance or the lack of resistance, the manner in which the system collapsed, and specific social and economic determinants of transformation. In addition to historiography, which is a reference point for other activities, tools for dealing with the past include creating films and historical exhibitions, and organizing public space, as well as (in a different dimension): vetting, amnesia, forgetfulness, and the privatization of memory. The above solutions appeared with great intensity in Central and Eastern European countries after 1989, when the pressure to deal with the communist past overlapped with the need to present oneself in the most favorable way towards Western Europe.

Before I can outline the structure of the book, I need to consider some conceptual and terminological issues. The subject of my research is the representations of communism that emerged as a result of the international balance of power and the administrative division of Europe based on the 1945 Yalta agreements. Therefore, exhibitions depicting communism at earlier stages of development (e.g. the National Museum "Memory of the Victims of the Great Famine in Ukraine") are beyond the scope of this analysis. For the bloc of countries that found themselves behind the "Iron Curtain," I use a symbolic (not geographic) definition of East Central Europe, despite the fact that after the transformation in 1989 this definition lost its sharpness and is interpreted differently by researchers. I am also aware of the problematic nature of the term "communism" in relation to the political and economic system that emerged at that time and of the complexity of this issue, both in the case of Poland and other European countries. In practice, the political situation in each of the Eastern bloc countries was slightly different, which is why it would be instructive to carry

out separate definitional and terminological analyses. In general, however, we may assume that no country has ever achieved communism as an ideal phase characterized by intense industrialization, a fully controlled economy, and the complete liquidation of private property. To describe what was, in fact, a constantly "transitional" phase, such terms as socialism, real socialism, socialism "with a human face," totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and people's democracy are currently used. Since my research does not concern itself with systemic or political issues, attempts to define the actual legal and political situation of countries on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain remain beyond the scope of my scientific research.

Today, the term "communism" functions both in the description of past reality and in current political disputes, where it is used to stigmatize the enemy, who in principle can be anyone, including communist-era opposition activists. Such terms as "post-communist countries," "post-communist opposition," and "decommunization of public space" are also commonly recognized. The term "communism" is tied to strong emotions, and it has become a kind of label since it sounds much more dangerous than, for example, socialism. It is the term "communism" that appears most often in museum representations. Entire establishments are named using the term (e.g. the Museum of Communism in Prague), as are individual exhibitions (the "Poles against communism" gallery will be one of the key elements of the Polish History Museum in Warsaw). Therefore, in my research I use both this and other terms interchangeably, leaving terminological issues to historians who deal with this political period.

This book has a thematic structure given that I discuss Polish and European exhibitions together, grouping them into specific categories. Such a system has a much greater comparative and synthetic value than creating separate chapters for each country of the former Eastern bloc. Moreover, the task I set for myself was to search for common features of the representation of communism in various countries, which requires the compilation of specific exhibitions and not the generation of separate descriptions for each of them.

Contemporary historical museums are categorized in several conflicting ways: high culture – commerce, history – heritage, history – memory, research – entertainment, education – audience satisfaction, all of which causes difficulties when it comes to institutions' self-determination, methodologies applied in research of these institutions, and debates about their various functions. Chapter 1 is therefore devoted to reflection on theoretical categories and concepts influencing the understanding of museums and the scope of their activities. The purpose of this short introduction is not so much to organize the subject matter or to absolutely define a historical museum, but to show the complexity of the

issues involved here and to justify the methodology used by me and necessary in the interpretation of historical exhibitions.

Chapter 2 presents the basic trend in museology, as viewed from the perspective of the official historical policy taken by most countries of the former Eastern Bloc, which I define as identity-heroic. Together with the martyrdom representations that I discuss in Chapter 3, they establish the mainstream in the portrayal of communism in Central-Eastern Europe. In these parts of the book, I present many examples of both types of exhibitions, their characteristics, their exhibition strategies, and their possibilities and limitations. The identity type includes museums as different from each other as the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, *TerrorHáza* in Budapest, and the Occupation Museums of Latvia and Estonia.[2] It is true that they use different means of communication, but it is not the latter that is the decisive factor in whether the representation belongs to a particular current. The Tyrtaeus-martyrdom type is, one could say, a variant of the identity type, despite the fact that it evokes different emotions in visitors and clearly differs from the heroic type through its commemorative perspective. In a paradigmatic form it is represented by the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius[3] in the Memory Rooms of Victims of Communist Terror in Warsaw and in Tomaszów Lubelski. While discussing identity museums, I also present the House of European History in Brussels, which is a variant of this trend. The fragment of the Brussels exhibition devoted to communism focuses intensely on the differences between Eastern and Western Europe in the perception of modern history.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the third type of exhibition which I describe as nostalgic. The phenomenon of nostalgia and its materialization in museum exhibitions is a peculiar phenomenon characteristic of the entire region. It appears everywhere with varying intensity, despite the fact that it is not supported by the official historical policies of individual countries. Similar exhibitions use strategies characteristic of participatory institutions and focus on everyday life under communism. A model example in this category is the DDR Museum in Berlin.

I devote Chapter 5 to monuments and art belonging to the material heritage of post-communism. This usually undesirable and embarrassing legacy has remained problematic for the last thirty years. Two basic ways of dealing with

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2   At present: Museum of the Occupation of Latvia and Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom (Estonia).

3   From 2018: Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights.

these uncomfortable traces of the past are removal from public spaces and musealization, which changes the meaning of the monuments. In Chapter 6 I continue the topic of negative heritage and how to manage it. This part of my work is devoted to Nowa Huta and non-classical forms of creating a canon of memory in the form of city tourist routes and the concept of a "distributed museum." It is also an excellent example of how to deal with the difficult decline of the communist era so as not to lose its positive or exceptional elements (socialist-realist architecture), and at the same time not to glorify the past.

The aim of this book is not to evaluate individual museums; they differ too much in terms of their presentation and even potential (large state institutions have great financial resources compared to modest private undertakings) for me to make valid evaluations. Moreover, exhibitions belonging to different trends fulfill different social functions, not all of which claim to represent "national" experiences or to create broad visions covering the past epoch. For this reason, I formulate specific judgments in relation to individual exhibitions, taking into consideration the degree to which they achieve the goals they set for themselves, along with the originality of their media and individual exhibition strategies. It should be noted, however, that even those exhibitions that deal with relatively narrow issues are open to various readings and interpretations that may affect the overall image of the system. A conglomerate of many individual representations functions in the public space and constitutes a phenomenon that I refer to as the musealization of communism.

Chapter 1 Between History, Memory, and Heritage: The Case of Historical Museums

Public museums have been established continuously since the eighteenth century, but there are periods in the history of culture when their development was abrupt and very intense. These include the years 1800–1899, the 1970s and the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These museum booms happened as the result of profound socio-cultural changes, such as the formation of nation states (in the first case), the appearance of mass tourism and an increased amount of free time (in the second) and the development of a consumerist and postmodern society which broke the boundaries between low and high culture (in the third). In the latter situation, the neoliberal expansion of a previously untapped market was also a factor, which influenced the opening of earlier sanctuaries to mass audiences by including shops, restaurants and cafes in museum spaces that provide a comprehensive experience in the spending free time.[4]

The Polish museum boom began after the political transformation of 1989, but the best conditions for this boom were established only after 2004, when Poland joined the European Union and began a period of solid economic development, all of which led to the implementation of museum projects and allowed museum directors to apply for additional grants and funds.[5] New museum buildings have been the result of international competitions, to which architects from all over the world apply (POLIN. Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Museum of the Second World War) or are created thanks to the revitalization of post-industrial facilities (the Warsaw Rising Museum or the Mazovian Center for Contemporary Art). The transformations of museum architecture (from classic palaces and temples through modernist geometric forms to the currently

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4   Jens Andermann and Silke Arnold-de Simine, "Introduction: Memory, Community and the New Museum," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29 (2012), no. 1: 7.

5   After 1989, such spectacular museum projects as the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Krakow, the Warsaw Rising Museum in Warsaw, the Museum of Art in Łódź, and POLIN The Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, the Silesian Museum in Katowice, the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk were realized. Work is underway on the Polish History Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. These are, of course, only the largest projects. Many smaller museums were created or have been thoroughly modernized (e.g. the Frédéric Chopin Museum in Warsaw).

dominant postmodern buildings full of symbolic references or popular post-industrial architecture) are accompanied by revolutionary changes in exhibition strategies.

It is not without reason that most of the new museums are historical museums, and these are the focus of attention for museologists, audiences, and politicians. The remarkable metamorphosis of museum institutions – in terms of financing, attendance, and image – has been quickly noticed by decision-makers and is increasingly being used for purposes other than cognitive, aesthetic, or educational purposes. Museum exhibitions often become instruments of historical politics and expressions of particular visions of the world and particular ideologies. For the purposes of this work, I understand historical politics as the idea of using historical knowledge and various interpretations of the past as a tool of social and political influence.[6] The implementation of similar intentions is facilitated by narrative exhibitions that depart from displaying a traditionally understood museum object towards the use of para-theatrical forms, copies, scenography, and technologically advanced multimedia installations. The coherent lines of interpretation presented by them are easy to use politically, which brings in its wake numerous problems, because although the exhibitions have never been neutral in terms of worldview, the high degree of ideologization causes them to lose their greatest value: authority and social trust.

A museum has the potential to discover its own conceptual order, even to reverse or criticize it ("critical museum"[7]). It is an institution capable of reflecting on its own status and identity and contesting specific discourses of power-knowledge, so it is certainly not a place that is only defined by its objects and collections. Therefore, the intensive emergence of new museum institutions is

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6   Joanna Kalicka and Piotr Witek, entry "Polityka historyczna" in *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Robert Traba (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2014), 378–387. The term "historical politics" is now heavily loaded with meaning and has become the axis of academic debates and the source of political disputes. It would be difficult to list all the works devoted to this subject. They include: Robert Traba, *Historia-przestrzeń dialogu* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2006), Lech Nijakowski*, Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2008), Anna Wolff-Powęska, "Polskie spory o historię i pamięć. Polityka historyczna," *Przegląd Zachodni* (2007), no. 1, and Piotr Witek, "Doktryna polityki historycznej, czyli 'dramat' w kilku aktach," *Historyka* (2011), no. 16.

7   See Piotr Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne* (Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2011).

accompanied by debates on changes in their meaning and functions, and on their impact on the perception of social reality.[8]

In Michel Foucault's understanding, the museum is a heterotopia; it combines in one place dimensions incompatible in the spatial and temporal aspect: objects from different periods and places, collected in a limited sphere, protected against the erosion of time. The museum is a space isolated from linear time and yet representing this time.[9] A museum heterotopia is also a space of difference: it represents, interprets, contests, and reverses the cultural order with which it is associated. For the visitor, the museum has always been a place of reflection on the order of things and the problem of compliance of representations with variously perceived reality. Changes in exhibitions concern only the way in which the museum presents itself as a space of representation. Eighteenth-century museums offered virtually no textual interpretation and required viewers to reflect on the order of objects and its adequacy in relation to the magnificence of nature. The authoritative nineteenth-century exhibitions abounded in didactic texts and presented the order of things as historical and progressive, leaving little room for challenges to curatorial authority. Currently, some museums invite visitors to reflect on whether the interpretation presented (and the presented order) are the only possible choices.[10]

A museum is also a juxtaposition of various semantic orders, which is especially clear in the case of historical museums, which operate in three overlapping and blurred spheres: history, collective memory, and heritage. In practice, the task of museum discourse is to naturalize the relationship between these three discourses: history (both as *res gestae* and *rerum gestarum*) is used to build a coherent identity and cultural memory of a community, construct a basic canon of knowledge about the past and a sense of pride in the national heritage. Thus, museumized fragments of a past reality are treated as a tool to achieve specific, contemporary goals.

In a 1963 essay entitled "Musealisierung als Kompensation," philosopher Joachim Ritter used the concept of musealization as a category to describe a

8   See Anke te Heesen, *Teorie muzeum*, trans. Agata Teperek, ed. Anna Ziębińska-Witek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2016).

9   Michel Foucault, "Inne przestrzenie," trans. Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, *Teksty drugie* (2015), no. 6: 117–125; see also Kevin Hetherington, "The Utopics of Social Ordering – Stonehenge as a Museum Without Walls," in *Theorizing Museums,* eds. Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 158–160.

10   Beth Lord, "Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy," *Museum and Society* 1 (2006), no. 4: 6–7.

situation in which the past, which was once tradition and an organic part of the *Lebenswelt* (a social world perceived subjectively as real), enters modernity and becomes institutionalized. According to Ritter, as of the end of the nineteenth century, museums assumed the role of cultural memory and compensated for the erosion of tradition. In 1980, Herman Lübbe noted the "dramatic growth" of museums throughout the Western world and recognized (as had Ritter) that it was a symptom of the accelerated institutionalization of a past that was increasingly distinct from the present. Cultural events and practices become history faster and are subject to musealization. The future, on the other hand, is less and less predictable and has few roots in the present. According to Lübbe, this situation creates a lack of confidence in individuals and social groups who begin to place increasing trust in formal systems rather than in their direct knowledge. Musealization thus understood is a form of anchoring and a way of gaining certainty (a sense of permanence) in the face of loss of tradition caused by the rapid pace of technological, social and cultural change.[11] These views are close to Andreas Huyssen's so-called compensation theory, which includes a conservative critique of modernization and points to the erosion of tradition, the entropy of stability, and the increasing progress of science, technology and innovation as the source of problems that societies and individuals have with identity. According to this concept, a museum compensates for the loss of stability and offers traditional forms of cultural identity, while pretending that these cultural traditions have not been changed by modernization.[12]

From a strictly museological point of view, the term "musealization" means the physical or conceptual separation and exclusion of a particular element from its natural or cultural environment and granting it a museum status.[13] This "element" is most often an object which, after going through the entire process including specific phases (such as selection, research, and expertise, giving it new meaning within a collection), becomes a museum object. All the above steps are in line with the currently applicable criteria and are tantamount to separating the object from its original context and creating new relationships with other objects. The musealization of entire fragments of the past sociopolitical reality is a much more complicated task. By means of various exhibition strategies, complex

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11   See Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London-New York: Routledge 2013), 138.

12   See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia (*London and New York: Routledge,1995), 25–35.

13   *Key concepts of museology,* eds. André Desvallées, François Mairesse, Armand Colin (Paris 2010), 50–51.

and often long-lasting historical processes with a multifaceted genesis, course and consequences are "translated" into the form of exhibition, i.e. a particular cultural work combining, within its structure, elements of architecture, art and language, subordinated to a specific function and addressed to specific types of recipients.[14] The main role of a historical exhibition is not to convey the historical truth about the past, but to build a cultural memory and the canon of community knowledge; thus, in this case, musealization is mainly based on the selection and attribution of a specific meaning to the story presented at the exhibition.

Today, cultural memory is defined as long-term memory that serves to transfer experience and knowledge across generations and relies on external media and institutions that provide information.[15] It aims to facilitate communication in a long-term historical perspective and stabilize an identity based on tradition and wide-ranging historical experiences. Cultural memory's repertoire, transferred to material carriers (artifacts, texts), requires constant adaptation and renewal, as well as reading and discussion, since it is constantly adapted to the needs and requirements of the present.[16] Aleida Assman emphasizes that cultural memory, "[…] thanks to the built-in relationship of tensions between memory and oblivion, conscious and unconscious, the visible and the hidden, is incomparably more complex and able to change (but also more fragile and problematic) than collective memory, focused on uniformity and unambiguity."[17] The researcher also differentiates the structure of cultural memory defined in this way into stored and functional memory. The former accepts and stores enormous amounts of increasing scientific and historical knowledge on material carriers, and the latter "selects from this undifferentiated mass of contents that are worth keeping in living memory and have the potential to build identity or function as landmarks."[18] While stored memory means objectified cultural knowledge

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14   Jerzy Świecimski, *Wystawy muzealne,* vol. 1: *Studium z estetyki wystaw*, ed. Jan-Kajetan Młynarski (Kraków 1992), 55. This is one of the basic definitions of a museum exhibition; for more on this topic see Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach. Studium ekspozycji Holokaustu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Marii Curie-Sklodowskiej, 2011), particularly Chapter 2.

15   Aleida Assmann, "Cztery formy pamięci," in Assmann, *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, ed. Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, trans. from the German Karolina Sidowska (Warszawa: WUW, 2013), 55.

16   Ibid., 56.

17   Ibid., 57.

18   "Pamięć magazynująca i funkcjonalna," in Aleida Assman, *Między historią…*, trans from the German Karolina Sidowska, 67. Both memories are related to each other. We need functional memory to establish selection, validity, and relevance criteria for

recorded in various systems of signs, functional memory is a cultural knowledge binding for all members of a given group and "which should be assimilated in the process of upbringing, embodied, taught and made an integral part of itself so that the participants of a given culture can identify with it and feel belonging to it."[19] In other words, stored memory saves the past in the form of an archive, and functional memory preserves the past as the present in the form of a canon.[20] The archive creates meta-memory, provides a counterbalance to (necessarily) reductive active memory, stores what is forgotten,[21] even though – from the perspective of community identity and control over the world view of groups and individuals – the canon is much more important; hence the importance attached to historical exhibitions.

What the canon of knowledge is concretely, and what social functions it performs, is accurately defined by Andrzej Szpociński, who defines it as "[…] a set of people, events, phenomena, and patterns belonging to the past, the knowledge of which is the most common and considered part of compulsory common knowledge. It consists of a resource for this information that should be known by every person functioning as a full member of the community. The canon of memory relates to a specific community, and its elements symbolize the group, as well as the ideas, values and patterns of behavior considered by its members as particularly important."[22] Inclusion in the canon is a process involving selection, value, and duration. Subsequent generations need not re-establish the canon. It lasts longer than entire generations; it is reinterpreted in line with the spirit of the times; it plays the role of the active memory that defines and supports cultural identity; and it is highly selective and built on the principle of exclusion.[23] Therefore, the most important public institutions that deal with the education of wide social groups are undoubtedly an extremely effective tool

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stored knowledge. We need stored memory to critically observe functional memory and to realize what has been discarded. See ibid., 72.

19   Aleida Assman, *Cztery formy*…, 61.

20   Aleida Assmann, "Dynamika pamięci kulturowej – między pamiętaniem a zapominaniem," in Assmann, *Miedzy historią*…, trans. from German Aleksandra Konarzewska, 76.

21   Ibid., 86.

22   Andrzej Szpociński, *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski: analiza słuchowisk historycznych dla szkół podstawowych 1951–1984* (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1989), 21–22.

23   Aleida Assman, *Dynamika pamięci kulturowej*, 78, 86.

for creating a canon of knowledge and creating cultural memory. That having been said, this is not the only sphere in which their impact can be entered.

It would be a mistake to assume that in museums we are dealing only with a ready-to-absorb collection of appropriately selected and presented facts from the past. Historical exhibition – we should repeat – is also a form of social practice containing – in addition to historical knowledge – rich elements of visual and material culture as well as multi-level relations of power-knowledge and power-ideology, which are embedded in forms resulting from changing exhibition strategies. History museums simultaneously represent certain issues and historical processes, just as they create, mediate, and regulate their understanding and meaning.

Exhibitions understood in this way fit into Jeffrey Olick's concept of collective memory, which – among the many memory processes and practices (neurological, cognitive, personal, and collective) – identifies supra-individual social structures influencing the memory of an individual. The researcher distinguishes those patterns of remembering and group thinking that are irreducible to the individual. Remembering is an active and constructive process (not a reproduction), and the past is processed (created, recreated) in the present and for the needs of the present. It is this model of collective memory that constitutes the foundation and explanation for the formation of mythology, tradition, and heritage. In this sense, "individual and collective identity […] are two sides of a coin rather than different phenomena."[24] In the media of collective memory, which include museums (as well as political holidays and celebrations,

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24   Jeffrey K. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999), no 3, 341–342. The second model of collective memory describe by Olick is the so-called collected memory. At this point, Olick emphasizes the individualistic nature of the remembering process, which does not exclude the influence of the group/community on the shape of these memories. However, the main foundation of the above model is the thesis that it is the individual who remembers (alone or as part of a group). According to Olick, this division helps avoid the danger of "slipping into a metaphysics of group mind." All symbols and deep structures shared by a community make sense only when individuals treat them as such and implement them in social practice. The model of memories or accumulated memory does not assume the existence of a community that has a collective memory, nor the existence of a "store" from which memories can be derived. See ibid., 338. See also Maria Kobielska, "Pamięć zbiorowa w centrum nowoczesności. Ujęcie Jeffreya K. Olicka," *Teksty Drugie* (2010), no. 6: 179–194.

ruins and monuments, historiography, and historical sources), not one past is created, but various pasts, which depend on the specificity of a given medium.[25]

Olick's concept of collective memory – which assumes endless mediation between the past and present and various entities – overlaps in many places with the theory of heritage, also understood as a social and cultural process involving acts of engagement and communication, and – importantly, giving meaning to the past in the present. The concept of heritage is not new, but today, due to scientific reflection on it in the public discourse, it has become self-aware. The growing interest in heritage dates back to the 1980s. It commonly includes memorials, monuments, entire cities, historical sites and, of course, museums. One researcher of this phenomenon, David Lowenthal, believes that the reason for such a high popularity of heritage sites is the kind of profound socio-cultural change that brings with it deepening isolation and separation of the individual from family, of family from the neighborhood community, of the community from the nation, and even the disturbance of an individual's identity. Migrations, along with increasing threats (technological, economic, political) cause a growth in awareness of the past and the need to have one's own heritage.[26] It is not surprising that these are the same factors that occur in the above-mentioned theories of musealization and compensation. Heritage sites are usually a complex space socially constructed by visitors' interactions and perceptions. These places create a "sense of the past" and an experience of the past of varying strengths and forms. They are most powerful when the past is visible, alive, and credible to visitors.[27]

According to the theory put forward by Laurajane Smith, which I have adopted for the purposes of my analyses here, the essence of heritage is not only material objects or places identified as valuable, because nothing is naturally and necessarily valuable. It is also the current cultural processes and the activities to which they are subjected that cause those objects and places to be perceived as physical symbols or specific cultural and social events that are carriers of

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25   In his use of mnemonic media, Olick modeled himself on the work of Peter Reichel. See Peter Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung. Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit* (München: Carl Hanser, 1995), cited in Maria Kobielska, op. cit., 186.

26   David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6. Lowenthal, "Natural and Cultural Heritage," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 11 (2005), no. 1: 81–92.

27   Mary-Catherine E. Garden, "The Heritagescape: Looking at Landscape of the Past," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (2006), no. 5: 396, 408.

various meanings important from the perspective of the community. In other words, certain fragments of the material and non-material world are subjected to appropriate management processes contemporarily; in this way, "heritage" is created. It has nothing to do with "finding" places or objects and keeping them "for posterity." It is the process of taking places, objects and phenomena that reflect contemporary and social values, debates and aspirations and identifying them as "heritage," giving them meaning and value as "heritage."[28] Heritage is a matter of continuous negotiations about how to make use of the past, about collective or individual memories, and about ways of living and expressing identity. There is a set of practices that focus on heritage management and conservation, and regulating public visits to similar sites. These practices are created and authorized by institutions appointed for this purpose, most often dealing with tourism and the organization of free time. Heritage is created and maintained through instructions, protocols, expertise, techniques, and procedures, as well as economic and political decisions. Tangible objects and places can serve as tools or means of support to facilitate this process, but they cannot signify this process (and they are not the process itself).[29]

History museums have an extremely important role to play in the above-mentioned activities related to collective memory and heritage. As cultural and (most often) government institutions, they embody acts of remembrance and constitute and positively value the very idea of heritage, while at the same time indicating resources that can be used to define or redefine a community's identity. Among these resources are specific, selected historical facts, material and immaterial objects (ideas, traditions, etc.), and entire mental structures which help give meaning to chaotic reality. The heritage presented at exhibitions has an intellectual and emotional impact, evokes a sense of pride in belonging to a given community, and is, at the same time, based on historical research.

Notions of heritage and history overlap in many places. In both cases, practitioners declare a will to get to things "as they really were," to recall the old heroes, to evoke empathy through imagination, and to make the past more accessible. Despite being linked to historical research, the differences are nevertheless significant, as heritage presents an identity that literally means

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28   Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 3. The idea of heritage as an act of communication and meaning, and as a kind of experience, is not consistent with the professional or "expert" view of heritage, which emphasizes the tasks of conservation, management, and performance of specific functions; ibid., 2.

29   Ibid., 12–13.

immutability over time. Material culture is not understood here as representing or "transferring" this identity, but as something that materializes or objectifies it. Cultural heritage is therefore a discourse and a set of practices focused on the continuity, durability and materiality of a community (usually a national community) and acts as a kind of physical evidence, a material testimony to its identity.[30] Therefore, if we consider heritage as an activity that establishes and symbolizes social cohesion and membership in real or imagined communities and maintains the community's continuous identity, and if we regard history (*historia rerum gestarum*) as an attempt to grasp historical processes in all their complexity with the use of a scientific apparatus, then we must recognize that history museums are located in the interests of the former rather than the latter. Museum exhibitions remove what is strange and incomprehensible, and they offer visions that are clearer than historiography. None of which means that heritage merely evokes moments of a nation's triumph, given that defeat can have an impact on identity that is equal to victory; misfortune strengthens ties, and the recreation of traumatic events keeps the past present. In this case, however, heritage becomes problematic for perpetrators and witnesses, because it offers an identity from which many would like to distance themselves, even if it may of course be considered part of their history. This problem is particularly evident in museums devoted to communism throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

The above considerations point to significant difficulties in how we define and give meaning to the notion of a historical museum. A certain constellation of overlapping and sometimes conflicting historical discourses, of (cultural) memory, and of heritage as employed within which museum institutions, lends itself to the increasingly frequent use, in the context of historical exhibitions, of the term "public history" or "applied history."[31] While there are many definitions

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30   Sharon Macdonald, "Undesirable Heritage: Fascist Material Culture and Historical Consciousness in Nuremberg," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (2006), no. 1: 10–11.

31   Some researchers (especially in the field of German research) separate these two concepts by pointing out that public history has a wider scope and is better conceptualized than applied history. See Cord Arendes, Juliane Tomann, "Wytyczanie dróg ku sferze publicznej: czym są public history i historia stosowana?" in *Historia w kulturze ponowoczesnej. Koncepcje – metody – perspektywy badawcze*, eds. Miloš Řezník, Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska, Sabine Stach and Katrin Stoll (Kraków: Universitas, 2017), 43–60. However, these attempts do not convince me, because both categories regard the process of communication between academic history (research discipline) and the public sphere as the foundation.

of public history, their main element is the existence of an interactive process between the historian, the audience and the historical topic. Public or applied history operates outside academia, involves the presentation of historical knowledge (in various forms) to the general public, and is based on the belief that history can be taught in many different places and in many different ways. What mainly distinguishes public history from academic history is a focus on the audience and the involvement of the latter in the processes of knowledge production.[32]

Public history is associated with a wide range of activities that include protection and maintenance (cultivation, commemoration) of historical places, obtaining archival knowledge, museum construction, oral history, memory, and other related fields. We can trace the beginnings of public history in the West to the 1960s and 1970s, when feminist movements and oral history shed light on the experience of people whose historical mainstream has so far ignored. Robert Traba also notes that in the case of the United States and Western Europe, public history represented an attempt to respond to interest in the past in public spaces and the growing demand for historical knowledge. "The concept of public history was used to define the non-university presence of history in the form of political advice, various forms of history's presence in the media, in the form of museums and places commemorating the past, popular science publications, etc."[33] Public history now encompasses historical research, analysis and presentation, but also, at least to some extent, the needs of modern social life. In this case, history is not an "art for art's sake" (history for its own sake) – i.e. it does not focus only on research and academic purposes – but takes into consideration the needs of individuals, local groups, national communities or institutions.[34] Public history engages a wide audience in the creation of the its own stories about the past (discussion about this process is an integral part of its practice), promotes the use of historical methods (with varying degrees of effect) and is usually handled by people with historical education (although sometimes from outside the academic circles).

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32 Compare the different definitions of "public history" on the website: http://www.publichistory.org/what_is/definition.html (retrieved: 24 November 2014).

33 Robert Traba, "Pożyteczność uczenia się z historii. Historia stosowana: między 'History Sells' a 'Public History'," in *Historie wzajemnych oddziaływań*, ed. Robert Traba (Berlin/Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2014), 68.

34 Hilda Kean, "Introduction," in *The Public History Reader*, eds. Hilda Kean and Paul Martin (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), xiv–xvi.

Despite the great emphasis on the usefulness of knowledge about the past, it is wrong to understand public history as a story prepared "for the public." This approach presupposes an active professional (historian) acting for passive viewers who need to be "engaged," For example, Joanna Wojdon, explaining the public historian's tasks, writes:

> Museums and other institutions employing public historians open themselves up to recipients, reaching their environments – through readings, meetings, workshops, as well as mass events that enjoy unwavering popularity, such as archaeological picnics or historical reconstructions. The duties of public historians include both the creation of their concept and the entire logistics of preparation and presentation, establishing cooperation with other professionals (e.g. artists) and amateurs (e.g. reconstruction groups), promotion and advertising, as well as evaluation.[35]

Contrary to what Wojdon writes, involvement should result from the real needs and interests of particular people, and should not be a top-down process. Robert Archibald emphasizes:

> Public historians do not own history. History is owned by those whose past is described in the narrative because that story, their own version of it, resides in their memories and establishes their identities. If public involvement is not integral in the process of public history, the conclusions are meaningless.[36]

In museum practice, this involves sharing (curatorial) authority and democratizing access to the creative work of an exhibition, an approach which is in fact still a very rare.[37]

Public history is constantly evolving, a fact which is connected with the growing interest in the past and activity related to historical knowledge, which has in turn become a form of spending free time. Jerome de Groot writes about the "consumption" of history in contemporary culture, which has been increasing since the 1990s. History as a product functions in the public space in various ways, related to nationality, nostalgia, commodity, disclosure and knowledge, but also to personal testimony and experience. The past has become something

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35   See for example Joanna Wojdon, "Public history czyli historia w przestrzeni publicznej," *Klio* 34 (2015), 33.
36   Robert Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community*, American Association for State and Local History (New York: Altamira 1999), 155–156.
37   See for example Anna Ziębińska-Witek, "Muzea historyczne w XXI wieku: transformacja czy trwanie?" *Kultura współczesna* 4 (2015): 106–123 and Michael Frisch, ed., *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 1990.

that anyone can literally take into their own hands, discover for themselves and experience in different ways depending on the medium. The audience is encouraged and involved in "history in the making," becoming a self-conscious historical subject.[38]

Unfortunately, the universality of a phenomenon does not affect its quality. It is unlikely that in the near future public history could fulfill the function described by Robert Traba: "The main task of applied history is to shape / teach historical imagination and acquire workshop competences, i.e. the ability to categorize stories about the past by critical analysis of diverse source material."[39] Traba would like applied history to preserve and care for a balance between scientifically understood cultural history, historical knowledge and emotional experiencing of the past, which, in his opinion, may lead to myth-making, sentimentalization or hypostasis of history, i.e. giving historical phenomena the meaning of an independent existence, rather than relational phenomena that can be subject to criticism and redefinition.[40]

In the public sphere, there are many objections to the forms adopted by public history, including accusations of nationalism, ignorance, anachronism, succumbing to commercialism, promoting kitsch, distorting the past, and stoking antagonisms. The most common fear, however, is that public history undermines the authority of "real" history. Academic historians see themselves as the sole guardians of the past, the authenticity of which is at stake, and which they try to defend against the dangers of a market-driven, consumerist approach. First of all, however, public history has already developed independently of the actions of academic historians (and I would even say that because of them, since they are rarely interested in disseminating the results of their scholarship outside of university halls), and second, because the defense of "true history" requires recognizing how it works in contemporary culture. The directions in which public history is developing may seem problematic, but it is hard to deny that they strongly influence the ways in which the individual conceptualizes himself and the social world.

History museums in the mainstream of public history now occupy a prominent place for several reasons, influenced by the so-called "New Museology," which should "[…] be based on specific social realities and should aim for liberation,

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38   Jerome de Groot, *Consuming history. Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 3–4.

39   Robert Traba, op. cit., 91–92.

40   Ibid., 83.

development and transformation of society through the awareness and participation of the population."[41] In this case, the extension of museology's traditional roles, consisting in the identification and conservation of objects and education, turned out to be of key importance to the idea of communicating with the public. The declaration outlining the basic functions of museums in the twenty-first century proclaims:

> [Museology] preserves the material fruit of past civilizations, and that it protects those that bear witness to present day aspirations and technologies, the new museology […] is first and foremost concerned with the development of populations, reflecting the modern principles that have driven its evolution while simultaneously associating them to projects for the future.[42]

It is therefore an idea to promote an "active" museum involving the involvement of people in the processes of representation and interpretation, which is in line with the main goals of public history.

Another issue affecting the popularity of museums in the public sphere is the increasing perception of historical exhibitions as a reflection of the self-image of a nation/group – that is, how certain communities want to be perceived "from the outside." Exhibitions become a set of cultural patterns teaching the community how to identify and define itself, how to indicate the "other," and how to create a national "brand." The creation of a "museum experience" makes the exhibition ever more emotional, which is another indispensable element of public history. At the same time (unlike amateur grassroots activities) the authority of the institution remains unchallenged, ideas (national) and objects ("speaking for themselves") give visitors the impression that there is unquestionable and indirect evidence supporting certain theses. The museum is viewed as the owner of national treasures and a place to disseminate knowledge, which renders the nation's cultural attributes concrete and visible.

The above theoretical reflections lead to the proposition that, operating at the intersection of the discourses of (cultural) memory, history and heritage, historical exhibitions are the product of the present and instruments of historical politics, and to the same extent they reveal what the fragments of the past hide,

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41   Stephen E. Weil, *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 55–56.

42   *Declaration of Quebec: Basic Principles for a New Museology* and Pierre Mayrand, "The New Museology Proclaimed," *Museum* 148 (1985), 201. For more on the "new museology," see Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach*, op. cit., 25–32 and Piotr Piotrowski, op. cit., 13–14.

while the stories presented in them strengthen or legitimize dominant social norms and political goals. Various exhibition strategies hide from the public the conclusion that in practice the past presented in museums is not actually what happened, it is not an "objective truth," but only a certain concept or representation. The act of creating a museum exhibition is an act of creating: a new meaning, a new understanding, a new interpretation, or a new world that never really existed. Thus, curators are the creators of a reality that can be called "negotiated reality."[43] Beyond that, exhibitions are shaped by historians-experts, designers dealing with the visual side, and a "sponsor" – that is, the private or (more often) state-owned element. Relevant governmental players generally dominate the interpretation from a political perspective, an influence that tends to mystify rather than explain the relationship between the past and the present, to ensure rather than undermine the prevailing status quo. Lastly, the audience itself is an active party, especially when the topic is recent history, when the memory of past events is still alive. The audience has their beliefs and memories and arrives at the museum waiting for their confirmation. All these dependencies make the interpretations of museum exhibitions a challenge that requires knowledge from many academic disciplines and a specially developed methodology.

1.1. Research methodology

Placing a museum in a discursive perspective is not (…) a gesture of some fashionable linguistic imperialism (…); rather, such a perspective strips museum activity of innocence and imposes on it a responsibility that belongs both to itself and to its users.

Mieke Bal[44]

The aim of my research on museums of communism in Poland and Central-Eastern Europe thirty years after the transformation is neither to explore past reality nor to delve into historical research conducted in individual European countries. According to my assumptions, the analyses of exhibitions should lead to a critical deconstruction of national stories about the past presented in

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43 Jeanne Canizzo, "How sweet it is: cultural politics in Barbados," *Muse*, Winter 1987, cited in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Making Histories, Making Memories*, in *Making Histories in Museums*, ed. Gaynor Kavanagh (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), 6.

44 Mieke Bal, "Dyskurs muzeum," trans. Małgorzata Nitka, in *Muzeum sztuki. Antologia*, ed. Maria Popczyk (Kraków: Universitas, 2005), 367.

museum representations. In other words, the conclusions do not concern the scientific reconstruction of what happened in the past in the light of different and proven sources of information, but focus on museum representations, that is, specific social constructions of past events that are created for their usefulness in meeting the requirements of the present.

Given the previous considerations indicating the complex nature of cultural works such as museum exhibitions and the overlapping fields of their activity and influence, I decided that the most effective framework for their interpretation is discourse analysis. According to Michel Foucault, the author of this term, discourse consists of:

> (…) relations between statements (even if the author is unaware of them; even if the statements do not have the same author; even if the authors were unaware of each other's existence); relations between groups of statements thus established (even if these groups do not concern the same, or even adjacent, fields; even if they do not possess the same formal level; even if they are not the locus of assignable exchanges); relations between statements and groups of statements and events of a quite different kind (technical, economic, social, political).[45]

Gillian Rose defines discourse as a particular knowledge of the world that shapes the way we understand it.[46] In this book we are dealing with a mainly (but not only) visual discourse arising in close connection with socio-political and economic events taking place in a given society. A common element of this discourse in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe is the complex reactions of societies to the communist system introduced at the end of the Second World War and lasting until 1989[47] and the dramatic transformation that followed. In her writing about the analysis of visual discourse as a research method, Rose divides analysis into two separate variants: the first focuses on how discourse is expressed through various types of visual representations and verbal texts, and the second analyzes the practices of individual institutions.[48] In research on

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45   Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Psychology Press, 2002), 32. I dealt more broadly with the methodology of researching museum exhibitions in *Historia w muzeach*, op.cit, 107–131.

46   According to Rose, discursive formation is a way of combining meanings in a specific discourse; see Gillian Rose, *Interpretacja materiałów wizualnych. Krytyczna metodologia badań nad wizualnością,* trans. Ewa Klekot (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010), 174–175.

47   The year 1989 is a symbolic date, the system continued in some countries until 1990 or 1991.

48   Ibid., 178–179.

exhibitions, I am mainly interested in the area of producing meanings by specific representations, which I explore in several dimensions: technological (the elements that make up the exhibition), compositional (its spatial organization), content (the specific facts and historical phenomena it presents, the elements that are most important, and those that are omitted) and the world view (the ideas or messages a specific representation carries, the social functions it performs).

The study of museum exhibitions requires the use of a methodology combining methods used in anthropology and visual history[49]– i.e. disciplines dealing with analysis of visual representations in a historical context, with the interpretation of written texts and material culture. Particularly important is the analysis of museum objects, which are not simply material objects, but polysemantic exhibits that can be read in the following dimensions: cognitive, aesthetic, emotional and affective.[50] In the case of historical museums, an object also acts as a witness or a document / testimony, which, however, depends on its appropriate conceptualization, and which Wojciech Gluziński calls a "documentary intention." It consists in treating an object as a transmitter of information and indicating or lending it the features that are its carriers (on the part of the recipient, i.e. the viewer).[51] The object has a documentary value only in relation to the phenomenon previously identified. Gluziński writes: "No object, in itself, separated from the reality that surrounds us, documents anything, as long as it has not been selected in accordance with any conceptualization of phenomena. Therefore, one cannot talk about the documentation of reality

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49   For more on visual history see, among others, Piotr Witek, *Andrzej Wajda jako historyk. Metodologiczne studium z historii wizualnej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2016); Dorota Skotarczak, *Historia wizualna* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2013); Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), Peter Burke, *Naoczność. Materiały wizualne jako świadectwa historyczne,* trans. Justyna Hunia (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2012).

50   The importance of the physical properties of an object is underlined by researchers representing the "materialistic turn" in research on culture. I do not agree with the thesis that the cultural context and information about the object are not of great importance in its interpretation, but the materiality of the object undoubtedly gives it a certain kind of power and even agency that written texts or new technologies do not possess. On the "materialistic turn" in museology, see *Museum Materialities. Object, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

51   Wojciech Gluziński, *U podstaw muzeologii* (Warszawa Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980), 296–297.

as such, but only about the documentation of specific, identified phenomena (…)."[52] Here, however, it should be added that reading the object (and the entire exhibition) preferred by the creators is only one of the possible readings, because the relationship between the object and collection, object and exhibition, and object, exhibition and audience are very complex and carry many possible (and opposing) meanings. In my research, I am interested in both intentional (historical interpretation) and potentially different (adaptive interpretation) readings of specific representations.[53] Therefore, in addition to the analyses of individual exhibitions, I refer to the literature on the subject describing the genesis of exhibitions, to interviews with curators, and wherever possible I spoke with museum staff. Historical interpretation, i.e. the full reconstruction of the creators' intentions, is never possible, but in the case of museum exhibitions it is impossible to ignore them without damaging the entire picture.

In my earlier texts, especially *Historia w muzeach. Studium ekspozycji Holokaustu*, I described many theoretical problems related to the social tasks of museums, the construction of exhibitions and interpreting visual discourses and their particular variations – that is, of historical exhibitions. In this book, I do not discuss my earlier conclusions, but rather test and verify them based on broader research material. Within the very broad structure of discourse analysis, however, many minor theoretical concepts appear in the book. I do not devote separate chapters to them (as a rule, there is already extensive literature on the subject), but I show how they are implemented in practice, on specific empirical material – that is, in a given museum exhibition. Due to the differences between exhibitions and the contexts in which they arise, "mid-range" concepts work better in interpretations than attempts to apply one "big theory" that would cover all exhibitions or (more broadly) historical representations, e.g. functionalism, structuralism or constructivism. Critical interpretation and analysis of exhibitions serve to decode the views on the recent history contained in them and to reconstruct the (museum) story of communism created for the needs of a given community. Visual representations are never innocent, and their final meaning cannot be fully predicted; each exhibition's potential is usually greater than the creators assume. The theoretical concepts that I apply help to deconstruct it, at least to some extent.

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52   Ibid., 303.

53   For more on various types of interpretation, see for example Henryk Markiewicz, "O interpretacji semantycznej utworów literackich," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 74/2 (1983).

The analyses I present in the subject literature are referred to as collective case studies – i.e. the subjection of a certain number of cases to detailed studies in order to better understand a given phenomenon, draw general conclusions or deepen one's knowledge about wider processes.[54] This method allowed me to select those exhibitions that I found them to be most representative for a given country or trend and the most interesting in terms of form and content, and visually. Therefore, I did not intend to describe all the exhibitions devoted to communism, although I tried to analyze as many of them as possible in order to base my conclusions on a solid, empirical foundation. Some of the discussed expositions can be considered autotelic cases – that is, cases that are interesting in themselves – while others are meaningful only in a broader context. However, I found the search for regularities or patterns more useful than focusing on individual cases, because I wanted to draw general conclusions that may encourage further research and provoke questions about the limits of permissible generalizations.

I devoted the most attention to Polish exhibitions, mainly permanent ones, although I also took into account some temporary exhibitions – when they were particularly important – that is, when they reflected an exhibition strategy important from my perspective, or when there was simply no permanent exhibition and the museum was an important point on the map of communism representation, such as the PRL Museum (in organization) in Nowa Huta. In some cases (e.g. the Silesian Museum in Katowice), I analyzed only fragments of exhibitions thematically related to the historical period of interest to me. I also took into consideration the more important memory rooms to demonstrate the techniques of representation used by these institutions. In the case of exhibitions in Central and Eastern Europe, I selected representations for analysis, which – for many reasons – can be considered a reflection of the cultural memory and historical policy of a given country.

The scope of my research does not include concepts or scenarios of exhibitions that are yet to be created (Polish History Museum – Gallery "Poles against communism," Museum of Nowa Huta, or the Museum of Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the People's Republic of Poland) or were supposed to be created but for various reasons were not realized (SocLand – the Museum of Memory and Communism in Warsaw). As I emphasize many times, a museum

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54 Robert E. Stake, "Jakościowe stadium przypadku," trans. Marta Sałkowska *in Metody badań jakościowych*, vol. 1, eds. Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010), 623–654.

exhibition is a cultural work that belongs mainly to visual discourse and can only be assessed and analyzed in this form. The scenario or concept – even the richest one – in no way reflects the specifics of a museum representation or its meanings. On their basis, it is possible to draw conclusions about the content of a future exhibition, which is not enough to form general conclusions. Moreover, there are sometimes differences between the conception and the realization that change the final meaning of the whole. I also didn't research internet projects that require a completely different methodology.

In exceptional cases, I analyzed catalogs of exhibitions that no longer exist or are temporary (e.g. "They never had it better? Modernization of everyday life in socialist Yugoslavia," or "Communism – la belle époque. Everyday life in Eastern bloc countries in the seventies"), which was justified by the importance of a given exhibition for the issues discussed in this book. Catalogs are elements of museum interpretation techniques and are carriers of specific knowledge, but they are only an addition to the exhibition, therefore they were not my primary research material.

In the latter group, what draws one's attention are the Internet catalogs of temporary exhibitions created by the Institute of National Remembrance.[55] Formally, all these representations were similar to each other, they consisted of panels with photos and textual comments, so their strength is not innovation, but their number (several hundred) and quite diverse topics. It is true that most were devoted to political history, but they also touched upon issues absent in other representations. Above all they strongly emphasized the period of Stalinism (1948–1956), which in practice does not exist in other exhibitions (except for memory rooms).[56] The largest thematic group of IPN representations were communist crimes. Both individual exhibitions and entire series, such as "Traces of Crime" or "Faces of the Security Service," have been devoted to this issue. The smallest, but in my opinion most interesting category of IPN exhibitions are representations showing the social life of the communist era. Apart from one (already mentioned) case concerning everyday life, I did not devote separate analyses to IPN exhibitions because in practice it is difficult to call them exhibitions; I would rather describe them as specific "information

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55   The titles and topics of the exhibitions can be found on the website of the Institute of National Remembrance. Some contain catalogs and/or photos. See https://ipn.gov. pl/pl/edukacja-1/wystawy (retrieved: 22 April 2018).

56   This subject will appear in more detail in the Polish History Museum.

displays" created solely for educational purposes.[57] The vast majority of these representations did not contain any objects, but only boards, were thematically similar and distinguished by their particular way of displaying information (most often in the public space of cities) and therefore deserve a separate "genre" analysis as a special and different case from the other examples I interpreted.

By analyzing individual Polish and European exhibitions, I tried to spot the most common interpretative patterns – i.e. popular and readily accepted interpretations of past events – and to check how they function in public history, how they satisfy the need for moral order and organize chaotic reality. Similar patterns play an important role in explaining contemporary social problems and can therefore be understood as a cultural-historical self-definition. One of the main research goals I set for myself was to answer the question of whether, in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, we can talk about the existence of a transnational museum narrative about communism, and if so, which elements are the most important and why. In the course of my research, I also took up more detailed topics related to specific narrative and exhibition strategies used in individual exhibitions, the influence of technology and multimedia on the museum message, the status of objects in contemporary historical museums, and the evocation of specific emotions in the public.

At the foundation of my research is the thesis that historical museums are not a neutral and objective instrument for transmitting historical knowledge, but are rather places where the past is interpreted as dictated by the needs of the present and the future. Museum narratives are mainly designed to create a self-positive image of the nation: historical events and figures are subject to glorification, failures or disasters are positively reevaluated and thus gain cathartic value, and the memory of the past is always a function of the present.

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57   David Dean distinguishes between a display, an exhibit and an exhibition. A display is the presentation of objects to the public without adding meaningful interpretation. An exhibit is a group of objects and interpretative material that together form a coherent whole within a gallery or museum. An exhibition is a group of all elements (including those of a display and an exhibit), a form of a complete public presentation consisting of a collection and information for public use. See David Dean, *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 3.

Chapter 2 The Identity-Heroic Trend, or National Branding

> *(…) we might imagine national museums as providing the scenography and stage for the performance of myths of nationhood. As in the theatre we might* imagine *and believe, but in the museum our imagining can be so much more believable because we are led to think that all around us has arrived objectively and all is as it seems to be; these things are not merely props.*
>
> Simon Knell[58]

The institution of a public museum flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries along with the idea of the nation state, which was related to the processes of shaping the identity of specific communities. Museums gathered objects of great cultural importance as a "national" expression of identity, one which was associated with "possessing history" – that is, the collective equivalent of personal memory. The establishment of a museum meant obtaining a homogeneous and deeply entrenched identity. According to Sharon Macdonald, nineteenth-century museums tried to present the history of a given nation in the form of increased development that ended in success, and at the same time they attempted to mark the uniqueness of the national trajectory. Viewers were encouraged to see themselves as members of a particular community, different from others (e.g. in a national or ethnic sense). They were to gain a sense of stability and awareness of progress, to shape a coherent and deeply rooted identity. The objectified, "scientific" point of view imposed upon the exhibition helped legitimize such a vision.[59]

Particularly important at that time was to teach the audience a specific "way of looking" that Timothy Mitchell called "the world as a picture" or "the world as an exhibition". This way of looking crystallized in the nineteenth century and meant the separation of the audience's position from the viewed exhibition. The viewer began to perceive himself as standing outside of what was represented, all of which was connected to the belief that there was an "imaginary structure" independent of what is called "external reality," and that it was possible to find an

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58 Simon Knell, "National Museums and the National Imagination," in *National Museums. New Studies From Around the World,* ed. Simon J. Knell et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

59 Sharon J. Macdonald, "Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities," *Museum and Society* (2003), no. 1: 1–3.

external point of view from which the world appeared orderly and complete, and the "structures of meaning" became clear and obvious.[60] This privileged point of view was adopted by museums by presenting an "objective" discourse supported by expert knowledge. Despite significant differences in exhibition strategies, the above phenomena still apply to the majority of contemporary historical representations.

Without going deeper into the matter of definitions, I assumed – for the purposes of my research – that a national historical museum aims to shape or consolidate identity (usually national) understood as identification with a specific community and a sense of separateness from others, defining oneself in terms of a wider community and an awareness of its continuity, its historical duration.[61] An exhibition aims to help visitors build a sense of belonging, develop and locate their personal narrative in a broad, global perspective. Like nineteenth-century institutions, contemporary museums mark the uniqueness of the community and organize the world in such a way as to facilitate (or impose) specific (depending on current needs) meanings on the viewers, to legitimize and naturalize a point of view consistent with the current *raison d'état*. A historical museum can shape representation using one of three concepts: internationalism, ideology, or nationality. In the first case, the collection includes items of European or world material culture, usually arranged according to the boundaries of disciplines (art, numismatics, etc.). Internationalism arises from the desire to show one's own culture as a dominant and hegemonic culture, which controls the world and knowledge in accordance with the Foucault's model of power-knowledge. This model often involves such phenomena as colonialism, expansion, economic or military power. It willingly presents art, especially painting, which helped shape the canon of so-called European Art History. The second model speaks in the language of ideology, most often associated with totalitarian systems (fascism, communism); it builds a narrative according to a specific doctrine in a way that instrumentalizes the past. The third paradigm refers to the concept of the nation defined in an essentialist way: as something that can be owned and depended upon. In national narratives, there are frequent references to specific phenomena or elements of material culture that are key elements for a given community and

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60　　Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 18–23.

61　　See Andrzej Szpociński, "Tożsamość narodowa w perspektywie kulturalistycznej," in *Kultura wobec kręgów tożsamości*, eds. Teresa Kostyrko, Tadeusz Zgółka (Poznań-Wrocław 2000), 7–15; Kazimierz Łastawski, "Historyczne i współczesne wartości polskiej tożsamości narodowej," *Słupskie Studia Historyczne* (2007), no. 13: 279–307.

how it wants to perceive itself.[62] Museums produce coherent stories reflecting the current political context; they try to respond to the expectations of the audience and, at the same time, convey the values desired from the perspective of national identity.

In the case of historical museums, the latter type of exhibition is eagerly carried out, which is the result of many factors, above all a crisis involving the very idea of the nation state – i.e. the foundation on which the first public museums were built. In the twenty-first century, nation-states are threatened externally by the emergence of international interest groups, corporations, and transnational organizations, and internally by the growing importance of ethno-nationalisms, regionalisms, and strong separatist tendencies in specific ethnic groups. The growth of mass media and rapidly expanding consumerism have also led to the collapse of a unified "public sphere." which has been devalued and fragmented and has eventually become a place for the coexistence of multiple interest groups with little sense of participation in a larger community. Marginal and previously excluded groups have thus come to the fore, a fact which some perceive as a threat to the "majority."[63]

The approach to the issue of identity has also changed. "Nationality" is traditionally defined by a particular statehood, constituting a centralized authority and a political whole governing within a limited physical space. National identity is effectively imposed by the state and accepted (more or less enthusiastically) by groups and individuals who remain its beneficiaries or are vulnerable to sanctions on its part.[64] However, not everyone must identify with the dominant discourse. Modern telecommunications technologies and the compression of time and space make identity separate not only from the local and the traditional framework of nation and ethnicity, but also from class or kinship.[65] Globalization means that national factors no longer play a big role, and the heretofore strong link between the national past and future, indeed the

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62 "National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe," https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:606052/FULLTEXT01.pdf, 38–40 (retrieved: 20 May 2017).

63 Sharon J. Macdonald, *Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities,* op. cit., 5.

64 Flora S. Kaplan, "Making and Remaking National Identities," in *A Companion to Museum Studies,* ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 152–153.

65 See Anthony Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. "Ja" i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności,* trans. Alina Szulżycka (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010).

nation-state itself, no longer provides a solid framework for social relations. That having been said, the end of – or crisis in – traditionally understood identity does not mean that societies become collections of atomized, heterogeneous individuals who lack any identity. Individuals or groups search – including in historical museums – for ideas that could form the basis of their own identity. The national language in historical museums is therefore, first of all, a form of defense against the challenges of postmodernity, and secondly, a haven and shelter for individuals seeking permanent support in an essentialistically defined national community.

Post-communist countries are in a particularly difficult situation because – in addition to the above-mentioned threats characteristic of the era of globalization – they must redefine their identity, define themselves in relation to others, develop satisfactory relations with the "old" European Union members, overcome complexes and a sense of inferiority, and of which together encourages museums to use the national model. In this context, we can conclude that for the countries of the former Eastern bloc, a "militaristic" definition of national museums still applies, according to which they "were formed to build walls around communities, to act as cultural armaments that defined the self and the other and to establish world views through the lens of the nation."[66]

Therefore, it is not surprising that in Poland the main path toward shaping the canon of memory of communism in Poland passes through exhibitions that speak the national language and refer to such concepts as identity, heroism, martyrdom, i.e. to a romantic or symbolic-romantic interpretation. As Maria Janion writes: "Quite uniform – despite all deviations, often marked with the great names of the creators – this culture was organized around the spiritual values of the community, such as homeland, independence, national freedom, national solidarity. Interpretation of these values has used either Tyrrhenian or martyrology-messianic categories; they coexisted, sometimes antinomically, sometimes harmoniously, in the model of romantic culture."[67] Janion recognizes that romanticism – dominant for almost two hundred years (from the post-partition era, to martial law and the period thereafter) as a uniform and all-encompassing concept and practice of culture – built a sense of national identity during this period and defended the symbols of this identity, which ultimately

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66   "National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe," https://www.diva-portal
     .org/smash/get/diva2:606052/FULLTEXT01.pdf, 11 (retrieved: 20 May 2017).
67   Maria Janion, *Zmierzch paradygmatu*, http://biblioteka.kijowski.pl/janion%20maria/
     co%20prze%BFy%B3e%9C.pdf (retrieved: 10 May 2017).

made it take on the character of a national charism.[68] The Solidarity ethos from the years 1980–1981 was the next and last culmination of romanticism. It referred directly to heroic and romantic values and used the model of noble Polish idealism sacrificing everything for the fight for freedom. That is why observers often talk about the last, albeit bloodless, Polish uprising. Solidarity took over and developed, in its own way, the romantic emotional culture, its solemn patriotism and fidelity to the ideals of independence. Martial law further deepened this emotionality: manifestations of national identity used the symbols, gestures, and rituals of Romantic culture.

Maria Janion believes, however, that this historical cycle in Polish culture is today undergoing a painful and dramatic process of extinction. "Such recent emotions recede into an ever more irreversible past; at times it seems as if they come from some distant historical era. Memories of martial law are sometimes treated like those from the January Uprising."[69] The romantic tradition has ceased to be a meta-narrative uniting the nation; there is decentralization and fragmentation of collective memory, which is visible in, among other places, the emergence of communist representations different from the single vision promoted by historical policy. However, one can still reasonably argue that in the official Polish museological trend, recent history is presented in accordance with the Romantic interpretation.

2.1. National Brand

The European Solidarity Center[70] (*Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, ECS*) in Gdańsk and the Poznań Uprising Museum – June 1956[71] (*Muzeum Powstania*

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68 Maria Janion, *Zmierzch paradygmatu*, http://biblioteka.kijowski.pl/janion%20maria/co%20prze%BFy%B3e%9C.pdf (retrieved: 10 May 2017).

69 Maria Janion, *Zmierzch paradygmatu,* http://biblioteka.kijowski.pl/janion%20maria/co%20prze%BFy%B3e%9C.pdf (retrieved: 10 May 2017).

70 The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" – a nationwide trade union established in 1980 to defend workers' rights, formed on the basis of various strike committees (including the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in Gdańsk), which transformed themselves over time into the founding committees of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity." The union was registered as NSZZ "Solidarność" on November 10, 1980 by the Provincial Court in Warsaw. Lech Wałęsa was the co-founder of the trade union movement. Until 1989, "Solidarity" was one of the main centers of opposition against the government of the PRL and communism.

71 Poznań June (Poznań Uprising) – the first general strike and street demonstrations in the PRL, which took place at the end of June 1956 in Poznań. The protests were

Poznańskiego – Czerwiec 1956 roku) in Poznań, which is a branch of the Greater Poland's Museum of Independence (*Wielkopolskie Muzeum Niepodległości*), are two museums that most speak the national language and try to make use of the romantic vision through their identity-heroic narratives of Polish history. On the one hand, such a task was easier because the symbolism used by both institutions is well-rooted in Polish culture and known to all visitors. On the other hand, it turned out that it was necessary to "modernize" somewhat archaic concepts, though modernization concerns only the form of representation. Neither the ECS nor the Poznań museum covers the entire period of communism (in the latter case, the representation concerns only one episode, though a dramatic one), but both present key events from this era and try to place events into a wider context (especially the ECS).

The European Solidarity Center opened its doors in 2014, on the 34th anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreement.[72] On August 30 there was a ceremony that looked like the traditional launching of a ship, a bottle of cider was smashed at the "side" of the ECS, which was meant to symbolize "the price we have to pay

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bloodily suppressed by the army and the militia, and the event itself was downplayed by PRL propaganda as "June events" and concealed. Currently, by some historians and participants, June '56 is also referred to as the Poznań rebellion, as a revolt, as the Poznań uprising. The strike broke out on the morning of June 28 at the Zakłady Przemysłu Metalowego H. Cegielski Poznań and turned into a spontaneous protest against authorities. The thirteen-year-old Romek Strzałkowski, who died during the pacification of the protests, became a symbol of opposition to communist rule.

72 On August 31, 1980, at the Gdańsk Shipyard, communist authorities represented by the Government Commission and the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (MKS) signed the Gdańsk Agreement, which ended a wave of workers' protests and strikes. The Gdańsk Agreement was achieved in the wake of a two-week strike in the Shipyard, which over time extended to many plants throughout Poland. The MKS's 21 postulates were written down. The first was the creation of free trade unions independent of party and employers. Another established the right to strike; freedom of speech; reinstatement of those dismissed for political reasons; broadcast of information on the establishment of the MKS in the mass media and publishing a list of demands; wage increases; full market supply of food products; selection of management staff according to competences, not party affiliation; abolition of privileges for the MO and SB; the abolition of foreign currency sales in the so-called internal export; introducing a card system for meat and preserves; lowering the retirement age; improving working conditions in the health services; shortening the waiting time for an apartment; all Saturdays free from work; indexation of wages, salaries and pensions; increasing the number of spaces in nurseries and kindergartens; and extension of maternity leave.

for solidarity."[73] The shape of the building, which was intended to reflect both the "spirit of Solidarity" and the industrial nature of the surroundings, refers to the shipyards and ships. The facade is reminiscent of a ship's hull and is made of a special type of steel (Cor-Ten made by the company Ruukki), which gives the impression that the body looks like it is covered with rust. The open and glazed pediment symbolizes the "road to freedom" (Photo 1).[74]

Romantic language already applies to the building's descriptions. Referring to the ECS architecture, Wojciech Targowski writes: "(…) the form can be read in many ways and bring to mind a sailing ship, or rather the hull of a ship that is just under construction, or stacked metal sheets prepared for its construction. For many, the timelessness of the Solidarity's constantly up-to-date ideas comes from the fact that they have not yet been completed and the process of achieving them has not ended."[75] The work initiated by Solidarity (a lonely ship in a stormy sea) needs to be continued, the Polish "mission of freedom" has not yet been completed. Another actor in the romantic performance is the building's surrounding nature: "Characteristic for the Polish idyllic landscape, the rhythm of long, colorful stripes of arable fields used in composing the designed greenery […]."[76] This passage from Targowski's statement seems to be borrowed from Adam Mickiewicz's national epic, in which a nostalgic-romantic vision of "a country of childhood years" is created. In this interpretation, the Solidarity movement is characterized by its simplicity of actions and its power to cause historical change, and the building – as an element of the museum narrative – is clearly meant to indicate this: "(…) the body of the building (…) was created on the basis of an uncomplicated system of parallel, regularly spaced walls, devoid of extensive detail, finished with a raw surface of rusting corten steel plating. The steel walls that form the canvas seem to move. The first one bursts in half and tilts. Others follow. The oblique, rhythmically repeated directions delineated

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73   Maria Szruba, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności*, https://www.infona.pl/.../174602e6-c541-3502-8387-056a2ee9f446 (retrieved: 24 September 2016) This institution was established in 2007 by the decision of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, the city authorities of Gdańsk, the local government of the Pomeranian Voivodeship, NSZZ Solidarność and the Solidarity Center Foundation. The foundation act was signed on August 31, 2005, on the 25th anniversary of August 1980.

74   Maria Szruba, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności,* https://www.infona.pl/.../174602e6-c541-3502-8387-056a2ee9f446 (retrieved: 24 September 2016).

75   Wojciech Targowski, "Architektura budynku Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności" in *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog*, eds. Paweł Golak, Basil Kerski & Konrad Knoch (Gdańsk 2014), 253.

76   Ibid., 255.

by the planes of the building structure introduce the viewer to the dynamism of the world of historical transformation."[77] From the very first moment, i.e. when viewing the building and its location, the visitor is supposed to feel the importance of the events happening in this place and Poland's role in the processes of historical changes. As Konrad Knoch writes in the "Catalog" accompanying the exhibition: "It is here, in the former Gdańsk "Lenin" Shipyard, where events began that contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reestablishment of freedom throughout Central and Eastern Europe."[78] Already at this stage there are elements that the exhibition will confirm: the main goal of the European Solidarity Center, despite its very broad mission[79], is to create the Polish national identity and collective memory based on the retrospective heroization of the past.

The exhibition-set design concept was prepared by Studio 1:1 from Gdańsk which devoted six rectangular-shaped rooms (and two temporary exhibition rooms) to the exhibition. A chapel was abandoned in favor of a room "with a universal message of the culture of peaceful transformations" with windows overlooking the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers (Pomnik Poległych Stoczniowców). The architect allowed only minimal interference in shading the walls also covered with corten sheet plating on the inside, which was a challenge and a limitation for the exhibition creators.[80]

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77   Ibid., 253.

78   Konrad Knoch, "Europejskie Centrum Solidarności. Wyzwania w trakcie realizacji jednej z największych w Polsce wystaw narracyjnych o najnowszej historii Polski i Europy," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-U* (still in the organization stage) (2014), no. 1: 109. The "correct" reading of the building's architecture is taken for granted: "The programmatic simplicity makes the idea of the building as obvious as the workers' demands were obvious to the shipyard workers." See Wojciech Targowski, op. cit., 253.

79   The ECS's mission is to commemorate, preserve and disseminate the heritage as well as the message of the idea of Solidarity and the anti-communist democratic opposition in Poland and around the world. In addition, to "(…) inspire new initiatives, both cultural and civic, to share the achievements of peaceful struggle for freedom, justice, democracy and human rights with those who are deprived of them, and to encourage active participation in building a European identity and a new international order." See Konrad Knoch, op. cit., 109.

80   Konrad Knoch, op. cit., 112–113. It happens increasingly often that a museum building is more important than an exhibition, which is an "addition" to the architecture (e.g. the Jewish Museum in Berlin, designed by Daniel Libeskind). However, according to Konrad Knoch, all limitations "turned out to be apparent," The light streaming through the windows into the rooms gave the exhibition a completely "new quality"

The identity-related nature of the narrative is explicitly expressed in the "Catalog," in which Jarosław and Beata Szymański (the creators of the exhibition concept) emphasize that its overriding goal was to "make the viewers feel that it is a story about themselves," and the method of achieving this goal was the possibility of "identifying the visitor with the heroes of the time."[81] Identity and collective memory most willingly refer to moments in history that strengthen the community's positive self-image and easily reject what does not fit its heroic image. Difficult and complicated though it is in many respects, especially in terms of social attitudes, the communist period in the ECS takes on unambiguous dimensions of a heroic past.

The exhibition focuses mainly on the history of Solidarity, which is extremely convenient from the perspective of the identity-heroic narrative. Initially the exhibition was to cover the period after 1939, but due to the nearby Museum of the Second World War, content from the war was not included in the script. The events in Europe in 1945–1970 were limited to the symbolic dates 1953 (Berlin), 1956 (Hungary), 1961 (Berlin Wall), 1968 (Prague), which mainly pointed, symptomatically, to acts of social disobedience and uprisings against communist authorities. Focusing only on unwavering resistance and civic rebellion, the narrative ignores issues involving the extent to which Poles (and other nations) broadly adapted to the system, their causes and their far-reaching consequences.[82] In this case, an entire set of social attitudes is subject

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and allowed for the inclusion of the historical space in the narrative of the core exhibition. Corten steel plating covering the walls of the exhibition halls was included in the design of the exhibition, e.g. in the room devoted to martial law electrical resistors were cut into the plating, and cut out of the plating in the room devoted to the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe were the inscriptions "Upadek Imperium," "Falling Empire" (appropriately multiplied and arranged). See ibid., 113. In addition to the exhibition in the ECS building there is an archive, library, reading room, media library, an educational and training center, spaces for workshops, an auditorium and a "winter garden." Basically the exhibition is only one of the many "experiences" proposed by the creators.

81   Jarosław and Beata Szymański, "Powstawanie wystawy stałej," in *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog*, op. cit., 257.

82   Krystyna Kersten writes: "Adaptation and resistance sprouted from one stem: it was the imperative to persist. The durability of the nation in the biological and cultural dimension and the durability of the Polish state to secure the material and cultural existence of Poles. The consequence of the coupling of adaptation processes with resistance: passive or active, intentional, or instinctive, was the emergence of a discrepancy between the ideological sphere, the sphere of symbols and values, and

to "forgetting," or rather deliberately "erasing," attitudes which Józef Tischner described as *homo sovieticus*[83] and Leszek Kołakowski called simply "a sense of normality." Kołakowski writes:

> the vast majority of people lived in a sense of normality that was only interrupted at times: people went to schools and universities, attended various positions in the administration, got married and divorced, while not feeling alien to the country in which they lived, a country not sovereign, whose rule they did not choose, and which was based on an ideology which was completely ridiculous, which no one took seriously. (…) There is no (…) sense (…) telling people that 45 years are to be wiped from their life stories, as if they did not live at all and everything had been tossed into a void.[84]

The exhibition does not emphasize the fact that most of Solidarity's demands were concerned with social issues, not political issues, and that the goal was "socialism with a human face" and not liberal capitalism. A clear narrative line and a coherent story do not allow for the ambiguity and disputes that currently dominate both statements of direct witnesses to events and professional historians dealing with that period.

Seven rooms are dedicated to the exhibition, where a monolithic story was created that can be watched (or "experienced") both chronologically and thematically, though the latter is not often fully realized in historical museums (one example of a successfully applied chronological-thematic model, at the Budapest History Museum, is described below). The "action" begins with a protest in the Gdańsk Shipyard and ends with changes in Central and Eastern Europe. Each room is appropriately titled: "The Birth of Solidarity" – "The Power of the Powerless" – "Solidarity and Hope" – "War with Society" – "Road to Democracy" – "The Triumph of Freedom" – "Culture of Peaceful Change." The strike in the shipyard in August 1980 was presented as a breakthrough event, the foundation and founding myth not only of Solidarity and free Poland, but of

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everyday behavior forced by the elementary requirements of existence." See Krystyna Kersten, *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944–1956* (London: Aneks, 1993), 15. See also Czesław Miłosz, *Zniewolony umysł*, first edition (Paris: Instytut Literacki, Biblioteka "Kultury," 1953).

83   "Communism appears as a system not imposed and foreign, but with Polish supporters and followers, there was also *homo sovieticus*, i.e. a certain type of man who felt exceptionally well in that system (no one forced him to do so and was not its ideological follower)." See Józef Tischner, "Homo sovieticus. Między Wawelem a Jasną Górą," in *Spór o Polskę 1989–99. Wybór tekstów prasowych*, ed. Paweł Śpiewak (Warszawa: PWN, 2000), 111.

84   Leszek Kołakowski, "PRL-wesoły nieboszczyk?" in *Spór o Polskę*, op. cit., 137.

the whole of Europe. The immediate cause of the rebellion was the dismissal of Anna Walentynowicz from her job; therefore, the first thing the viewer sees after crossing the threshold of the exhibition is the gantry crane on which she was working, not the same one but "of the same type (Photo 2). However, the most important icon-objects related to the first part of the exhibition, and actually the entire exhibition, are the boards with the strikers' demands written down and the gate no. 2 of the Gdańsk Shipyard, located outside the building but an integral part of the narrative (the gate can also be viewed from the windows of the exhibition halls) (Photo 3).

During the strike, demands written by Arkadiusz Rybicki and Maciej Grzywaczewski on wooden plywood were placed at the shipyard gate no. 2. Because a copy of them was made, it was possible to save the original from confiscation when martial law was introduced. The copy confiscated by the Security Service has not been found. The original plaques were hidden in a partition wall in the attic of Wiesław Urbański's house in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz. They remained there until 1996, when they were transferred to the Central Maritime Museum where they were then made available to the public. On October 16, 2003, they were included in the UNESCO "Memory of the World Programme."[85] As of August 2014, the original plaques with the 21 demands are displayed at the ECS permanent exhibition as a deposit from the National Maritime Museum.[86] Gate no. 2 of the Gdańsk "Lenin" Shipyard is the second-strike icon of August 1980, recognizable throughout the world thanks to media coverage. During a protest in December 1970, shipyard workers were shot and wounded there, and the gate was the first place that event was commemorated. In August 1980, images of Mother Mary and John Paul II, a plaque with the demands and a banner with the slogan "workers of the world, unite!" were hung on that gate, which also served as a meeting place for strikers and their families.

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85 The program aims to "protect and promote the world's documentary heritage." It is mainly about making nations, states and institutions aware, through documentation, of the importance of preserving what could be a fleeting and easily destructible heritage. See *Program Pamięć Świata,* http://www.unesco.pl/komunikacja-i-informa cja/pamiec-swiata (retrieved: 23 April 2017).

86 *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog*, op. cit., 26–27.

On August 31, 1980, Lech Wałęsa,[87] standing at that gate, announced the signing of the Gdańsk Accords.[88]

The above two objects perfectly fulfill ECS's mission, which assumes that Solidarity will be entered into Europe's memory. They are large and recognizable in the world. Contrary to appearances, this first feature is extremely important in the case of historical reconstructions of phenomena or processes for which it is difficult to find spectacular material proofs, and the existing ones are difficult to exhibit due to their "ordinariness." Such elements of the exhibition as an overhead crane, helmets, tables from the health and safety hall, time sheets and shipbuilding tools do not have the power to attract that is equal to valuable objects (by valuable above I mean not so much their monetary value, but their uniqueness, which makes it easy to turn a given object into a museum piece that can be perceived on a cognitive or aesthetic level.[89])

In the ECS's subsequent rooms there are references to the most important – from the heroic narrative's point of view – events preceding the strike in the shipyard. These events are mainly of a political nature, characterized by the greatest intensity of drama and emotions. These include: March 1968, December 1970, the end of the so-called Gierek decades – i.e. the growing economic crisis

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87   Lech Wałęsa – leader of the democratic opposition during the PRL, co-founder and first chairman of NSZZ "Solidarity." Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. President of the Republic of Poland in 1990–1995. After taking a job as electrician in the Gdańsk Shipyard in 1967, he became a trade union activist, for which he was repeatedly repressed by PRL authorities – he was put under surveillance, arrested, and in 1976 dismissed from work. In August 1980, he played a key role in the negotiations that led to the August Agreements – a landmark settlement between striking workers and the government. In 1989, he was one of the key participants in the Round Table talks that led to partially free parliamentary elections in June 1989 and to the formation of a Solidarity-led government. He played an important role in the political transformation of Poland, as well as in the end of the Cold War. Since the political transformation, accusations have been heard that Lech Wałęsa collaborated with the Security Service, an organ of the PRL political police. In 2017, an expert opinion prepared for the purposes of an investigation conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance showed that the documents in which Wałęsa agreed to cooperate with the SB were authentic. Wałęsa himself has consistently denied ever cooperating with the SB. The issue of Wałęsa's cooperation with the services has become the subject of a dispute among historians.

88   Ibid., 38–39.

89   I wrote more about objects and exhibits and the differences between them in *Historia w muzeach,* op. cit., 81–92.

and protests in Radom, Ursus and Płock and the establishment of the Workers' Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR) in 1976. The above-mentioned events at the exhibition are represented mainly by photographic materials, e.g. quite controversial close-ups of the faces of the victims killed in the streets of Gdynia and Gdańsk, and relic objects of high emotional potential such as the shot-through jacket of the twenty-year-old shipbuilder Ludwik Piernicki, killed on December 17, 1970 in Gdynia, along with the contents of his pocket (a medal with the Mother Mary and the identity card of an honorary blood donor), or a fragment of the jacket of Adam Gotner, who was also shot. The narrative emphasizes the growing power of the opposition: "In the second half of the 1970s, the opposition became an expression of the expectations of Polish society. *Despite the fact that there were few activists* [author's emphasis -A. Z-W], they managed to break the monopoly the authorities had over information. The scale of underground publishing activity leads us to call it a paper revolution."[90] At the exhibition you can see one of the underground printing houses that were being built all over the country. At this point, as if in passing, there is the important information that only a small part of society was involved in opposition activities.

Only a small part of the exhibition relates to private life: the reconstruction of a furnished room in a typical apartment in a block of flats. It is very interesting that in the guide's narrative this element of the exhibition is interpreted as "a small enclave of freedom" which is supposed to be symbolized by the radio standing on the dresser, from which the sounds of a Radio Free Europe broadcast can be heard. However, the guide himself points out that the audience interprets the room quite differently, through the filter of nostalgia and memories of childhood and early youth evoked by the sight of well-known equipment.

The exhibition culminates in the representation of the introduction of martial law ("War with Society"). In my opinion this is the dramatically best part of the exhibition, as dynamic as a stopped film frame. The symbolic coke ovens which soldiers used to keep themselves war are accompanied by images of battles in the streets, metaphorically presented by a militia vehicle commonly known as an "icebox," a "shack" or a "disco". These vehicles were used by the Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO)[91] to implement martial law

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90   Jakub Kufel, "Siła bezsilnych" *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog*, op. cit., 56.

91   Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej, ZOMO – a paramilitary organization established in 1956 to establish order in exceptional situations. ZOMO functioned on military principles.

along with tanks and combat vehicles. In the open cabin you can see militia equipment: shield holders, helmets, weapons. In the next part of the room there is an art installation by Dorota Nieznalska. Based on archival materials, the artist recreated the appearance of Gate no. 2, destroyed during the pacification on December 16, 1981 by a T-55 tank (Photo 4). At this point, it is easiest to notice that the narrative of the exhibition is entirely cinematic: the plot begins with a dramatic moment in Polish history, which is the 1980 strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard, then viewers are offered a retrospection (a return to December 1970), at which point tension builds up to the climax (martial law) and finally a happy ending and catharsis (the victory of democracy).

A typical narrative operation at the Gdańsk exhibition involves the creation of a collective entity, i.e. "Polish society," on behalf of which, and with whose consent, a handful of opposition activists acted. The theoretically "powerless" (the title of the room "The Power of the Powerless" comes from an essay by Vaclav Havel, who in this text refused to accept the communist system and to participate in the construction of socialism[92]) in practice had power, because it stood behind them (in the "Catalog" always written in capital letters "TRUTH"). The community or nation (at the exhibition these categories are synonymous) does not remain passive but resists by fighting (demonstrations in the streets) and creating a "well-organized, underground alternative society" while Solidarity goes underground.[93] At the exhibition this tragic period in history ends at a bright point heralding final victory: in 1983, Lech Wałęsa receives the Nobel Peace Prize, which Danuta Wałęsa receives in Oslo on behalf of her husband.

The exhibition emphasizes the unique role the Catholic Church played in Poland's transformations. "The ethical cement of this movement," Jakub Kufel writes in the catalog, "was the Catholic Church, which, after the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope, played an important role in integrating Polish society. The words of John Paul II, uttered during the first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979 – "let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. The face of this land" – strengthened Poles in the belief that only shared actions in solidarity could expand the boundaries of freedom."[94] Apart from the photos of the Pope, the exhibition also features a reconstruction of a white "popemobile." The narrative has two undisputed heroes: Lech Wałęsa and John Paul II, whose pilgrimages to the country are highlighted as events of great political importance.

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92   Ibid., 54.

93   Przemysław Ruchlewski, *Wojna ze społeczeństwem* in *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog,* op. cit., 127.

94   Jakub Kufel, op. cit., 57.

The last stage of the Solidarity Revolution started in August 1980 ("The Road to Democracy") and involved the overthrow of the communist system in Poland and all of Central and Eastern Europe along with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The exhibition emphasizes the uniqueness of this change, which took place without bloodshed and which was "a surprise for the West."[95] The heroic story of the Polish bloodless revolution is based on selected political events without paying much attention to everyday life or the popular culture of the past epoch. From among many cultural phenomena, the creators of the concept choose only those with a political tone, such as the Orange Alternative (*Pomarańczowa Alternatywa*), the artistic opposition movement created by Waldemar "Major" Frydrych, the "Freedom and Peace" (*Wolność i Pokój*) movement from 1985, the Federation of Fighting Youth (*Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej*).

In addition to clearly marked positive characters, the identity narrative requires the definition of the enemy. It is through that enemy that the heroic story can confirm its importance and significance. As research on exhibitions devoted to the Second World War shows, the principles by which an enemy figure is created in museum exhibitions are consistent with the current paradigm of historical narratives, and this image is also influenced by memory discourse, cultural stereotypes, historical politics, deep cultural structures (e.g. religion) – that is historical, psychological and sociological mechanisms. Interestingly, the enemy itself (or the "other") is not as important as the enemy-hero relationship and its dynamics/tension, which is in many cases the foundation of the museum narrative.[96] The ECS exhibition does not quite manage this task. The exhibition places "Polish society" on the bright side of truth, morality, and ethics, but it is not very clear who the opponent is. Naturally, there are names that have a symbolic dimension, such as Wojciech Jaruzelski introducing martial law, and there is the "other" – that is, the Soviets. Basically, however, we are dealing with an impersonal enemy in the form of the communist system. The opponent does not have to be a specific person, the us-them dichotomy can be expressed symbolically. The hostile system on display is characterized by a set of features typical of totalitarianism: brutality, militarism (ZOMO), heartlessness, anonymity, the desire for omnipotent control, and the desire to maintain power

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95   Adam Cherek, "Droga do demokracji," *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności. Katalog,* op. cit., 153.

96   See *The Enemy on Display. The Second Warld War in Eastern European Museums*, eds. Zuzannna Bogumił, Joanna Wawrzyniak, Tim Buchen, Christian Ganzer & Maria Senina (New York-Oxford: Berghahn, 2015).

at all costs. This procedure is especially useful for creating an identity narrative that cannot exclude entire social groups, one that admits that the enemy in the recent past was also a part of Polish society, an enemy who identifies with the system or even manages it. A possible deconstruction of the enemy's image would weaken the whole story, destroy the dichotomy, and the narrative would become less heroic and less convincing. Instead, it would bring in a poorly perceived relativity that would jeopardize the existence of the identity discourse.[97]

The main opposition in the story is truth-lie, treated in terms of right and wrong, without any shadow of doubt. In the catalog we read that the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers "became (…) a visible sign of opposition to LIES told in the public sphere" and that "On the anniversaries of the December events, demonstrations of many thousand people were organized in which they demanded TRUE information on repression," and in which "LIFE IN TRUTH became a credo for the people who in September 1976 established the Workers' Defense Committee (…)"[98] [orthography in original – A. Z-W] The narrative in the ECS is a messianic story about heroic deeds with a moral message inscribed not only in the heroic Polish tradition of "bloodshed in the name of the opposition to the actions of the communist authorities" which was "alive on the [Baltic] coast,"[99] but also, and perhaps above all, inscribed into the peaceful revolutions of Central and Eastern European and the world independence movement.

This black and white image and one-sided interpretation help build a strong sense of unity within the nation, but they do not lead to critical thinking, to distancing oneself from the past and understanding complex historical processes. The exhibition creators do not define the category of "history" as used in the catalog in any way, because what is most important are not methodological complexities, but the restoration or even construction of the subjectivity of Polish society. For example, the category "universal history" is problematic. Knoch writes: "The visitor learns how the revolution took place in Poland, which turned society – pushed to the sidelines because of the Yalta Agreements – once again into an actor in universal history."[100] It seems that this way of understanding history is closest to Hegel's philosophy in which individual nations in different epochs are tools for the realization of the "world-spirit," but the use of the term is unclear. Its understanding may also be colloquial, which would mean that the

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97   See ibid., 149.
98   All of that on just two pages. See Jakub Kufel, *Siła bezsilnych*, op. cit., 56–57.
99   Ibid., 57.
100 Konrad Knoch, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności*, op. cit., 126.

creators of the exhibition believed that during the communist period, the history of Poland and the entire Central and Eastern Europe ran along a side, marginal track, and after 1989 (thanks to Solidarity) it rejoined the mainstream of world history.

The museum does not hide its intentions and openly assumes identity goals: "The ECS functions in three dimensions: the retrospective – focused on the past; the present – dealing with reacting, researching and commenting on the current socio-political situation; and prospective – looking to the future and trying to influence this future."[101] It is therefore no surprise that the "Solidarity" ECS ascribes somewhat exaggeratedly far-reaching, positive changes in the mentality of Polish society: the movement was a "school of democracy" thanks to which "millions" of Poles participated in public debate, it was "a time of great activity, convening meetings, rallies, constant discussions, debates and deliberations." Solidarity also allegedly won the battle for historical memory, as evidenced by the monuments made from social donations: the fallen Shipyard Workers 1970 in Gdańsk, the victims of December 1970 in Gdynia, the victims of June 1956 in Poznań.[102]

Formally, the exhibition is a realistic reconstruction of the past, neutral and objective by definition, which in the case of heroic and identity exhibitions is never possible in practice. In addition to traditional exhibition methods – for example artifacts from the era – the creators present the latest technological solutions. Visitors have access to electronic projections, collected photographs, film archival materials, documents, maps, biographies, calendars, and press clippings. Konrad Knoch writes about three levels of narration: the first and most the basic – focused on introductory texts, photographs, archives, and objects;

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101   Ibid., 110.

102   Konrad Knoch, "Solidarność i nadzieja," *Wystawa stała Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności*, op. cit., 87–90. As it is not difficult to notice in the current political discussions, the battle for historical memory continues, and both the Round Table Talks and the character of Lech Wałęsa are the most hot and controversial points here. The story of the "last Polish confederation," a "common start" waging "victorious battles without the use of violence" under the "unquestionable" leadership of Lech Wałęsa, who enjoyed "enormous authority in society," has been called into question, and debates on the main heroes of the revolution were rekindled. The rituals of laying flowers or paying homage at monuments are only external signs of respect for the past to which different groups attach different meanings. Terms such as "Polish love of freedom" and "civil society" can be applied in practice only to part of the community.

the second – based on multimedia in the form of touch screens connected to databases; and the third – based on a guide's story with suggested sightseeing paths for different groups of people.[103]

There were no collections or ready-made collections related to Solidarity, so souvenirs were found for the purposes of the exhibition, primarily through individual gifts from private collections, most often photographs (approximately 40,000 photos were collected in total). Of more than 2,300 objects, the most valuable is the "Workers of the world, unite" banner which hung over Gate no. 2 during the August strikes, Lech Wałęsa's strike sweater, offset matrices of the "Solidarity Strike Information Bulletin," printing materials and devices, banners, flags, strike bands, seals, stamps, a crane, and other small objects.[104]

The creators of this concept are not fully aware of the meaning of certain phrases in the contemporary discourse on exhibition. They define their scenographic procedures, which often enrich exhibitions and allow for the viewer's emotional involvement (e.g. at the Museum of the Second World War), as "intrusive narrative": "At all costs we wanted to avoid intrusive narrative, purely scenographic activities. Instead of replicas, we proposed installations made of real objects. We wanted an important element of the exhibition to show the real tools used by shipyard workers. We did not treat objects as decorative elements. Of course, they were supposed to be a background for the story's main theme, but also a pretext to tell stories both small and large."[105] In practice, it seems, the point is rather that the rectangular rooms of the building did not provide great scenographic opportunities; for example, they did not lend themselves to "playing" with light and space. Replicas of items that can significantly enrich the exhibition by providing a full (instead of fragmentary) view of a given situation, space, or even a set of objects (such as in Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Krakow) are called by the Szymańskis "poorly made dummies": "But is the alternative an exhibition where, according to a specific scenario, one walks between poorly made dummies intended to introduce the visitor to the 'atmosphere'? What is permissible in the theater, located beyond the magical border of the proscenium, is – at the exhibition, in direct contact with the viewer – often unbearable."[106] The traditional (as opposed to narrative) museum is understood as a one-way exhibition, one you can navigate by following the

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103   Konrad Knoch, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności*, op. cit., 124–125.

104   Ibid., 117–118.

105   Jarosław and Beata Szymański, op. cit., 257.

106   Ibid.

arrows: "The idea of a narrative museum was created in opposition to the traditional museum. Exhibitions where you can only walk in one direction, marked by the arrows, are a thing of the past."[107] Meanwhile, a model for all narrative museums, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, features a one-way exhibition, as do most history museums.

According to the concept creators, the ECS exhibition is "open" and "multi-narrative," linear and chronological, but also networked, which encourages visitors to choose their own path. In practice, the audience most often chooses the chronological order,[108] which is entirely in line with the way history is most often understood: as a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Historical narrative must form a whole, and individual phenomena or processes presented at the exhibition should remain in cause-effect and time-space relationships, which means that the "network" rarely works in historical exhibitions. Linear narrative deprives objects of potential ambiguity and integrates them with the specific story, which facilitates "storytelling."

The creators of the exhibition emphasize the authenticity of objects – which, incidentally, is symptomatic of traditional museums from which they distance themselves – and it is on this basis that they try to build the exhibition's authority. However, the issue is complex because the artifacts presented at the exhibition are tangible objects used everyday in the shipyard, alongside films, documents, photos, press clippings and archival recordings. In these particular cases, it is difficult to use categories such as "true" or "authentic." Twentieth-century technologies created new possibilities and the concept of authenticity (in the sense of "singularity" or uniqueness) became problematic because images are indistinguishable from each other and easily accessible outside a museum.[109] A photograph taken by an artist can be reproduced by someone else in hundreds of prints by using the same negative. Utility items, in turn, are generally manufactured in enormous quantities and can only be described as "exemplary." Which of them will go to the collection depends not so much on the items themselves as on the history related to them which makes them

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107   Ibid.

108   Konrad Knoch, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności,* op. cit., 121–122.

109   "One might subsume the eliminated element in the term 'aura' […] the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence." See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. and with intro. by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 221.

unique and important. Therefore, it seems that the creators of the ECS exhibition often emphasize the spectacular nature of the story associated with the items on display. In such a situation, objects lose their importance in favor of curatorial measures on whose basis a story is created. "Authenticity is not about factuality or reality," write Spencer Crew and James Sims. "It is about authority. Objects have no authority; people do. It is people on the exhibition team who must make a judgment about how to tell the past. Authenticity – authority – enforces the social contract between the audience and the museum, a socially-agreed upon reality that exists only as long as confidence in the voice of the exhibition holds."[110] According to this concept, what is key is the event – not things. Authenticity is therefore located in the event – not in the object.[111] The creators of the ECS exhibition, consciously or not, emphasize this concept of authenticity and make it one of the exhibition's assets. Use of so-called "second-class relics" – which do not have a high artistic value, and sometimes have little historical value (for example clothes or helmets of shipyard workers or their tools, which are intended to testify to the "scale and diversity of production in factories in the 1970s and 1980s"[112]) – is mainly aimed at confirming the reality of the past and its legitimation. These relics create – as Andrzej Szpociński calls it – the "historical space" of the exhibition. The materiality of the product is important here in that it undoubtedly confirms its "antiquity."[113]

By placing the ECS in a broader interpretative context, we can evaluate it through the prism of two phenomena: the romantic museum (referring to the past) and national branding (oriented towards the future). The romantic trend of Polish museology was born in Puławy at the end of the eighteenth century, along with the implemented idea of Izabela Czartoryska for a national museum (Sibyl), referring to emotional factors, such as love of the motherland, longing for freedom, respect for one's own national creativity, own national style and customs and cultivating feelings of reverence and mystical faith towards the

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110   Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, *Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue* in *Exhibiting Cultures The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 163.

111   Ibid., 174.

112   "*Narzędzia stoczniowe*," in *Wystawa Europejskiego Centrum Solidarności*, op. cit., 25.

113   In the case of monuments of great importance and historical or artistic importance, their values are obscured by other functions. See Andrzej Szpociński, "Autentyczność przeszłości jako problem kultury współczesnej," in *Wobec przyszłości. Pamięć przeszłości jako element kultury współczesnej,* ed. Andrzej Szpociński (Warszawa: Instytut im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2005), 299.

so-called national treasures or souvenirs (state symbols, signs, documents). Zbigniew Żygulski described this tendency as political and patriotic.[114] Sibyl combined the models of classical antiquity with romantic mysticism. Żygulski writes: "In Puławy it was possible to adopt and transform in its own fashion various foreign ideas and patterns, both the experience in the museum field of revolutionary France and the Ossianic exaltations reminiscent of a trip to Scotland. However, we need not overestimate these analogies and inspirations: thoroughly original features appeared in the Puławy Museum. For the first time in history, the museum began to proclaim the noble idea of the nation's armed struggle for independence in an integral and solemn manner. The patriotic idea completely permeated the content of this institution; it stood out above all other aspects, artistic or scientific."[115] Alina Aleksandrowicz describes the interpretation of history in the museum in Puławy as "Sibylian historicism" characterized by a tendency to sanctify the heroic past and respect for national heroes. The collective imagination is supposed to organize itself around the cult of "leading people," patriots, and citizens combining the virtues of *cives* and the bravery of *miles*. The cult of memorabilia was intended to make us aware of the longevity and richness of the native tradition, whereby military memorabilia were particularly important.[116] The symbolic values of the memorabilia exceed their museum value; the most important thing for Czartoryska and the creators of the ECS exhibition is the authenticity of the objects.

The Romantic Museum is characterized by an emphasis on emotional over intellectual factors – appealing to the imagination, patriotism (sometimes close to exaltation), political commitment in the fight for freedom and independence, the cult of heroes – and the appearance of literary motifs, especially medieval, oriental, and exotic. In the nineteenth century, the idea of a "trophy space" (undertaken and implemented in Puławy) was also of great importance. The concept of a trophy space, the roots of which are in antiquity, means the custom

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114 Zdzisław Żygulski, "Nurt romantyczny w muzealnictwie polskim," in *Originalveröffentlichung in: Romantyzm: Studia nad sztuką 2. połowy XVIII wieku i wieku XIX. Materiały sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki* (Warszawa 1963–1967), 52.

115 Ibid., 46.

116 Alina Aleksandrowicz, *Różne drogi do wolności. Puławy Czartoryskich na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku* (Puławy: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Puław, 2011), 231–232.

of preserving and cultivating certain signs and objects of a national or state function (including enemy prey) in a chosen, holy district.[117]

An open question remains to what extent the shipyard itself and its surroundings were to be a trophy space in the above sense. No doubt, the museum's creators devote a great deal of attention in their comments to the authenticity of the space itself and its inclusion in the museum narrative. On the other hand, as Filip Springer notes in the light of the "financial and technological gigantomania" of the entire undertaking: "The European Solidarity Center is (…) a spectacular and brave building, but it stood in a place where a brutal destruction of historic buildings from the nineteenth century was carried out, the original yard facilities. And the trees planted in his winter garden, bought for the amount of almost PLN 300,000 withered spectacularly after just two years."[118] The building with the OHS hall standing not far from the museum, which is the historic space where the August Agreements were signed and is owned by the National Commission of NSZZ "Solidarity," is also completely neglected. In this space there is only a very traditional exhibition with charts and photos entitled "The phenomenon of Solidarity. Snapshots from the history of Poland 1980–1981" and models of ships manufactured at the shipyard. The room serves as a meeting place for witnesses to history or for conferences. The building with the Bezpieczeństwo i Higiena Pracy (Health and Safety Department) hall remains undeveloped for exhibitions. Regardless of the reasons, it seems that concern for the authenticity of spaces and buildings surrounding the museum and for including them in the Solidarity story remained at the level of declarations so as to simply "fit" the current museum discourse.

Romantic museums (after transformations) have survived to modern times, now they are institutions relating to exceptional times, such as the period of great wars, revolutions and events affecting the "transformation of humanity" (e.g. communist museums of revolutionary movements). Romantic traits can also be found in martyrdom museums and, of course, in the ECS. Their hero is usually

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117   In the Christian-feudal period, as in antiquity, trophy spaces were located in places of religious worship. In Poland, in the early phase of the state of Gniezno, the Gniezno cathedral with the relics of St. Adalbert, and for many centuries the Krakow cathedral at Wawel with the tomb of St. Stanislaus. See Zdzisław Żygulski, op. cit., 49.

118   Filip Springer, *Muzeum II Wojny Światowej. Przeszłość schowana pod ziemią stała się kosztowną zabawką polityków,* http://weekend.gazeta.pl/weekend/1,152 121,21864052,muzeum-ii-wojny-swiatowej-przeszlosc-schowana-pod-ziemia-stala. html#TRwknd (retrieved: 27 May 2017).

not one man, a genius or a bard, but thousands of anonymous people "who, in torment and anguish, walked, fought and died convinced of the value of their struggle and sacrifice. Common to all these museums is a passionate ideological attitude, reaching into the sphere of affection, an expression of faith in social justice and the future of humanity. This optimistic faith, in the face of evil, was passed on to us by the romantics."[119]

The collective hero, of course, does not exclude commemorating the figures of other leaders or outstanding strategists, or people who played a breakthrough role in history (Sibyl honored Tadeusz Kościuszko, ECS evokes the figures of Lech Wałęsa and John Paul II). In the second, next to Sybilla, a museum called the Gothic House, Izabela Czartoryska also presented heroes from other countries, to show the cult of outstanding figures defending Polish freedom against the background of world examples such as Cyd, William Tell, and George Washington. In the ECS, guided by the same idea, there are references to Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, and people with whom Polish visitors are more acquainted who contributed to the overthrow of communism, such as Mikhail Gorbachev or Vaclav Havel.

The basic idea represented by both the Sibyl and the ECS is the immortality of the nation on the condition that it preserves its identity and the will to fight for survival. The aim of the exhibition in both cases is to raise the level of national dignity. Sibyl's slogan "The Past of the Future" is in line with the ECS's motto: "Learn the history, decide about the future."[120] The intention of both exhibitions, rooted in the past, was to build historical awareness of present and future generations of Poles. The language of the narrative is solemn; it refers to the category of good and evil and has a moral purpose (more on this later in the chapter).

The second, much more modern category into which ECS's strategy and mission can be entered is national branding, i.e. brand creation. In fact, the authors of the ECS concept write about it openly, though without deepening these considerations and without going into the consequences of the politics of representation understood in this way: "We wanted to show Solidarity as a positive movement that influenced the shape of modern Europe. We wanted to convey a simple message: it started in Poland, it began in Gdańsk. Another important goal – however prosaic and trivial it may sound. Still, it may upset

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119   Zdzisław Żygulski, op. cit. 53.
120   Konrad Knoch, *Europejskie Centrum Solidarności,* op. cit., 110.

some – was to promote the best Polish brand, Solidarity."[121] The very idea of branding is accepted or at least tolerated in contemporary consumer culture, but it raises doubts when it is used with concepts such as nation or national identity. According to Melissa Aronczyk, however, national branding can be perceived as a logical extension of a specific way of constructing national identity and ways of communicating community experiences in time and space.[122] Branding understood in this way is simply one of many social and cultural practices.

In the case of national identity, branding means the process of assigning a community a unique identity by highlighting certain (positive) meanings and myths and ignoring others. This process is supported by state policy and aims for a nation to distinguish itself in a globalized world and to generate economic benefits related to tourism, investment, job creation, etc. Characteristics such as stability and consistency are key to forming and maintaining a national identity, and branding can be a highly effective strategy in achieving those goals even though the "commercial" nature of the term does not mean that the practice cannot be a symbolic act, representing social and political reality.[123] One of the essential elements of national branding is to identify key issues and show rituals, images and symbols situating a given nation in a specific space, distinguishing it from others. It is therefore fundamental to show the uniqueness, individuality of history or tradition. In the case of the ECS narrative, its creators recognized the romantic desire for freedom as a key component of Polish national identity.

National branding reflects the specific political and social reality of postmodernity, which is important in the international context, but it also applies to the national / social imaginary – i.e. the image of one's own society, its way of understanding the world, which define a given community's expectations towards others and helps it to "navigate" through the present day, not just to promote the national identity to the outside. According to Aronczyk, the phenomenon of national branding means a shift from political to post-political representations of national identity, but in the case of ECS, branding is a manifestation of a

121   Jarosław and Beata Szymański, op. cit., 259.

122   Melissa Aronczyk, *New and improved nations. Branding national identity* http://
        www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/articles/events/nationbranding/
        participant-papers/New-And-Improved-Nations_-_Melissa-Aronczyk.pdf
        (retrieved: 13 May 2017)

123   Melissa Aronczyk, *New and improved nations. Branding national identity* http://
        www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/articles/events/nationbranding/
        participant-papers/New-And-Improved-Nations_-_Melissa-Aronczyk.pdf
        (retrieved: 13 May 2017)

specific historical and identity policy, not a post-political one. This strategy may be the result, for example, of a lack of self-confidence when confronted with international competition, the desire to be recognized and appreciated by other EU members and to emphasize the uniqueness of one's own history.

It is worth comparing the European Solidarity Center with a second Polish museum clearly guided by the mission of creating an auto-positive image of the nation, although with a much smaller range and intensity of heroic elements, namely the Poznań Uprising Museum – June 1956. Opened in October 2007, the Poznań Uprising Museum (a branch of the Greater Poland's Museum of Independence) in Poznań is located in the Imperial Castle (on the ground floor), which in 1956 housed the Municipal National Council (next to the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, or PZPR). On June 28, 1956, protests of demonstrators took place on what was then called Armia Czerwona (Red Army) Street and the nearby Stalin Square (now called Święty Marcin Street and Adam Mickiewicz Square).[124]

The events and processes represented by the museum, i.e. the first mass demonstration of the city's workers and residents against the communist regime, perfectly fulfill the function of a founding narrative that constitutes the foundation for a new, free society. The narrative line of the exhibition entitled "Poznań Uprising 1956 – Saved Memory" is, as in the case of the ECS, a heroic story about a foreign enemy (communism) oppressing an enslaved society, which – at the cost of many victims and apparent defeats – ultimately wins. Thus, the Polish "love of freedom" appears again as a key component of the national identity. The exhibition ignores issues that might make the image of the first of the "Polish months" less clear. Marcin Zaremba claims that creating a legend applies to all protests directed against authorities: "(…) we are dealing with the legend of the heroic 'Polish months', as if the only thing this brave society did was oppose communism. It wasn't that simple. For communism was not opposed only to pay rises. In December 1970 and June 1976, there were acts of vandalism and robbery, and there was no need for provocateurs. The working class has never been sacred. Looting in the time of chaos, when there is a sense of anonymity, happened even earlier."[125] Paweł Machcewicz writes, in turn, about a much broader acceptance of the system in 1956 than in the later period – in

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124 http://www.wmn.poznan.pl/odwiedz-nas/muzeum-powstania-poznanskiego-czerwiec-1956 (retrieved: 4 June 2017).

125 Conversation with Marcin Zaremba in Andrzej Brzezicki, *Lekcje historii. PRL w rozmowach* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2009), 200.

the mid-1980s. "They wanted profound changes – a departure from terror and collectivization, from the Soviet dictatorship, but there was still a belief that it was a system that could implement the ideals of social justice, equality, and modernity."[126] But such conclusions do not fit with identity narratives.

The first stage of the exhibition introduces the audience to the atmosphere in Poznań in the 1950s by presenting a reconstruction of part of a typical apartment for that period with elements important for the libertarian and messianic myth: souvenirs of ancestors who fought in the uprisings (from the November Uprising of 1830–1831 to the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918–1919) and close family members belonging to the Home Army resistance organization of the Second World War, with religious images, the radio "broadcasting Radio Free Europe" (Photo 5).[127] From the apartment the viewer moves into the urban space, onto the (symbolic) Wolność (Freedom) Street. The name is not accidental, the metaphors of museum exhibitions are usually not very sophisticated and are easy to read. The identity message must be simple and unambiguous.

The concept of the Poznań exhibition is based on scenery simulating a walk around the city. It was later used with great success in Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Krakow (some elements, such as a tram standing on a paved street, are even confusingly similar). On Freedom Street in Poznań, visitors follow in the footsteps of the demonstrators (Photo 6). Step by step, the exhibition introduces the viewer to the historical context: the failure of the six-year plan, the PZPR's policies, along with illustrated posters both national and local, Poznań, which was characterized by a lack of funds for investments, wages that were lower than elsewhere, greater obligations to the central "headquarters." At this stage, it becomes clear that the exhibition treats communism as an aberration in the history of Greater Poland and Poland: "The 6-year plan destroyed the order created over a hundred years ago. In a short period of time, food became scarce in a region that was traditionally rich in food." Even the nineteenth-century partitions were smoothly incorporated into a history that was radically interrupted only by the advent of communism. All this makes up the background story, at the center of which are the events of June 1956 as described by witnesses to history (in multimedia forms) and archival photos by Leszek Paprzycki (showing the sequence of events at Kochanowski Street) and other random photographers.

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126   Ibid., 94.

127   http://www.wmn.poznan.pl/odwiedz-nas/muzeum-powstania-poznanskiego-czerwiec-1956 (retrieved: 4 June 2017).

The exhibition emphasized specific places related to the course of the demonstration through mock-ups, e.g. a model of the T-34 tank on the street symbolizes the intervention of the Polish People's Army. The mementos of the rebellion's youngest victim – Roman Strzałkowski – fulfill the functions of relics, as Ludwik Piernicki's did in the case of the ECS. In addition to the boy's photo, the exhibition also includes his bag and harmonica. On the floor, simulating the cobblestones of a Poznań street, there are glassed-in spaces-hiding places containing (like older, traditional display cases) original objects "taking part" in the presented events.

From Freedom Street the viewer can enter scenographically arranged rooms: the presidential hall of the Provincial Committee of the PZPR and the Joseph Stalin Metal Works in Poznań (*Zakłady Przemysłu Metalowego im. Józefa Stalina*), where the workers who supported the strike came from. From Kochanowski Street, the road leads to the building of the Provincial Office for Public Security (secret police) and then to rooms that are important from the perspective of events in 1956: an interrogation room, a courtroom where the so-called the trial of "ten" took place (it is possible to hear testimonies and speeches of the defenders of the accused demonstrators), and the prison cell where the repressed demonstrators were sent.

Both exhibitions (the Poznań Museum and the ECS) are narrative-driven exhibitions, i.e. holistic ones, creating an experience of unity (like a film), the components of which are historical studies, objects, texts and design. These exhibitions present a prepared and coherent interpretation of events and try to maintain a balance between the content and visual elements; to a large extent, they consider the uniqueness of the objects as important.[128] In my opinion, however, the June 1956 Museum presents a narrative that is much more coherent and well-thought-out in terms of form. The creators of the exhibition (Barbara Fabiańska and Jan Szymański) decided to create a space that would allow the public to experience the past rather than simply obtain information about it in a standard way for a museum, i.e. by viewing objects and reading texts, none of which means that the exhibition is devoid of informational value, rather that knowledge is gained here mainly through the exploration of the exhibition space. It is important that the exhibition does not attack the senses with noise; to hear the voices of the witnesses, you have to put your ear to the wall or pick up a receiver, etc. It does not cause chaos or give the impression of a cacophony of sounds.

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128   For more see Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach*, op. cit., 175–178.

The Poznań exhibition is a space that is both realistic and metaphorical. It is influenced by the decision to not limit itself to only original objects (with aura) in favor of objects-props, which allows for the free creation of a story about a city in revolt, because its development is not dependent on having specific artifacts and gives the audience the opportunity to gain a comprehensive overview of the situation. This quality allows viewers to focus on the story of the city instead of objects and documents that could overwhelm the exhibition and the audience. The viewer may feel more at ease, in many cases he can touch the object without concern, look at it closely, enter into a deeper relationship with it. The authentic elements of the exhibition are (as mentioned above) placed in glass cases, but there are not many of them. In this case, authenticity is a feature not only of the object itself, but above all of the experience of this object by the subject (i.e. the viewer). Sometimes an object seems more real not when it is displayed in a display case, but when (as a replica) it appears in the appropriate context (e.g. production or use).

Both the Poznań and Gdańsk exhibitions are simulations that allow you to avoid being dazzled with cruelty and drastic scenes and that invites viewers to participate. Simulation – according to the thesis of Jean Baudrillard – does not refer to reality, because it undermines the difference between the real and the imagined – it "stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference."[129] The experience is emotional and immediate; in this case the real historical objects and places are not so important. Similar presentations simulate reality using techniques that appeal to the senses – so-called scientific observation is replaced by smells, sounds and tactile simulations. The main point is the illusion of time travel and immersion, and it is about psychological immersion, i.e. a special type of experience independent of technological solutions.[130] The state of immersion occurs when a given person's entire concentration (all cognitive mechanisms) is focused on representation (defined as x2 level) while completely ignoring everyday reality (x1 level). The boundaries between the levels are set metaphorically as a "visit" (a return from x2 to x1 is possible at any time).[131] In other words, it is about minimizing the

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129   Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 6.

130   Katarzyna Prajzner, "Agent w tekście. Imersja i interaktywność we współczesnej teorii narracji," in *Nowa audiowizualność – nowy paradygmat kultury?*, eds. Eugeniusz Wilk, Iwona Kolasińska-Pasterczyk (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2008), 242.

131   Ibid., 249.

distance between the viewer's "imaginary" position and the time and space of the events represented.[132] The most important issue, therefore, is to create the kind of representation that allows the viewer to develop the impression of appearing on the stage of the presented events, a particular shift in time and space (time-space immersion), of the entire spectrum of emotional relations indicating participation in the thoughts of represented characters (psychological immersion). To induce the experience of immersion, the representation (in this case, a museum exhibition) simply has the features of the world, and as Michael Heim points out, the world is not a collection of fragments, but the surrounding environment perceived as a coherent whole. It does not consist of a group of objects, but of objects that are in use, functioning and interacting with each other.[133] The audience does not contemplate individual artifacts, which avoids the danger of aestheticization, but comes into contact with them as with parts of a whole system: objects-props participate in the performance on an equal footing with the audience.

In the museum of June 1956, the theater technique is more visible than in the ECS. The space is organized like a stage filled with props and simulations. According to Freddie Rokem, a theatrical performance about historical events is an aesthetic adaptation of events that we know once happened. It is a kind of re-doing of something that has already happened in the past, a process that creates a secondary elaboration of a historical event.[134] The actor playing the historical figure becomes, in a sense, a witness to the event. As a witness, he need not strive for total objectivity or neutrality, it is only intended to make it easier for viewers – observers to understand historical processes. One of the main goals of a historical theatrical performance is also to enable the audience to view the past in a new or completely different way.[135] The theatricalization of a museum space does not mean that the audience is in an imaginary audience; on the contrary, the audience is at the center of events, indeed on the stage itself. While walking around the city engulfed in revolt, the visitors assume the role of supporting actors in the performance; they turn into witnesses of the acted event – an event not from the past – because they are aware that they are not seeing the past "as it really was."

132   Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 130.

133   Michael Heim, *Virtual Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 90–91.

134   Freddie Rokem, *Performing History. Theatrical Representation of the Past In Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 6.

135   Ibid., 9.

However, this allows for a completely different contact with the past than reading an objectified historical narrative or watching a (equally objectified) traditional museum exhibition – i.e. objects with signatures and documents in glass cases. The viewer appears in an architectural and theatrical space, and as if in a drama he enters a role (in this case, an actor – witness) that engages him emotionally. Emotional involvement is not the same as an anti-intellectual experience. On the contrary, going beyond the typically visual experience (when the visitor is only watching the exhibition) towards spectacularity and performativity (when he is in active contact with it) gives the experience its multidimensionality.

Both of the exhibitions under analysis here present heroic and identity narratives, but the Poznań museum focuses more on the representation of a specific historical event than on a set of values characterizing the messianic worldview, in which the most important categories are patriotism, homeland, nation, Christianity and values referred by the so-called common people, i.e. family and social security. The creation of a positive hero or story subject is also more interesting than in the case of the ECS because what is at issue is not a nation, society or opposition, but a city understood as a hybrid structure, a socio-geographical space consisting of a community of people and non-human actors: streets, houses, workplaces, entire urban layouts, each of which played a role in the ongoing drama: "(…) the city rebelled, because it was not about 'economic difficulties', but about existence, freedom and its own identity. The city was free for several hours. It took up a fight that it could not win. The wound remained for decades – in the subsequent breakthrough years of the PRL, the city was less prone to rebellion."[136] The enemy is also slightly more specific than in the ECS, though it is a representation of the system in a similar way. Hence, the "party," "central authority," "authority" and the Office for Public Security act in opposition to society. Demonstrators and witnesses are (as far as possible) individualized, with identities, names, and surnames, while victims have a separate status; they are listed on special boards or in separate display cases, as in the case of Roman Strzałkowski. In general, the exhibition is more coherent than the one in the ECS, where some fragments are dynamic and formally very good ("The Birth of Solidarity" and "War with Society") and others monotonous and much weaker. (e.g. "Solidarity and Hope").

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136   http://www.muzeumniepodleglosci.poznan.pl/index.php?module=htmlpa ges&func=display&pid=5 (retrieved: 13 August 2015).

2.2. Anomaly or Long Duration?[137]

An excellent example of an identity narrative combined with an image representation of the nation prepared mainly for the needs of foreign tourists is the House of Terror (*TerrorHáza*) in Budapest. The most noticeable elements in the case of the Hungarian exhibition are a simplified vision of the recent past and very clear narrative symbolism.

Every museum can be analyzed through the primacy of politics and the poetics of representation. Representation policy concerns the social circumstances within which the exhibition is organized, presented, and interpreted. In the case of *Terrorháza*, one should consider the political conditions of the project related to election struggles and the historical policy of the right-wing politician, Victor Orbán. In the light of these circumstances, the Budapest museum is one of the most controversial cultural institutions. Its creation was considered by many people to be a purely political decision, one which was the subject of severe criticism. Victor Orbán – the initiator of the project – was competing with the socialist party during elections, and the House of Terror, with a strong anti-communist message, was seen by some as anti-socialist propaganda. The museum – unfinished at the time – opened its doors about six weeks before the 2002 elections. The controversy related to the alleged *ad hoc* political motives behind the idea (although political motives usually lie behind a decision to create a historical museum, especially one with an identity element, they are usually not that dominant) completed the strongly criticized imbalance between the representation of Nazism and communism.

Dedicated to the memory of the victims of both totalitarian regimes, *Terrorháza* is housed in a Neo-Renaissance building from 1880, which was chosen as the headquarters by both regimes in Hungary. Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the Arrow Cross, called the building located at 60 Andrássy Street the "House of Loyalty." In the winter of 1944, when the Hungarian Nazis came to power, hundreds of people were tortured in its cellars. In 1945, when the country was occupied by the Red Army, the Hungarian communists took over the property. The building was seized by the communist secret police PRO (Politikai Rendészeti Osztály, i.e. the Political Department of the Budapest Police Headquarters), later renamed ÁVO (Államvédelmi Osztály – State Security Department of the Hungarian

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137   A part of this section on Terrorháza appeared in Anna Ziębińska-Witek, "Historical museums: between representation and illusion," in *Politics of Erasure. From "Damnatio Memoriae" to Alluring Void,* ed. Anna Markowska (Warsaw-Torun-Wrocław: Tako Publishing House, 2014), 97–105.

State Police) and in 1945–1956 ÁVH (Állicóvédelmi Ludowa) led by Gábor Péter. Political prisoners were tortured and killed in a labyrinth of underground chambers. Soon a prison was established there. After 1956 there were residential apartments in the building. The museum was opened on February 24, 2002.

In terms of the narrative and aesthetic foundations of the exhibition (the poetics of representation), *Terrorháza* can be defined as a historical narrative museum organized according to so-called performative museology characterized by a transition from information to experience, from exhibition to staging, from thinking to feeling (emotions), from things to history, from hard knowledge to soft knowledge.[138] The past in the Hungarian museum is a reconstruction with clear elements of simulation. The exhibition's creators produced a peculiar performance based on so-called historical facts to make the story deeply engaging. This choice, however, is burdened with specific consequences, above all that visitors will probably read the exhibition through the prism of aesthetics (or genres) they already know from similar representations, which prompts them to treat the exhibition only as a form of entertainment. *Terrorháza* is in effect a kind of open-air museum of totalitarianism (mainly communism), and I do not use this term in a pejorative sense, but only as a descriptive category that is helpful in analyzing the museum's poetics. Similar museums, both indoors and outdoors, owe a great deal to the Scandinavian popular movement, with whom they share certain difficulties. There is an inevitable atmosphere of artificiality in them. The layout (graphical arrangement) is planned and much more "typical" than real life. Objects may come from different places or times, often they are replicas. The only original space in the Hungarian museum is the "torture chamber" known as the "gymnasium" located in the basement where political prisoners were detained and tortured in 1945–1956. The catalog provides a detailed description of torture. Visitors descend by elevator to the basement, having in front of their eyes the screen and witnesses telling about their experiences; there is no other path, so you cannot "avoid" or skip this part of the story.

The first room of the House of Terror, entitled "Double Occupation," introduces the subject of the exhibition. The two-color (the colors refer to the black and red regime), two opposite wall have monitors: while one side shows the

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138   Soft knowledge is knowledge acquired on the basis of relatively free speculation, as opposed to the hard knowledge that characterizes the exact sciences, where it is necessary to know the rules and principles from simple to increasingly complicated. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett *The museum as catalyst*, https://silo.tips/download/the-museum-as-catalyst (retrieved: 12 April 2017).

genocidal Nazi regime (Hitler and the crowds cheering him) and photographs from Bergen-Belsen, the other side shows communist regime (including the Red Army, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the fight for Budapest). In further parts of the museum, an overwhelming majority of the representation is from the communist regime. The Arrow Cross Corridor and the Arrow Cross Room are the only spaces entirely devoted to the active participation of the Hungarians themselves in the Nazi system. On a corridor wall hangs a fragment of a speech to the nation delivered by Ferenc Szálasi, who took power in Hungary on October 16, 1944, and photos from the exhumation of the victims of mass murders committed by his organization. In the room there are the uniforms of the Arrow Cross and the ghostly figure of Ferenc Szálasi himself, the monitors display fragments of films showing the deportation of Jews and propaganda materials.[139] This relatively small presentation about the extermination of Hungarian Jews diminishes the role of Hungarian Arrow Cross Jews in these events; it rather claims that Hungarians were the victims of two systems, not active torturers in the service of one of them. This is clearly implied by a small part of the exhibition in which – placed on a moving, rotating platform – two Nazi and Soviet uniforms suggest a simple exchange of one occupation for another. However, the dominant role played by the communist period at the exhibition shows that it was somehow "worse" than the Nazi one.

The most interesting (in terms of the form of presentation) is the room entitled The Gulag whose entire floor contains a map of labor camps with characteristic tubes "pound into" the floor and marking those to which Hungarians were sent. The entire hall is stylized as a train car with monitors instead of windows. This part of the exhibition combines several ways of representing the past. The audience steps on the map (probably not many people would notice the traditional map hung on the wall) and is, at the same time, inside the train car; through the monitor windows you can see the moving Siberian landscape, which gives a sense of physical movement in space. Monitors also display the memories of former prisoners (oral history is seamlessly interwoven into the museum narrative, legitimizing it), while the viewer experiences the power of the real thing (the illuminated tubes contain authentic items belonging to the victims of

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139   The Hungarians dedicated a separate Holocaust Memorial Center (*Holokauszt Emlékközpont*) to the extermination of Jews, interesting in a formal sense, multimedia, with a predominance of virtual elements, sounds and digital images, but this cannot explain the lack of proportional representation of the Holocaust in the most famous and popular museum in Budapest.

the system). Twilight heightens emotions. In this rather unconventional way, a real place – i.e. geographical space which is historically related to the past course of events and impossible to recreate in a museum – has been replaced with a simulation with authentic elements (witness accounts, objects).

Another example of simulation in the Budapest museum is the room entitled "Soviet advisers." These advisers appeared in Hungary in 1944, almost simultaneously with the Red Army, most of whom were political officers; their task was to create a new Hungarian administration cooperating with authorities. The last Soviet advisers left Hungary in 1989. The hall shows the (relative) prosperity and luxury in which they lived. We read in the exhibition catalog that: "[…] the aim of Soviet educators (…) was not only to convey the experiences of the "advanced Soviet industry and agriculture" to their Hungarian colleagues, but to try and make them accept a lifestyle and mentality totally alien to the Hungarian people".[140] The simple conclusions were that the regime was imposed from above, that no one collaborated, and that the Soviet model was completely alien to Hungary. This impression is reinforced by a separate room devoted to resistance against the regime, which (as we read in the catalog) extended over "all social strata." Resistance groups (smaller or larger) were active in almost all parts of the country:

> […] tens of thousands were prepared to undertake armed resistance, print and distribute leaflets (…), carry out acts of sabotage or any other form of resistance. Many of them risked their lives. (…) In barely more than ten years (between 1945 and 1956) some fifty thousand persons in more than fifty cases were brought before the courts accused of sedition. Close on four hundred of them were executed (…).[141]

These simulations basically favor the concealment of certain inconvenient facts, events, or processes, because they use extremely suggestive and simple symbols that direct the audience's attention to specific (and desired) elements of a given issue. The anti-communist resistance of certain circles is not a phenomenon invented for the purpose of the exhibition, but in Hungary, society's adaptation to the system was large and there is no mass opposition movement.

Another example of manipulation is the room entitled "Parody of Justice." This is a kind of explanation of unfair decisions handed down by Hungarian courts: the museum space has been lined here with copies of materials from

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140   *TerrorHáza* (catalog), ed. Mária Schmidt, trans. from the Hungarian into English by Ann Major (Budapest: Public Endowment for Research in Central and East-European History and Society, 2008), 21.

141   Ibid., 25.

political trials, indictments, sentences, appeals and records of investigations from 1945–1956. On the monitor you can watch an hour-long propaganda film made in 1958 on the Imre Nagy trial. And the walls are covered in shelves containing symbolic binders. However, the key element of this fragment of the exhibition is a side room, or rather a recess in which there is only a chair, a lamp and a telephone, which symbolizes, firstly, the arbitrariness of courts violating the principle of separation of powers and an independent judiciary, and secondly, the compulsion exerted on judges to act against democratic principles and (possibly) their convictions, which (depending on the interpretation) partially relieves them of responsibility for political judgments. A separate room is devoted to the Revolution of 1956, the space of which has been arranged in a martyrdom convention. The relic object is (as in Gdańsk and Poznań) a leather cloak of one of the victims (Gergely Pongrátz). The names of the other "martyrs" can be heard coming from loudspeakers.

An interesting example of a certain "Disneyland-ization" of the Hungarian museum is the representation of the resettlement and deportation processes. In the spring and summer of 1944, hundreds of thousands of people were deported from Hungary. After the tragedy of the Jews, the local population of Germans was displaced (between 1946 and 1948, two hundred thousand ethnic Germans were expelled and resettled to occupied Germany). Then more than 10,000 villagers were transported to so-called "closed" camps (in fact concentration camps). In 1951, thousands of members of the middle class were relocated to the countryside. The exhibition features a symbol of those times – ZIM 12 (also known as GAZ 12) – a higher class Soviet passenger car produced in 1950–1960 at the Gorky Automobile Plant. It was the notorious so-called "black car" used by the communist political police, whose representatives usually came to pick up the victims in the middle of the night. Millions of people were afraid of those night visits and the sound of the doorbell, by which the saying "bell-panic" was coined. The veil covering the car represents mystery, dread, and fear, and is a symbol of darkness, night, and death. At regular intervals, the car lights up and sounds the horn, then you can look inside. Thanks to these effects, ZIM12 is a powerful eye-catcher (light and sound are very strong stimuli), though it seems its attraction comes more from the car as a representative of automotive technology at the time and a kind of "luxury" unavailable to the average citizen than as a symbol of deportation; attached to the car is no information on deportations.

In the case of the House of Terror (quite apart from the fact that it omits content undesirable and inconvenient for Hungarians), it is also possible to create or reinforce certain myths that normalize the crime by "forcing" it into the conventional framework of a museum narrative, which leads to an inevitable

reduction of real places to tourism space.[142] No museum is free from mythological elements, but with the kind of representation offered by the House of Terror, myth creation seems to be the main goal.

An example of mythologization is the room dedicated to the clergy. The glowing cross in the floor is a symbol of the church, of innocence and suffering, and monitors show films about the persecution of the clergy. The catalog says that both Nazism and Communism regarded religion as their enemy. The argument of totalitarianism's "natural" hostility to religion is supported by a "theological" argument: while totalitarian dictatorships persecuted and murdered their victims based on collective criteria, religion focuses on sin and individual responsibility. Both the Nazis and communists replaced God with their leaders, who were presented as infallible and all-powerful. The catalog mentions that, although in 1938–39 the church hierarchy did not condemn the anti-Jewish legislation introduced in the aftermath of the German occupation, it notes that many clergymen rushed to help their Jewish fellow citizens. Churches, monastic orders and parishes protected many of the persecuted.[143] The facts are that the first anti-Semitic law in Europe was introduced by none other than Hungary in 1920 (limiting the number of Jewish students at universities), and the legislation of 1938–39 clearly limited the participation of Jews in the political and economic life of the country. Another law from 1941 was – as Saul Friedländer writes – a copy of the Nuremberg Laws.[144] On most of these issues, the Hungarian Catholic Church and Protestant churches supported Admiral Miklós Horthy.

In line with its assumptions, the House of Terror evokes emotional involvement and transforms the viewer (spectator) into an actor and participant in the events represented (a *spec-actor*). In the case of similar reconstructions, one can also talk about the phenomenon of "suspension of disbelief," which means that the audience accepts the limitations of the medium, suspends the critical gaze for the duration of the visit, and sacrifices realism and logic for the sake of fun and excitement or commitment. The exhibition instrumentalizes the past for the purposes of current historical policy, which are related to the positive presentation of the Hungarian nation to the Western world (the museum is a major tourist attraction). The creation of the extremely uncritical Hungarian self-image is not without significance for the museum's popularity.

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142   See Piotr Piotrowski, "Auschwitz versus Auschwitz," *Pro Memoria* (2004), no. 20: 20.

143   *TerrorHáza* (catalog), op. cit., 48.

144   Saul Friedländer, *Czas eksterminacji. Nazistowskie Niemcy i Żydzi 1939–1945*, trans. Sławomir Kupisz, Krzysztof Masłowski, Anna Maria Nowak (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2010), 305.

The House of Terror and the Polish identity museums in Poznań and Gdańsk differ mainly in their language of expression. This may not be the best term for visual discourses, but it captures the essence of the problem. The "Polish months" – periods of rebellion – and in particular the rise and activity of Solidarity were, as Jadwiga Staniszkis puts it, a fight for the sake of dignity, a "cleansing," a "festival," one that was "expressed primarily in moral, not political or material terms."[145] After the transformation, according to Staniszkis, an accelerated process of individualization began in which people "abandoned by the state" had to rely only on themselves, the sense of community characteristic of the 1980s disappeared, and the process of teaching "formal rationality" began. At the same time, as a consequence of these changes, it became difficult to express the collective experience: when the myth of moral reason disappeared, the language in which people survived the Solidarity period also disappeared.[146] Staniszkis writes:

> The repressive measures that came with martial law (but also exhaustion tied to the hysteria of one's own millenarian elation), and then – the course of transformation so different from the Solidarity Utopia and the increasing knowledge about ways in which authorities manipulated this uprising, effectively corroded this feeling of absolute rightness. Silence returned, a kind of disarticulation (with one key word: "return to normal") and (…) a fear of the ridiculousness of using great words in confrontation with the everyday, individual struggle. The end of the Solidarity utopia meant the end of the belief that collective solutions relating to the entire community were possible. Individual strategies of survival and promotion, remembered from the Gierek era, returned.[147]

In other words, the categories belonging to the romantic paradigm, which were perfect for the struggle for sovereignty (in line with the original context of their use and functioning in culture), turned out to be completely useless after the transformation when – in Janion's words – a certain "historical cycle" in Polish culture expired. The narratives of the European Solidarity Center and, to a certain extent, the June 1956 Museum eagerly return to the language of moral reason; they create a solemn, sometimes pathetic mood and try to revive a community that does not exist today by invoking the heroic past with the simultaneous silence of conflict and painful situations (problems with interpreting such events

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145   Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Antropologia władzy. Między traktatem Lizbońskim a kryzysem* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2009), 186.

146   Ibid., 188–189.

147   Ibid., 190.

such as the Round Table Talks,[148] Lech Wałęsa's contacts with the SB, disputes over vetting, etc.). Instead of this, however, we have an attempt to create an anti-communist opposition myth as the founding foundation of the Third Republic.

Terrorháza does not speak a solemn language. On the contrary, it contains a great deal of nostalgic, non-heroic elements (certain elements of everyday life under the communist state are recalled with sympathy). In an interview with *Tygodnik Powszechny* under the telling title "I Do Not Believe in Objectivity," the director of the Budapest museum, Mária Schmidt, claims that the exhibition creators had goals other than just an objective representation of history: "People said we were falsifying the history of the twentieth century. But I was sure that I wanted to move the hearts of museum visitors and make them emotionally involved in history."[149] The exhibition also aims to evoke a feeling of nostalgia: "I consider it something natural," Schmidt says. "Why shouldn't we be nostalgic for the times in which we lived our youth? (…) Everyday life during the communist period also had many good sides."[150] Despite this, we are still dealing with a museum with a strong identity, creating the myth of Hungarians as victims of two totalitarian regimes, and with a patriotic narrative propagated by the state. The museum is dominated by mythologizing over nostalgic elements.

At this point, however, it should be mentioned that in Budapest there are two other historical museum representations that meet the conditions of identity exhibitions, though they use different means and exhibition strategies than the House of Terror and the exhibitions in Poland. The first one is located in the Hungarian National Museum (*Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum*), the country's largest historical museum built in 1827–1847 according to the design drawn up by architect Mihály Pollack. This institution was founded by Count Ferenc Széchényi, who in 1802 donated his collection of engravings, manuscripts, maps, and coins and thus created the collection's nucleus. A strong bond with an authentic facility has been the direction taken by the facility's development from

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148 Round Table – negotiations conducted from February 6 to April 5, 1989 by representatives of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, the democratic opposition and church parties. One of the most important events in the recent Polish history, from which the political changes in the PRL began, including partially free elections to the Sejm, the so-called June elections.

149 Maria Schmidt, "Nie wierzę w obiektywizm," *Tygodnik Powszechny* (2012), no. 18–19 (special issue): 16. When asked if she imagines a different interpretation of the communist period, Schmidt replies: "Of course. People have to decide for themselves which type of narrative they will accept. This is freedom." See ibid., 17.

150 Ibid., 17.

the nineteenth century to the present day. The exhibition presents the history of Hungary in twenty rooms and consequently avoids the use of the so-called new technologies, i.e. multimedia kiosks with available databases, panels or monitors, as well as arrangements, reconstructions and simulations, which appear only in the last part of the exhibition covering the latest history.

As part of the chronological story, the audience follows the history of the nation from the founding of the state (the Kingdom of Hungary – the Árpád dynasty, 11th-13th century) to 1990 (the fall of communism and the political transformation). The next rooms show successive time intervals, and in its entirety, the exhibition is based solely on objects illustrating the national history in several dimensions. While political life is represented by the insignia of rulers, armor, monuments and weapons, everyday life is shown through home gadgets and clothing, and art and science is symbolized by scientific instruments, church decorations, paintings and sculptures. In a small, bright room you can listen (using headphones) to fragments of compositions by Franz Liszt. The traditional division of public from private life is broken by the juxtaposition of objects belonging to different fields in individual rooms, but the classic character of the exhibition has been retained (showcases, a minimal number of captions, no sound elements).

The exhibition is coherent and non-narrative: it does not present a linear story about events, nor does it interpret them for the viewer, and the objects do not fulfill a set design function. On the contrary, they are the core of the exhibition, and what counts is their authenticity and material quality, surface, density, texture, and color. The meaning and sense of Hungarian history have been attached to the artifacts that mark the political, geographic, ethical, and aesthetic course of history. Objects present their own narrative potential, which visitors will not overlook since there is nothing to shift their attention. The museum is quiet and devoid of distractions.

This style of exhibition changes in the last room presenting the years 1945–1990, which is preceded by a fragment about the war and the double German-Soviet occupation, which is presented as in the House of Terror through two enemy uniforms arranged next to each other. At the entrance to this part of the exhibition there is a large five-pointed star and a copy of the infamous statue of Joseph Stalin, designed by Mikus Sándor, destroyed during the 1956 uprising and erected just four years earlier. The exhibition space has been divided into "cubicles" which present this stage of Hungarian history in a thematic way (Photo 7). The following topics were distinguished: regime art (paintings, sculptures), changes in public space (posters, street signs), work (office furniture, portraits of leaders), the imbalanced economy – industrialization and collectivization (posters,

photographs, press articles), activities of the security services (reconstruction of a prison cell), the persecution and deportation of people (reconstruction of a typical interrogation room), the revolution of 1956 (torn cobblestones, military uniforms), everyday life under János Kádár (reconstruction of an apartment in a block of flats), the uniqueness Hungarian art film in the 1960s and the final collapse of the system. Although the exhibition still focuses mainly on objects, there are arrangements and a clear interpretative suggestion, as if out of some fear that the audience might overlook something or understand something contrary to the curator's intention. This part of the exhibition has narrative elements, which indicates the importance attached to giving recent history a concrete meaning. A similar exhibition strategy potentially exerts a stronger influence on the viewer by presenting a specific story about events, which in practice prevents the emergence of competing interpretations. Despite the visual change, the exhibition does not suggest that Hungary's recent history is detached from the times preceding it. On the contrary, it is part of the nation's history as one of its stages, perhaps a complicated stage but not an aberration. Of course, communism is still presented as a regime that was imposed upon Hungary and foreign, but it is significant to emphasize that even in such a difficult situation, the Hungarian nation both fought for freedom (the 1956 revolution) and functioned normally within the system and even succeeded (e.g. in the film industry), a fact which emphasizes the multidimensionality of the past and makes it difficult to assess it unequivocally.

The second representation that makes Hungary's recent history even more clearly embedded in the past is the exhibition at the Budapest History Museum (*Budapesti Történeti Múzeum*), entitled "Budapest – Lights and Shadows. The Capital's 1000 years." This exhibition begins with a story about the prehistoric traces of human settlements in today's Budapest, but it is not extensive given that it treats the city's history very selectively. The exhibition continues in two directions – chronological and thematic – and some of the thematic elements that stand out are ethnic diversity, housing conditions, cultural activity, bathing culture, workshop and factory, market fairs and the market in general, and the symbolic occupation of public space. In these specific thematic capsules, the exhibition's creators freely juxtaposed artifacts from different eras – for example, residential interiors from early modern times with the reconstruction of an apartment from the 1970s and elements of furnishings from the 1940s and 1960s. In the fragment devoted to art, nineteenth-century portraits of Hungarian actors (Lujza Blaha and Márton Lendvay) are set adjacent to film posters from 1904, 1917, 1920 and 1944, while in the "capsule" devoted to public space we see copies of monuments to rulers from different periods of Hungarian history

(Photo 8). Once again, a copy of a Stalin sculpture by Mikus Sándor is a symbol of the communist era.

The exhibition is both chronological – it can thus be visited in a linear way from the earliest times to the present (the last stage is the period 1945–1990 illustrated mainly by posters, banners and a bust of Kádár and a description of the city's expansion under the communists) – and thematic ("capsules" showing small fragments of the city's history in a holistic way, juxtaposing elements of that history from different periods of time). In this way, the exhibition shows that regardless of various historical processes, urban space is a unity, a material and non-material palimpsest durable over time. From this perspective, no historical period can be viewed as a break in continuity, an aberration or a divergence.

Unlike the House of Terror, which shows the two occupations as a breach or anomaly in the "normal" course of the nation's history, both of the above exhibitions treat the communist regime as a small part of a larger whole, and their "identity" is not based on heroism or martyrdom, but simply on their existence in time. Set in the perspective of long duration, they show – without pompous and momentous rhetoric – the nation's strength, the permanence of place, and the stability of identity.

2.3. Double Occupation

The collective memory of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian societies differs significantly from the memory of other countries in the region in the light of the fact that the Soviet occupation, which began there in 1940 under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, lasted an exceptionally long time; the Yalta and Tehran conferences tacitly confirmed the inclusion of the Baltic countries in USSR, which regained their independent statehood only in 1991. During this period, the Baltic societies experienced the Nazi regime for a relatively short time (1941–1944) (together with Belarus they were part of the Reich Commissariat East).

Settling accounts with the past is thus difficult because the Baltic states still have to deal with accusations of collaboration with the Nazis and complicity in the Holocaust. The German occupier's policy in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, according to many scholars, was characterized by relatively low repression and broad collaboration.[151] To this day, Baltic societies remember the long-lasting

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151   See for example Marian Wojciechowski, *Czy istniała kolaboracja z Rzeszą niemiecką i ZSRR podczas drugiej wojny światowej?* https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media// files/Rocznik_Towarzystwa_Naukowego_Warszawskiego-r2004-t67-s13-25.pdf (retrieved: 19 November 2017). For more on the issue of anti-communism in the

Soviet repressions with much greater clarity and memory of the German occupation and the Holocaust is limited. In 1998, the presidents of all three countries established historical commissions to investigate the crimes of occupation (mostly Soviet). Despite resistance, the political elites of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia ultimately adopted an identical (compromise) concept of juxtaposing the two regimes and "double genocide." That having been said, this compromise took place as a result of efforts to admit these countries into European Union structures and the need to accept Western standards and fundamental historical beliefs. In the West, Nazism and the Holocaust are treated as a paradigmatic and completely unique example of unprecedented genocide and a lesson from which the world should learn. Much attention is also paid to the collaboration of European societies with the Nazis. Memory of the Holocaust and the Nazi period in the Baltic republics has thus increased since the 1990s, though in the opinion of some Western scholars, commemoration actions are aimed at satisfying the expectations of the West, and not the real needs of their own audience.[152]

The idea of comparing and contrasting the two regimes and the creation of the Occupation Museums has a double goal in the opinion of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian societies: "East Europeans," as deputy director of the Latvian museum Valters Nollendorfs puts it, "must now come to terms with the Holocaust and everything connected with it. West Europeans must come to grips with the Gulag. That's the only way both sides can come to an understanding."[153] The creator of the first concept at the exhibition in Riga, Paulis Lazda, admits that he had to resist pressure to limit parts of the exhibition about the Nazi period in order to emphasize the Soviet repression.[154] At first she was opposed to the equation of fascism and communism in museums, since this approach completely reversed the vision – in force until *perestroika* – of the Russians as

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Baltic States see Rafał Wnuk, *Leśni bracia. Podiemie antykomunistyczne na Litwie, Łotwie i Estonii 1944–1956* (Warszawa: Bellona, 2018) and Grzegorz Motyka, Rafał Wnuk, Tomasz Stryjek, Adam F. Baran, *Wojna po wojnie. Antysowieckie podziemie w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1944–1953* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012).

152   James Mark, "Containing Fascism. History in Post-Communist Baltic Occupation and Genocide Museums," in *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989,* eds. Oksana Sarkisova and Péter Apor (Ventral European University 2008)**,** 364.

153   Cited in ibid., 350.

154   Ibid.

liberators. Audience surveys show that the Russian minority rarely visits the museums in Riga and Tallinn, and among Russian children who visited the museum in Latvia, it aroused a sense of guilt because they identified with the "occupiers."[155]

Because of the typology I use in this book, I place the Museums of the Occupation in Latvia and Estonia in the category of identity-heroic. The Lithuanian Genocide Museum uses a different exhibition strategy, so I will discuss it below, which does not mean that it is not an identity museum.

The building of the present Latvian Occupation Museum in Riga (*Latvijas Okupācijas Muzejs*) was built in 1971 to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin. It is located in the very center of Riga's Old Town, but it differs significantly – in terms of colors, shape, materials used and the general atmosphere – from the elaborate neighboring buildings, the House of the Blackheads and Scales House. Architecturally, the building is cuboid with a "brutalist" statement and a dark façade set on two heavy, stone backrests and four thin pillars. The building block is thus open to both visitors and random passers-by who may cross underneath.

Until 1991, the facility was a branch of the Museum of the Revolution and the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic, which was finally closed in 1991. At that time, the museum hosted an exhibition devoted to the Latvian Red Riflemen, i.e. the Bolshevik formation which in 1917 separated from the Latvian Riflemen established two years earlier to defend the Baltic territories of the Russian Empire (Photo 9). The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia was established in 1993 as a private venture initiated by Paulis Lazda from the University of Wisconsin in cooperation with the Latvian Minister of Culture. In 2006, the Latvian parliament passed a law that allowed the museum to be co-financed from state funds. The new institution completely cut itself off from the Revolution Museum (and from the past); nothing was left from the old exhibition except a few communist busts and most of the collection was donated to the War Museum in Riga.[156] New material was obtained from individual donations, antique shops, and even from

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155   Ieva Gundare, *Overcoming the Legacy of History for Ethnic Integration in Latvia* https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/int/int_0503a.pdf (retrieved: 22 February 2017).

156   The War Museum (*Latvijas Kara Muzejs*) is located in the fourteenth-century Powder Tower in the Riga Old Town. It is one of the oldest museums in Latvia, founded in 1916. The exhibition covers Latvian military history from the ninth century to contemporary NATO operations. The best and most modern part of the exhibition is the one devoted to both world wars and the 1917 revolution.

former KGB agents who decided to sell their material. By 2017, the museum collection had grown to 60,000 items.[157]

The exhibition, which I visited for the first time in 2013, commemorated the Soviet occupation (1940–1941), the German occupation (1941–1944) and again the Soviet occupation (1944–1991). The two regimes were juxtaposed by the symbols of the hammer and sickle and swastikas alternating one after another, and by enlarged photos of the dictators, Hitler and Stalin, displayed next to each other (Photo 10). The calendar of tragic events for Latvia was illustrated with photos showing the crimes and repressive measures carried out against society, while, which was strongly emphasized, the responsibility for the destruction of the state and the economy and the Sovietization of the community was borne by the Soviet Union. A comparison of the activities of the German and Soviet occupiers clearly showed which regime was more destructive for the Latvians. For example, the part of the exhibition devoted to the first Soviet occupation emphasized the terror and crimes committed by the Soviet secret services, and the introduction to the German occupation read: "After a year of horror, the German army was welcomed as liberators," which was additionally illustrated with photos of the exhumation of the Cheka's victims. The exhibition also emphasized constant resistance and the will of an enslaved society to survive.

In 2018, during my second stay in Riga, the situation in the museum was quite different. The building and exhibition were officially closed due to reconstruction and expansion,[158] but one of the museum staff told me, there were other reasons as well. As long as the museum was completely private, it enjoyed political independence. But since the museum came under the influence of the Latvian parliament, discussion about how the shape of the building "does not suit" the Riga Old Town's architecture has been joined by a debate tied to members of the Russian minority (represented by the leftist coalition of the Concord Center) and their disagreement over certain aspects of the exhibition. The main point of the dispute was the use of the term "occupation" to refer to the Soviet presence in Latvia after 1944. According to the opponents of this notion, it would be more reasonable to describe it as an "illegal regime change."[159] This new terminology would require a complete reconstruction of the exhibition.

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157   https://okupacijasmuzejs.lv/en/about-the-museum#about (retrieved: 19 January 2018).

158   Part of the expanded complex will also include a memorial dedicated to the victims of the Soviet occupation of Latvia. Now museum is opened again. History of the museum see https://okupacijasmuzejs.lv/storage/files/6/OM%2045.%20 apkartraksts%20LV_ENG.pdf

159   Author's conversation with one of the museum's employees 12 January 2018.

Because of this "terminological" conflict, which in practice is a political conflict, the date on which the museum will be reopened is unknown, and the public can visit the temporary exhibition located in four small rooms in the public administration building, which also houses the archives (in the city center at Raiņa bulvāris 7, but not in the Riga Old Town). One of the first panels at the exhibition is devoted to the concept of occupation defined as "military seizure of all or part of the territory of another state and imposition of the occupant's administration thereon" and a reminder that this category was formulated by the Hague (1907) and Geneva (1949) Conventions and confirmed by other international legislation (Photo 11). The exhibition, which in this shape contains almost no objects, also emphasizes that the three Baltic states' situation with regard to the Soviet occupation, which lasted until 1991, was different from the realities of not only Western countries but also other Eastern European countries.

One branch of the Occupation Museum, which serves at the same time as a symbol of the Soviet oppression in 1940–1941 and 1944–1991, is the KGB building located at the corner of Brīvības and Stabu streets. The Soviet secret services (in Latvia they are most often called the Cheka) appeared on Latvian soil together with the Red Army and – as they did in all of Eastern Europe – carried out repressive measures, including executions, against the system's opponents and suspected "counter-revolutionaries" in accordance with the notorious Article 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code based on the concept of "enemy of the people." This neoclassical building in Riga – designed by the famous Latvian architect Aleksandrs Vanags and known also as "The House on the Corner," in Latvian *Stūra Māja* – was built in 1912 as an apartment building with shops on the ground floor. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was slowly taken over by the Ministry of the Interior and various non-governmental offices. The NKVD moved into the building in August 1940; prison cells were created in the cellars and a space for executions was built next to the courtyard. The rooms in which suspects were interrogated were located on the building's upper floors. During the short German occupation, the building housed German and Latvian administrative offices, but it also served propaganda purposes: it was opened to the public so that the people of Riga could see with their own eyes the dimension of Bolshevik terror. During the next Soviet occupation, it housed the headquarters of the KGB and cells for the temporary detention of prisoners pending their final sentence in the central prison in Riga or in one of the Gulag camps. In 1992–2007, the building was operated by the Latvian State Police, which meant that many elements of the interior were changed, and the functions performed during the Soviet occupation were ended. Since 2007, the building has been empty and in decline.

The tour of the former KGB headquarters covers the ground floor, fragments of which reflect both the first stage of the building's history (decorative floors, mirrors, a coffered ceiling in the staircase of the former apartment building) and the subsequent criminal activity of special services (vestibule, office furnishings). But the main exhibition space is the prison, which can only be entered with a guide (Photo 12). The corridor, cells and rooms for the interrogation and registration of prisoners do not differ in appearance from similar places scattered throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In Riga, you can also see a prison kitchen with (reconstructed) equipment, an internal "walking yard" and an execution room. I will describe this exhibition trend in more detail in the next chapter. The narrative used by the young guide is aimed at foreign tourists and includes basic information on what the Cheka / NKVD / KGB was, what methods were used in interrogations, who could be sentenced, and how long the detention period was before the final sentence.[160]

In addition to the Occupation Museum, there is one more institution in Riga dealing with the recent Latvian history. The Latvian Museum of National History (*Latvijas Nacionālais vēstures muzejs*) was founded in 1896 and located for a long time in the medieval castle of Riga. But after fire destroyed some of the exhibits in May 2014, it was moved (temporarily) to a nineteenth-century tenement house next to one of city's most important arteries on Freedom Boulevard (*Brīvības bulvāris*). The permanent exhibition presents Latvian history from its ancient beginnings to 1991 (regained independence). The exhibition is based on archaeological, ethnographic, and historical objects, the authenticity of which is assumed to serve as the foundation and confirmation of Latvian identity. The part devoted to recent history is divided into unusual time periods (compared to similar representations in all the Baltic republics).

The occupation and annexation of the Republic of Latvia by the Soviets (1940–1941) marked the end of the independent state and the beginning of a long totalitarian period. The exhibition here presents photos of people responsible for cooperation with the Soviet Union, a large portrait of Stalin and a life-size wax figure of the controversial Latvian Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis (Photo 13). The next part of the exhibition lists the "repressive measures of totalitarian regimes and the Second World War (1940–1953)" – that is, the period encompassing the Soviet and German occupations and the first decade of the repeated Soviet rule. Inscriptions inform viewers that after a year of Soviet

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160   The guide was unable to answer the question about further plans of the museum and the city regarding the building.

terror, many Latvian citizens welcomed the Germans with the hope of improving their fate, which, however, turned out to be illusory. The greatest Nazi crimes in Latvia were – according to the exhibition – the murders of Jews and the Holocaust (though there is no information on the participation of Latvians in these crimes). An illustration of this terror is the reconstruction of the isolation room in the KGB headquarters in Riga. The next part of the exhibition is devoted exclusively to the era of Soviet rule in the period 1944–1985: ideology, economy, and administration. In this way, the German occupation does not appear at all as a separate stage in Latvian history, but rather only as an element of the general chaos and terror that marked this period of the country's history. The exhibition is not one of the most original (from the formal perspective): apart from boards with photographs documenting everyday life and the pompous ceremonies that characterized communism, small items from the period are contained in small showcases. One space is used to demonstrate the living conditions of an average Latvian family by reconstructing a room with furniture typical of the 1960s (Photo 14). The years 1987–1990 are presented as Latvia's slow restoration as an independent state, a period marked by the intensification of resistance in the country and changes in the Soviet Union led by Mikhail Gorbachev. Regained independence in 1991, illustrated by a large mock-up of the American Statue of Liberty, ends the entire exhibition by suggesting that since that year Latvia's history has returned to the track in line with Western standards of development and progress in all walks of life.

The establishment of the Occupation Museum in Tallinn (*Okupatsioonide Muuseum*), just like the one in Riga, meant a shift in collective memory from an almost total concentration on the Soviet regime to recognition of the German occupation's effects. The institution (as in the Latvian case) relies on external subsidies. In Estonia, the greatest contribution to the creation of the museum was made by Olga Kistler-Ritso, who in 1949 emigrated to the USA and, after the "Singing Revolution," became interested in commemorating the occupation of Estonia by the USSR and the Third Reich. To this end, she set up the Estonian Kistler-Ritso Foundation (*Kistler-Ritso Sihtasutus Eesti*). The museum was opened in July 2003 and its periodization and content were preceded, despite its private nature, by a conference of Estonian academics in 1998.

It is symptomatic that, in the opinion of its director, Heiki Ahonen, the museum should be created in opposition to Western Holocaust exhibitions where, in the director's words, a "church atmosphere" is dominant, where "you should not make any noise" and you are "made to act in a certain way" which, in his opinion, makes it impossible to carry out educational activities. In addition, Holocaust museums have an "oppressive atmosphere" which produces "an environment in

which there should be no doubts" and which inhibits reflection. Ahonen believes that a situation like this is particularly undesirable when it comes to educating young people who like to seek answers themselves. The Occupation Museum in Tallinn was intended to be free from the above difficulties and designed to provoke debate, not to provide ready-made answers.[161]

The museum building – made of concrete and glass, with an oppressive atmosphere like in Riga – is also intended to serve as a commemoration, that is, a memorial "for numerous victims buried in unmarked graves" – according to one part of the exhibition. The museum fits into the city space and its surroundings (Photo 15). Architects Indrek Peil and Siiri Vallner located the building on the corner of Toompea Street and Kaarli Boulevard. Toompea is also the name of Tallinn Castle, which now houses the Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*). The museum is situated on the line between the parliament and the nearby national library. Until 2007, this road was interrupted by the Bronze Soldier Monument; after its removal, the straight, unbroken line serves as a symbol of Estonian independence and the uninterrupted road to freedom lasting from 1918 to 1991.[162] A dozen concrete suitcases in front of the building symbolize the tens of thousands of Estonians who left the country in 1944 in an attempt to escape the Red Army, or who were sent to Soviet camps. The suitcases, the world-famous symbol of deportation to concentration and extermination camps, draw a parallel in Tallinn between the Holocaust and the Gulag.

The museum[163] has a collection of about fifteen thousand artifacts accumulated over five years. A team of curators, led by the history professor Enn Tarvel,

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161   Cited in James Mark, "Containing Fascism," op. cit., 351.

162   The Bronze Soldier, or the Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn, was unveiled on September 22, 1947, on the third anniversary of the Red Army's entry into the city. See Stuart Burch and Ulf Zander, "Preoccupied by the Past: The Case of Estonia's Museum of Occupations," *Scandia: tidskrift för historisk forskning* 74 (2008), no. 2: 53–73. http://www.stuartburch.com/uploads/8/1/9/1/8191744/2008_museum _of_occupations.pdf (retrieved: 17 March 2017).

163   The description of the exhibition in the book comes from 2017. In subsequent years the exhibition was changed and now focuses on the theme of "Freedom without borders." The exhibition consists of five thematic parts: a description of crimes against humanity, the fate of Estonians in the free world, life in Soviet Estonia, the reestablishment of independence and the times of freedom. Multimedia stories of witnesses to key events in Estonian history, memories of persecution, exile and trauma have also been added. The current name of the museum is Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom and KGB Prison Cells see https://vabamu.ee/en/ exhibitions/freedom-without-borders/

arranged the objects in chronological order (1940–1941, 1941–1944, 1944–1991). Each period is illustrated with artifacts and interviews with witnesses. The items are presented in display cases with no text or minimal captions. They do not constitute a coherent story about events; it is not a narrative museum, and the objects exemplify history in three intertwining dimensions: military, political and everyday life. The changes in the occupation are presented by three military uniforms arranged side by side: Soviet, German, and again Soviet (Photo 16).

In underground or cellar-like rooms, which are accessed from the level of the main exhibition, there are few iconic monuments (including Mikhail Kalinin – chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and Viktor Kingissepp – an Estonian communist activist) without pedestals and plinths. There are no windows in this space; it is dim, as in a prison, bunker, or shelter. There is no information describing the symbolism of the place, which can be read as the degradation of monuments or their metaphorical imprisonment. It is worth adding that Estonian works of art from the Soviet era are in the KuMu national art museum (*Eesti Kunstimuuseum*), opened in 2006 in Tallinn. They make up the installation by Villu Jaanisoo entitled "Seagull" with busts dating from the nineteenth century to 1980 and a part of an exhibition presenting the history of Estonian art from 1940–1990.

At the exhibition the Museum of Occupation formulates its mission clearly: "(…) to preserve historical memory that strengthens the identity of the nation and the state. Regardless of what the past was like (happy, tragic, giving reasons for pride or shame), it deserves to be remembered. (…) Estonia is the only home we have. We want to know what happened here and teach others about it." In practice, however, there are no exhibition elements that could "bring shame" on the Estonians, the inscription only suggests that even such events (implicitly collaboration with Nazism) belong to the nation's past, which is treated, however, as a result of circumstances that were tragic for the state and society.

Another historical exhibition devoted to recent history is located in the Tallinn City Museum (*Linnamuuseum*), which presents the city's history from the tenth century. The exhibition is a typical reconstruction filled with replicas, mock-ups, mannequins, but also authentic artifacts from the past, which mainly include decorative objects of everyday use. The last part of the exhibition covers the period 1939–1991. A short introduction to the history of the city at this stage of its history contains not a single sentence about the presence of the Nazis in Estonia. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact marks the beginning of the Soviet occupation, which lasted uninterruptedly until 1991. The museum space here resembles a forgotten warehouse with items that are no longer needed

and a bit embarrassing, but – because of the memories they evoke – were not thrown away.

Wooden shelves stand in a row, and on their shelves behind glass there are dozens of everyday items: polyester clothes, toys, alcohol and cigarette packaging, food cards, books, traditional cutouts, tableware (contrasting with richly decorated porcelain, faience, and silver from earlier eras). Placed on the floor (as if due to lack of space) were busts of communist activists (Photo 17). Behind bars symbolizing the "iron curtain" hangs a plaque with photos and postcards from the forbidden Western world. In museum stores, there are often items that do not match the story presented at the main exhibition, possibly incomplete or requiring maintenance or damaged. In the case of the exhibition at the City Museum in Tallinn, the arrangement, stylized like a junk room, seems to suggest that the period 1939–1991 was for the city not only a break in its development, but even a regression in the linear line of progress characteristic of earlier eras. The lack of any reference to the Nazis' short presence in the history of Tallinn and Estonia indicates that in the community's memory, the main blame for this degradation lies with the Soviets.

The Museums of the Occupation in Latvia and Estonia are official spaces visited by foreign visitors. Like all identity museums, they create the foundation myths of both nations, centered around the struggle for independence and the imperative to defend it. In their rhetoric, the Occupation Museums highlight the equal suffering endured by the victims of both the Nazi and Soviet regimes; the differences between them are blurred and the exhibitions accuse no ethnic group of any crimes by including all of them in the national martyrdom. However, the exhibitions clearly reveal certain "omissions" and gaps indicating that the Soviet regime is treated as the main external force aimed at the complete destruction of the Baltic nations. The German occupation seems much less brutal, and those who fought against the Bolsheviks (along with the Nazis) are presented as national heroes. Writing about the currently closed exhibition in the Latvian museum, Ieva Gundare points out that over 70 % of the artifacts and over 80 % of the content involves the Soviet occupation (especially the loss of population, deportations, and Stalinist crimes). Some visitors, including history teachers, were quite surprised by the fact that the term "occupation" was applied to the Nazi period at all, so strongly is it associated only with the Soviets.[164]

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164   Ieva Gundare, *Overcoming the Legacy of History for Ethnic Integration in Latvia* https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/int/int_0503a.pdf (retrieved: 22 February 2017).

In a text analyzing both exhibitions, James Mark argues that in both cases the effects of Nazism are "minimized," especially when they could potentially obscure the story of communism, and that the museums lack reflection on how the two regimes relate to each other and how this ideological battle influenced the citizen's worldview.[165] Similar accusations indicate a misunderstanding typical of Western scholars focused on the Holocaust and Nazism. The museum is not a place of historiographic research (Holocaust museums around the world, including the most famous ones in Washington, do not carry out such analyses either[166]), but rather a reflection of collective memory and identity, including contemporary fears. It is worth noting that the current situation in the Baltic republics may only deepen the anxiety related to the proximity of Russia and its imperial foreign policy. James Mark also does not mention the fact that the Germanic cultural influence in Latvia and Estonia was strong since the Middle Ages, which influenced the perception of Germany by contemporary Baltic societies.

Nonetheless, I agree with James Mark's thesis that Occupation Museums do not create conditions or provide arguments for reflection or discussion of the potential of communist ideology as a reaction to Nazism. Rather, they prefer narratives about hostile and brutal occupation, followed by even worse slavery. Collaboration from this perspective appeared to be carried out in defense of the nation in the best possible way, and not as a result of a world view or beliefs (right or left). Under the German occupation, collaboration was usually limited to cooperation with the Nazis in order to fight a worse evil – the communists, and under the Soviet occupation, it was resistance to the destroyers of the nation. Ordinary citizens are rarely seen as expressing an ideology other than Latvian nationalism,[167] which is precisely the specificity, or even mission, of identity and heroic museums: to create a certain mythical structure on which societies can build a sense of community and pride in their own history. Elements that threaten this structure are marginalized or completely ignored.

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165 Mark believes that all aspects of the Nazi occupation are used to demonize communism, and those that could threaten anti-communism are marginalized or suppressed altogether. Tales of Nazi atrocities seem particularly dangerous to him, as they may support the idea that the Soviet Union liberated the Baltic states. See James Mark, *"Containing Fascism,"* op. cit., 352, 354, 357 and 361.

166 See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach*, op. cit., particularly Chapters 5 and 6.

167 James Mark "Containing Fascism," op. cit., 361.

2.4. "Patchwork" Identity

Collective identity is "(…) the result of the classification of the social world, an order introduced into the symbolic world around us, it is an image of a group, an integrated system of elements representing its essential features and distinguishing it from other groups, and thus defining their mutual relations."[168] On the one hand it is stable and coherent, and on the other hand it is dynamic and subject to changes in relations with other people and groups. Building an image of oneself and one's own community towards others was a particularly complex process in the so-called Recovered Territories,[169] where various groups of people interacted, after traumatic experiences related to war and then sudden, often forced, relocation. The demolished cities were a foreign, hostile, territory that needed to be "tamed," in which a long time passed before the feeling of "temporariness" could be overcome. I call the identity forged through the years among the inhabitants of this region a "patchwork" identity, made of scraps and elements of previous visions of the world plowed up by the war and negotiated with various people. Without going deeper into these considerations, I would like to devote a short reflection here to two historical museums that present the post-war fate of Wrocław and Szczecin from an identity perspective.

The Depot History Center in Wrocław is located in the former bus depot no. VII at Grabiszyńska Street. The depot was opened in 1893 when a private German company launched the first electric trams in Wrocław. In 1924, it was taken over by the city and given the number VII. Destroyed during the bombing in 1945, it was used again only in the early 1960s after it was rebuilt and taken over by the Municipal Transport Company of Wrocław, which in 2015 moved to a more modern headquarters. Currently, the two-level building, rebuilt and adapted to museum activities, presents a historical exhibition devoted to the

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168   Zdzisław Mach, "Przedmowa," Tadeusz Paleczny, *Socjologia tożsamości* (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, 2008), 7.

169   Recovered Territories – the western and northern territories of modern Poland, which, in accordance with the provisions of the Potsdam Conference (July 17, 1945 – August 2, 1945), were granted to Poland. The northern and western lands annexed to Poland included the provinces of Germany located east of the Oder and Neisse Lusatian rivers. In 1939, this area was inhabited by 7.1 million Germans and 1.3 million Poles. In the final months of the Second World War, much of the population fled the approaching Soviet army. About 3.5 million people recognized as Germans were displaced to Germany from 1945 to the end of 1950. The largest cities in these territories are Wrocław (formerly German Breslau), Gdańsk (formerly German Freie Stadt Danzig) and Szczecin (formerly German Stettin)

city's postwar fate and the shaping of its identity. The exhibition was opened to the public in 2016. In line with the modern ideas of revitalization of industrial districts, the institution is also intended to fulfill culture-forming tasks, inspiring residents and tourists to become active.

The time range established for the exhibition was 1945–2016, but the story begins earlier with a representation of the interwar period and the Second World War, with both topics being treated very selectively. The years 1918–1939 – presented under the slogan "Those were the days!" – present a romantic vision of that twenty-year period that is not fully in line with historical realities. Concentration on the cultural or scientific achievements of that period, ignoring national conflicts or socio-political problems, constitutes an unjustified idealization of the past. The aim of the procedure is, it would seem, an attempt to show the continuation of borderland traditions in post-war Wrocław, which was related to the migration of Lviv's culture-forming elites[170] to the so-called Regained Territories.

Representation of the Second World War emphasizes the heroism and martyrdom of Poles attacked and terrorized by two enemies, the Germans and the Soviets, which is in line with the heroic vision of history and the nation that we see throughout the exhibition. The most interesting element of this part of the exhibition is the facsimile of the map on which Stalin and Ribbentrop have marked the division of Poland; it is signed by both politicians. The key events for the rest of the story were the Tehran and Yalta conferences, which determined the fate of the eastern and western Polish lands. It was there that the post-war history of Wrocław

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170   In 1944–1946, there was a wave of forced resettlement of the Polish population from the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic (the so-called *Kresy Wschodnie*) to the new borders of the Republic of Poland ("People's Poland"). At the Yalta Conference (1945), the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity signed an agreement with the USSR recognizing the modified Curzon line as Poland's eastern border. As a consequence, the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic were separated from Poland and incorporated into the union republics of the USSR: the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The resettlement operation in Lviv began in May 1945. The Polish Evacuation Committee began operating in the city, whose task was to issue evacuation cards in cooperation with Soviet authorities and to register the displaced persons, along with property that was to be transported. The displaced people carried their limited possessions, which the Soviet authorities allowed to fill in only 34 passenger wagons. Transports formed in this way were sent in three directions: south (Kraków, Bytom, Gliwice, Opole, Wrocław, Kłodzko), central (through the center of the country towards Szczecin) and north (Pomerania, Masuria).

began, which at the exhibition was divided into six overlapping time periods: 1945–1948 ("Foreign City"), 1945–1955 ("Consolidation of 'people' power"), 1945–1989 ("Behind the Iron Curtain"), 1956–1980 ("City on the Oder"), 1980–1989 ("Solidarity Wrocław"), and 1989–2016 ("City of meetings"). The exhibition's main idea is to show how, over the course of half a century, a coherent identity of the city and its community was forged from culturally alien groups of people.

The great advantage of representation in the Depot is a broad socio-cultural and not just political approach to the subject matter. The story covers issues related to the basic organization of life in Wrocław in the post-war period and later, the problems that visitors and residents had to face, and the gradual rebuilding of the city and one's own life in an initially unknown place. However, it was mainly facts from political life that were regarded as events that formed identity. The remaining elements are somehow their result or reaction to those facts (especially cultural life). The highlight and breakthrough in the history of the city was – the exhibition tells us – the Solidarity strike along the coast, which began in the depot in 1980. This protest is a founding myth of the final construction of a uniform identity among Wrocław inhabitants. In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Rafał Dutkiewicz writes: "(…) it was then, during the hot days of the strike, that Wrocław residents really felt that it was their city, and it was then that its identity was finally shaped, built over the subsequent decades of difficult communist reality."[171]

The exhibition is intended to arouse the pride of city residents (as most identity narratives do), so it highlights successes, introduces people who made Wrocław famous (e.g. Tadeusz Różewicz and Marek Krajewski), and emphasizes the community's contribution to national and international achievements (e.g. Wytwórnia Filmów Fabularnych,[172] the Feature Film Studios). The advantage of this representation is that it includes a large amount of information about the everyday life of residents without falling into nostalgia. On the downside, there are elements that I would describe as ahistorical, mainly about the ways the attitudes and actions of certain people (e.g. Cardinal Bolesław Kominek) are assessed in the light of currently known facts, such as Polish membership in the European Union (it is difficult to assume that in the 1960s, anyone could have foreseen such a development).

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171   *Wrocław 1945–2016 – wystawa w Centrum Historii Zajezdnia*, (catalog), Ośrodek "Pamięć i Przyszłość," (Wrocław 2016), 5.

172   The Feature Film Studio in Wrocław was in operation from 1954 to 2011. It was one of the largest film studios in Poland. It played an enormous role in the development of Polish film after the Second World War.

From the formal point of view, the exhibition is a kind of set design, with a small number of original objects; the curators were clearly inspired by the Warsaw Rising Museum and the Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum. Viewers are "drawn" into the exhibition, and they can visit its individual elements in the form of a "walk around the city" – for example, visit a butcher shop or a prison. This concept, however, does not fully work at those times when the exhibition presents a period of several dozen years in the city's history. The exhibitions at the Warsaw Rising Museum and Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory are much more successful in terms of consistency and drama. There, curators and designers took care to maximize the potential of the exhibitions to evoke strong emotions. Thus, both representations of urban spaces, Warsaw and Krakow, focused on "producing" authenticity and maintaining the illusion of "truthfulness" among viewers, while distracting their attention from the fact that the exhibitions are reconstructions and arrangements. In both cases, these plans were successfully implemented. The Depot History Center is not that visually impressive (Photo 18). The exhibition is chronological, forcing viewers to move along a "timeline" marked on the floor, which in itself is a contradiction to free walking. While some reconstructions are based on objects (e.g. a train wagon symbolizing migrations filled with poor repatriates' belongings), others contain only photographs; the conventionality of the arrangement is at times blatant, creating an impression of decoration, which does not allow for the experience of authenticity.

An exhibition covering the post-war history of the "recovered" city is also offered by the Dialogue Centre Upheavals (*Centrum Dialogu Przełomy, CDP*) in Szczecin, administratively part of the National Museum. The exhibition, opened in 2016, is located in an unusual and award-winning[173] facility at Solidarność Square. In the past, the Provincial Headquarters of the Civic Militia and the Security Service, from which protesting workers were shot at in 1970, was located near the square. Currently, the CDP building and the square form one public space; the historical exhibition is located in an underground part, and on the ground floor is the Monument to the Victims of December 1970 (Photo 19).

This historical exhibition presents the history of Szczecin and Western Pomerania in the years 1939–1989. The creators of the exhibition decided its

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173   Best Building in the World, winner in the "Culture" category in the World Building of the Year 2016 competition, Best Public Space in Europe in the European Prize for Urban Public Space 2016, Grand Prix of the *Polityka* Architectural Award in 2017 and the Sybilla 2016 Museum Event of the Year Year in the "Historical and Archaeological Exhibitions" category and Sybilla 2015 Museum Event of the Year in the "Investments" category.

focus would be "breakthroughs," which they defined as "moments in history" presenting "everything that had been well known in a different light" and connected "with the awakening of the awareness of resistance or opposition to the system of power in a broader (not individual, but group) dimension."[174] Unfortunately, the exhibition does not clearly reflect the above premises.

The permanent exhibition is divided into four chronologically arranged but unequally sized parts. The first, "Genesis," covers the longest period, from the Second World War to the 1970s. Within it, many problems are outlined that have significant importance for how the region's Polish identity was shaped. These include: the conferences in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam and their consequences, i.e. the Polish takeover of Szczecin; population migrations; the installation of new authorities accompanied by violence and repression; the development of urban space and the construction of a shipyard. This extensive module also includes references to a few broader European events listed with dates on black plates: "1953 – Death of Stalin," "1953 – Pilzno / Berlin," "1956 – Budapest," "1959 – Khrushchev in Szczecin," "1965 – Letter from bishops." Political events are intertwined with randomly selected and sparse issues tied to cultural and social life (e.g. the "Festival of young talents" or "May Day parades"). The second part, "The Riotous City," shows the first "breakthrough" – that is, the representation of the key events of the 1970s from the perspective of Szczecin and several other Pomeranian cities. Gierek's decade is presented briefly and nostalgically, with an emphasis on Poland's growing debt. The exhibition focuses on highlights of that period, that is, the events of December 1970[175] and January 1971 in Pomerania.[176] Large shortcuts and symbols are used to present a series of historical facts leading to the culmination of the tragedy, i.e. the December

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174 *Założenia do scenariusza ekspozycji Centrum Dialogu Przełomy* http://www.przel omy.muzeum.szczecin.pl/materialy/745-zaoenia-do-scenariusza-ekspozycji-cent rum-dialogu-przeomy.html (retrieved: 4 June 2018).

175 On December 14–22, 1970, worker strikes, protests and demonstrations took place in the main coastal cities of Gdynia, Gdańsk, Szczecin and Elbląg. The immediate cause of the protests was food price rises (prices were officially regulated). The protests were bloodily suppressed by the militia and the army. As a result of the repression, 41 people were killed, including 16 in Szczecin.

176 On January 22, 1971, strikes broke out at the Warski Shipyard in Szczecin. The shipyard workers were angry over the failure to keep promises to reduce prices and by the false and censored press coverage of December 1970 (see previous footnote). On January 24, 1971, Edward Gierek, the new First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, arrived in Szczecin. The next day, after talks with protest representatives, the strike ended. The food price hike was not canceled.

events in Szczecin. The next stage, and the next "breakthrough," is "The Road to Freedom": representation of the August 1980 strikes,[177] martial law and social resistance.[178] The permanent exhibition ends with the last "breakthrough" – the change of the political system that occurred in June 1989.

Like most of the recently created historical representations, the exhibition in Szczecin is a hybrid, one that is based on multimedia but also contains authentic objects, arrangements, and reconstructions. Underground rooms require light, which gives the opportunity for increased dramatic effect. It is worth mentioning here that visitors are able to view many artistic works at the exhibition. The Kobas Laksa photo-collage entitled "The End of Dreams, Stettin 1945", which opens the exhibition, is impressive. Another interesting installation is the reconstruction of a prison by Robert Kuśmirowski. The least successful is a work by Tomasz Mróz called "silicone sculpture." This installation makes an almost grotesque impression because of one detail, namely that as an assumption, the hyper-realistic "sculpture" shows a life-size Fiat 126p with four mannequins inside – i.e. a "typical" Polish family with two children "returning from holidays in Bulgaria." For unknown reasons, however, the distorted face of the woman sitting next to the driver looks like the image of a "zombie" from B-class TV horror movies. Regardless of whether it was the artist's intention or the figure was simply made improperly, the final effect differs from realism enough to distract the viewer's attention from the

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177 In August 1980, a wave of strikes spread throughout Poland. The first strikes in the summer of 1980 were a reaction to prices hikes for meat and cold cuts, introduced by Edward Gierek and his team. Ultimately, the August 1980 strikes led to the creation of NSZZ "Solidarity" – the first legal and independent trade union organization in the communist bloc. The agreement signed in Gdańsk on August 31, 1980 between the government commission and the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee, along with the establishment of Solidarity, marked the beginning of the changes of 1989 – the overthrow of communism in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe.

178 Martial law was introduced on December 13, 1981 throughout the entire PRL. It was suspended on December 31, 1982, and finally lifted on July 22, 1983. Over 10,000 activists associated with the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" were interned, and about 40 people lost their lives. The official reasons for introducing martial law were the country's deteriorating economic situation and the threat to energy security in the country due to the approaching winter. The real reasons were the communist regime's fears of losing power, related to the loss of control over the independent trade union movement, in particular the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" and the struggles of various parties within the PZPR that could not agree on the form and scope of political and economic reforms. The sharp decline in public support for the communist policy was also significant.

events represented at the exhibition and redirect it along a different path. In any case, this is probably not what the exhibition creators intended.

The exhibition lacks drama, although most of the events it presents could provide the basis for an emotional story. On the other hand, it is one of the few representations that show, in a minimalist and ascetic way, the deaths of the regime's victims: it does not dazzle visitors with pictures of murdered people, but instead presents home albums, medical reports, and a cemetery map with marked graves. Night-time and secret burials are symbolized by the screened fragment of Jerzy Wójcik's film "Complaint" (*Skarga*), which is based on the actual events of 1970 and shows parents' struggle for the right to a dignified funeral for their son.

In the first part of the exhibition, numerous events and processes of great importance to the shape of the region's identity are treated in a very general manner. Then, time slows down and the exhibition focuses on short periods of several months which, although intense from a political perspective, remain disproportionately extensive compared to the other parts. In general, although the exhibition is formally coherent and well-thought-out, it remains poor in terms of its scenario, banal both in content (the road to national freedom leading through successive outbreaks of social rebellions) and symbolism. It certainly does not fulfill its promise to illustrate known historical facts or phenomena "in a different light". The concentration on political events related to the anti-communist opposition and its activities means that, unlike the representation in Wrocław, Szczecin fails to satisfactorily show the specificity of the city and region. By definition, the CDP remains an identity exhibition, as indicated for example by the category of "breakthroughs" aimed at building group awareness, but it is difficult to regard this attempt as fully successful.

Both exhibitions presented above focus on "short duration" since the postwar period is only a small part of the history of both cities; the rich prewar past was not included in the exhibitions. Meanwhile, forgetting or denial, both brutal, imposed from above and voluntary, bottom-up, has an impact on the formation of a new identity.[179] Both in Wrocław and in Szczecin, the city's historical museums show the earlier history of cities (although in the latter case it is a very modest exhibition), which is in fact highly symbolic. We are dealing here with a literal "detachment" of a centuries-old, rich past and its transfer to another place.

Another museum representing patchwork identity is the House of European History (HEH) in Brussels, which in practice is the only representation in

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179   Paul Connerton, "Seven types of forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1 (2008): 60–64.

Western Europe that covers the communist era. This exhibition shows how people on the two sides of the "iron curtain" perceived this period differently. The House of European History opened its doors on May 6, 2017. The originator of the museum is the former president of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, who started the project in 2007. Pöttering believed that such a facility would provide an additional opportunity to create a European consciousness: "We do not want European centralism, he argues, but we want our national identity not to be the opposite of European identity, because they are inseparable. Unity in diversity (…) The museum also shows why ultimately, despite wars and conflicts in Europe, peace was and remains possible."[180]

The museum is located in Leopold Park, in a building named after the American philanthropist George Eastman. The building, originally intended for the needs of a dental clinic, was designed by the Swiss architect Michel Polak, known for his art deco style, and in particular for the Résidence Palace in Brussels. Leopold Park itself, along with such historic buildings as the Pasteur Institute or the Solvay Library, has been protected since 1976.

The project is aimed at tourists from both the European Union and outside Europe who can visit the House of European History during their visit to Brussels and the parliament building. According to the design, the facility was intended to be a modern documentation, information and exhibition center with an area of approximately 4,000 square meters and containing both a permanent exhibition on the history of Europe and temporary exhibitions.[181] From the very beginning, the idea behind the museum was considered "difficult" and raised concerns expressed by, among others, Polish MEPs who pointed to "historical errors and omissions" related to Poland's role in European history.[182] The concept was also poorly received in Britain, where an attempt to establish one common

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180 Barbara Cöllen, *Europa ma własne muzeum: Dom Historii Europejskiej*, http://www.dw.com/pl/europa-ma-w%C5%82asne-muzeum-dom-historii-europejskiej/a-38737681 (retrieved: 15 July 2017).

181 *Powstanie Dom Historii Europejskiej,* http://www.rp.pl/artykul/235189-Powstanie-Dom-Historii-Europejskiej-.html (retrieved: 15 July 2017).

182 Proposed changes focused on, inter alia, the complete omission of the Bolshevik War and the Battle of Vienna, Polish resistance during the Second World War, relations between Solidarity and the actions of Pope John Paul II and the fall of communism. See Inga Czerny, *Dom Historii Europejskiej ma już budżet i ma ruszyć w 2014 roku* http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/dom-historii-europejskiej-ma-juz-budzet-i-ma-ruszyc-w-2014-roku (retrieved: 15 July 2017) Nonetheless, these elements were not included in the final exhibition.

version of the history of 27 different member states was criticized by the British think tank Civitas, according to which: "the HEH can achieve nothing but a disingenuous paradox, aiming to tell the history of all the 27 states, but in fact relating no history at all."[183] It is not only the museum's historical content that has been criticized, but also the costs of its creation, especially since the museum was established during the economic crisis and recession. Marta Andreasen, MEP from the UK Independence Party stated that "it defies both belief and logic that in this age of austerity MEPs have the vast sums of money to fund this grossly narcissistic project."[184]

Objections raised to the exhibition's content result mainly from a misunderstanding about the idea of the museum, which was not created to present an outline of the history of individual European countries or to commemorate specific historical events, but to show common elements in these stories and define the so-called European identity. Another problem involves responses to the questions whether such a mission was feasible at all (due to the existing fundamental differences of opinion as to the interpretation of certain historical facts) and to what extent the goal set by the House of European History was achieved.

The permanent exhibition is located on four floors of the building (plus temporary exhibitions on the ground floor), and from the entrance to the top floor, the exhibition is accompanied by an art installation called "Cyclone of ideas and words" symbolizing the process of creating a complex, difficult, and complicated but single-structured European identity. In 2007, before the museum had a determined location and when only temporary exhibitions had been organized, Krzysztof Pomian wrote: "(…) the history of Europe is not a triumphant march towards unity. There have been times when unifying trends prevail over centrifugal ones, and there have been times when the previous unity collapsed, as expressed in continent-wide, if not world-wide wars. Now, if something happened in the past, and it happened at least twice, it may also happen in the future. Therefore, we are convinced (…) that there is no guarantee the current stage of European integration will be successful."[185] The present exhibition is a development and justification of the above thought.

183   *Rewriting history*, http://www.civitas.org.uk/2011/04/07/rewriting-history (retrieved: 16 May 2017).

184   *Row brewing as cost of New Brassels history museum soars,* http://www.dailymail. co.uk/travel/article-1373596/Brussels-House-Of-European-History-museum-Row-brewing-escalating-costs.html (retrieved: 15 July 2017).

185   Krzysztof Pomian, *Muzeum Europy*, *Muzealnictwo* (2007), no. 48: 225.

The exhibition begins with a reminder of the Greek myth of Europe, from which the name of the continent is derived, but the real beginning of European history is marked by the nineteenth century, when – thanks to the bourgeois and industrial revolution – Europe became a world power. It was at this time that the fundamental values of contemporary Europe emerged: human rights, civil rights, democracy, nationalism and – in the economy – industrialization, free markets, and inventions (photography, cinema, telephone) that drove development and mass culture. The earlier years and epochs are presented at the exhibition through a fairly general set of slogans constituting the basis for discussion of a common European memory and cultural foundation: Christianity, Enlightenment, democracy, capitalism, the rule of law, humanism, the nation state, philosophy, revolutions, communism, but also colonialism, the slave trade, genocide and state terror. Each of these issues is symbolized by a single object, such as a figure of the pope, shackles, or the board game called "Strike!" and played by the Marx family.

The year 1914 and the First World War are a turning point in European history at the Brussels exhibition, given that the traumatic armed conflict, catastrophic in and of itself, marked the beginning of the new century, which was the background for the birth of two criminal systems: communism and national socialism. In practice, parliamentary democracy developed simultaneously with the Soviet and German dictatorships. The two totalitarian regimes are set alongside each other at the exhibition; on large screens we see fragments of documentary films showing marches and parades, large portraits of leaders, and the symbols used by both systems. Ideological differences are de-emphasized, but already at this stage of representation there is a disproportion. Nazi totalitarianism appears to be worse, mainly because of its consequences – i.e. the Holocaust, a topic which has not only a separate cabinet, but even a separate room entitled "Memory of the Holocaust". The exhibition did not pay such attention to the victims of communism, the Gulags, the Stalinist terror, and the hunger in Ukraine.[186] This is an obvious sign of the times, as the discourse on the Holocaust has been powerful in the West for at least twenty years and strongly influences the memory of the war and Nazism. I am the last person to question the importance of Nazi genocide, but the exhibition on the history of Europe

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186 The Great Famine in Ukraine, the Holodomor (Ukrainian Голодомор) in 1932–1933 was caused by the deliberate action of the communist authorities of the USSR against opposition within the population of Ukrainian villages (at that time the Ukrainian Soviet Republic) to collectivization of agriculture and compulsory deliveries of agricultural products exceeding a village's production capacity. Various sources claim that the number of famine victims in Ukraine alone ranged from over 3 to as many as 10 million.

should be balanced, as its absence may be harmful to the victims of other mass crimes. The argument that "the extermination of European Jews in terms of the degree of bureaucratization is not comparable to any other event in history"[187] is in itself controversial for many scholars (not revisionists),[188] not to mention the fact that it does not mention other victims of the Holocaust.

However, it seems valuable to point to the processes that led to the birth of both regimes: economic crises, exploitation, inequalities, and social frustration. The Second World War (preceded by a part of the exhibition focusing on the Spanish Civil War) is presented from the perspective of the millions of ordinary people who suffered, not the decisions made by leaders, war strategies, or decisive battles. This is in line with a broader trend visible in world museology: concentration on victims, which pushes the perpetrators into the background but emphasizes the uniqueness and extreme nature of the experience of war through the civilian losses.

The most interesting part of the exhibition in the context of my work is the post-1945 history. The first surprise is the chronological period marked by the years 1945–1970, a rather unusual division in works on Central and Eastern Europe, while the second surprise is the content of this part emphasized by the title: "Ensuring social security." Since the end of the Second World War, it has been particularly difficult to talk about Europe's shared history, which – it would seem – leads to the creators' decision to emphasize the improvement of the daily living conditions among the people in the 1950s and 1960s that were larger in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. But the fact is that, since 1945, the political, legal-constitutional, and cultural differences between the continent's two parts are much more important than the social differences. The communist dictatorship had a decisive influence on the mentality of the inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe, and the economic growth and the introduction of the welfare state improved the quality of life compared to the war years but insignificantly in relation to the Western world. The exhibition presents Eastern and Western European design, apartment interiors and technological innovations and it points to differences in standard, but it pays no attention to the system's key elements, such as repression, restriction of freedom, forced collectivization, crimes and propaganda, and many other factors characteristic

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187   *Dom Historii Europejskiej. Przewodnik kieszonkowy*, 10.
188   For more on the worldwide discussion about the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the consequences of adopting such an argument see *Holocaust. Problemy przedstawiania* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005), 11–22.

of communist totalitarianism. The exhibition presents communism as a bad system mainly because it failed to provide the economic conditions produced by the West's free market economy.

In the case of Central and Eastern European countries, one would sooner expect collective memory of that period to be completely displaced than to have it presented from an economic perspective unless done as a nostalgic representation referring to relatively short periods of increased consumption (such as the 1970s in the PRL). Basically, what is most important for exhibitions and museums is the regime's political aspects and its ruthless oppression of societies and individuals, while living conditions recede into the background, possibly appearing as the backdrop for events or the subject of temporary exhibitions. It is understandable that the exhibition omits many elements from the national histories of individual countries, but the socio-economic representation of communism as a system that influenced the current situation in Europe must be unsatisfactory.

The exhibition's basic element in the part covering recent history involves the successive stages of European unification (from the European Coal and Steel Community to the end of the Cold War and the admission of new countries from the former bloc of the so-called "people's democracies"), and this is the leitmotif of the entire museum. Emphasis is placed on the need to give up one's own interests and powers in the name of supranational solidarity and efficiency. Viewed from this perspective, the exhibition's main theme would not be the history of Europe as the sum of the history of individual countries but the history of European integration and the dangers of its fragmentation. The creators also leave room for their own reflections on European heritage and what it means to be a European. The idea of the exhibition is noble and understandable, but it required the significant manipulation of historical material to show that unification (although difficult, as evidenced by the volumes of EU documents and treaties displayed at the exhibition) is the only chance for what is most important in European culture to survive.

From the very beginning, the exhibition is accompanied by the category of memory, the importance of which is made clear by the voice of the guide who introduces the visitors to the exhibition. In addition to the highly emphasized memory of the Holocaust, there is also information about the memories of people repressed during the communist era. Nonetheless, one basically gets the impression that the question of shared and divided European memory remains merely declarative. As a whole the exhibition does not refer to the category of memory, but is rather focused on the dissemination of European civic awareness and the importance of the act of rising above state and national interests. The

memory of wars and cataclysms is only an instrument that has the task of warning against the consequences of particularistic victories.

The exhibition is interesting (though uneven) in terms of its formalities. At the entrance each visitor receives a tablet which they can use however they want – that is, to listen to recorded comments and descriptions of individual parts of the exhibition. Given this technology, there are no texts at the exhibition. Importantly, the explanations are available in all EU languages. Quite separate from their advantages (individualized tours in accordance with personal preferences), tablets have one disadvantage: each viewer is immersed in his own story; it is impossible to share experiences and emotions and to establish social bonds, all of which is extremely important for the museum's identity as a culture-forming institution.

The oldest history of Europe (from the myth of Europe to the revolution of the nineteenth century) is as symbolic as possible and limited to a dozen or so objects, while the part devoted to revolutions is equally well designed. The selected artifacts seem to represent the essence of European history at that time, probably because objects such as shackles, a steam engine, or a camera function in mass culture as easily recognizable icons. The representation of the twentieth century at the exhibition is much weaker. There are many more objects, but few of them (gas masks symbolizing the Battle of Ypres, prisoner uniforms, which appear in all representations of the Holocaust) have an iconic status. The exhibition does not follow the contemporary trend to narrativize and theatricalize the museum space, but it does not shy away from modern solutions (high media saturation). It is a hybrid solution: on the one hand, it returns to the object as the core of the museum exhibition, and on the other, introduces new technologies.

By way of summary, I would describe the exhibition as a didactic exhibition "with a thesis" which goes like this: only unity (despite differences) can save Europe from the cataclysms of war and totalitarianism. In the name of this unity, societies must develop a civic awareness and a sense of community, and this can only be done through the concept of a European identity. Despite differing traditions and national histories and various animosities among nations, there is nothing to stop us from creating such an identity by emphasizing what connects Europe. Basically, every identity is a socio-cultural construct, and the exhibition aims to create a certain repository of shared experiences, concepts and ideas – i.e. a European heritage.

2.5. Identity museums – Problems and Challenges

Identity museums share common problems as a result of the goals they set: to provide a coherent story as a narrative that guarantees the continuation of national identity and the popularization of a formative story, sometimes even foundational story, in line with various state interests and favoring a positive image of the nation.[189] This requires making difficult choices since the history of each nation is full of moments that do not necessarily fit in with a positive vision of self-identity. Another problem is the fact that, at present, historical museums also emerge due to competition between nations for which one is more "unique" or "modern" than others. Museums look for ways to "elevate" their community to a higher position, so they do not so much represent its history as link it with various popular ideas: progress, change, modernity, or – as in the Polish case – freedom.[190]

The most frequently chosen type of exhibition in the case of identity museums is the so-called narrative exhibition, the most effective in theory and most eagerly watched by viewers, and in practice the easiest to control. The story proposed by their creators imposes a specific interpretation, organizes and selects the evidence, and subordinates to itself the few objects that are meant only to illustrate it. This completely rules out the objects' polysemantic nature because the history that binds them together does not allow for other interpretations. All media and technologies contained in the museum, its theatricalization, the creation of fictional spaces, and the dramatic use of illumination also serve to convey information so as to promote a particular interpretation and manipulate viewers' emotions.

Narrative exhibitions are characterized by a clear realism that helps viewers treat the story of the past as a faithful reflection of it. The need for the exhibition to be scientific in nature is complied with to only a limited extent, which means that there is usually a compliance of the presented historical facts with the official

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189   Piotr Gliński, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, admitted this during the opening of the Markowa Ulma-Family Museum of Poles Who Saved Jews: "I want to make it clear that the Polish government will continue to build and co-create museums important for Polish memory, for Polish identity, and for the Polish present." See Magdalena Mach, *Minister Gliński w Markowej: "Muzeum ważne dla polskiej racji stanu"*, http://rzeszow.wyborcza.pl/rzeszow/7,34962,22001128,minister-glinski-w-markowej-muzeum-wazne-dla-polskiej-racji.html (retrieved: 26 June 2017).

190   For a comparison of national museums see *National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe*, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:606052/FULLTEXT01.pdf (retrieved: 20 May 2017).

historiography. But the very selection of these facts and their interpretation are sometimes controversial. The educational mission is always clear, and identity exhibitions are the most pedagogical of all.

In some (not so rare) cases, the vision of Oren Baruch Strier, the great opponent of the "anti-objective," narrative and multimedia approach, is realized:

> The past and its evidence are all but erased or, at best, relegated to the margins of the museum, side shows to the main attraction (…). The ground has, in fact, gone out from under us, and without any artifacts holding us down and helping to maintain a sense of history and coherence (however "fictional" their representational scheme may be), we travel weightless through the spectacle (…) unsure of what exactly has been represented or seen.[191]

Indeed, there are few museums (like the Latvian Museum of National History or the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest) that link national identity with concrete material objects. In these cases, it is the priceless artifacts (appropriately selected by curators) that fulfill the function of connecting the community with a strong bond. Along with the spread of the narrative model, this role has been taken over by the story and – because of the communication techniques and exhibition strategies they use – historical museums rarely consider objects to be the foundation of their activity and culture-creating mission.

Identity narratives adapt a specific moral position and test visitors' ethical judgments. They also look for ways to evoke specific empathetic reactions, a sense of right and wrong, of justice, or of injury. As a result of such efforts, the institution's authority must remain unquestionable, ideas (national) and objects ("speaking for themselves") legitimize each other, which gives the impression of the existence of undisputed and unmediated evidence supporting certain theses. The museum presents itself as the "owner" of national treasures and a place where knowledge is disseminated, thanks to which the nation's cultural attributes become concrete and visible. Visitors are to recognize the authority of the institution, whose creators are "trusted purveyors of national orthodoxy."[192] A big problem with identity museums is the lack of space for debate or even dialogue and the avoidance of controversy and polyphony which, contrary to what curators claim, deprives viewers of the possibility of independent

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191   Oren Baruch Strier, "Virtual Memories: Mediating the Holocaust at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Beit Hashoah Museum of Tolerance," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996), no. 4: 845.

192   *National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe*, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:606052/FULLTEXT01.pdf, 11 (retrieved: 20 May 2017).

interpretation of the events represented. The disadvantages of a similar approach are summarized by Robert Traba in the discussion on the shape of the Polish History Museum:

> My criticism of the Polish History Museum relates primarily to its role as the creator of the social debate over history. The museum represents the only chance to create such a discussion, because the meaning of a democratic society is not to exclude anyone, but to create a space for debate. The space of dispute generates a new story, makes dialogue last. The most important thing is to build common points of contention in the discussion. The society must be agonistic and not antagonistic – that is, must be able to build a space of its own identity in the debate. Otherwise, we blur issues and lead to populism. I would like the museum to help in this discussion, for the museum to generate issues that are important for the social discussion. I define museum interactivity by two terms: controversiality and multi-perspective.[193]

In practice, however, a coherent narrative excludes multi-perspectivity, which would introduce different points of view and other visions of the past, which in turn could raise doubts among the viewers. Most often, the introduction of a different voice to the identity narrative takes place only when that voice supports the dominant story. The resulting national identity has a mythological structure and masks, or completely obscures, other stories, and potential interpretations. The modern form often hides highly archaic content.[194]

There is no doubt that the communist era, viewed from the identity perspective, is a difficult and negative period in Polish history. This fact has been an issue in academic historiography for a long time, and though it is not my goal to refer to the rich literature on the subject here, I will mention the most important issues that identity exhibitions overlook. First of all, resistance was not the only attitude taken by Poles towards the system; adaptation also quickly emerged and the government – although widely perceived as foreign – implemented certain national values and social reforms that coincided with the expectations of large sections of Polish society.[195] Krystyna Kersten, who was the first to analyze

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193 "W poszukiwaniu formuły nowoczesnego muzeum. Dyskusja," *Borussia* 47 (2010): 129–130. The response from the director of the Polish History Museum, Robert Kostro, is symptomatic: "Most museums of this type have an important message regarding identity and patriotic and civic awareness, and this message is not indifferent, it cannot be neutral." See ibid., 128.

194 This is visible in the example of the Warsaw Rising Museum. See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, "Wystawianie przeszłości, czyli historia w nowych muzeach," *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* (2013), no. 2: 77–92.

195 Krystyna Kersten, op. cit., 12. The factors determining Kersten's attitudes at that time included both negative elements – losses in the war, disappointment with the West

these attitudes, applied them to the postwar period, but adaptation did not disappear over the course of time – quite the opposite. Because many opposition activists and intellectuals emigrated, a large part of society accepted the growing communist dominance, either as a result of coercion or because they were guided by a sincere belief that the new system, despite all its deficiencies (often considered temporary), represented the realization of the dreams of the Polish people for justice and equality.[196] It also had negative psychological effects, as "the coexistence of adaptation and resistance at different levels – politics, culture, working life and everyday life – as well as in various dimensions – intellectual, emotional and moral – had profound consequences. It meant survival, but for many individuals of that generation who had to make big and small choices at the time, it proved devastating, causing spiritual devastation and depravity related to compromise beyond measure."[197] In practice, every country in Central and Eastern Europe has a history of accommodation and adaptation to communism. By introducing sharp divisions between heroes and enemies, or assuming that the opposition acted "on behalf of" society, identity expositions ignore the above issues, though they remain significant for understanding the mechanisms of the system's operation.

Of course, museums are not places where historians are supposed to argue or present in-depth critical analysis of a given historical process. It is neither possible nor necessary to do such a thing, but there are intermediate routes between a one-dimensional selective narrative and a deeply analytical debate. A great example of the creative and thought-provoking use of museum space are the so-called ironic museums that extend beyond a single main narrative and propose different ways of understanding events. This can be achieved by

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and allies, disappointment and loss of trust in the government (the September 1939 defeat, emigration, lack of protection of Poland's basic interests), NKVD terror – and positive elements: the reconstruction of the country, settlement and development of acquired lands, social reforms, opened paths to social promotion. See ibid., 13–14.

196   Ibid., 25.

197   Ibid., 15. Knowledge about these processes is now common. Andrzej Friszke writes about the progressive "mass-ification" and "nationalization" of the PZPR, which at the end of the 1970s had over 3 million members and candidates, i.e. nearly 15 % of the adult population, and many people joined the party not for ideological reasons, but to no block the possibility of promotion, which was impossible without a party ID. Friszke also emphasizes the importance of the passage of time for society's self-awareness: subsequent generations accepted the system as their own more easily because they knew no other system. See Andrzej Friszke, "Jakim państwem była PRL w latach 1956–1976?" *Pamięć i sprawiedliwość* (2006), no. 2: 21–22.

unexpected juxtapositions of items or even by introducing themes that support alternative interpretations of the exhibition.[198]

History museums presenting a one-dimensional narrative are identity-based, but often in a different sense than their creators intended: they identify with a specific vision of the past and some of its actors, which in practice means they represent the memory of certain events and processes rather than the actual history (in the sense of historical science). Krzysztof Pomian writes about this, noting that identification with the past is characteristic of memory, but what is constitutive for history as science is the distancing of oneself from the past: "(…) a statement about the past expresses its memory when the author of this statement identifies himself with one of the parties to a conflict that happened in the past, or more generally – with any individual or collective protagonist of the events in question. What is identified here is as follows: he adopts the point of view of one of the protagonists of these events, recognizes his values as his own, his judgments, his fears, his prejudices, his expectations."[199]

It is worth mentioning here that visitors do not come to a museum with the intention of shaping or deepening their national identity. Most viewers admit that they are driven by social needs, a desire for entertainment and education. Even if they agree that a museum should serve both the community and foreign tourists, they nevertheless recognize that their most important function is to faithfully present the nation's history.[200] The desire to update or legitimize the values with which one specific group identifies itself does not appear as a social expectations in attitude vis-à-vis the museum; rather, they are targets of the factors shaping historical policy. Therefore, one should also ask the question to what extent the identity narratives created in the Polish museums described above correspond to the social needs. This topic requires separate surveys conducted on large groups of visitors. Here I will only quote the results of an

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198   Compare Steven Bann, "Historical Text and Historical Object. The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny," *History and Theory* 17 (1978), no. 3: 251–266. Bann defines an ironic museum as a museum that is able to operate within two different tropes: metonymy and synecdoche – techniques of dispersion and isolation, as well as integration and the conjunction of various things in order to make visible (deprive of transparency) the techniques and principles that inevitably guide the viewer's perception in the museum.

199   Krzysztof Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2006), 193.

200   *National Museums Making Histories in a Diverse Europe*, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:606052/FULLTEXT01.pdf (20 May 2017), 28.

interesting, though random, survey conducted in 2014 among people visiting the PRL Museum (still in the organization stage)[201] in Nowa Huta. Although the study group was not large (approximately 200 people), the answers still provide food for thought. In addition to questions about the form of the future museum (a vast majority of respondents would like to have a multimedia museum, with strongly marked scenery and necessarily containing objects), the survey also asked for suggestions regarding the exhibition's content. Most people believed that the future PRL Museum should focus on the customs (164 people), that period's achievements (110), the totalitarian system and its exercise of power (100), the reasons for the system's collapse (72) and the opposition (50). When asked about what they associate with the communist era, respondents rarely mentioned politics or ideology, though a few identified with the democratic opposition (such categories as Solidarity, strikes, opposition, underground and freedom appeared only twice, as well as names: Adam Michnik, Władysław Gomułka. Lech Wałęsa, Edward Gierek). The communist era was mainly associated with the ups and downs of everyday life: on the one hand shortages (queues, empty shelves, poverty, poverty), and on the other hand childhood / youth and nostalgic memories (summer camps, a carefree and rich social life, fun, holidays, homes, culture etc.).[202] In view of the above, it is not surprising that museums presenting nostalgic narratives are very popular (more on this later in the book). Nonetheless, it is identity museums that contain the basic framework of historical facts arranged according to a specific interpretative line so as to create a mythological structure of national museum narratives that remain, from the perspective of each country, the most important instrument of historical policy.

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201   The PRL Museum (under organization) operated in 2013–2019. Many temporary exhibitions were created at that time, and the concept of a main exhibition was also worked out. On March 1, 2019, as a result of the merger of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow and the PRL Museum, the Museum of Nowa Huta was established. More on Nowa Huta in Chapter 6 of this book.

202   Ryszard Kozik, "Jakie powinno być Muzeum PRL-u – podsumowanie opinii zwiedzających," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage), 2 (2015), 85–191. The PRL's most important achievements, according to respondents, are the Polonez, Fiat 126p, Trabant, Syrena, "Frania" washing machines, tape recorders and TV sets.

Chapter 3 Memory as a Form of Justice in the Tyrtaeus-Martyrdom Model

The romantic and messianic ethos of independence in the extreme form – i.e. martyrdom for liberty – refers to the current in Polish Romanticism which, anticipated by the Greek poet from the seventh century BC Tyrtaeus, called for a relentless battle to defend the fatherland. Tyrtaeus's most famous words – "This thing is truly beautiful, when, marching in the front row / A brave man dies, fighting for the fatherland (…) / Let us fight bravely to protect our land and children, although we would have to die (…)"[203] – meant putting the fatherland's liberty at the top of the hierarchy of each patriot's values.[204] The Tyrtaean trend is a reflection of a particular type of Polish romantic identity, in which the fatherland and its heroes become victims of hostile, foreign forces in the community's consciousness. According to Aleida Assman, disasters become central historical points of reference, provided that they are included in the martyrological narrative of the tragic hero. "If the nation bases its identity on a victim's consciousness, maintains memory of the wrongs it has suffered so as to legitimize claims and mobilize heroic readiness to retaliate, then defeats are commemorated with great pathos and commitment."[205] In Poland, the Tyrtaean movement associated with the communist regime is carried out mainly through memory rooms and the Museum of the Servant of God, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko.[206] In some Central-Eastern European countries, Tyrtaean elements are clearly visible in the main (official) narratives about the past, at which point they take the form what I refer to as the "prison" trend.

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203 Tyrtajos, *Rzecz to piękna*…, trans. Włodzimierz Appel, http://hamlet.edu.pl/data/uploads/teksty/wybor-poezji-antycznej.pdf (retrieved: 15 August 2015).

204 See np. Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia*, słowo/obraz terytoria (Gdańsk 2001), 387–393.

205 Aleida Assmann, op. cit., 50.

206 Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947–1984), Polish Roman Catholic priest, chaplain of the Warsaw "Solidarity," human rights defender in the PRL, murdered by Security Service officers in 1984.

3.1. Glory to the Heroes

From the organizational perspective, memory rooms are usually treated as the lowest link in the museum structure in Poland. The chambers' beginnings are associated with the first Renaissance private collections focusing on antiquity, enriched at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with native elements influenced by the ideology of Sarmatism. The nobility collected clothes, portraits of ancestors, decorative fabrics, furniture, jewelry, historical documents confirming ownership rights and noble lineage. During the Enlightenment, these were national memorabilia, emblems, coins and old prints, an example was given by Stanisław August Poniatowski himself when he collected books, documents, engravings, sculptures, and numismatic items.[207] The creation of history cabinets (mainly natural history, which together with geography and socio-political history constituted one subject at the time) was also recommended by the National Education Commission. Józef Rell, one of the few scholars of this subject, recognizes the "School Museum" founded in 1904 in the gymnasium in Nowy Sącz as the prototype of the modern hall of national remembrance (three documents from the January Uprising were collected there).[208] The ideological lineage of modern memory rooms also comes from the activities of the Council for the Protection of Monuments of Struggle and Martyrdom (1947), which inspired the creation of collections of national memorabilia. After the war, the earliest organized national memory room was established in 1949 (based on the initiative of teacher Zacheusz Misiurski). It was an exhibition in the thirteenth-century chapter house of the former Cistercian abbey in Sulejów.[209]

In the twentieth century, the chambers began to be called "tradition rooms", "corners of national remembrance" or – as in the 1970s – "exhibitions of documents of national remembrance" or "halls of national tradition and

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207 Józef Rell, *Izby Pamięci Narodowej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1982), 17. In the nineteenth century, museums were established based on private and social collections, which were one of the important factors in the struggle for the survival of Polishness. In addition to Izabela Czartoryska's Sybilla (1801) there were: the Stanisław K. Potocki gallery in Wilanów, which was opened to the public in 1805; an exhibition of military items in the Stanisław Staszic palace, which was organized in 1823; the Polish National Museum, which was established in 1870 in Rapperswil, Switzerland as a collection of souvenirs after the January Uprising. See ibid., 18–19.

208 Ibid., 19–20.

209 Ibid., 21.

perspectives."[210] In Rell's opinion, the elements that distinguish chambers from "full-size" museums (apart from the size of the exhibition and differences in the legal and organizational status) are the social initiative of the creation and functioning of the collections and their purpose, which is mainly ideological and educational.[211] These two tasks come to the fore in the definition that Rell formulated in the 1980s: "(…) the hall of national remembrance is a cell of a state or social institution (…) For didactic and educational purposes, it exhibits sources and historical objects, protected from destruction and oblivion, with a large dose of ideological expression in accordance with the intended topic, only supplemented with illustrative materials and written texts, in a composition of graphic, light, color and acoustic means."[212] The key information in the above definition, considered from the perspective of contemporary memory rooms, is the presence of artifacts "with a large dose of expression." Thus, the chambers contain objects that are seemingly insignificant, but have a high emotional value for a given area, institution, or group of people. In the case of chambers devoted to the communist past, original historical documents (written or iconographic) remain in the background, though material objects that are closely related to the events "participated" in those events and thus have a great potential for emotional involvement.

I will analyze this type of exhibition using as examples the Memory Room KWK "Wujek" in Katowice, the Memory Room to the Victims of Communist Terror in Warsaw, the Memory Room of Communist Terror in Tomaszów Lubelski, and the General Kukliński[213] Memory Room in Warsaw. A slightly different example, although also in the Tyrtaean type, is the Museum of the Servant of God, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko in Warsaw. Each of the above representations is a kind of case study that is interesting in itself and worth a separate analysis, but for me the most important thing is that they are model

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210   Ibid., 5.

211   Ibid., 7.

212   Ibid., 10.

213   Ryszard Jerzy Kuklinski (1930–2004), pseudonym "Jack Strong," "Mewa" – colonel in the Polish People's Army, deputy chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Polish Army, since 1970 an intelligence agent of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), shortly before the introduction of martial law (1981) evacuated by the CIA to West Berlin. Plans are to open a General Ryszard Kuklinski Cold War Museum in 2022. The exhibition located in the General Kuklinski Memorial Room will be moved in its entirety to the Cold War Museum, and the person of Ryszard Kuklinski will be the leitmotiv of the entire new museum.

examples representing the cross-section of topics characteristic of martyrdom representations. They include: commemorating a single event (pacification of a mine), a historical phenomenon (communist terror), a person-fighter (Ryszard Kukliński) and a martyr (Jerzy Popiełuszko). When analyzing the "prison" trend in official state representations of communism, I will refer to two examples from outside Poland: the Genocide Museum in Vilnius, Lithuania, and the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance in Sighet, Romania. This chapter also includes museums established in the former quarters of communist security services, because although they are not model examples of martyrdom, they fall within the "prison" paradigm.

All the above museum representations belong to the group that, in my research on Holocaust exhibitions, I have categorized as "real death."[214] According to this concept, the most effective and convincing representations of the past combine the power of a real thing, a real place, and a real person.[215] According to the belief of curators, a real thing can, in a sense, transfer the past into the present due to its actual relationship with past events. A real place is a geographical space historically associated with the past course of events. It is historical material in the broadest sense; everything – from the smallest object to the largest building – is part of the same process. Places retain a certain "real" power, even when little else is left to see. Where ruins or buildings remain, our sense of the place's "reality" is obviously stronger. Like real objects, some places are perceived as more significant than others.[216] The third force is the strength of the "real person". The awareness of the object's meaning is increased when the explanations are given by the people who created or used the object. Letters, journals, recordings, portraits, photographs, films, and interviews recorded on video all give an insight into human relations with material culture.[217]

The Memory Room KWK "Wujek" opened its doors in November 2008.[218] It is located in an old clothing warehouse tied to a still operating mine, one which has been adapted for exhibition purposes. It is visited by about 5,000 people a year,

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214   See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach*, op. cit., 161–174.

215   Kevin Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture* (Leicester University Press 1997), 135.

216   Ibid., 136.

217   Ibid., 142–143.

218   In 2011, the Silesian Center for Freedom and Solidarity was established, which currently supervises the Memory Room. Interviews by the author with hall employee Sebastian Reńca, with director of ŚCWiS Robert Ciupa, and with the chairman of the Social Committee of Miners' Remembrance of KWK "Wujek" in Katowice, Krzysztof Pluszczyk, 14 October 2016.

most of them around December – on the anniversary of the commemorated events. The exhibition is divided into two parts. The first presents the history of the "Wujek" mine, and the second examines the dramatic events of December 16, 1981.[219] The historical outline in the passage located under the mine's pavement structure presents the history of the mine using charts made up of articles and press photos. The charts inform visitors about the beginnings of coal mining in Silesia, which dates back to the end of the seventeenth century, and the exhibition's first photo showing the mine builders comes from 1900. Texts and photographs in this part of the exhibition are accompanied by material items from the past: mining tools, lamps (oil, carbide, gasoline and electric) and the nineteenth century stones marking the mining field's boundaries. The following charts briefly inform visitors about the mine's fate during the partitions[220] and the two world wars (Photo 20).

The above-mentioned elements prove the chamber's connection with a specific social community and Silesia's strong sense of separateness and separate identity. The exhibition is undoubtedly an expression of the needs of a specific professional group (miners) and cultivates the memory of a given region. The other chambers discussed in this chapter, despite their specific locations, are designed to represent supra-regional and national experiences. In the Memory Room KWK "Wujek" the glorious traditions of the region were dominant, and the national dimension was shown only in the light of the importance of mining for the development of the entire country. Additionally, the exhibition includes

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219   On the night of December 12/13, 1981, martial law was introduced throughout Poland. Together with hundreds of others, Jan Ludwiczak – the "Solidarity" leader in the "Wujek" mine – was arrested. The miners decided to go on strike, demanding the abolition of martial law and the release of all activists interned on the night of 12/13 December. The authorities, refusing to make any concessions, decided to use force against the miners. On December 16, army units and ZOMO entered the mine through a wall knocked down by tanks. The strikers defended themselves by throwing stones and screws at the attackers. Six people were killed on the spot, and three more died later in the hospital.

220   The Partitions of Poland – in the years 1772–1795 the Commonwealth of Two Nations (Poland and Lithuania) ceded its territory, in stages, to neighboring Russia, Prussia and Austria after a lost war and under the threat of further force. Poland regained its independence in 1918, but in most of the Polish pre-partition territories, new states were established after that year: outside of the Second Polish Republic, these were Lithuania and the Free City of Gdańsk; scraps of the territory fell within the borders of Latvia and Estonia, and some of territory remained within the borders of Germany and Soviet Russia (later the USSR).

objects pointing to traditional characteristics of the Silesian mining community by displaying a mining uniform and banners (including one from 1925).

The mine's history serves as an introduction to the exhibition's main theme and its climax – the pacification operation. At the beginning, the exhibition briefly informs viewers about the political and social situation in Poland shortly before the introduction of martial law. The tragic events of the pacification itself are presented in a 9 square meter diorama showing clashes between miners and the militia on a 1:100 scale (Photo 21). The model was made by Warsaw modelers under the supervision of Sławomir Rakowiecki and presents the events of December 16, 1981 at a specific moment of the day – around noon. Events were reproduced based on accounts provided by witnesses and of archival photographs.[221] This part of the exhibition is enhanced by sound; speakers emanate the soundtrack of Kazimierz Kutz's film *Śmierć jak kromka chleba* (Death like a slice of bread, 1994) focusing on the pacification. The small figures of miners and policemen placed behind the glass pane against the background of the mine buildings and the winter landscape do not reflect the drama of the events, so they are strengthened in two ways: first by stories provided by witnesses of history present in the chamber, and second by authentic exhibit objects. The moment frozen in time on December 16, 1981 becomes the scenery for a story whose uniqueness results mainly from the presence of narrators – participants of the pacification. These are people who took part in both the tragic events themselves and in later trials (including Stanisław Płatek, the then chairman of the strike committee). The diorama thus becomes an illustration for their stories about that day; helps to locate events in space; and visualizes the narrative which, thanks to the soundtrack from Kutz's film, comes to life and takes the form of a moving drama unfolding before the audience's eyes. Without these elements, viewing the model would resemble observing a puppet show, or possibly a well-known play with plastic soldiers.

Modest in terms of number of exhibit objects – which include the mining helmet of Jan Stawisiński (one of those who was shot), 9 mm shells and a bullet found in the mine, tear gas "vials" and parts of militia equipment (a uniform, shield, helmet, gas mask) – can be viewed in a display case and, like the diorama, serve as illustrative material for the story. Among the exhibit objects two special items are conspicuous: a T-shirt of one of the injured miners of Zygmunt School with a bullet mark and an X-ray image of the murdered miner Andrzej Pełka with a visible trace of a deadly bullet. Similar objects, characteristic of all heroic exhibitions, serve as relics. Their authenticity helps mythologize the story.

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221   *Muzeum Izba Pamięci KWK "Wujek"* (informational material), oprac. Robert Ciupa, Śląskie Centrum Wolności i Solidarności, Katowice 2016, 5.

In the Middle Ages, certain conditions had to be met in order to lend value to certain bodies as relics for worship: During his lifetime and, more importantly after death, the deceased had a special relationship with God. The corpse was handled appropriately and had to be authenticated. If we translate this into secular and contemporary categories, then a kind of personal charisma takes the place of holiness. The power remains, and close contact with the remnants signifies participation in that power. The real body need not be present anymore because its place is taken by objects that were close to the person in life, especially if they are to be arranged into an exhibition.[222] Instead of a strong bond with God (although in the case of the mining community's religiousness, this type of relationship still makes sense) there is martyrdom in the name of higher values. Charisma manifests itself in strength and courage to stand up against the authorities. At the exhibition the miners are equipped with a kind of collective charisma as a community that does not bow to violence.

An element clearly indicating the miners' heroism is the emphasis on the difference between the forces and weapons of the protagonists. Life-size mannequins of a miner and a policeman were positioned in a manner that suggests hand-to-hand combat (Photo 22). Such a presentation is controversial because there was in fact no direct clash between the miners and the militia during the pacification. Krzysztof Pluszczyk, who is responsible for the exhibition, points to the fact that there was physical contact between the parties (three policemen were caught and held in confinement), though he admits that no hand-to-hand combat took place during the December events.[223] The mannequins in combat poses are therefore misleading, though their tasks – Pluszczyk claims – is to present the militia's weapons and the miners' lack of weapons. This is important given the propaganda at that time about battle organizations and weapons warehouses being created within Solidarity. Antoni Dudek claims that PRL leaders actually believed that such organizations and warehouses existed and that they were created in cooperation with the CIA. Leonid Brezhnev demanded that they be dismantled.[224] Both the mannequins and the photo from the "staging of the entrance door" to the apartment of Jan Ludwiczak (who at the time was head

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222   Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 198.

223   Conversation by the author with Krzysztof Pluszczyk, 16 October 2016.

224   *Antoni Dudek o masakrze w "Wujku": to była manifestacja siły*, http://wiadomosci. onet.pl/kraj/stan-wojenny-w-polsce-antoni-dudek-o-masakrze-w-kopalni-wujek/ k7w7zfr (retrieved: 13 December 2016).

of Solidarity at the "Wujek" mine) after the invasion of the militia are intended to show the fury of the authorities, the violence they used, and the government's determination to suppress the rebellion at all costs. Although the miners were not completely defenseless, given that they had long pikes, chains and axes, the weapons difference was dramatic, since the militia had long truncheons, helmets with visors, protective glasses, gas masks, plastic shields and detonation grenades.[225] This part of the exhibition reminds visitors of David's fight with Goliath, of unequal chances, and of the clear division between Good and Bad, all of which suggests that moral victory can only be enjoyed by one side. In fact, the operation to introduce martial law was a success and the scale of resistance was small.

The pacification of the mine and its victims – nine miners – have become symbols of the crimes of martial law. There are enlarged photographs of the victims in the cinema room where documentary films are screened.[226] The most important place of the planned future museum exhibition (currently not open to the public) is the ramp adjacent to the chamber building from which the police shot the protesters.[227]

On the other hand, the chamber lacks the perspective of the perpetrators, even in purely factual terms, and it did not examine the situation prevailing among pacification decision-makers, the circumstances around which martial law was imposed, or controversies accompanying these events that have not been resolved to this day. It is not about justifying the actions of individual people, but rather to outline their context. At the exhibition, we are dealing with a collective entity referred to as "communist authorities" or "functionaries," and descriptions of the pacification process include only such non-personal expressions as "gas was used" or "armored equipment broke through," which does not directly indicate the actors in the drama. A symbolic representation of "communist authorities" is Wojciech Jaruzelski (with the caption: "General Wojciech Jaruzelski announces the introduction of martial law on television") and General Czesław Kiszczak,

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225   *Muzeum Izba Pamięci KWK "Wujek"* (informational material), op. cit., 14–15.

226   Presented are *Życiorysy z bliznami* by Agnieszka Świdzińska, *Górnicy z kopalni "Wujek"* by Waldemar Patlewicz, and *Lot kuli* by Jerzy Ridan.

227   Forces opened fire around 12.30. Six miners died in the mine and 3 more died in the hospital as a result of the gunfire: Józef Czekalski, Ryszard Gzik, Zbigniew Wilk, Joachim Gnida, Zenon Zając, Bogusław Kopczak, Jan Stawisiński, Andrzej Pełka and Józef Giza. See *Muzeum Izba Pamięci KWK "Wujek"* (informational material), op. cit., 18–19.

whose encrypted text on the possibility of using direct coercive measures (including firearms) for the "protection of public safety" is shown on one of the boards. What we have here is thus a kind of "Polish- Jaruzelski war," though not in a metaphorical sense, as in the title of Andrzej Paczkowski's book, but in a quite literal sense.[228] The enemies of the nation are an impersonal (though causative) force that must be temporarily overcome in order to achieve ultimate victory. The Polish nation (represented by the miners) deserves tribute and remembrance for the highest sacrifice in the name of freedom – which is why the Chamber was created in the first place.[229]

The situation is different in the Memory Room to the Victims of Communist Terror in Warsaw and the Memory Room of Communist Terror in Tomaszów Lubelski. The goal behind these two places – that is to commemorate the victims of the regime and pay tribute to them – is similar to that in the case of the Memory Room KWK "Wujek," but the aesthetics of the exhibition are different, and the symbolic punishment of the perpetrators is powerfully emphasized.

Both memory rooms in question are located in authentic places. The Memory Room to the Victims of Communist Terror in Warsaw at Oczko Street was established in 2006, on the 25th anniversary of the introduction of martial law, in the basement of the building that housed the detention center of the Main Military Information Board under the PRL.[230] This office of Military Information, as a military counterintelligence body, operated in People's Poland in the years 1944–1957. Its victims were mainly officers from the Armed Forces of the Second Republic of Poland and military independence organizations, primarily the Home Army and the Polish Armed Forces in the West.[231] The Memory Room

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228   Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska* (Warszawa: Prószyński i Spółka, 2006).

229   Both remembrance and commemoration of the pacification operation took place immediately after the events. It can be assumed that the symbolic dimension of the pacification was already recognized and appreciated at the time, but it grew over time. At the mine wall (from the side of Wincenty Pola Street), in the place where the tank broke through, on December 16 in the evening, a cross with mining lamps was placed there which was destroyed on the night of January 27–28, 1982. The cross was renovated and remained in this place until the monument was built in 1991.

230   Currently, the building is the seat of the Military Counterintelligence Service. Thus, tours take place by prior appointment and after submitting personal data. These difficulties affect attendance. See *Izba pamięci ofiar terroru świeci pustkami. A oto powód*, http://telewizjarepublika.pl/izba-pamieci-ofiar-terroru-komunistycznego-swieci-pustkami-a-oto-powod,14423.html (retrieved: 25 November 2016).

231   The armed forces of the Republic of Poland subject to constitutional state authorities operating abroad, not recognized by the Soviet Union. After the Second World War,

of Communist Terror in Tomaszów Lubelski, which opened in 2010, is located in the former building of the County Public Security Office (PUBP), known as the "Dragon's Lair." In 1944–1956, opponents of communism, mainly soldiers of the WiN Association[232] and the OUN-UPA,[233] were held there and murdered. After 1956, the building served as a district court archive.

Both chambers represent a trend that is strong on the musealization of communism and that I call the "prison" trend. The main feature of this aesthetic phenomenon is the desire to present the cruelty and brutality of communist terror as faithfully as possible through a realistic depiction of the conditions of detention, interrogation, and treatment of prisoners. These exhibitions are most often located in authentic or reconstructed buildings (sometimes even rebuilt from ruins) that served as prisons and / or jails during the communist era. In the past such places were surrounded by an aura of mystery and horror; after all, the events that took place there were invisible to a majority of society, and perhaps for this very reason they were considered the most essential and characteristic part of the communist system. In the prison trend, violence and terror, the signs of which are prisons and headquarters of security services, are a symbol of the entire regime, its crimes and – most importantly in these representations – the fact that few of the perpetrators were ever held responsible.

The most typical and repetitive elements in prison representations are raw dark interiors, most often including a prison corridor with cell doors ajar and bunks without mattresses. In the Warsaw chamber, the detainees' cells and interrogation rooms were restored, while the chamber in Tomaszów was reconstructed (copies were used given the lack of original objects). The effort to achieve authenticity is clear, the best example of which comes with the chamber in Tomaszów Lubelski. Because of the former PUBP building's later transformations, only the bars in the windows and a few cell elements remained; doors from the police detention

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soldiers of the Home Army were persecuted by communist authorities – they were arrested by the Ministry of Public Security, imprisoned and murdered.

232   Association of Freedom and Independence (WiN), a Polish civil-military underground organization founded on September 2, 1945 in Warsaw. WiN demanded that the Red Army and the NKVD leave Poland. The organization rejected the shape of the eastern border established in Yalta.

233   Ukrainian Insurgent Army UPA (in Ukrainian:Українська повстанська армія, УПА) – an armed formation created by a faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) at the end of 1942 and led by it. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists did not recognize the borders established at the Teheran and Yalta conferences.

center (at Zamojska Street), which resemble the original ones from the detention center, were transported to the exhibition site.[234]

A fixed component in the prison model is also the arranged interrogation room with a single lamp, which in the past served both as lighting and as a tool of torture (blinding interrogated prisoners). Both in Warsaw and Tomaszów Lubelski, as in all museums relating to communism, the interrogation rooms look similar (stools, a table, telephones, files), while in Tomaszów we are dealing with a complete reconstruction (exceptionally there is no lamp there, but much more obvious torture devices are displayed in the corner of the room) (Photo 23). Elements of visual iconography related to the process of interrogating prisoners have become a permanent element of the set of traditional metaphors present in all representations (museums and films) of the communist system. They are as deeply embedded in mass culture as watchtowers, barbed wire, and prisoner uniforms in Holocaust iconography. As a result, the audience, accustomed to a certain symbolism, expects such iconography in all presentations of communism, both documentary and fictional.

In the case of the interrogation rooms in both chambers, a strategy called "moment-in-time installation" is used, which allows for an emphasis on the activity of individual people. It is about creating a kind of theatrical staging (scene) and the arrangement of artifacts in such a way that suggests that someone literally stopped his work / activity and left the room. The visitor enters the room as if in the middle of the ongoing activity.[235] Objects are a combination of artifacts and reproductions, without captions, because they would point to the scene's artificiality. A similar strategy shifts visitors' attention from objects (usually not very spectacular) to people and their ordinary activities. In the interrogation rooms there are no clear indications as to what activities were carried out there, but they are not needed due to the above-mentioned common knowledge of this symbolism in post-communist societies. Similar "pictures from life" help the audience achieve a state of immersion; they are realistic and rich in detail. Sometimes visitors spend a lot of time analyzing just such details (e.g. reading a reproduction of a carelessly "abandoned" newspaper).

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234   The author's interview with Jarosław Antoszewski, head of the Memory Room in Tomaszów Lubelski, 13 July 2015.

235   This strategy is most often used in museums – historic houses whose focus is everyday life or famous figures. See Nancy E. Villa Bryk, "'I Wish You Could Take a Peek at Us at the Present Moment': Infusing the Historic House with Characters and Activity," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 144–145.

The selective authenticity we see in memory rooms and historical museums comes as the result of a desire to convey the true experience of prisoners in detention/prison and is often accompanied by the recurring problem of the lack of original objects. Faced with this situation, curators replace the authority of the object with their own. By creating an exhibition and deciding how to talk about the past, they arrive at a specific agreement with the audience – a contract that presupposes the viewers' trust in the experts' knowledge. An event, a historical fact or a process comes to the fore, and by viewing the exhibition, the public takes part in co-creating the social meaning of represented phenomena.[236] In this way, museums increasingly expand their tools of interpretation and free themselves from strict dependence on authentic artifacts.

Both memory rooms understand their main function to be the symbolic administration of justice directed against perpetrators who avoided punishment because of legal imperfections or inadequate courts. A characteristic realization of this goal is the clear emphasis on the identity of victims and their executioners (names, surnames, photos of faces). The battling victim of the communist system is the ideal type of freedom fighter, whose death gave final and full moral meaning to his activities. The few authentic objects owned by prisoners, or even copies of their letters, serve as relics in the prison trend. Documentary films and/ or witness accounts recorded and displayed on monitors can also be viewed at the exhibitions.

Victims are defined primarily by their military training and heroic deeds. Before their surname, as a rule, there is a military rank; obligatory are the highest Polish military decorations awarded for combat merits (such as the order of "Virtuti Militari"). An indispensable complement to the exhibitions is the call for viewers to pay tribute. In the Warsaw memory room, this call is expressed in a fragment of the poem "Służewiec" by Tadeusz Porayski, a poet, translator, and soldier of the Home Army persecuted by the communists after the war (he was sentenced to six years in Rakowiec imprisonment)[237]: "Passer-by! Uncover your head! Stop for a moment! / Here every lump of earth bleeds with a martyr's blood, / Here is Służewiec, these are Polish Thermopylae, / Here lie those who wanted to fight to the end."

Veneration of this kind clearly indicates that in the described museum representations focus on a specific type of victim, one which I call heroic as

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236   For more, see Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, op. cit., 159–175.

237   Tadeusz Porayski is author of a poem engraved on the Monument to the Martyrs of Communist Terror 1944–1956 at the Church of St. Katarzyna in Warsaw.

opposed to strictly martyrdom. In the first case, we are dealing with victims fighting and dying in the name of legitimate national goals or even higher universal goals, such as freedom or honor. Heroic victims are morally victorious and the homage they deserve involves commemoration. The second group consists of victims in the strict meaning of the term, accidental and nonsensical, by which I mean that their deaths cannot be reasonably rationalized, cannot be heroized and cannot be positively assessed. In addition to the Jews, Roma and other ethnic groups murdered during the Holocaust, it also includes civilian victims of wars, pacification actions, expulsions, etc. Their commemoration is more about remembering them and reflecting on the mechanisms that led to the crime.

In my opinion, the first group of victims is the dominant category in memory rooms and museums devoted to communism. Heroic victims, dutiful in combat, are a reason for community pride, which sometimes reaches the dimensions of megalomania. In memory rooms, but also in museums thematically related to the Second World War (e.g. the Warsaw Rising Museum, the Home Army Museum, the Katyn Museum), we are dealing with precisely the phenomenon Jan Piskorski (like the Korean scholar Jie-Hyun Lim) describes as "victimhood nationalism." This phenomenon means "(…) a sense of usually excessive national pride, i.e. (…) national megalomania, resulting from an authentic or only imaginary threat, as well as the belief in a nation's particular rights and special status as a victim, for whom it is not enough to do more than others in addition, but who deserves historical compensation. In this case, the right to respect is hereditary: in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Israel to at least the third generation, while in countries with colonial roots, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or the USA, virtually indefinitely."[238] In the memory rooms of the defeated heroes, they put up as an example to follow. Not only do they give a reason to be proud and their suffering is assessed positively, but their personal stories become a fragment of a wider story that makes up the foundation myth of an independent, reborn community (as in the case of "cursed" soldiers[239]). At

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238   Jan M. Piskorski, "Od kultu herosów do adoracji ofiar. Przemiany w kulturze pamięci," *Więź* 53 (2010), no. 2–3: 5; see also Jie-Hyun Lim, "Victimhood Nationalism," *The Korea Herald* 9 April 2007.

239   An anti-communist, independence guerrilla movement that resisted the Sovietization of Poland and its subordination to the USSR, and fought the security services of the USSR and their subordinate services in Poland. After the post-election amnesty and collapse in expectations that Western powers would intervene, the anti-communist, pro-independence armed underground after 1947 numbered no more than two thousand people.

the exhibition, they are usually presented through their uniforms and weapons, and the Warsaw memory room offers up their military biographies, which immediately suggests that the most important element of the exhibition is the heroic battle, not the death itself. They were murdered, but their deeds made them immortal. The same applies to the perpetrators, whose shame is eternal.

Martyrdom victims are commemorated most commonly in the Holocaust museums. The difference is fundamental. In this case, we get to know the victims for the moment of their extermination, and it is their death that is the most important for the exhibition. The memory of people is reduced to scraps of things that belonged to them; memories of their lives, families, education, traditions, and their communities are lost. The murdered are represented mainly by items that used to be their property and by the remains of their bodies, which are incorporated in various ways into monuments or exhibitions. The focus on the victims (or rather their extermination) pushes the perpetrators into the background (names of successive camp commanders) and witnesses (usually omitted at all at the exhibitions). The above remarks apply to contemporary exhibition strategies, given that the first postwar concepts of exhibitions in the former concentration camps were different and took into account a realistic, even naturalistic recreation of camp life, including placing perpetrators' mannequins on the campgrounds.[240]

In the case of the victims of communism, the perpetrators of the crimes were not punished at all (in this regard there is a common consensus) or were insufficiently punished for several reasons. Therefore, their presence in the commemoration space is a kind of response to their unpaid or incomplete punishment, a moral sanction, and the final condemnation. In Tomaszów Lubelski, along with enlarged photographs of the faces of security service officers, their extensive biographies are shown against a red background. The Memory Room in Warsaw lists the people responsible for communist crimes (judges, prosecutors, executioners) and presents the exact charges of the so-called Mazur Commission established after Bolesław Bierut's death[241] to investigate cases

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240   See Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach,* op. cit.,161–164.

241   Bolesław Bierut (1892–1956) – Polish politician, communist activist, president of Poland in 1947–1952 (elected by the Sejm after the rigged parliamentary elections of 1947), leader of the PZPR (from 1948 as secretary general, and from 1954 as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party). He died on March 12, 1956 in Moscow, where he was a guest of the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (February 14–25, 1956). It was during that Congress that Nikita Khrushchev delivered his secret speech exposing Stalinist crimes: "On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences."

of abuse and criminality in the highest military law enforcement and justice agencies.[242] The exhibition stated that "the conclusions of the commission regarding prosecutors and judges were implemented. No one was subject to criminal proceedings, military ranks were not reduced, and one of the judges was a judge of the Military Chamber of the Supreme Court for many years to come (…)." In addition to the history of the institution, its statute, and methods of operation (surveillance), the persons performing the most important functions and positions in the intelligence authorities are mentioned and shown (portrait photos). As for the perpetrators' intentions and moral deterioration, there is no doubt; the quotation from statements made by Colonel Dmitry Wozniesienski, the head of the Main Information Board, openly specifies the institution's task, "We will fire all of you pre-war officers and your families." In the memory rooms, the memory of the perpetrators and their bestiality becomes a form of "civilized" revenge, and the victims' memories serve as compensation.

The history presented in the memory rooms is usually very clear (at the expense of many simplifications), and the characters (victims, perpetrators, heroes, executioners) are one-dimensional in nature. This minimizes the dangers that come with the freedom to interpret ambiguous past reality. A model example of the use of similar measures is the General Kukliński Memory Room, where the difficult, complex and in fact tragic story of Ryszard Kukliński was "pressed" into the frame of the story of a romantic hero. The General Kukliński Memory Room was established in 2006 thanks to the efforts of Józef Szaniawski.[243] It occupies a small room at the back of St. John's Cathedral on Kanonia Street in Warsaw. The small exhibition chamber was divided into two parts by a symbolic "iron curtain," which was constructed with corrugated sheets from the Red Army warehouses in Legnica (Photo 24). The "eastern" side of the curtain shows communist Europe, which was illustrated with photos of party secretaries, tanks on Red Square, and strategic maps of the Warsaw Pact. On the other side of

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242   The commission, established in December 1956, named 6 Soviet and 49 Polish Intelligence Officers, 4 Soviet and 11 Polish prosecutors, and 2 Soviet and 11 Polish military judges as particularly serious cases. Despite the commission's conclusions, which called for criminal proceedings against 18 people (11 Intelligence Officers, 3 prosecutors and 4 military judges), only two were brought before the court. Although they were convicted (3 and 5 years for abuse of power), they were released from prison after only a few months. The rest escaped justice. See *Raport Komisji Mazura*, http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,7603376,Raport_komisji_Mazura.html (retrieved: 1 December 2016).

243   Author's conversation with Sebastian Warlikowski, 2 October 2015.

the "curtain," we see the West presented mainly through the prism of artifacts related to the opposition, Ryszard Kukliński's personal mementos, and symbolic images of characters that, in common understanding, were key to the system's collapse: Ronald Reagan and John Paul II. The difference between the two parts of Europe is symbolized by the sheet metal itself (i.e. the "iron curtain"), rusty and dirty on one side, polished and shiny on the other.

The idealistic image of the West corresponds to the heroic image of Ryszard Kukliński, which is created with the use of very clear symbolism referring directly to the romantic and messianic idea. In the Chamber there is a sculpture by Xawery Dunikowski, "Prometheus", which indicates the missionary nature of the activities of Kukliński, who devoted himself to the good of humanity, which excludes personal benefits or other possible motivations. The protagonist is also characterized by quotes from Zbigniew Herbert,[244] Lech Kaczyński[245] and Sławoj Leszek Głódź.[246] The quotes emphasize the lonely struggle for national dignity and "the most important matters", and they directly define Kukliński as "modern Wallenrod" and "the father of Polish freedom." The Chamber presents a one-sided image of the romantic hero, depriving him of the human weaknesses, feelings of fear, hesitation or doubts that were inherent in the personality of even his literary prototypes, ambiguous and tragic characters. Although Kukliński is not presented as a victim of the system but as the ultimate victor, the way the Chamber presents this history corresponds to the perspective used in other memory rooms, which call on visitors to pay tribute to the soldier's deeds and his character.

3.2. Hagiographic History

The blood of martyrs becomes the seed of believers. And that's what happened. The nation awoke. A nation has risen. Again, with a clear sound above our ears came the word: Homeland.

Józef Tischner [247]

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244   Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998) – Polish poet, essayist, playwright.

245   Lech Kaczyński – (1949–2010) – Polish politician and lawyer, independence opposition activist.

246   Sławoj Leszek Głódź (born 1945) – Polish Roman Catholic clergyman, doctor of canon law, field bishop for the Polish Army in the years 1991–2004, diocesan bishop of Warsaw-Praga in the years 2004–2008, metropolitan archbishop of Gdańsk in the years 2008–2020.

247   Passage from a sermon delivered by Józef Tischner on 5 May 1984, cited in Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, *Ksiądz Jerzy Popiełuszko* (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2004), 351.

Father Jerzy Popiełuszko went down in history as the victim of the most famous kidnapping and political murder in Polish postwar history. The crime of the Security Service officers became a symbol of communist lawlessness. Even though the direct perpetrators were punished, the murder has never been fully explained and there are still many hypotheses as to who issued the order itself and the actual course of events.[248] Those who probably issued the orders, generals Czesław Kiszczak and Wojciech Jaruzelski, consistently presented the murder as a provocation directed by one against the other, but they never specified who could have inspired such an action. The next alleged initiators, General Władysław Ciastoń, former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, and Zenon Płatek, former director of Department IV of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, were acquitted of murder in their trial in 1994. It is also not known whether the Kremlin played a role. Antoni Dudek believes that the most logical explanation of Popiełuszko's death is by pointing to the result of illegal (even under PRL law) actions that the SB took against the opposition. The murder was supposed (due to the ineffectiveness of other measures) to persuade other clergymen to withdraw their support for the underground "Solidarity." Previously, a whole range of measures had been taken against Popiełuszko, referred to as "operational actions and schemes."[249]

The murder of a priest crossed a certain line. Ewa K. Czaczkowska and Tomasz Wiścicki write: "A martyr appeared, one whose sacrifice obliges others to the community. Such events escape the logical description of events in another space – the axiology, which produces a psychological effect."[250] The Church points to the theological dimension of Father Popiełuszko's death, presenting it as a voluntary sacrifice in defense of fundamental values – truth, freedom,

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248 The trial in Toruń (27 December 1984 -7 February 1985) involved four Security Service officers: Captain Grzegorz Piotrowski, Lieutenant Leszek Pękala, Lieutenant Waldemar Chmielewski, and Colonel Adam Pietruszka. Piotrowski and Pietruszka were sentenced to 25 years, Pękala to 15 years, and Chmielewski to 14 years in prison. The judgment of the Provincial Court in Toruń was upheld by the Supreme Court after the appeal hearing on 19 and 22 April 1985. Under a later amnesty, the sentences were shortened. See the full issue of the *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (2004), no. 10, https://ipn.gov.pl/download/1/18053/1-3935.pdf (retrieved: 13 December 2016).

249 Antoni Dudek, "Introduction," in Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, op. cit., 7–8.

250 Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, op. cit., 346.

dignity, and human rights. In a mystical sense, as a sacrifice made to God by the Church, a sacrifice needed for the spiritual transformation of Poles.[251]

The Father Jerzy Popiełuszko Museum was opened in the basement of the church of St. Stanisław Kostka in Żoliborz, where the priest celebrated the famous Masses for the Homeland. The priest's grave is also in the parish, which is a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. Pilgrimages began shortly after Popiełuszko's funeral, and the church of St. Stanisław Kostka was viewed as a sanctuary, i.e. a holy place. The exhibition that advertises itself on the web as "modern and multimedia" was created by Father. Zygmunt Malacki. The museum's opening was part of the celebration of the Year of the Servant of God, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, on October 16, 2004. It was consecrated by Cardinal Józef Glemp, who was Primate of Poland at the time.

The story presented in the museum is a martyrdom narrative in the Christian sense, but in the context of the person of Jerzy Popiełuszko this category can be considered more broadly, because the belief about the relationship between truth, suffering and death was born many centuries before Christianity. It was at work in the ancient philosophers Aeschylus and Sophocles, but it is the figure of Socrates that is the focal point of the tradition combining the choice of wisdom with the choice of death.[252] Socrates' response to a proposal to repeal a sentence in exchange for a promise to abandon the philosophical life is recorded in Plato's *Apology*: "(…) if, as I said, you should dismiss me on these terms, I should say to you, 'O Athenians! I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you; and so long as I breathe and am able, I shall not cease studying philosophy, and exhorting you' […]."[253] When a person is condemned for who he is, and not for what he has done, he can avoid death only at the cost of self-abuse. From this perspective, death appears as a possible consequence of taking the side of the truth expressed equally by words and deeds.[254] In Hellenistic philosophy, the term *martys* appears in Epictetus' *Diatribes* and is used to describe a philosopher who, even under the threat of death, maintains peace of mind (*ataraxia*), shows indifference to material goods, and conveys with his life attitude the truth about the objective order things, as he sees it. It is witnessing by deed.[255] The above identification of words with deeds, derived from pre-Christian philosophy and

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251   Ibid., 352.

252   Dariusz Karłowicz, *Arcyparadoks śmierci* (Warszawa: Fronda, 2007), 181.

253   Plato, *Apology, Crito, and Phaedo of Socrates* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 2011), 25.

254   Ibid., 182–183.

255   Epiktet z Hierapolis, *Diatryby* in ibid., 116.

faith in such absolute values as truth and justice which cannot be negotiated, are common to Socrates and Epictetus, and from the perspective of the exhibition, to Jerzy Popiełuszko.

For the first time, the concept of a martyr (*martys*) in reference to a person who gives his life for the teachings of Christ appears, as Dariusz Karłowicz writes, in the middle of the second century AD, in a letter from the Myrenian Church describing the martyrdom of St. Polycarp. In Greek, the word *martys* usually occurs in a juridical context and means a person who passes on his personal knowledge onto others, i.e. helps to establish an objective state of affairs. This meaning remains the same in the Bible, though it is focused on the person and teaching of Christ. In the middle of the second century AD, witnesses were called Christians who, without being historical participants in Christ's life, died as victims of persecution. Such testimony began to be associated with the sacrifice of shed blood. In the literature from this period, there is a division between a martyr (*martys*) who, following Christ, gave his life for his faith, and a follower (*homologetes*) who suffered but did not sacrifice his life.[256] Willingness to suffer and die in the name of justice becomes a kind of criterion for true faith. "Following Christ is fulfilling God's will by living righteously, in all conditions, even to suffering and dying for the faith."[257]

Father Jerzy Popiełuszko is presented at the exhibition in the light of the above ideals, as a perfect witness in whom, like Jesus Christ himself, word and deed converge and there can be no compromises. The story at the exhibition begins with the presentation of the communist system through the prism of human rights violations and total economic failure. In the first room, in a showcase titled "Against Conscience, Dignity and Freedom 1944–1989," bureaucratic evidence is presented about how society was harassed. This evidence is made up mostly of Interior Ministry files, examples showing how the communists punished and took various actions against people representing "hostile and opposition attitudes" (only Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński was specifically named). In the room devoted to the PRL, in addition to symbolic food cards and a few copies of the weekly Solidarność, the Pope's pilgrimages to Poland are mentioned with the most famous sentence from his sermon delivered in Warsaw in June 1979: "Let your spirit descend and renew the face of the Earth, this Earth."

Out of many historical events of great importance, the exhibition presents only those that are directly related to Popiełuszko's life. The Gdańsk shipyard

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256   Ibid., 105–108.
257   Ibid., 110.

strike in 1980 (the museum displays copies of the demands formulated by the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (*Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy*)) and a dozen or so photos presenting the activities of Warsaw Solidarity, which serve as references to breakthrough moments in the life of a priest who in August 1980 began cooperating with the opposition movement. The initial moment of this activity is the celebration of Holy Mass by Popiełuszko for striking steel workers. Soon after, he joined the Workers' Ministry (*Duszpasterstwo Ludzi Pracy*) and became the chaplain of Warsaw "Solidarity."

The meager historical context and the strong emphasis on religious elements give Popiełuszko's story a mystical dimension from the very beginning. This impression grows when we go from the "PRL Hall" to another room stylized as the Popiełuszko family home, at whose center is a cradle made of branches, the poor appearance of which is irresistibly associated with a quotation from the Bible: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Photo 25).[258] A tiled kitchen, appliances, photographs on the walls and a (staged) view from the window onto an ordinary village yard indicate the conditions in which Popiełuszko was raised; he was born on September 14, 1947 in the village of Okopy in the Białystok region, one of five siblings. The room is entitled "Roots" and the short message says that "To understand a man you must go to his family home." The exhibition's creator noted that "the son of modest parents (…) walked four kilometers to lessons and to the morning Mass," which immediately indicates that piety and religiousness were close to both him and his parents, Władysław and Marianna Popiełuszko. The exhibition also mentions the mother's memory of her son being an ardent reader of the monthly *Rycerz Niepokalanej* (a periodical founded in 1922 by Maksymilian Kolbe).[259]

The next part of the exhibition shows a young Popiełuszko (still using the name Alfons) submitting an application to the seminary in Warsaw that includes his reasons: "My request is motivated by the fact that I want to become a priest,

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258   King James Bible, Luke 2:12.

259   Maksymilian Maria Kolbe (1984–1941) a Polish Franciscan friar, missionary, the first Polish martyr of the Second World War, a saint of the Catholic Church. Founder of the organization Rycerstwo Niepokalanej, the monthly magazine *Rycerz Niepokalanej* and Radio Niepokalanów, as well as the monastery in Niepokalanów. The monthly *Rycerz Niepokalanej* is controversial due to its anti-Semitic qualities and serves as an example of the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the Catholic Church in the interwar period, but the Popiełuszko museum uses it only as proof of the future priest's religious interests.

because I have a passion for this profession." Then visitors see the seminarian doing military service in Bartoszyce. The "Soldiers' Rosary" room presents this period of Popiełuszko's life as another formative stage on his path to charism and future martyrdom: "(…) for him praying together, and especially the rosary, was, a source of inner strength in witnessing fidelity to God and the Gospel." Already at this stage of Popiełuszko's biography, the steadfastness of his character and his will to adhere to truth, understood in absolutist terms, are emphasized.

The next room is the culmination of Popiełuszko's religious and opposition activities, the symbol of which were the so-called Masses for the Homeland celebrated in the Church of St. Stanisław Kostka. The first such mass took place on February 22, 1981, and was celebrated by Father Teofila Bogucki, and from February 28, 1982 they were celebrated by Popiełuszko. The central element of the hall (entitled "The Gift of the Priesthood" and which on the website is called "the heart" of the museum[260]) is the altar with liturgical vessels (chalice and paten) on display. There are also the priest's liturgical vestments and some of his civilian clothes. In his sermons, Popiełuszko combined religious content with patriotic Polish poetry and linked what he considered to be a universal message of Christianity with Polish culture, understood as the continuity of the national tradition, emphasizing mainly the Poles' aspirations for freedom.[261] Museum visitors can watch fragments of recorded Masses. The language of the sermons was sublime and solemn, in line with the martyrdom and messianic paradigm of independence most fully expressed in nineteenth-century poetry. Popiełuszko's words – "what a similarity there is today between Christ dripping with blood on the cross and our sorrowful homeland!"[262] – harmonize with a fragment from Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*: "O Mother Poland, thou that in this hour/Art laid within the grave-what man hath power / To speak of thee today?"[263] The language of a higher moral reason, out of date and artificial though it may seem to many people today, reached an audience at the time because it seemed completely natural and faithfully reflected the current situation and social experience.[264] The activity of Solidarity was a morally cleansing event for the majority of society. In this atmosphere, the moral pathos of Popiełuszko's sermons surprised no one. On the contrary, it worked in harmony with the audience's experience.

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260   https://muzeumkspopieluszki.pl/ (retrieved: 19 December 2016).
261   Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, op. cit., 169–170.
262   Cited in ibid., 179.
263   Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (London: Dent & Sons, 1966), 284.
264   Jadwiga Staniszkis, op. cit., 188–189.

This part of the exhibition also shows how the priest was the object of growing harassment on the part of the communist authorities. In one corner of the room, a space reconstructing Popiełuszko's private apartment (a desk, a typewriter, books, the 1984 Solidarity calendar, a cross, an image of the Virgin Mary) was staged so that visitors can see several summons from the Warsaw Internal Affairs Office calling Popiełuszko a "suspect." However, we will not find there any currently known details of surveillance, wiretapping in the priest's apartment in the rectory, provocation in his private apartment at Chłodna Street,[265] not to mention the broader context, i.e. the policy towards clergy conducted by the 4th Department of the Ministry of the Interior. The exhibition reflects only one dimension of events, that is, the degree of the priest's involvement in opposition activities and his faith in the super-human factor at play.

The above observation is confirmed by another room, entitled "Golgotha," which suggests that Popiełuszko's suffering and death were a sacrifice resulting from obedience to God's will; as such his life was not "wasted", but served a higher purpose. The consequence of such an approach is the lack of references to the historical ("earthly") circumstances of Popiełuszko's activity and to the reasons behind his decisions, which could be justified by factors other than those that were divine (e.g. the priest's character traits). There is also a lack of information on the reaction of the priest's superiors to subsequent events. It is known that they had the opportunity to stop the persecution by arranging for Popiełuszko to leave Poland. Primate Józef Glemp commented on it years later: "Father Popiełuszko was, however, strongly associated with the people. He had the charism needed to bind people together, he was widely trusted. In view of my proposals, he had a choice: to change the parish or change the place; whatever. He personally did not want to make any decisions about himself. If I had taken it, he would certainly have complied with me. But we know how unfavorable it would be in the face of the pressure being applied on Him and the Church. Hence, he stayed where he was."[266] In an interview for *Newsweek* in June 2010, Glemp admitted: "Popiełuszko told me: 'If the Primate tells me to do so, I will leave.' But that meant I would have to tell him. By removing Father Jerzy from Warsaw, I would be considered a collaborator with the regime." He added: "(…) I knew that Father Popiełuszko's life was in danger. (…) I also talked to Father Jerzy himself. It seemed to me that Father Jerzy was hated by the [communist]

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265   See for example Piotr Litka, *Ksiądz Jerzy Popiełuszko. Dni, które wstrząsnęły Polską* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Św. Stanisława BM, 2010).

266   Cited in Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, op. cit., 260.

functionaries, that he was pushing himself to martyrdom."[267] From the historical perspective, this is very important information showing the complexity of the circumstances surrounding the decisions of church hierarchs and Popiełuszko himself. But the exhibition's religious and mystical dimension allows them to be omitted because the most important goal from this perspective is to show the path Jerzy Popiełuszko took to fulfill his divine mission. As Karłowicz writes, "(…) for Christians, the fight between good and evil acquires a fuller dimension, and those who are 'persecuted for righteousness' take part in the battle between God and demons."[268] So instead of the context, and even information about the direct and indirect perpetrators of the events, the exhibition's creator offers a laconic but symbolic comment – "He was in God's hand. He read God's signs" – which deprives the exhibition of historical background.

Golgotha is the climax and the most solemn part of the exhibition. It is accessed by a corridor entitled "The sky has fallen on our heads"[269] and focusing on the experience of martial law. Historical details are still sparse. General Wojciech Jaruzelski's announcement is accompanied by brief information about the internees, the pacification actions, and their victims. Here you can find information about the kidnapping of Popiełuszko on his way back from Bydgoszcz by officers of the Security Service and photos of a demonstration taking place in Warsaw in support of Popiełuszko. The photo shows a large banner "God, bring Father Jerzy back to us," which can be seen in the exhibition (arranged in such a way that only the first word "God" is visible). A highly interesting element of this part of the exhibition are "Silent Witnesses" – i.e. trees cut from the forest where Popiełuszko was beaten and tortured (Photo 26). The concept of non-human witnesses to the crime as elements of commemoration is currently used especially in the case of former Holocaust sites, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau or Bełżec. According to Giorgio Agamben's thesis, only those who did not survive,

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267 Andrzej Stankiewicz, Piotr Śmiłowicz, *Kardynał Józef Glemp po raz ostatni dla Newsweeka: Wszyscy jesteśmy grzeszni*, http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/kardynal-jozef-glemp-po-raz-ostatni-dla-newsweeka--wszyscy-jestesmy-grzeszni,59611,1,1.html (retrieved: 19 December 2016).

268 Dariusz Karłowicz, op. cit., 185.

269 The website of the museum says that this is a fragment from a poem by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński. See http://muzeumkspopieluszko.pl/work/niebo-runelo-nam-na-glowy (retrieved: 19 December 2016). It seems to be a paraphrase of a line from the poem "Mazowsze" (Masovia), which originally reads: "And then the country's sky collapsed." See Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, *Mazowsze*, http://www.baczynski.art.pl/wiersze/102-W.html (retrieved: 19 December 2016).

those who were murdered or found themselves in a state of extreme degradation, could be true witnesses to the crimes of the Holocaust. He writes:

> The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be born witness to and that discharges the survivors of authority. The "true" witnesses, the "complete witnesses," are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who "touched bottom": the Muslims, the drowned, the survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony.[270]

According to the controversial thesis above, the only true witnesses are the victims of the crime; none of the others giving them voice, speaking as a substitute, fulfill the definition of a true witness. In the case of Popiełuszko's murder, the murderers were the only witnesses to the crime, which immediately questions the value of their testimony. Martyrdom needs credible accounts, so in cases where no one can bear witness, people "cite" non-human witnesses, in this case trees, which silently eyed the crime. The trees, "silent witnesses," were participants and eyewitnesses to the murder. Their non-humanity is not a significant factor here; their presence at the crime scene is important. Nature is neither neutral nor hostile, but – as in Zbigniew Herbert's poem "Apollo and Marsyas" – it stands on the side of the victim: "suddenly/at his feet/falls a petrified nightingale/he looks back and sees/that the hair of the tree to which Marsyas was fastened/is white/completely."[271]

Writing about trees-witnesses at the Museum-Memorial Site in Bełżec, Jacek Małczyński recognizes that a separate interpretative category should be created for them, as non-human witnesses,[272] though it seems that such a category already exists. An object-witness in museology (it can be both a dead object and a plant) is one whose aura results from the fact that it belonged to someone or was somewhere else, and thanks to this ontological connection with the past, it is transferred to the present. A similar item in exhibitions functions either as a source or as an emotional object. When it is a source, it tells a story, because in

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270   Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants* of *Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Zone Books, 1999), 34.

271   Zbigniew Herbert, "Apollo and Marsyas," *Postwar Polish Poetry: An Anthology*, selected and edited by Czesław Miłosz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 126.

272   Jacek Małczyński, "Drzewa 'żywe pomniki' w Muzeum-Miejscu Pamięci w Bełżcu," *Teksty Drugie* (2009) no. 1: 212.

the form of a vestige it enables us to understand the past and serves as evidence. As an emotional object, it uses the aura resulting from the viewers' awareness of its participation in some historically important event or its connection with a historical figure. In places of memory devoted to the Holocaust, where objects act as witnesses and serve as evidence for crimes, even a particular style of presentation has developed, which Thomas Thiemeyer calls "historical documentation": objects with attached descriptions and additional documents replace the historical narrative. This maintains the "authentic relic" effect. The authenticity of an object is its most important feature; its aesthetic value is irrelevant.[273] In the Popiełuszko museum, "mute witnesses" are – like other objects of this type – ontologically connected with the past; they strengthen the narrative effect, confirm its authenticity, and legitimize the story. They are not accompanied by additional information because, like true witnesses, they are supposed to "speak for themselves."

The martyr's death of Popiełuszko – that is, the aforementioned "Golgotha" – was presented in a realistic way. A fragment of the dam in Włocławek from which the murderers threw the victim into the Vistula River was reconstructed in the room draped in twilight (a luminous cross is reflected in water in the museum). The most drastic element of this part of the exhibition (and the entire exhibition) is the enlarged photographic close-ups of Popiełuszko's massacred corpse displayed on the wall above the "dam". The photos of the murdered man's beaten face are especially shocking. The clothes in which the priest was found (cassock, shoes) and the murder weapon (a wooden club) were hung on the opposite wall. This is an example of perceptual realism (which I write about in more detail later in this chapter), but also an element of rhetoric that can be easily read as a hagiographic story. Only such a scheme can explain the ethically controversial decision to display the victim's body in public, which in other circumstances (e.g. in historical exhibitions using only "secular" categories) could be called into question as an additional humiliation of the murdered man.

One of the two (apart from ascetic) models of personal hagiography – i.e. stories about saints – is the warrior who battles infidels in defense of the Catholic faith. Among the several elements of the so-called hagiographic scheme contained within the exhibition in question (beyond the description of childhood, youth, persecution, and miracles after death), the most important is the visual

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273   Thomas Thiemeyer, "Work, specimen, witness: How different perspectives on museum objects alter the way they are perceived and the values attributed to them," *Museum & Society* 3 (2015), no. 13: 405–406.

representation of the hero's martyrdom. As Aleksandra Witkowska writes: "The figure of the saint was formed from heterogeneous matter. It consisted of biographical and historical data drawn from the written or oral tradition, not always credible, but allowing for an approximation of the individual life path and individual personality traits of the protagonist. This image was radically transformed when it came into contact with the functioning model of holiness, which consisted of certain virtues and the ability to perform miracles, and in some cases also stereotypical motives behind martyrdom. The ideal pattern was subordinate to the historical message, which became a mere source of exemplifying material. Only what is universal could become an effective instrument of moral education."[274] There is no contradiction between the precise presentation of Popiełuszko's activity and the affirmation of transcendence, because according to the rule of writing about the lives of saints, temporal activity is most appropriate when it is accompanied by the ability to recognize the transcendent. conditions of human existence.[275] This is why the exhibition presents historical background and in one of the last rooms there are sashes from funeral wreaths and banners (archived for twenty years by Nela Wojnakiewicz) referring to both God and the priest's oppositional activity. Anna Kapuścińska also draws attention to the fact that references to hagiography in periods of socio-political and cultural crises – such as that which took place in the nineteenth century – play an important role in creating a messianic vision of society's renewal and the idea of the rebirth of Catholicism as a factor immortalizing the nation and defining his status. Biographies of saints then become especially important as a reservoir of heroic role models.[276] The figure of Popiełuszko fits well into this role, and the missing details regarding the causes of events, perpetrators, and hypotheses concerning the still unexplained death are, in this case, not necessary. Instead of a complex context, the exhibition presents the figure of the priest and his activity only through the prism of the religiously understood road to martyrdom for the faith, not even political martyrdom. It is interesting because until 1989 Popiełuszko was first and foremost a symbol of Solidarity and personified the moral power

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274   Aleksandra Witkowska, *Polska twórczość hagiograficzna. Próba bilansu*, „Anamnesis" 9: 2005 nr. 1 s. 97–109.

275   Anna Kapuścińska, "Recepcja Skargowskiej metody parenetycznej w polskim żywotopisarstwie XIX wieku Prokop Leszczyński OFMCap (1812–1895) i ultramontańskie źródła 'renesansu' hagiografii potrydenckiej," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* 21 (2013), no. 3: 337.

276   Ibid., 329–330.

of the movement. From the moment of his death, he was treated as a Christian martyr, but above all a national hero (of both Poland and Solidarity), a defender of human rights, an advocate of universal values. It was only after 1989 that a religious theme began to prevail in the Popiełuszko cult.[277] The exhibition is consistent with this second line of interpretation, and Popiełuszko is presented as a man who treated the promotion of truth and justice in public life not as political postulates but as fulfilling his Church vocation.

The exhibition poses no additional questions, which in this case are plentiful, nor does it seek to present the events objectively (objectivity, understood in various ways, is usually one of the basic assumptions of the creators of historical exhibitions). It clearly avoids the exact identification of the perpetrators, which is characteristic of hagiography, where the character of the enemy mainly performs integrative functions. Hagiography treats the enemy as a materialized evil that every saint fights, hence his incarnation is not that important. In the past, they were pagans or heretics, and during Popiełuszko's lifetime they were communists, but basically they are always people who oppose the Church, God or faith – which is quite clear.[278] The exhibition also made no mention of the fact that Popiełuszko was not the only clergyman persecuted and murdered during the PRL.[279] Instead, the exhibition assumes with absolute certainty the presence of a divine factor in history and the action of divine providence. In this sense, the exhibition is not related to history, understood as explaining a specific historical process, or even presenting known historical facts in the form of a visual story, but to theodicy, which tries to reconcile the idea of a merciful and almighty God with the existence of evil in the world. A good explanation of this problem is

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277 Ewa K. Czaczkowska, Tomasz Wiścicki, op cit., 358–359. On the other hand, as Elżbieta Hałas writes in her article about changing street names after the fall of communism, the names "Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński" and "Father Jerzy Popiełuszko" are synonymous with the anti-communist opposition. "They personify values that are antinomic to communism, with a clear ideological connotation and Polish Catholic identity." See Elżbieta Hałas, *Polityka symboliczna i pamięć zbiorowa. Zmiany nazwy ulic po komunizmie* in *Zmiana czy stagnacja? Społeczeństwo polskie po czternastu latach transformacji*, ed. Mirosława Marody (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2004), 147.

278 Piotr Jacniacki, "Hagiografia a biografistyka przywódców ruchu robotniczego," *Res Historica* (2005), no. 19: 136.

279 See *Represje wobec osób duchownych i konsekrowanych w PRL w latach 1944–1989*, ed. Alicja Grześkowiak (Lublin 2004), particularly pp. 263–322.

the concept of sacrifice, thanks to which the "renewal of the face of the earth" announced by John Paul II takes place.

The problem of the exhibition's historicity is complicated by the fact that – as I mentioned earlier – Popiełuszko's grave is located at the church of St. Stanisław Kostka, which means that a trip to the museum is a pilgrimage. Antoni Jackowski defines a pilgrimage as "(…) a trip taken for religious reasons to a place considered sacred (*locus sacer*) due to a special action by God or a deity, in order to perform certain religious acts of piety and penance there. In other words, the essence of a pilgrimage has always resulted from the faithful's willingness to commune with the sacred."[280] In Popiełuszko's museum, one can easily find all three basic components of a pilgrimage: man (*homo religiosus*), space and sacrum, but it should be assumed that for many people visiting the museum they are also important for cognitive reasons. We are then dealing with "religious tourism" or a "pilgrimage," which means a journey undertaken on the basis of religious and cognitive motives, also conditioned by non-religious factors and combining spiritual and secular elements.[281] This does not change the fact that visitors, for religious and cognitive reasons, make pilgrimages to the Popiełuszko Museum rather than simply visit it, which means that they enter the sacred dimension of space and time. However, this is not the mythical ancient times brought to present times, reversible and liturgical in the sense offered by Mircea Eliade,[282] because the exhibition – torn, as a consequence, from its secular temporal setting – would be completely ahistorical. Instead of sacred ahistoricality, we are dealing with a special historicity characteristic of the philosophical reflection of the Christian Middle Ages, when history was not viewed as an independent scientific discipline, but as a tool for the interpretation of the Bible, an instrument of theological exegesis. Categories developed by history were designed to help theology, which focused on the role of Providence in two worlds: terrestrial and extraterrestrial.[283] The best exponent and creator of the concept of Christian historicity in that period was St. Augustine, who understood history as "(…) an enormous, God-made drama with man as an actor."[284]

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280   Antoni Jackowski, "Pielgrzymki zagraniczne szansą dla rozwoju polskich ośrodków kultu religijnego," *Prace Geograficzne* issue 117 (2007), 241.

281   Ibid., 242.

282   Mircea Eliade, *Sacrum-mit-historia* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1993), 89–92.

283   Andrzej F. Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2003), 59.

284   Cited in ibid., 60.

The division created by Augustine between *historia sacra* (history of divine actions) and *historia profana* (history of human actions) in no way meant the existence of two separate stories. On the contrary, only the history of the saint was true, but it took place on two levels: the content (divine) and the event (human). Only the former revealed the meaning of earthly history.[285] In the twelfth century, the view of the direct influence of Providence changed thanks to John of Salisbury, who set forth the possibility of the human creative influence on the course of historical events, and St. Thomas Aquinas, who – without questioning the claim that God participated in every human action – considered that its form was left to man himself.[286] Popiełuszko, who "read the signs of God", strove to fulfill his martyrdom mission in the historical conditions of his day and which his activity changed. In this way, *historia sacra* and the *historia profana* were merged at the exhibition, and the pursuit of human perfection was realized. The correct recognition of God's voice and the mission's completion confirm the miracles to which the last exhibition room is dedicated. Letters containing descriptions of healings performed through Popiełuszko's intercession prove that "his ministry" was a "leaven of good" now multiplied many times. What can be interpreted in the case of the Popiełuszko museum as the influence of the non-human factor on the history of the world also appears in the perception of communism in Romania, though we are dealing there with a diabolical element.

3.3. Battle and Exorcisms

The memory of communism in Romania is a palimpsest with many layers and levels related to social and cultural groups and local communities. Memories belong to a social, cultural, or professional group, but also depend on the media and the current international context. According to Claudia Florentina Dobre, the official version of the past imposed by the communist party was only valid in Romania's public sphere. It expanded into the private sphere through history books, novels, and movies. Fear kept most people from passing on any (non-official) information, stories, or memories. As a result, post-communist memory is dominated by historical figures and mythical events propagated by the communists over the course of forty-five years creating monuments, memorials and museums of socialist art and communist ideology.[287]

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285   Ibid., 61.

286   Ibid., 69.

287   Claudia Florentina Dobre, "Communism at the Museum: Staging Memory at the Sighet Memorial," *Performing the Past. Post-Communist Poland and Romania*, ed. Izabela Skórzyńska and Christian Lavrence (Poznań: IH, 2014), 40.

The current discourse about communism in Romania is a story of a struggle and resistance against the system, with the narrative's most distinct feature being a great distance from the past, and even a kind of alienation and avoidance of inscribing the communist period into any coherent history of the Romanian state. This discourse was not always prominent; it became mainstream only on December 18, 2006, when President Traian Băsescu symbolically launched it with his speech on the occasion of the presentation of a report by the presidential commission appointed to analyze the crimes of the communist dictatorship in Romania. Until then, anti-communist statements had been limited to a small group of intellectuals and former political prisoners who called themselves "democrats" and who, after the 1989 breakthrough, declared communism a foreign system imposed on the Romanian people by the Soviet Union and facilitated by forces that had "betrayed" Romania at the end of the Second World War.[288]

The past, perceived as a wound, a place full of darkness and death, must be definitely closed with the help of an equally powerful tool, which for Romanians was a cross that evoked strong symbolically opposing associations: life – death, good – evil, reality – nightmare, truth – falsehood. Therefore, as Gabriela Cristela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci write, most of the commemorations scattered all over Romania and devoted to the victims of communism took the form of crosses (in a few cases a skull and crossbones). Marble, stone or wooden crosses are placed in parks, streets, crossings, church yards.[289] In the mind of Romanians, only this symbol can oppose the past metaphorically defined as "Soviet devastation" and the

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288   Former communists who converted to capitalism emphasized the need to forget about the past. Ion Iliescu (an iconic figure among neo-communists, president in the years 1990–1996 and 2000–2004) argued that there was no need for a debate about communism as the regime had already been condemned by history. He argued that people should forget about the past and reconcile with the past to rebuild the country. After 2000, a new generation of artists, scholars and political leaders who had achieved prominence in the social, cultural, and political field began to promote a new kind of memory of communism: their personal memory. Most of them experienced communism in childhood or early adolescence, so they shared rather positive experiences and memories that were defined by the term "pink" memory. See Claudia Florentina Dobre, op. cit., 34 oraz Gabriela Cristela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," in *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, ed. Oksana Sarkisova and Péter Apor (Ventral European University, 2008), 278–279.

289   Gabriela Cristela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, op. cit., 281–282.

"red devil," and can commemorate the victims who "sacrificed for Christ, dignity and national freedom."[290] Communism turned out to be such a demonic evil that the struggle against its remnants sometimes required a tool even stronger than the cross itself, namely exorcisms (in the literal sense), the most striking example of which was the situation at the Romanian Peasant Museum (*Muzeul Taranului Roman*) in Bucharest. Communism is not the main exhibition theme of this institution, but only a small part. Nonetheless, it worth our attention for many reasons.

It is worth mentioning here that in the Romanian capital there is another institution created to represent the nation's history, i.e. the National Museum of Romanian History (*Muzeul Național de Istorie României*), but it only shows a fragment of an exhibition on ancient times with the reconstruction of Trajan's Column, while the rest of the exhibition has remained for years in "reorganization."[291] The facility was established in 1972 as the Museum of the History of the Socialist Republic of Romania and remained under the strict party and state management until 1989. After the transformation, as the National Museum of Romanian History, it presented its most important exhibition project entitled "Communism in Romania". This 2007 exhibition included eight thematic blocks: Sovietization, party-state, repression and the resistance movement, Romanian emigration, the economy, foreign policy, the cult of personality and the revolution of 1989. And as the descriptions and photographs show, it was quite a rich representation of the era.[292] It contained both documents and objects from everyday life, posters and brochures, photos, and reconstructions of, for example, a prison cell. It is hard to guess why the exhibition was closed,[293] since as deputy director of the museum, Cornel Constantin Ilie, writes, "it was

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290 Ibid., 284.

291 The exposition with the Trajan's column is a reference to the so-called "theory of continuity", i.e. the belief that around 275, after the departure of the Romans, who occupied Dacia for 170 years, a new Dacco-Roman people – ancestral Romanians – remained in the abandoned province. See for example Thomas Kunze, *Ceaușescu. Piekło na ziemi*, trans. Joanna Czudec (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2016)*,* 152.

292 For a detailed description of this exhibition, see Cornel Constatin Ilie, "Przedstawienie komunizmu w Narodowym Muzeum Historii Rumunii," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) 3 (2016): 43–54.

293 Basically, according to Bădică, it presented the same exhibition model used in communist museums. Perhaps this is the reason why the exhibition was dismantled. See Simina Bădică, "Same exhibitions, different labels? Romanian national museums and the fall of communism," in Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Amundsen eds., *National Museums. New Studies from Around the World* (London: Routledge 2010), 283.

extremely popular."[294] It is also unknown when the museum will eventually be "reorganized" and fully utilized. The history of Romanian communism from the perspective of the capital is also presented in a nutshell at the Bucharest City Museum (*Muzeul Municipiului Bucuresti*) in the form of traditional thematic boards with photos and short captions (e.g. social life and leisure, propaganda, urban constructions, industrialization). The exhibition on communism there is a small part of the whole and contains few objects from the period.

The aforementioned Romanian Peasant Museum was established in 1990. It is a rare case in Romania when an institutional museum from the regime was turned into a museum containing an exhibition about that very regime. The building was erected at the beginning of the twentieth century and was initially intended as an ethnographic museum. In 1952, an exhibition of national art was removed from there and the Lenin and Stalin Museum was created, renamed successively the Lenin Museum, the Museum of the Romanian Communist Party and finally the Historical Museum of the Communist Party and of Democratic and Revolutionary Movements in Romania. The latter survived until 1990.[295]

In 1990, Andrei Pleşu, the then Minister of Culture, decided to rebuild the ethnographic exhibition here, which, as he put it, "will be a symbolic exorcism of the demons of the false museum that was the Communist Party Museum and the restoration of the museum originally belonging to the local tradition."[296] Thus began the "cleaning up" of the exhibition rooms and the transfer of objects to other institutions. The old collection was labeled "rubbish" and was meant to be thrown away, but it was ultimately decided that the past could not be "removed" as the communists had done. In practice, however, few sites were identified as having any heritage value. Ioana Popescu, one of the people working on the design of the new exhibition, says:

> While the dismantling took place, Horia Bernea had the idea that we needed to clean the space not only of fake walls and fake objects, but also of the bad spirits that must have sneaked in and lived among us. (…) He brought some prelates who came to sprinkle the holy water (aghiasmă), to clean the whole museum. They entered every storage room, every little corner; we have pictures of that. And it is interesting to see that we were all there. We were all there because we all had to be sprinkled with holy water. (…) And the priests who came with huge buckets of holy water were sprinkling with all

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294   Ibid., 53. As a continuation of the exhibition, the website www.comunismulinroma nia.ro was created, but it contains only articles in Romanian and photographs from the communist period (retrieved: 19 October 2017).

295   Gabriela Cristela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, op. cit., 286.

296   Ibid., 287.

the strength in their muscles. It seemed that their arms were going to break off their shoulders when they were sprinkling. They flooded everything in holy water. When they found themselves in front of that famous sculpture of the heads of Marx, Engels and Lenin—there was one in almost every room—they drenched, flooded it with water as if this would destroy it.[297]

The use of the liturgical rite in order to expel the "evil spirit" not only from space, but also from people staying in the "wrong place," was intended to free them from the direct satanic influence that had materialized in Romania under the form of communism.

The exhibition, which was finally established in the Romanian Peasant Museum in 1993, initially had no references to communism, a fact that reflected the intelligentsia's current attitude towards the recent past – a "black hole" of oblivion, or rather the displacement of the past from consciousness, in order to return as soon as possible to true Romanian history and identity. The ethnographic exhibition created at that time presents a completely mythical image of a peasant living in harmony with nature, immersed in a kind of "timelessness," because it is not based on historical, linear time. In 1997, a small display on forced collectivization was added to the exhibition. Its authors, Irina Nicolau and Horia Bernea, entitled it "The Plague – a Political Installation," though they also considered the titles: "Broken Silence," "Essay on Death," "Essay on Murder" and "Plague – Broken Silence."[298] The display is located outside the main exhibition in a place quite unusual for a museum: to the right of the main entrance, in the basement, near the toilets – which, taking into account the belief that the communist system was diabolical – is certainly not accidental.

The exhibition does not so much show the historical course and effects of collectivization as it serves to commemorate "the pain and suffering caused by collectivization," It is here where the remains of the previous exhibition are located: numerous busts of Lenin, previously subjected to exorcism, and two large paintings of Lenin and Stalin. The whole space is made up of two small rooms. In the first one, on one of the walls, there are several symbols of communism, a hammer and sickle (against a blue background) and copies of the communist newspaper *Scânteia* containing a list of the names of peasants imprisoned for opposing collectivization. The second wall is hung with portraits

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297   It is worth adding that the exorcisms involved those who replaced the museum's previous employees. The latter were released, and the attitude of both groups to each other was hostile. Cited in ibid., 289.

298   Ibid., 297.

of Stalin and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who as prime minister (from June 1952 to October 1955) was responsible for, among other things, the collectivization of the countryside. At the center of the room there is a large vase with the inscription (in Romanian): "For Comrade Stalin as a sign of friendship and gratitude from the Romanian Society for Friendship with the Soviet Union" (Photo 27).[299] In the second room there are fragments of poems and short compositions for children praising collectivization and expressing hatred towards kulaks, and another inscription "Learning collectivization – from child to adult."[300] Memories and testimonies of the peasants about the suffering they endured during collectivization are also placed on the table. Here, at least some of the texts are translated into English.

The entire exhibition was intended to contrast with the beautiful and harmonious main exhibition, and therefore attacks the visitor with ugly objects and communist kitsch. The only pleasant object is an attractive carved desk complete with a leather armchair (the furniture is slightly damaged due to improper use). On the desktop there is a stone and nutshells, and a dirty "tote" is hung over the back of the chair. One can interpret this part of the exhibition as a symbol of the ruin of "true" Romanian history as a result of the Sovietization of politics, customs and material culture. All objects were originally exhibited at the Museum of the Communist Party, but their previous context and the story they served are unknown.

According to Gabriela Cristeli and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, the installation touches not only the issue of collectivization, but the whole of communism, its ugliness, absurdity and "fakeness."[301] However, in my opinion the presentation says little about collectivization itself and actually nothing about communism. The objects are indescribable, there is a lack of information in the form of even modest captions or leaflets, texts in Romanian are hardly sufficient. I think no tourist will have a problem with recognizing Stalin or Lenin in the painting, but

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299   The vase must be walked around 4 times before the entire inscription can be read. There are huge ashtrays around the vase, the meaning of which is unclear.

300   In the description of the rooms, the authors of the article mention the color green, which was supposed to be a reference to the early years of communism. At the end of the war, the fleeing Germans left entire wagons full of green paint produced by I.G. Farben. The Soviets used it to paint everything: public toilets, offices, kindergartens, etc. For the creators of the exhibition, green became the color of communism. See ibid., 293–294. However, during my visit to the museum (March 2016) I did not notice the green color anywhere. It had been painted over.

301   Ibid., 294.

the portrait of the Romanian prime minister cannot be obvious to every visitor from outside Romania. It is a complete surprise that there is no reference to Nicolae Ceauşescu, who was the deputy minister of agriculture from 1948 and played an active role in the transformation of agriculture to a socialist economy, for which the Romanian people paid with poverty, hunger, and agricultural disaster. From 1960, Ceauşescu, as a member of the Politburo, led the criminal action against rebellious peasants.[302]

At this point, it is worth mentioning an even more spectacular "omission." During a tour organized for tourists to the famous Palace of the Parliament (*Palatul Parlamentului*) in Bucharest, the guide talks for about an hour and a half about the number of halls, the building's size and number of stories, the weight of the chandeliers, the curtains, the amount of marble, wood and crystal, steel and bronze, and the extraordinary qualities of the entire project, not to mention its creator and the social costs of the construction (demolition of the Old Town, razing the districts of Uranus, Antim and Rahva to the ground, and the displacement of about 40,000 inhabitants) (Photo 28). It seems that Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu were completely overshadowed by their own work, and it was they who, after visiting many world capitals, had a vision of filling Bucharest with monumental architecture.[303] Romanian guides speak with a kind of pride about a building whose "senselessness had no equal in the world."[304]

Returning to the exhibition devoted to collectivization, we should note that some objects (e.g. large ashtrays placed around a vase) give the impression of remnants of the previous museum with which curators did not fully know what to do. The basic exhibition strategy of the entire exhibition is to "let the objects speak for themselves." Leaving aside the naivete of this assumption, I assume that to some extent it may work well in the case of ethnographic exhibits, which are often very beautiful and equipped with an "aura" and suspended out of time, but it will certainly fail when introducing into the installation historical time measured by political events. Presentation of both the collectivization process and the entire period of communism in Romania requires some context because their historical background is what constitutes the importance of the object

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302   See Thomas Kunze, op. cit., 103–105 and 144.

303   In the military garrison in Târgovişte where Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu were led by the militia after escaping from Bucharest and after the National Salvation Front's decision, they were brought before a military tribunal, immediately tried, sentenced to death and shot. The provisionally furnished room where they spent the last three days life was preserved and their place of execution was marked.

304   Thomas Kunze, op. cit, 324.

for the visitor. Objects (regardless of their authenticity) lose their meaning when the audience lacks the appropriate information or does not accept the underlying aesthetic or cultural values. Without knowledge of the context in which an object is embedded, it cannot be understood even by its own cultural community.

A more complete, though still one-dimensional visual representation of Romanian communism is the narrative in the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance in Sighet (*Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței*) known as the Sighet Memorial (*Memorialul Sighet*). The basic categories for this commemoration are – as in other representations belonging to the "prison" trend – repression, cruelty, and brutality, and at the same time the system's great effectiveness. The prison museum in Sighet (in Maramureș County on the border with Ukraine) is currently the most important institution in Romania commemorating the forty-five-year horror of the regime. In Bucharest there is the "office" of the museum with a small photo exhibition presenting its interior and basic factual information.

The Sighet Memorial was inspired by Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan, two activists associated with the human rights movement. Blandiana, who since 1992 promoted the idea of a "memory center" dedicated to the victims of communism, said after its opening:

> The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance was born from a desire to revive collective memory, to act as an antidote to the brainwashing, that has produced most of the anomalies in our lives and present society. What we lived, and why, must be known, so we may understand what we are living today and know what we must never live again. We are not fighting Communism, but its ghosts, who haunt us and corrupt our lives and our history.[305]

The museum's current building was constructed in 1897 and functioned as a prison, first under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and then in interwar Romania. After 1941, the Hungarians used it for the same purpose. During the Second World War, it served as a location into which Transylvanian Jews were herded before deportation to Auschwitz. After the war, the prison became a place for isolating political opponents of the regime built by Romanian communists with Soviet help. Officially, it was a "special work unit," but in practice it was a site for the extermination of the country's intellectual elite: politicians, journalists,

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305   Ana Blandiana, *Spectator. Interviu,* "Formula as Magazine" 635, 2004, cited in Claudia Florentina Dobre, op. cit., 39.

clergy, and military. The prison was closed in 1977 and the museum (after reconstructing the building from ruins) was opened in 2000.[306]

According to the aesthetics of the "prison" trend, the central element of the commemoration is a room with rows of cells on the ground floor and two floors, while only some rooms retain the original decor (bunks, chains); others are thematic, devoted to persecuted people, minorities, labor camps, life everyday life in Romania in the 1960s and 1970s, and to the Romanian dictator and his wife. The characteristic room for interrogations conducted by the *Securitate* (a table, a typewriter and the infamous lamp used to torture prisoners) and an isolation room, known as the "black cell," were also reconstructed. Sound effects have also been added here, and the sounds of the investigation are played (though it is not clear if the recordings are authentic). The memorial – prison presents visitors with a broad spectrum of physical and spiritual repressive measures that have affected the culture, art, and memory of the nation, as well as the space of the Romanian state.[307]

However, the Sighet Memorial mainly symbolizes anti-communist resistance, which, according to Claudia Florentina Dobre, was in Romania not really an organized rebellion or even a dissident movement.[308] At the entrance visitors are presented with maps of Romania with marked places of the "war against communism" in the form of labor camps, prisons, insane asylums, and cemeteries. Resistance is also illustrated by the everyday life in prison, represented by objects such as handkerchiefs of prisoners, dictionaries for learning foreign languages, hand-made crosses, and poems passed on by inmates using the Morse code. All of these activities were of course forbidden. The anti-communist resistance is placed into a wider, international context through references to the situation in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (including the Hungarian

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306 James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 67. However, the prison has been fulfilling the function of commemoration since 1993, representing "the ruins of the Romanian past." See Gabriela Cristela and Simina Radu-Bucurenci, op. cit., 295–296.

307 In the 1980s, Ceauşescu launched a campaign to "systematize" towns and villages (*sistematizarea oraşelor şi satelor*), as a result of which houses, churches and entire villages were destroyed to make way for "public spaces" in line with the dictator's vision. At that time, great fragments of urban and rural infrastructure were destroyed. There are historical details in the collectivization room, but the violence and terror are mainly shown by numbers: 96 % of the agricultural area and 3,201,000 families were subject to forced collectivization. See ibid., 300.

308 Claudia Florentina Dobre, op. cit., 45.

revolution in 1956, the "Prague Spring" of 1968, the history of Solidarity, the "Charter 77" movement). Due to the lack of similar events in Romania, Sighet reveals the theme of the rebellion against the backdrop of collectivization and refers to the figure of the "hajduk" – an outlawed rebel – as an element of Romanian identity. Hajduk becomes a synonym of passive and active resistance, a testimony to the "historical self-confirmation" of the Romanian people.[309]

In order to emphasize the connection between the site and its victims, the Sighet Memorial did not stop at the reconstruction of the imprisoned space but looked for direct physical evidence of the presence and suffering of communist "martyrs." The authors of the commemoration turned to forensic archaeology to discover the remains of prominent prisoners who died in prison and were buried in a cemetery (the so-called Paupers' Cemetery, *Cimitirul Săracilor* in Romanian) in a nearby town. In the case of forensic archaeology, the research methodology must meet procedural requirements; archaeologists treat mass graves as crime scenes and remains as evidence through which criminal liability can be sought. Even if a trial is ultimately not possible, forensic archaeology can provide rhetorically strong scientific narratives about the illegality of a given dictatorship. In the case of Sighet, the work was initiated by the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania (*Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*). Work was carried out in July and November 2006, and the team of archaeologists searched mainly for the remains of two people: the leader of a right-wing party, Gheorghe Brătianu, and the leader of a peasant party, Iuliu Maniu. Archaeologists had to rely on the often contradictory testimony of former prisoners and the search was unsuccessful. For the anti-communists, however, the lack of bodies was further evidence of the system's extreme inhumanity and criminal nature, as well as the continued power of former communists to block attempts to reckon with a difficult past.[310]

It should be added, however, that material objects found in graves and during archaeological digs in various historical places (due to the growing popularity of this research, it is referred to as the "forensic turn" in the humanities) are so-called "raw sources" or evidence that "by themselves" will not museum historians and curators nothing. In order for the evidence to "speak" – writes Ewa Domańska – appropriate research questions need to be asked. Research questions thus bring

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309   Ibid., 45. In the 1950s, the main burden of anti-communist resistance actually rested with the peasants waging partisan battles against brutal collectivization. See Thomas Kunze, op. cit., 133–134.

310   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 70–71.

evidence into existence, though the interpretation of evidence depends on questions that are always asked in a specific context.[311] In the cases I describe, the context for such objects is the broader museum exhibition, which turns them into relics. According to Domańska, in the contemporary humanities and social sciences, material evidence in the form of corpses, remains, etc., is more important than the voice of witnesses whose memory is sometimes unreliable. Thus, the importance of non-human witnesses grows because they do not lie and are not fallible, and their "testimony" is verifiable by laboratory analysis.[312] However, it is worth paying attention to an important circumstance: material evidence is more important than witnesses mainly when there are no, or very few, witnesses. In the case of memory rooms (and Holocaust museums), the evidence found by judicial archaeology speaks for the absent murdered – victims of totalitarian systems. The use of similar evidence in exhibitions or the use of forensic archaeology in creating museum stories is mainly related to the "symbolic effectiveness" of human remains. Unlike abstract concepts, they can be moved, displayed, and located in strategic places. Their materiality is an advantage because it gives the impression that the past is present now.[313] In other words, instead of using concepts such as murder or crime, it is better (in the sense that it is more effective) to exhibit the bodies of the victims. It is easy to give them meaning because they are – like all other material objects – mute. The role that the victims were given in this case (evidence, or the so-called "secular relics") is defined only by their death and completely obscured by the fact that similar objects are easily instrumentalized.[314] On the other hand, professional archaeological research has helped verify historical facts or indicate the real burial zones of victims of mass crimes (as in the case of the death camps in Bełżec or Sobibór, which both became the basis for new commemoration projects).

In Romania, the idea of absent remains eventually became relevant. Instead of marginalizing the cemetery, where key evidence of the crime had not been found, the absence of the remains was incorporated into the narrative and experience of visitors by presenting the site as a space protected from further

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311 Ewa Domańska, *Nekros. Wprowadzenie do ontologii martwego ciała* (Warszawa: PWN, 2017), 136.

312 Ibid., 139.

313 Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 27.

314 I wrote more about human remains as museum objects in *Historia w muzeach,* op. cit., 164–170.

violence.[315] The memorial's website emphasized that, according to local accounts, 52 political prisoners who died in prison were left there, having been buried secretly at night. The graves were not identified among thousands of others, so a landscape project was carried out in 1999 to commemorate the death of these victims. On 14,000 square meters of cemetery, the outline of Romania's borders was created using specially planted flora – mainly conifers. In 2008, a stone altar was added.[316] In this way, the Sighet Memorial and the cemetery were turned into a national holy place.

A clear motive for the creation of the monument-museum in Sighet is the lack of official condemnation and the failure to account for communist crimes, which, according to Blandiana and Rusan, caused communism to survive the revolution in 1989, and turned "Bolsheviks/Mensheviks (…) [into] (…) Social Democrats."[317] In Sighet we have a substitute for justice in the form of commemoration, a place where citizens can see irrefutable evidence of the old system's criminal nature.

3.4. A Nation in the Face of Genocide

The "prison" trend in the representation of communism is most fully realized in Vilnius, where the building of the KGB headquarters (State Security Committee), previously the NKVD and MGB (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of State Security), was used by the Gestapo in 1941–1944 – was transformed into the Museum of Genocide Victims (Genocido Aukų Muziejus). It is the most important museum in Lithuania presenting the crimes of communism, opened in 1992 (and reorganized in 1997). The institution's mission is to:

> […] inform the public about the sufferings of [the Lithuanian nation – A. Z-W] during the years of occupation, about resistance, about the perpetrators (…) and about methods they resorted to. (…) Its purpose is to collect, keep and present historical documents about forms of physical and spiritual genocide against the Lithuanian people and the ways and the extent of the resistance against the Soviet regime.[318]

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315   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution,* op. cit., 70–73.

316   http://www.memorialsighet.ro/the-paupers-cemetery (retrieved: 6 February 2017).

317   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 65.

318   *The Museum of Genocide Victims, A Guide to the Exhibitions*, ed. Virginija Rudienė & Vilma Juozevičūtė (Vilnius, no publication date), 3. The museum is currently named Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights.

The initiative to transform the prison into a museum came from the Lithuanian association of political prisoners and was financially supported by the Ministry of Culture and education,[319] which means that the project can be considered a ramification of the historical policy implemented by the Lithuanian state.

The exhibition basically ignores the Nazi period in the history of both the building and Lithuania, focusing mainly on the communist regime. The creators of the exhibition do not hide that this was their goal: "(…) it was important for them to show the world that Communism was as bad as Fascism (…) Communism isn't condemned by everybody in [Western A. Z-W] public opinion (…) in Europe there is little known about Communism and it is very difficult for them even to get permission from Europe for projects concerning Communism. It doesn't seem important to them (…) mainly because, in the Second World War, Great Britain and the United States were together with Russia (…)"[320] As the reason for excluding fascism from the exhibition, the curators cite the lack of sufficient objects and sources to reconstruct the Nazi period in the prison's history, though as James Mark notes, similar inconveniences and gaps in the communist period were used as an illustration of communists' cunning, and their ability to cover up the traces of their criminal activities.[321] It is certainly not without significance that Lithuania, like Latvia and Estonia, had a history of collaboration with the Nazis during the Second World War, the most striking example of which was service in the German police and in SS formations and participation in the extermination of Jews.[322] Most Baltic societies considered the

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319   Since 1997 the museum has been part of the state-funded Lithuanian Center for Research on Genocide and Resistance (*Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras*), see http://genocid.lt/muziejus/en/695/c/ (retrieved: 6 February 2017).

320   Interview with Virginija Rudienė, cited in James Mark, "Containing Fascism," op. cit., 341.

321   Ibid., 342. In the Museum of Genocide Victims, the scholar found one trace of the building's Gestapo past in the form of a faintly visible swastika scratched on a cell wall by a Polish prisoner (with the date 8-VII-43), ibid., 347. I must admit that I did not even notice this slight trace.

322   For more on cooperation between Germans and Lithuanians during the occupation, see Christoph Dieckmann, "Niemiecka polityka okupacyjna na Litwie w latach 1941–1944. Podsumowanie," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, no. 13 (2017): 94–95. In 2011, as a result of international protests, a section devoted to the extermination of Jews was included in the exhibition. It is worth adding that in Vilnius there is a separate (small) museum dedicated to Lithuanian Jews (*Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus*) and the Holocaust. There, attentive visitors will find information about Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust. Laconically, the exhibition

Soviet Union their main enemy, treating Germany for some time as a potential ally. An additional factor was the repressive measures taken by the Soviet Union in 1940–1941.[323] A scholar of the subject, Grzegorz Motyka, writes: "If Hitler had allowed Lithuanian and Ukrainian nationalists to create their own states, they would have undoubtedly been fascist in nature. The rule of OUN-B [Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists] and LAF [Front of Lithuanian Activists] would probably be no less cruel than the Ustaše in Croatia."[324] The exhibition in Vilnius simply avoids difficult and controversial topics and focuses rather on heroic resistance to the (communist) regime and "discovering" the truth about its crimes.

The ground floor and first floor of the building contain an exhibition devoted to the history of Lithuania in 1940–1941, the guerrilla war until 1953 and the subsequent actions of the occupiers and acts of rebellion by the enslaved population. The exhibition recognizes the events that "sealed Lithuania's fate" in two Soviet-German pacts: the non-aggression of August 23, 1939 and the spheres of influence division of September 28, 1939. There is no information on everyday life in the Sovietized country; only the ways partisans spent their free time were taken into account. The curators focused solely on repression imposed by the communist regime against the Lithuanian nation (labor camps, deportations), but they emphasized most strongly the continuity of resistance, which (according to the vision presented in the museum) lasted continuously from 1940 to 1991. Only the forms of resistance changed: armed struggle, hanging national flags, distributing leaflets, the appearance of patriotic inscriptions on walls, organizing demonstrations, publishing forbidden books, increased activity of the Catholic Church, the dissident movement. Photographs of murdered partisans are an important element (I will return to this topic later). The exhibition's elements are traditional: information boards, documentary photos, a few objects of a mostly symbolic nature (Photo 29).

In accordance with the aesthetics of the "prison" trend, the exhibition's main and most important part is the KGB prison, which existed in the basement of the building since the fall of 1940, while the original cells from the early post-war years, which have not survived, have been meticulously recreated. In addition to

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mentions Lithuanian battalions (*Tautos darbo apsaugos batalionas, TDA*) that were "hired" by the Nazis to carry out regular executions.

323   See for examle Grzegorz Motyka, *Kolaboracja na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczpospolitej 1941–1944*, 184, http://www.polska1918-89.pl/pdf/kolaboracja-na-kresach-wschodnich-ii-rzeczypospolitej-19411944,3392.pdf (retrieved: 8 February 2017).

324   Ibid., 185.

the "standardized" cells, where prisoners arrived until the end of the investigation (which sometimes took up to a year), the public can see two rooms of about 0,6 m² (so-called "boxes"), where new arrivals were kept until the bureaucratic procedure was completed. The museum recreates in detail both the inmates' living conditions and the administrative rooms of KGB officers. The exhibition also includes objects from other places, for example a door from the prison in Lukiškės (*Lukiškių tardymo izoliatorius kalėjimas*), which was infamous not only in Lithuania, but throughout the Soviet Union, given that representatives of many nationalities were held there.

The highlight of the exhibition at the Museum of Genocide Victims is the cell where the executions took place: between 1944 and the early 1960s, around 1,000 people were murdered there, of which only a third received death sentences for anti-Soviet activities (Photo 30). Most of the victims were buried in a mass grave in Tuskulėnai, where (as at Sighet) archaeological research was carried out. In 2004, discovered human remains were reburied in the columbarium in Tuskulėnai.[325]

The execution hall is a basement room without windows. The floor is completely covered with transparent plexiglass plates, which allows the audience to move freely around the execution site and which, at the same time, protects the surface from damage. Items (medals, shoes, glasses) belonging to those who were murdered (found during archaeological research in Tuskulėnai) were placed under the plates. James Mark recognizes that transparent plates symbolize the transparency and objectivity of the curators' approach to history.[326] In my opinion, this approach aims to present the floor as a kind of relic, as it was the victims' last location. The prisoners of Auschwitz II-Birkenau were commemorated in an almost identical way, in a building known as the "Central Sauna," where transparent plates create a path on the stone floor, along which visitors follow in the footsteps of the victims. Władysław Niessner, one of the creators of the latter concept, writes: "We recognized (…) that the sauna floor is one of the most valuable authentic elements of the building and, despite significant damage, it is a moving document, preserving the traces of a large number of people who pass

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325   *The Museum of Genocide Victims, A Guide to the Exhibitions*, 16. The victims also included criminals, collaborators (with the Nazis), and Polish partisans accused of murdering Jews and those killed by the Soviets. It is obvious that the remains could not be separated from each other, but it seems quite unfortunate to include Nazi collaborators among the Soviet victims. See James Mark, "Containing Fascism," op. cit., 348.

326   Ibid., 345.

into oblivion. It is a silent witness to a terrifying practice, the quintessence of a journey through torment."[327] Lithuanian curators seem to be following the same trail, creating in the museum a zone of strict sacrum.

On one of the room's walls there are traces of bullets fired probably by the executioners; this part of the wall is also covered with plexiglass. Because there are not many sources of information about the methods by which the death penalty was executed, the curators decided to introduce an additional element here: a fragment of Andrzej Wajda's film "Katyń" is displayed on the monitor located next to the bullet marks, in particular the most shocking scene of the work showing NKVD officers shooting Polish officers in a naturalistic way. The images of the executions in Wajda's film are, as Piotr Witek writes, realized through the use of a privileged point of view, in close sets, in which the camera "looks" in the face of the soldiers being shot. In the case of the parts of the scene shown in the Vilnius museum (the murder of the general played by Jan Englert), we are dealing with the subjectivization of the message, when the viewers are briefly exposed to the victim's point of view, so they look at the perpetrators through the eyes of a man about to be murdered.[328] "In this way Wajda," Witek writes, "turns viewers into witnesses to the murder, puts them face to face with the crime, as close as possible. From a distance no further than an arm's length we look at the methodically performed execution and the desecrated corpse."[329] This power of the final scenes from "Katyn" was used by museum curators in Vilnius in the most dramatic moment of the visitors' experience. This part of the film was treated both as a metaphor (the director's vision of the Katyn massacre symbolizes similar executions carried out by Soviet security services in all countries in Eastern Europe) and a completely literal account of what happened in the basement at KGB headquarters in Vilnius. This fact not only justifies the use of a fictional film in the museum's message, but also strengthens the drama of the story.

The "prison" trend in the representations of communism is inspired by the symbolism and visual iconography present in Holocaust museums, which are connected primarily by the goal to convey the experience of the victims and the

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327   Władysław Niessner, "Sauna jako obiekt architektoniczny, jego zachowania i konserwacja," *Architektura zbrodni. Budynek tzw. centralnej sauny w KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau*, ed. Teresa Świebocka (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2001), 180–181.

328   Piotr Witek, *Andrzej Wajda jako historyk*, op. cit., 343–344.

329   Ibid., 344.

basic exhibition strategy, which is to influence the emotions of the viewer with the help of authentic infrastructure and facilities. Common elements also include the use of photographs of the victims, both portraits of living people (prisoners / prisoners) and controversial photographs of bodies after death (murdered, tortured, subjected to medical experiments). In the case of the representations of communism I describe, this strategy is most obvious in the Museum of the Servant of God, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (as an element of hagiography), but we can also see similar photos in the European Solidarity Center (victims of December 1970), the Memory Room in Warsaw (the bodies of murdered soldiers from the "Zapora" division) and in the Museum of Genocide in Vilnius (photos of shot partisans). In all cases, there is a clear desire to personify the memory of the victims and an emphasis on remembering and honoring each victim individually.

This type of narrative realism is described in the literature as perceptual realism, which evokes "the tangible reality of facts based on visible truth, on the power of visual perception."[330] It is very clearly present at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, represented primarily by documentary films and photos of victims (including children) taken at various times: before the war, during persecution (with victims often looking directly into the lens), and after death (bodies hanged, shot, burned). Perceptual realism, by causing shock and fear resulting from psychologically conditioned fear for one's own body, is supposed to increase the intensity of reception and put additional pressure on viewers to intensify involvement. As a result, however, it can lead to the activation of mechanisms by which one denies and distances oneself from the suffering of "strangers."

The Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius gives the exact numbers of people arrested, imprisoned, murdered, and deported during both the Soviet and German occupations (a total of 685,623), which, in line with the narrative, is the ultimate proof of the genocidal intentions of both systems. However, it was the KGB during its period of activity (1954–1991) that was assigned the main responsibility for crimes and repression in Lithuania. Part of the museum exhibition is devoted to an accurate description of the history, structure, methods of operation and most important people of the Soviet security services. The KGB is a model example of a criminal organization whose machinery was aimed at the

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330   Lilie Chouliaraki, "W stronę analityki mediacji," in *Krytyczna analiza dyskursu. Interdyscyplinarne podejście do komunikacji społecznej,* eds. Anna Duszak, Norman Fairclough (Kraków: Universitas, 2008), 318.

Lithuanian nation's destruction.[331] According to the Vilnius museum's narrative, it was only thanks to the constant efforts of public resistance in various forms that the Lithuanians managed to preserve the biological and spiritual fabric of the community and avoid extermination.

In the case of the Museum of Genocide Victims, a strong identity and heroic current is inseparably connected with the Tyrrhenian one. Given the definition of the Soviet policy as genocidal, the exhibition strategies modeled on the world-famous Holocaust musealizations, adapted to a different historical context, are not surprising. Strong emphasis on the authenticity and traumatic potential of the objects and the building itself (in terms of their ability to "transfer" victims' experiences) differentiate the exhibition in Lithuania from the exhibitions in the other two Baltic states. However, the Lithuanian memory of communism also has a different face (I will address this topic in chapter 5 below).

3.5. The Everyday Life of Secret Services

From the perspective of the above considerations, three exhibitions presenting the daily work of secret service officers look interesting, mainly in the museological context: the Stasi Museum in Berlin, the Stasi Museum in Dresden, and the exhibition at Hotel Viru in Tallinn. In all of them there is an element that can be described as the "trivialization of evil," which weakens their martyrological significance. The first two are not devoid of identity elements, while the third presents an ironic perspective, which is unique in the context of exhibitions devoted to communism.

The Stasi Museum (*Stasi-Museum* Berlin) in Berlin, also known as the Normannenstraße Research and Memorial Center (*Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte Normannenstraße*), presents the work of the German secret

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331   In connection with the above, I noticed with some amazement that in Lithuania it is possible to participate in a rather unusual project, one involving a kind of survival. Even in 2014, anyone who was willing could play the role of a dissident persecuted by the KGB and, after signing a relevant statement, be "arrested," taken to a bunker, and then subjected to "interrogation" and "torture." The fun (?) ended with a dinner attended by both "victims" and "torturers." See *Więzienie KGB i brutalne przesłuchania. Nowa atrakcja turystyczna na Litwie,* http://podroze.onet.pl/ciekawe/wiezienie-kgb-i-brutalne-przesluchania-nowa-atrakcja-turystyczna-na-litwie/b817r (retrieved: 2 July 2018). Unfortunately, I was unable to verify this information during my stay in Vilnius in 2016.

services from the perspective of their daily routine. A few kilometers from the museum there is the central Stasi investigative prison, now the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial (*Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*), which belongs to the "prison" trend I described above. In practice, both representations make up a story about the political system of the former East Germany (GDR), but here I am more interested in the first exhibition, located in the former seat of the Stasi Ministry of State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*) in Normannenstraße.

The Stasi was established on February 8, 1950, along with its long-time head Erich Mielke, Minister of Security of the GDR in 1957–1989, are today a symbol of oppression and espionage. He was a co-creator of the security apparatus, which controlled and surveillance not only over all areas of social life in the GDR, but in practice over the entire nation, including people occupying leading state functions. According to Heribert Schwan, not counting the 10,000 people belonging to the sentry regiment, the Stasi had a staff of 84,000 employees at the end of its existence.[332] Mielke implemented his motto – "There can be no place where we are not"[333]– largely thanks to help received from unofficial collaborators (so-called IMs) whose network spread throughout the GDR. Under Mielke's leadership, the Stasi became an out-of-control state organ. In 1989, with the fall of the government, Mielke resigned from office, was expelled from the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), and then arrested. In 1993, he was finally sentenced to 6 years in prison (for the murder of two Weimar police officers, not for activities carried out during the GDR). The Ministry of State Security was dissolved in November 1989.

The center of the entire complex, which in the past included several dozen facilities on an area of about twenty hectares and was a workplace for about 8,000 people, is "House no. 1," built in 1961. It was here that Erich Mielke's offices were located. The buildings were sealed at the time of the investigation and opened to the public in 1990. The present exhibition is located on three floors of the building. The first stage of the exhibition consists of several text panels covering the historical outline of the development, mission and structure of the GDR security services. On the third floor, visitors can learn about the Stasi's main operations and its methods of "traditional" work, as well as the biographies of major perpetrators and the characteristics of the victims, groups

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332   Heribert Schwan, *Erich Mielke – żywot w służbie Stasi*, trans. Mariusz Pindel (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2001), 106.

333   Ibid., 113.

that were particularly vulnerable to surveillance. In practice, this risk affected society as a whole. The most interesting (from the museological perspective) is the second floor, the so-called "Ministerial" floor. The entire space here includes a series of rooms in which Erich Mielke supervised the Stasi's large surveillance and oppression apparatus. The realities of the daily work carried out by the organization's leadership are rendered in the original (1990) condition of authentic furnishings of all ministerial rooms (Photo 31).

Large conference rooms and smaller work offices are equipped primarily with tables, desks, filing cabinets, armchairs, and numerous telephones, because Mielke used various devices when he wanted to connect with specific people and organizations and to contact the Central Committee; it was enough that he "pressed one button" on a special console. The minister's large secretariat (where seven people worked in a shift system and which was led by Hans Carlsohn, faithful to Mielke until his death), allows visitors to get acquainted with what at the time was modern office equipment. The kitchen, bathroom and bedroom form the private part of the House no. 1 and prove that the Minister was devotedly performing his duties and not always returning overnight to his guarded residence in the district where other Politburo members also lived. There was even a casino in the Ministry building to entertain officials and distinguished guests. Open elevators ran between the floors.

Interior design consisting of authentic objects is the exhibition's basic information carrier and the foundation for its interpretation in House no. 1. Both the rather crude communist "luxuries" and the not very sophisticated equipment (in both the office and the kitchen) indicate a qualitative difference between the privileged groups in the PRL and capitalist states. On the other hand, the individual solutions and devices used to surveil society are undoubtedly fascinating. In general, architectural or decorative details give a deeper context to our knowledge of the Stasi's work, locating it in tangible and material reality, enriching the recipient's experience, and allowing for a better understanding of textual interpretations. The museum makes it easier for viewers to replicate relations they know from real life and use their everyday senses in the physical world in contact with material objects.

The interiors are tidy, the furniture is neatly positioned, and there is no "moment in time" strategy, probably to prevent a feeling of nostalgia for the past, even at the sight of the scattered details of the epoch. The representation is interesting because it suggests telling the story from the Stasi's perspective (and more specifically the highest-ranking people) and places the story in the context of daily tasks and ordinary professional routine, which means it lacks a martyrdom dimension. The story was not left entirely to security service "narrators" given

that the exhibition's last part involves the presentation of the effects of their "hard" work (the third floor of the building mentioned above), but we might conclude that it introduces a new dimension to the museum's discourse on the criminal nature of Stasi activities. The "banality of evil" I mentioned above is manifested by showing the usual (not prison) office and conference environment, without torture instruments illustrating direct violence, which usually causes anxiety and even fear among viewers. This undermines the Manichean vision of the fight between good and evil, which is present in stories about the security services, and portrays members of the criminal organization as ordinary people who, at some point, were faced with the need to make life choices.

The exhibition dedicated to the Stasi in Dresden (*Gedenkstätte Bautzner Strasse*), opened in 1994, is similar at least in that part which relates to the office. The exhibition is located in the original building of a former prison and at the same time the Stasi's regional office. The Soviet Military Administration in Dresden expropriated the owners of the buildings on Bautzner Strasse and established its headquarters there. The prison and jail building was constructed in the 1950s in order to accommodate in a single place all prisoners of the Ministry of Public Security of the Dresden administrative district. As a rule, important or well-known people were transferred to Berlin.

The exhibition combines the "prison" trend with the presentation of the daily work of secret service officers. It includes a former prison (cells, solitary confinement rooms, admission room, sewing and ironing rooms, toilets) and two offices on the upper floors (a conference room and the office of Horst Böhm, head of the Dresden Security Service). Under the first floor there is the so-called "NKVD basement" – i.e. the rooms where the Soviets had detained and tortured political prisoners since 1945. If they were not sentenced to death and shot, those prisoners were sent to one of the labor camps. Because all the above-mentioned places are located in one building, the difference in the conditions under which detainees were held is noticeable. In a GDR prison, bunks were equipped with bedding, and the cells, although small, had sinks and a toilet (Photo 32). The special cell for foreigners had an even higher "standard" than the others (a larger space and a window allowing daylight into the rooms). The basement of the Soviet commandant's office is an extreme, terrifying space, even today after it was turned into a museum. An interesting strategy used in this last place is to break the typical "prison" style with the presence of figurative discourse, that is art. In the actual cells there are small sculptures of human figures in poses expressing despair and suffering (Photo 33). As usual in similar cases, the question arises whether works of art contained in memorial sites do not evoke a feeling of aesthetic pleasure and distract the audience from the suffering of the

victims. In the above case, however, the sculptures are easy to interpret, and they tend to heighten the feeling of fear and sadness rather than make us reflect on the artist's talent. Small human figures and graphics depicting a tortured man lying on the floor in the cell are intended to strengthen the concept in which the traumatic space "speaks for itself" and to support the viewer's imagination. The small size of the characters also symbolizes the helplessness of individuals within the larger system.

The entire representation, as in all cases of the "prison" trend, is based on the display of authentic spaces (prisons, dungeons, cellars, torture rooms), which are at the same time scientific and historical documents, testimonies of crimes and places of martyrdom involving victims of the communist system. Additional elements (information boards), reconstructions or artistic creations must not obscure (in the physical and metaphorical sense) the original rooms. All such elements disrupt the aura of authenticity. The connection of the NKVD prison and basement with the regional Stasi office in the case of the Dresden museum helps visitors view the system as a whole; its individual elements, such as the Soviet headquarters, local officials and political prisoners, constitute a portrait of the regime's operation.

A different representation from the above is the exhibition organized at the Hotel Viru in Tallinn. The hotel itself, the design and construction of which was carried out under the Soviet Union's supervision, was opened on May 5, 1972 and was the first such tall building in Estonia. The establishment of the facility was related to the tourist traffic between Estonia and Finland, which came alive in 1964 (between 1965 and 1967 Tallinn was visited by 15,000 Finns). Today, the hotel continues to fulfill its original function, but has an additional tourist attraction related to the past activities of the Soviet secret services.

Since the inception of the Hotel Viru, there was a "radio center" on the building's 23rd floor where the KGB resided, eavesdropping and spying on hotel guests. Wiretaps were installed in rooms and restaurants. The KGB left the hotel in 1991, but the service center was not discovered until three years later because the stairs leading to it were hidden. Currently, there is a small exhibition there that can be visited only at certain times, with a guide upon prior notification and on-line registration. The exhibition is accessed using the hotel elevator and then by going up a flight of stairs to the top floor; along the way visitors can view photos documenting the next stages of the hotel construction, the interiors of rooms and restaurants, and even photos of chefs' signature dishes from the 1970s. Old postcards with a view of the hotel and advertising leaflets complete the picture of the building of which Tallinn was clearly proud. From the top-floor platform there is a view of the city.

The exhibition itself is, in practice, only two rooms, where furniture and equipment left by the KGB for work have been preserved. The first room is a reconstructed office with an interior design typical of the Soviet era: a large desk, a telephone, a typewriter, and a polished cabinet filled with everyday objects, such as an "elegant" coffee set. In the corner, the creators of the exhibition placed a mannequin in a Soviet uniform so that there would be no doubt as to the national identity of the person in the room. The second room, the aforementioned "radio center," is much more interesting (Photo 34). The audience can see the listening devices of that time, individual "spy" devices, and listen to the guide's stories about specific technical solutions helpful in the agent's work, such as various ways of placing wiretaps in telephones, cameras, guest rooms and other rooms hotel rooms (some tables in the restaurant are equipped with microphones). In the corner of the room there is a mattress which indicates that the KGB was "watching" around the clock.

Both the arrangement of the exhibition and the guide's narration lack the features of a martyrological, heroic, or nostalgic story. However, they are not neutral or "objective" in tone, but rather bear the hallmarks of an ironic style. As Linda Hutcheon argues, on the semantic level, irony is defined as a signal of difference in meaning, that is, as an anti-phrase. It realizes itself in this role in a paradoxical way through the structural superimposition of semantic contexts: what is said and what one wants to make clear: one signifier is thus matched by two signifiers.[334] Irony is therefore both an anti-phrase structure and a strategy for evaluation, which implies the author-coder's relationship (in this case, a guide) to the text itself. It is also an attitude that enables and requires the reader-decoder (audience) to interpret and evaluate the statement's text.[335] The guide tells visitors about the uniqueness of the hotel, the high standard of rooms and restaurant, and he presents a wide variety of spy equipment, clever ways of installing wiretaps in unexpected places, all in a tone suggesting that the inventions and ideas exchanged are peculiar achievements of the communist system, very advanced – for those times. At the same time, however, it is an ironic, mocking story, which is flawlessly read by visitors laughing and joking. The pragmatic function of irony, writes Hutcheon, is to signal evaluation, and it is almost always pejorative. Ironic mockery usually manifests itself in the form of praise, implying however a negative judgment. On the semantic level, explicit praise serves to conceal a

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334   Linda Hutcheon, "Ironia, satyra, parodia – o ironii w ujęciu pragmatycznym," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 77 (1986), no. 1: 336.

335   Ibid., 335.

mocking judgment or a secret rebuke.[336] The modest museum in the Hotel Viru is an example of stories about secret services from the perspective of their daily activities, and not of the victims of this activity. Neither the representation nor the guide's story contain information about the consequences of the assumed wiretaps and spying on hotel guests. Only this approach allows the application of the ironic model, although of course it does not require it. The ironic model is not unusual in the representation of communism, it occurs mainly in Memorial Parks (Chapter 5 below) and is part of the nostalgic trend (Chapter 4). However, exceptionally it is used in an exhibition covering the activities of Soviet secret services. As if to maintain a balance in Tallinn, there is also a cellar in a tenement house on Pagari Street, open to the public, that served as a KGB prison. In this place, the Soviet services detained, beat, and tortured politicians, dissidents, intellectuals, but also ordinary people in the years 1940–1950. These rooms represent a typical example of the "prison" trend; the exhibition (organized by the Occupation Museum) includes two corridors, several cells, and a prison. However, the guide at the Hotel Viru makes no mention of this, perhaps because it would disturb the story prepared for the viewers, since irony does not seem to be a natural way of talking about human suffering.

3.6. The Commemorative Perspective

The aim of exhibitions that I include in the martyrdom and Tyrrhenian trends is to evoke a sense of pride and respect for national heroes and anger towards the perpetrators of crimes. The museum narrative is usually a story about "discovering the truth" – that is, the criminal dimension of the communist regime. "Final" evidence is increasingly provided by forensic archaeology. Objects "speaking for themselves" at exhibitions perform functions like those we see in exhibitions devoted to the Holocaust. Many similarities with the latter also exist in the way in which victims are represented, whose lives are shown through the prism of their struggle, suffering and death, and whose personal belongings turn into relics. We are dealing here with a kind of paradox: although martyrdom and Tyrrhenian exhibitions present only the perspective of the victims, they reduce their fate and activities so drastically that in practice they instrumentalize them in order to direct the audience's attention to the desired content, i.e. the system's criminal nature.

A similar approach does not allow the inclusion of other discourses in the narrative and what emerges are one-dimensional representations that create a

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336   Ibid., 334.

vision of communism only as foreign "colonization" or historical "deviation" and emphasize totalitarian oppression and even genocidal intentions against entire nations. The aim of such exhibitions is to bring symbolic justice, to compensate the victims, and to emphasize the ineffectiveness of the legal system which, after the transformations of 1989, failed to remove the communists from public life. James Mark calls such presentations "cultural trials."[337] It is also easy to manipulate the past for short-term political gain by taking control over history or shaping an appropriate worldview (in this case a right-wing or nationalist one).

The martyrdom and Tyrrhenian expositions described by me, due to the above features, are potentially the most effective in evoking fascination with an affective (emotional) dimension. Fascination also has cognitive aspects, but they work independently of the affective ones, although they are correlated with them. The cognitive interest theory assumes that interest in an object is mainly due to its understanding; in other words, the better we understand things the more interesting they are. When we perceive an object as coherent and meaningful, then we are able to inscribe it into a specific macro-structure as a meaningful part of a whole. Meanwhile, the emotional interest theory shows rather that positive emotions increase the level of commitment and make an experience with a given object more affirmative. Strengthening the emotional impact of exposure can be done by adding humorous elements, interesting anecdotes or elements that build tension or surprise. The increase in emotional interest causes an increase in attention and cognitive involvement with a given object.[338] Research on audiences in Norwegian museums has confirmed that fascination is related more to emotions than knowledge, but it also found that pleasure plays a smaller role than expected in the development of cognitive interest. Knowledge does not translate directly into interest; the most important thing is an emotional reaction to authenticity and realism. Interestingly, the exhibitions that evoked negative emotions turned out to be the most fascinating.[339] The most effective exhibition should therefore be about authentic events, preferably related to dangers or challenges and how people dealt with them. The exhibition should convey such content as realistically as possible.

Therefore, it would seem to be the case that evoking emotions, so eagerly emphasized by curators of historical exhibitions, is the right way to implement

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337 James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution,* op. cit., 61.

338 Tove I. Dahl, Pia Silvana Entner, Ann-Mari Horn Johansen, Joar Vitterso, "Is Our Fascination With Museum Displays More About What We Think Or How We Feel?," *Visitor Studies* 16 (2013), no. 16: 60–161.

339 Ibid., 167 and 175.

a museum's educational mission. At this point, however, we must ask whether emotional involvement is in fact an experience that transforms views or deepens understanding of the past or present. Martyrdom exposures usually engage people deeply who show a high level of emotional intelligence and are prone to empathy. However, even if they are positive emotions, such as patriotic feelings, they do not influence the development of critical thinking (on the contrary) or a permanent change of views.[340]

Similar exhibitions blur the lines between a museum perceived as an institution depicting the national past, protecting cultural heritage, and educating the public, and a monument that serves to impart moral value to the past or (worse) perform ideological functions. Timothy Snyder, writing in this context about representations of the Holocaust, argues: "The object of history should be clearly separated from the object of memory. The concept of commemorative causality concerns the mixing of two orders: the contemporary influence of the past and the strength of past reality. When commemorating, we fall into the trap of simplification. The task remains to understand the complications of the past world."[341] According to Snyder, commemoration results from the need for meaning, appeals to feelings, but limits the possibility of creating a balanced historical representation. Consequently, the image we get is poor – it is the price paid for ignoring certain facts.[342]

Adopting a commemorative perspective understood in this way (visible in martyrdom, Tyrrhenian, and heroic expositions) sets clear moral boundaries,

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340   According to research by Laurajane Smith on history museums in England, Australia and the US, only 6 percent of visitors responded positively to the question of whether their vision of the past or opinion changed as a result of what they saw in the museum. Changes concerned mostly social rather than political history (immigration, working-class life, slavery, etc.), and it is not known whether this situation continued (or for how long) after leaving the museum. Eleven percent gained new knowledge, and the rest (83 %) answered "no" or simply strengthened their current beliefs. At the same time, the majority declared a deep emotional commitment to the exposure, which apparently turns out to be insufficient to change views on a given subject. See Laurajane Smith, "Changing Views? Emotional Intelligence, Registers of Engagement and the MuseumVisit," in *Museums as Sites of Historical Consciousness: Perspectives on museum theory and practice in Canada*, eds. Viviane Gosselin and Phaedra Livingstone (Toronto: UBC Press, 2016), 101–121.

341   Timothy Snyder, *Przyczynowość kommemoracyjna*, https://www.eurozine.com/przyczynowosc-kommemoracyjna/ (retrieved: 23 November 2014).

342   Timothy Snyder, *Przyczynowość kommemoracyjna*, https://www.eurozine.com/przyczynowosc-kommemoracyjna/ (retrieved: 23 November 2014).

manipulates viewers' feelings, omits ambiguous or difficult stories, and focuses on trauma, conflict and the suffering experienced by others, most often strangers. But in the long run, injury as the foundation of identity and the main element of a nation's formative structure usually turns out to be a destructive factor with regard to the sense of permanence, stability or national pride.

Chapter 4 The Charm of Memories, or the Nostalgic Trend

For me as a matter of subjectivity, the range between 1965 (the year in which I was born) and 1989 (…) is not part of the communist era, but my life.

<div align="right">

Simona Popescu[343]

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Communist teleology was extremely powerful and intoxicating; and its loss is greatly missed in the post-Communist world. Hence everyone now is looking for its substitute, for another convincing plot […] that will help make sense of the chaotic present.

<div align="right">

Svetlana Boym[344]

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4.1. Post-communist Nostalgia

Nostalgia, literally meaning "homesickness" (Greek: νόστος, nóstos "return home" and ἄλγος, álgos "longing") is a seventeenth-century medical term coined to describe the melancholy of Swiss mercenaries fighting abroad.[345] As time passes, the phenomenon, initially associated only with a disease, expanded its scope and is now a cultural phenomenon whose deep meaning lies in the inaccessibility of the longed-for object. In this sense, nostalgia is a response to the conditions of the present and is felt more strongly in times of dissatisfaction, disappointment, or social unrest. Nostalgic memory filters and rejects unpleasant aspects of the past (and our former self), creating a high self-esteem that helps people survive present fears and concerns. Collectively, nostalgia provides a deep bond that connects and identifies a generation. It helps people overcome the frustration that comes with having lost something valuable.[346]

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343   Simona Popescu, "All that Nostalgia," in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, trans. Justyna Struzińska, eds. Filip Modrzejweski & Monika Sznajderman (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne 2002), 111.

344   Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001), 59.

345   Freed Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (London: Macmillan 1979), 105.

346   Robert Hewison, "The Climate of Decline," in *Representing the Nation: A Reader. Histories, Heritage and Museums*, ed. David Boswell & Jessica Evans (London – New York: Routledge, 1999), 159–160.

A rapid increase in interest in the past, and consequently nostalgia, appeared in Western culture in the 1970s, which was associated with the changes characteristic of the period known as late modernity. The twenty-first century, in connection with the rapid processes of social and technological change and de-industrialization, brought forth the term "endangered heritage" and an obsessive fear of losing it. The urgent need to preserve an ever-increasing number of remnants of the past also accelerated a feeling of nostalgia eagerly fueled by market and marketing tools. Linda Hutcheon believes that nostalgia and irony are the two key factors defining the present day, but recognizes that only nostalgia has become an obsession for both mass culture and elite art. The irreversibility of things past, the idealization and projection of the past times, the desire to bring them back, even if just in a remembered and imagined form (i.e. beautiful and harmonious) and not in a real form – all of this allows nostalgia to cut us off from the unsatisfactory present and bring us closer to the past. We experience an emotionally simple and pure past because it was designed by us, and as a result, the present appears to be complicated, difficult and unstable.[347] Hutcheon is echoed by David Lowenthal, who writes in his classic book, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, that nostalgia is not so much focused on the past as it is longing for that past; it does not aim to discover any historical facts, but focuses on collecting relics and celebrating imaginary values. Lowenthal describes this type of passionate attachment to the past as unambiguously negatively, arguing that such relationship as "pathological."[348]

Due to its sudden omnipresence, nostalgia has become the subject of academic analysis. Svetlana Boym identifies two types: restorative and reflective. While the former focuses on the lost home and attempts to reconstruct it, the latter emphasizes the feeling of longing itself. This is not a black and white issue; there are many shades of gray. Restorative nostalgia does not see itself in terms of nostalgia at all, but rather in terms of truth and tradition, and reflective nostalgia (it can be called anti-modernist) relies on two main themes: a return to origins and a conspiracy. This typology of nostalgia allows Boym to distinguish between national memory based on national identity and social memory consisting of

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347   Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés, *Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern: A Dialogue*, http://revistas.unam.mx/index.php/poligrafias/article/viewFile/31312/28976 (retrieved: 25 March 2018).

348   David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press 1985), 3–13.

many elements and structures, which emphasizes but does not define individual memory.[349]

However, the above considerations do not answer the most interesting question from my study's perspective concerning the occurrence of powerful post-communist nostalgia, a phenomenon that appeared (in various forms) in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Nostalgia helps give meaning and significance to the past and has become a popular memory practice, a model for narrative, and a market tool throughout the post-communist region. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is mainly related to disappointing experiences with the post-1989 transformation. Nostalgia helps societies adapt to changes within the socio-economic system; it performs healing functions and improves the social mood by idealizing the past, though it certainly does not positively affect the present. Michał Buchowski notes that the West's "rescue" scenario for post-communist societies had two variants: "shock therapy" and "big bang." The first meant treating the societies of Central and Eastern Europe as people suffering from mental disorders and becoming healthy, the second implied a new beginning – that is, it assumed that before 1989 the entire region had no form, it was a "vacuum," and only after that date did these societies change onto the "right" path of development with a chance for normality, provided that we work diligently on ourselves.[350] In both scenarios, those who did not keep up with civilizational changes are the poor and/or unemployed; they are the "ignorant" ones who deserve their fate, who do not want to work, who are waiting for the "manna from heaven," who are passive and "demoralized" by the previous system. In other words, they became the "new aliens" of the transformation.[351] In this situation, it is easy to get frustrated, the result being a sentimental attitude towards the past, which is the foundation from which nostalgia emerged in individuals, social groups, and entire national communities.

The hierarchy of reasons for the intensification of this phenomenon may be slightly different in various post-communist countries, but it is reasonable to make some generalizations (an in-depth psychological and social analysis of the spread of nostalgia in this region is not the purpose of this book). The first and most important reason seems to be unrealistic assumptions about the post-transformation future. It was widely expected that systemic change would raise

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349   Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii ff.

350   Michał Buchowski, *Rethinking Transformation. An Anthropological Perspective on Postsocialism* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, 2001), 13–14.

351   Ibid., 15.

standards of living and that the only (as it was believed) barrier to consumption would disappear – that is, market shortages related not to the economic situation, but to the political situation. Unrealistic consumer aspirations were additionally reinforced by the propaganda of success.[352] The costs of transformation, which Anna Giza-Poleszczuk calls a "lesson in realism," were not considered at all: the emergence of uncertainty (mainly regarding employment), the threat of crime, loss of trust in other people, and poverty on a mass scale. The latter was a new phenomenon, affecting those who in the previous era had enjoyed an average material status, especially those for whom "innocent and inconceivable" poverty was something "not only unfair, but also shameful."[353] Giza-Poleszczuk's research concerns Poland, but her results reflect the feelings of other societies in the region. Democracy was disappointing because it did not mean automatic equality, but rather equal opportunities (and not always that). Simona Popescu writes about Romania:

> It seems that equality in poverty (typical of communist times) is easier to bear than the inevitable inequality that democracy brings. Equality gave a sense of a certain brotherhood, solidarity, gave rise to a psychological and rhetorical reflex to say "we". (…) Under the pressure of common misery, a sense of instinctive solidarity was born, a little heroism common to all "us".[354]

The transformation process shattered the community "in poverty," and not all the individuals left to themselves were able to adapt to the new conditions.

The strict rules and principles of totalitarian and authoritarian systems basically released man from responsibility for his own life. For many people, liberal freedom from the state has turned out to be a burden, not a privilege. An unknown sense of the loss of social security, previously guaranteed by the paternalism of individual states, especially the Soviet Union, which "watches over" the entire system, has emerged throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Yuri Andrukhovych writes about Ukraine in the Soviet times:

> The sense of peace, order, *legal order* (italicized in the original – A. Z-W). Life without cataclysms, subject to strict regulation, moving slowly along the marked and only possible

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352   Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, "Brzydkie kaczątko Europy, czyli Polska po czternastu latach transformacji," in *Zmiana czy stagnacja? Społeczeństwo polskie po czternastu latach transformacji*, ed. Mirosława Marody (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2004), 250.

353   Ibid., 256–257.

354   Simona Popescu, op. cit, 101.

routes (…). The mass media were unanimous in the way they presented reality, nowhere and in no way would you be able to find at least a trace of contradiction or misunderstanding.[355]

Social existence was subject to planning and information was rationed, which created the illusion of order.

The transformations of 1989 exposed the weaknesses of the new democracies at the levels of institutions, law, and specific governments and people. Peeter Sauter on Estonia:

> Now the press is full of articles about how bad things are. The government robs the state and sells off businesses, and then loses the money it earns. On average, once a month we have a scandal about one of the ministers, someone from the city authorities or one of the deputies. Either someone is driving a car completely drunk, or shopping privately with a company credit card (…), etc. In turn, the life of pensioners is simply terrible. Their savings were swallowed up by financial reform, and today's pensions are barely sufficient for basic needs. (…)[356]

The economic and social changes were shocking to many. Modernization in communist countries turned out to be superficial; certain forms of behavior or practice were adopted often with no values attached to them (e.g. the equality of women appeared as a top-down political decision and did not bring a breakthrough in worldview). The scarcity of modern attitudes, and even secondary traditionalism, has located Poland far away from the developed countries of Europe. "Human capital" turned out to be much less valuable than commonly assumed. Self-esteem decreased, as people usually attributed failures to unfavorable political circumstances, not to their own mistakes.[357]

These realities have led to a decline in self-esteem and identity problems. In the past, many societies of post-communist countries regarded themselves (for various reasons) as unique. Marius Ivaškevičius notes: "At that time, a Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian was a citizen of the Land of Soviets of the first category. In that vast country, we were the West in every way. Now we have become the east of Europe, a continent where we still have to explain who we are and where we are from."[358] It is similar for Poland which, together with the icons of the struggle

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355   Jurij Andruchowycz, "Romans z uniwersum," in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, op. cit., 68.

356   Peeter Sauter, "Czy Lenin żyje?" in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, op. cit., 82–83.

357   Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, op. cit., 253–254.

358   Marius Ivaškevičius, "Gdy wyłapią białe amury," in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, op. cit., 48.

for freedom: Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa, and John Paul II, had previously been the object of Western interest and was thereby convinced of its own strengths and the special position within the block of people's democracies. After the transformation, Poland ceased to arouse such interest and became just one of the many countries in the region aspiring to Western structures and standards.

Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the GDR, in turn, enjoyed relatively high living standards. Hungarian "goulash communism" in the 1960s, in addition to improving economic conditions, introduced some basic political reforms, which changed the perception of Hungary in the Eastern bloc; Hungary even became a tourist destination. In addition, East Germany was by definition anti-fascist, so in creating a unique position, it was not hindered by feelings of guilt for the Second World War or the Holocaust – which were transferred to West Germany in their entirety. The inhabitants of the GDR felt like heroes fighting the Nazis.[359] German nostalgia is so strong that it "deserved" a separate term: "For the last few years, the sense of their own, separate identity has been growing in the eastern part of Germany. Ideas and relics from the fallen GDR are manipulated in a completely open way. Pulled into the light, in a way from the tomb, they become an object of worship. Some call it "nostalgia for the GDR", others coined a separate term – 'Ostalgia.'"[360]

The most noticeable negative changes came after the fall of communism and the break-up of Yugoslavia. In addition to brutal wars and the flourishing of nationalism, Yugoslavia lost what it was most proud of: its genuinely different status among communist countries, its geo-strategic position, which allowed it to enjoy privileges in both Western and Eastern Europe. Since 1989, the people

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359 David Art, *Making* "Room for November 9, 1989? The Fall of the Berlin Wall in German Politics and Memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, eds. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 199.

360 Joachim Trenkner, "Był kiedyś taki kraj…," in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, op. cit., 18. Every third German from the former East Germany in 1999 "often" or "sporadically" wanted the Berlin Wall back. "Nostalgic" people in the GDR are referred to as Ossis, and their basic problem is "the permanent feeling of being second-class citizens." Five types of Ossis were distinguished, with "the predominant type being the resigned, those who see no prospects in front of them." This group includes 33 % of respondents who consider themselves victims of reunification and expect the state to take care of them, who are frustrated and have no orientation in the new reality. The remaining groups are "active realists," "mismatched idealists", "consumption-oriented materialists" and "traditionalists." See Joachim Trenkner, ibid., 22–24.

of Yugoslavia have slowly lost what they valued most: the freedom to travel without visas (West Germany first introduced visas for Yugoslav citizens in 1989, then they had to apply for visas to the entire Schengen area, which they found humiliating.) As a result of the wars, the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia began to be stigmatized as an ethnically hated "other". The Balkans were seen as poor, criminalized, Muslim and culturally different from the rest of Europe.[361]

Bulgaria serves as a slightly different example, where the narrative that Eviatar Zerubavel called "rise-and-fall narrative" is flourishing, meaning "an essentially tragic scenario in which, following some unfortunate event (…) a story of success suddenly turns into one of decline."[362] In this case, however, it is the communist regime that is understood in terms of moral, economic and social development, and the period after 1989 is viewed mainly as a series of misfortunes. Bulgarians' deep disappointment with the transformation influenced collective memory, in which the Communist Party functions as a force transforming a backward state into a modern, industrialized and technologically advanced society with a lifestyle not much different from that of the Western middle class (all economic problems typical of socialism have been forgotten). The only question remains whether the loss of freedom is an acceptable price for the comfort of living, when rulers take care of the basic needs of citizens.[363] In this narrative, therefore, the communist regime itself, in its Bulgarian version, has been promoted to an exceptional role. The second version of events (communism as a criminal system) takes up much less space in Bulgarian collective memory.

In Romania, nostalgia for the system is felt mainly by those who were once privileged, because although these "privileges" concerned banal things, they allowed a sense of uniqueness at least within their own society. Simona Popescu diagnosed this situation: "The feeling of privilege, luxury – even minimal – must be something sublime, since one mourns the times when having a product 'from

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361 Aida A. Hozić, "It Happened Elsewhere. Remembering 1989 in the Former Yugoslavia," *Twenty Years After Communism*, op. cit., 254–255.

362 Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 18–19.

363 Venelin I. Ganev, "The Inescapable Past. The Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Bulgaria," in *Twenty Years After Communism,* op. cit., 225–227. In a poll on the most important political event conducted in 2009 by Bulgarian National Television (BNT), the date November 10, 1989 – the symbolic fall of communism in Bulgaria – was not even in the top five (the winning date was September 9, 1944 – the overthrow of the monarchy). See Venelin I. Ganev, ibid., 225–226.

over there' (from the forbidden, mythical West) was a source of satisfaction and social prestige."[364]

The "lack of meaning" which Giza-Poleszczuk writes about in the Polish context seems to be an experience shared by countries in the entire region. The reality of capitalism is simply different than expected, the world was "disenchanted," poverty comes through no fault of one's own, wealth is undeserved, the "welfare state" is insufficient, and social institutions, especially political institutions, are increasingly less deserving of trust.[365] The elites are disappointed by "the nation," entire communities have lost their point of reference (previously it was simply a mythologized "West" with its well-functioning institutions and high levels of consumption), the sense of security has disappeared, the high aspirations of individual countries and groups have not been satisfied. Earlier unrealistic assessments of one's own abilities in confrontation with the tough rules of competition caused a flood of frustration and triggered a piercing feeling of nostalgia.

At this point, however, it must be emphasized that nostalgia is not a simple longing for the previous system. "You don't feel nostalgia at the sight of the red flag and pictures of Lenin, but at the sight of the vodka you drank back then and the cigarettes you smoked. It is not a photo of a parade that causes nostalgia, but rather the memory of how you asked your parents to write a school excuse so you would not have to go to the parade," Peeter Sauter writes.[366] It is not a longing for life under communism, but for things and situations which were wanted then. In other words, apart from the natural, individual, and biographical nostalgia for the years of childhood and youth, which in retrospect usually seem innocent and safe, there is a longing for shared cultural dreams and fantasies shared by a generation, and it is not important if these things have little to do with past reality. Negative verification does not affect their importance and significance at that time. On the other hand, contemporary societies in Central and Eastern Europe can "afford" nostalgia because they believe that the system will never come back. Nostalgia serves as common ground for them in the discussion about socialism; it allows them to talk about the past without mentioning it – that is, to preserve their childhood memories without judging the broad historical and political context.[367]

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364   Simona Popescu, op. cit., 99.

365   Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, op. cit., 266–267.

366   Peeter Sauter, op. cit., 84.

367   Maya Nadkarni " 'But it's ours'. Nostalgia and Politics of Authenticity in Post-Socialist Hungary," in *Post-communist nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 205.

What collective needs are satisfied by nostalgia? It is certainly closely related – as I indicated above – to the extent to which identity and self-image suffered after the transformation. Nostalgia allows for the separation of what continues to have significant cultural value and is genuinely "ours," which can be isolated from the discredited past to create a new, post-communist national entity. The socialist past is inscribed in the discourse on the "Soviet occupation," but some of its elements are considered worth saving. In this way, nostalgia becomes a tool of cultural identification, and thereby helps to shape national pride and a new identity.

On the other hand, nostalgia symbolizes a break with the past, giving people an ironic distance to the kitsch of the official, state culture of the previous epoch, and then commodifying it, i.e. turning it into a product. Through these processes, new values are assigned to the artifacts of the socialist era. As a result, remnants of the old system have their value in the present, post-communist world. Commodification enhances the value of relics and subordinates them to the modern market logic, while legitimizing the disappointing experience of transformation. In other words, as Maya Nadkarni points out, nostalgia preserves the identity and cultural heritage of the past, which allows us to juxtapose the past with the present and offers a critique of capitalism. People who remember socialism have a sense of having additional knowledge: they are aware of what Western values are, but also know what Westerners lack.[368]

Even the West was an object of longing for the former socialist bloc. The socialist era dreamed of Western goods and attributed emotional value to them. What appeared then to be a cheap, inauthentic, "counterfeit" communist imitation of Western products appears now as genuine and desirable compared to today's common goods. The production and distribution of socialist goods did not follow the rules of the market or passing fashions. Starting in the 1960s, half of Europe played with the same toys and owned items from the same brands. This allowed for the emergence of a collective identity, one which revealed itself only when these objects disappeared.[369] Old symbols appear in new versions (restaurants, gadgets, souvenirs), devoid of ideological content, which then becomes historical kitsch showing the difference between the socialist past and the "western" present. There is also a vintage phenomenon, i.e. the fashion for socialist design, items stylized to reflect the previous epoch, authentic trinkets

368   Ibid., 192–193 and 206–207.
369   Ibid., 197–198.

growing to the rank of symbols and signs. Weronika Bryl-Roman writes about vintage:

> This phenomenon can be seen as a postmodern practice of recycling cultural content. (…) Vintage also fits perfectly into the contemporary way of decorating interiors known as the fusion style. It consists of a harmonious combination of "old" and "new" in the interior, combining various styles.[370]

The vintage phenomenon concerns especially furniture, ornaments, utility items and entire interior decorations (e.g. lofts) and does not always have to be based on nostalgia – it is also possible to appreciate interesting and original designers from the previous era. In most cases, however, it is connected with a sentiment to the past and its positive valorization, showing that not everything "then" was bad. On the contrary, many elements deserve to be "rediscovered" and permanently inscribed into the heritage of a given community.

4.2. The musealization of Nostalgia

> *Contrary to melancholy, which is limited to the plan*
> *of individual consciousness, nostalgia concerns the*
> *relationship between the biography of an individual*
> *and the biography of a group or nation, the relationship*
> *between individual and collective memory.*
>
> *Svetlana Boym[371]*

Nostalgia as a phenomenon, and the complicated ways of its existence in culture are a subject both broad and multidimensional. The subject of this book is much narrower, and in-depth reflection thus concerns only one aspect of the issue: the musealization of nostalgia for the socialist past and related exhibition strategies and exhibition goals of exhibitions.[372] The institutionalization of post-socialist

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370   Weronika Bryl-Roman, "Polski vintage – odkrywanie peerelowskiego designu," in *Popkomunizm. Doświadczenie komunizmu a kultura popularna,* eds. Magdalena Bogusławska and Zuzanna Grębecka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo LIBRON, 2010), 53.

371   Svetlana Boym, *Nostalgia i postkomunistyczna pamięć*, op. cit., 276.

372   The only objects of interest to me are museums existing in the real world. Many museums and the so-called "fan" pages related to some phenomena and products of the PRL function in a virtual space (e.g. www.muzeumdobrano cek.pl; www.muzeumczterechpancernych.pl; www.czas-prl.pl; www.auta-prl. pl); their analysis is a topic for a separate study due to their intangible nature and network context (usually made up of photo and scan galleries), which requires a different methodology. For more, see for example Zuzanna Grębacka,

nostalgia, although a universal process, is different in different countries of the region.

4.2.1. Journey to the Past

The PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska and the Charm of the PRL museum in Warsaw are nostalgic exhibitions that provide fragmentary reconstructions of the past intended to evoke among viewers a sense of being in the past. Both (private) ventures are based on the belief that nostalgia provides a deep bond connecting and identifying a generation, a fact which can make the exhibitions a (business) success in terms of attendance.

The PRL Museum is based on an initiative of the Fundacja Minionej Epoki led by Monika Żywot (the foundation's originator was Krzysztof Kornacki, former director of the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka). It was established in 2010 on the site of a former state farm (the German farm Dwór Nowa Ruda was located there even earlier).[373] The Charm of the PRL museum in Warsaw was born from the idea of Rafał and Marta Patl (Adventure Warsaw) in 2014. In this case, the exhibition is only part of a wider experience, because the tour creators' intention is the crowning achievement of a 3-hour trip through the "historic Neisse" around Warsaw and the material traces of "the history of socialism in Poland"[374] (I write more about similar urban tourist routes in Chapter 6).

There is no mention of glorification of PRL in any of these places, but they certainly contain a filter of nostalgia that changes the hardships and absurdities of life in a communist state into "tame" everyday communism. The social and private life of the "average Joe," and not political turmoil, are the basis of the narrative in both museums. Many people who remember the old system associate it with the simplicity of interpersonal relations, warmth, kindness, rules they knew and to which they had adapted.[375] Ireneusz Krzemiński and

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"Między śmiechem a nostalgią – powroty do komunistycznej przeszłości," in *Popkomunizm,* op. cit., 321–344. Separate analyses focus on the manifestations of nostalgia in other products of popular culture, e.g. in cinema. For this, see for example Dobrochna Dabert, *Ostalgia i bezpowrotność w środkowoeuropejskim kinie przełomu*, https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-doi-10_14746_p_2012_11_11181 (retrieved: 10 October 2017).

373   http://www.muzeumprl-u.pl/index.php?id=51 (retrieved: 18 August 2017).

374   http://czarprl.pl/wycieczki-nysami (retrieved: 19 August 2017).

375   Ireneusz Krzemiński, Paweł Śpiewak, *Druga rewolucja w małym mieście. Zmiana ustrojowa w oczach mieszkańców Mławy i Szczecinka* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2001), 67.

Paweł Śpiewak write that there is a "(…) belief that the social world was perhaps less colorful and less dynamic back then, and that there was less anger, greed and space for human ambitions, but there was also more warmth in interpersonal relations at that time."[376] Nostalgia always focuses on the private sphere, so it is not surprising that both exhibitions reconstruct spaces that most typify everyday life: flat interiors (the hallway, kitchen, other rooms) or shops (with weight scales, cards for groceries, old banknotes). Rooms are filled with objects of unknown origin (they often come from public collections or online auctions) and from various periods of the PRL. Virtually every visitor from the generation of people who remember the previous epoch will find things at these exhibitions that they associate with childhood or youth.

The goal of both exhibitions is to create the experience of traveling to the past. The "time capsule" – this is how the main exhibition is called at the PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska – changes every several months, presenting new residential interiors: the oldest from the 1950s and 1960s (Photo 35). Archived photos of subsequent exhibitions can be viewed on the website. The museum is in development; new elements appear (the so-called Chamber of National Remembrance, a military exhibition) and the Statue Park is also getting richer. The political sphere is presented in a very limited form, represented in both museums by reconstructions of party offices. The Charm of the PRL (Warsaw) also presents a small "Solidarity corner" (newspapers, leaflets, books, a copy of Grzegorz Przemyk's hourglass) and mentions the imposition of martial law. Museums of the nostalgic trend are based on authentic items from the period, preferably the most typical ones, supplemented by photographs. Some objects are now difficult to find, which makes them unique, even though they were once common, e.g. the soda machine at the Charm of the PRL Museum (Photo 36). The past at both exhibitions is not precisely defined because the exhibitions are rather generally located "in PRL times." This is a very important feature of nostalgic representations, taking into account the fact that the period 1944–1989 (or rather, 1952–1989, when it involves the PRL *per se*) was not homogeneous either politically, socially or economically. Living conditions in the so-called "Gierek decade"[377] differed radically from the earlier and later phases of socialism,

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376   Ibid., 68.

377   Edward Gierek (1913–2001) – Polish worker, politician, member of the Polish United Workers' Party, in the years 1970–1980 First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, "The Gierek Decade" – i.e. the period in which Edward Gierek held power in the years 1970–1980 – was characterized (until around 1976) by a dynamic process of modernization and socio-economic development of

and it was this stage that Poles most remember, and which most often causes nostalgia.[378] As Jerzy Eisler writes: "[…] at the height of his political career, Gierek was certainly more than just the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. It is difficult to say today to what extent he consciously, and to what degree he unknowingly, created himself, or was rather created, into the 'father of the nation' and 'providential man.'"[379] Rafal Kalukin, explaining the reasons for Edward Gierek's extraordinary popularity, points out that the communist ideology was already outdated at that time, "dead," so the party began to legitimize its rule by increasing the level of consumption, wage increases and new technologies, by "building another Poland," by creating an "oasis of socialist happiness" funded by massive loans. "The more Poles ate, the less they were hurt by the lack of freedom, serfdom to Big Brother, pushy propaganda of success, and the numb language of newspapers."[380] It is also not without significance that most of the people who visit the museum trace their youth back to the 1970s. The objects they view are easily turned into "memorabilia," rooted as those objects are in a nostalgic longing for the past perceived in retrospect as better and fuller than the usually difficult and complex present. Artifacts-memorabilia give meaning to a biographical experience that grows ever more distant; they build myths to the past's existence in the present moment (Photo 37).

Generally speaking, "souvenirs" are objects that owe their wholeness to the relationship they have with the life of a single person or group of people (married couple, family). They usually come to a museum as part of what the curators call "personals" or "memorabilia" that are sometimes part of the personality of a character with which those objects were once associated, a character interesting

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the country, which, as a result of increasing foreign debt and bad economic policy, entered a period of long-term economic and political crisis.

378 See Jan Dziadul, "Edward wspaniały," *Polityka* (2010), no. 31: 67. Jerzy Eisler analyzes the reasons for this phenomenon, including: Gierek's image, his foreign travels and "farm visits," economic decisions (freezing food prices), political decisions (he did not engage in open battle with the opposition and he did not shoot at people). It is not without significance that he was contrasted with the previous secretaries – Bierut, Ochab and Gomułka – and against their background he was a "ray of sunshine." See Jerzy Eisler, *Siedmiu wspaniałych. Poczet pierwszych sekretarzy KC PZPR* (Warszawa: wydawnictwo czerwone i czarne, 2014), 278–282 and 310–311.

379 Jerzy Eisler, op. cit., 257.

380 Rafał Kalukin, "Dlaczego Polacy kochają Edwarda Gierka?," *Wprost* (2011), no. 30: 30–33.

enough to cast some light on them. In general, however, these objects are not particularly distinctive (unless they are extremely old or rare) and are experienced by most viewers as boring and confusing. The situation changes completely when they have something to do with ourselves (in this case, the museum audience), in which case they are touching and important. They become part of a past experience/event, but unlike words, deeds, looks and other elements of that event, they have a permanence due to their materiality, a permanence they carry from the past into the present. Souvenirs talk about events that cannot be recreated but can have stories told around them; they serve to enhance the authenticity of similar narratives. They help to reduce a complex experience to a smaller and simpler rank, so that a person can make sense of it. In many ways souvenirs are romantic in a philosophical sense. The romantic view assumes that everything and everyone has their place in a true organic whole that includes human relationships, the traditional past-present continuation. Human life is not broken, confusing and inconstant, but rather noble and full of meaning.[381] Objects- mementos in nostalgic museums give meaning to personal life stories, create a coherent "me," which is especially important because for many people the shocking transformation of 1989 was the beginning a life dramatically different from what they had led before.

Formally, both exhibitions are reconstructions with staging features, even decoration (the PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska serves as an atelier for wedding sessions – this service is included in the price list). The advantage of a reconstruction is undoubtedly the emotional involvement of viewers, which is more difficult to achieve in the case of a classic, objectified narrative. From the perspective of both museums, the socialist period has little to do with politics, crises, economic plans, external and internal threats (these factors serve at most as a background), but with the everyday life preserved in memories, which – given the time distance and the filter of nostalgia – is called "the good old days." Socialism in this version is a distant, safe, and even friendly time. History is associated with a personal testimony, an individual biography, and the past is a discourse both distant (in time) and close, something that everyone can literally take into their own hands and experience in various ways. Artifacts-souvenirs become carriers of memories, support emotional experiences, and evoke the experience of "time travel." This is confirmed by both my conversations with

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381   Susan Pearce, "Collecting Reconsidered," in *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts*, ed. G. Kavanagh (Leicester, London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1991), 139–141.

visitors to the two exhibitions and the audience notes left in the so-called Book of Wishes and Complaints at the PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska: "It's wonderful here! Memories returned. We don't miss those times but it was fun." "A beautiful return to the past it almost hurts"; "… Oh, the charm of memories… I returned to the times of my childhood. Great memories – I was walking with a smile on my face (…) though I don't want to go back to such times." "(…) We, the socialist shock brigade, have fond memories of the old days." Much less frequently the public emphasizes the exhibition's informative value: "I am delighted with the Museum. I was able to show my grandson things he had not seen, and I went back to those times." "(…) a great lesson in Polish history." Those few entries devoid of a nostalgic element are made by young people born after the transformation: "The initiative to create such a place is a great idea, a return to the socialist era, seeing all these "wonders" of technology and the "prosperity" of every citizen. May these times never come back."

The material culture of the socialist era, exhibited at nostalgic exhibitions, provides space for an ambivalent experience. On the one hand, musealization indicates a positive value (affirmation of certain values). On the other hand, there is a risk that it confirms stereotypes while bringing nothing new to the understanding of the past, even that it encourages people to give up critical thinking in favor of (pleasant in this case) emotions. As a rule, nostalgia does not favor the old regime, though this fact is of little importance given that nostalgia yearns for the very vision which that old regime promoted.

4.2.2. Nostalgic Palimpsest

> *[The PRL gene] is a gene of injustice, a sense of harm and exclusion. Passed on in Poland from generation to generation. Everyone thinks that the problem of State Farms is no more, they were closed down 23 years ago. But in fact this problem has never been resolved.*
>
> *Joanna Warecha[382]*
>
> *I remembered how I had to wait in the shop for an hour at my aunt's in the country for an ordinary orangeade, a so-called "landrynówka" (…)*
>
> *Entry in the Guest Book of the State Farm Museum*

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382 Joanna Warecha, *Wołali "PGR-usy, wszarze, brudasy!,"* https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/akcje-specjalne/7,156847,20630836,joanna-warecha-wolali-pgr-usy-wszarze-brudasy.html (retrieved: 19 September 2017).

In the case of former employees of the State Agricultural Farms (PGR),[383] the feeling of nostalgia for the past is not difficult to explain and understand. State-owned farms formed closed units organizing the professional, social, and cultural life of employees who formed communities that were quite isolated from the surrounding environment. As Anna Giza-Poleszczuk and Witold Kościesza-Jaworski write, the dominant model at that time was the organizationally and economically justified (because they minimized travel costs, and because of the lack of vacant apartments and the need to build new ones) model of concentrating employees and staff in separate housing estates, often at a considerable distance from the villages or towns of the powiat (or county). Within the state farms, various social, educational, and cultural institutions were created (day-care centers, kindergartens, schools, health centers).[384]

In the ideological dimension, state-owned farms were and remain symbols of past socialism. In many ways, they resembled the old "farms" in the sense that the enterprise director fulfilled the function of the "fine lord" who looked after the community of workers who had come from small-scale or landless farms, from poor families of former farm workers, from the rural poor, or from the aristocratic court service. Sociologists believe that the mentality of the inhabitants of former state-owned estates is a combination of the serf complex and the consciousness of the *kolkhoz* farmer, a fact which impacts attitudes many people have toward present realities.[385] What used to produce social advancement now exacerbates

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383   State farm (PGR) – a large, socialist agricultural enterprise owned by the state. In 1949, the Polish government began forced collectivization, which meant bringing peasants together in agricultural production cooperatives. Such farms were created mainly on the basis of former landed estates. Many such farms were established in the western territories annexed to Poland after the Second World War. Until 1988, state-owned farms absorbed over 50 % of funds allocated to investments in agriculture. Most farms performed many social functions that could not bring monetary profits. Such activities included day care centers, clubs, kindergartens or even schools and fire brigades, feeding and transporting children, meeting housing needs, strengthening and maintaining local roads and conducting drainage activities. After the transition to a market economy, in 1991, state farms were liquidated and their assets taken over by the Agricultural Property Agency of the State Treasury.

384   Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, Witold Kościesza-Jaworski, *Społeczne aspekty likwidacji Państwowych Gospodarstw Rolnych: raport socjologiczny z badań jakościowych i ilościowych,* https://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Analizy/pgr/Zalacznik_pgr_4.pdf (retrieved: 15 September 2017).

385   Renata Marks-Bielska, "Byli pracownicy PGR jako 'przegrani' transformacji ustrojowej," *Polityka Społeczna* (2005), no. 7: 9–10.

marginalization and the feeling of a lack of prospects, especially since these folks often live in under-invested regions, with a low level of economic development and poor infrastructure, which is not conducive to the population's social assimilation.

From this work's point of view, the most important thing is not reality itself after the transformation, but the present emotions and perceptions of former state farm workers. A report on the research on the social aspects of the liquidation of state-owned farms shows that the political breakthrough left them with a great feeling of injustice and injustice:

> Nobody explained to them why a plant, which in their opinion was prospering, was closed – after closure, the authorities showed no interest in the people who, having worked all their lives in state-owned farms, were left without work, without the ability to look for work, and without qualifications useful under conditions created by the new system. They could only count on help from family and neighbors, the state had abandoned them. People both young and old have positive memories of the state farm, believe that it was better then than now; the time immediately after its closure was an extremely difficult period, full of disappointments, failures, and sacrifices.[386]

Former state farm employees remained dispersed and disorganized with a sense of being forgotten by everyone. Their interests are represented by neither political parties nor the company leaders for whom they previously worked; as a rule, the latter have found a place in the new social-economic reality.

Former state farms are additionally stigmatized as an "underclass."[387] The image of people not coping with the new situation and falling into pathology "through their own fault" which was sharpened by the controversial 1977 film by Ewa Borzęcka entitled "Arizona," and which did little to help solve social problems. As Zofia Kawczyńska-Butrym writes: "This type of labeling may cause or perpetuate the phenomenon of secondary deviation among the inhabitants themselves, of entering the socially defined role of a deviant, exceeding the

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386   Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, Witold Kościesza-Jaworski, Społeczne aspekty likwidacji Państwowych Gospodarstw Rolnych: raport socjologiczny z badań jakościowych i ilościowych, https://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Analizy/pgr/Zala cznik_pgr_4.pdf (retrieved: 15 September 2017).

387   Using the term "underclass," Gunnar Myrdal was referring to the victims of structural changes caused by uncontrolled distribution of income and the social mechanisms that cause a prospering economy to include a group of disadvantaged, unemployed or part-time workers who are cut off from society and do not participate in its life, ambitions and successes. See Gunnar Myrdal, *Challenge of Affluence* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), cited in Renata Marks-Bielska, op. cit., 11.

socially accepted and expected norms of behavior."[388] The problems I have just outlined allow us to draw the conclusion that nostalgia levels may be higher in areas around former state-owned farms than elsewhere.

The State Agricultural Farm in Grabinek (since 1992 Bolegorzyn) was established in 1964 by the merger of two farms: in Lipno and Jaźwiny. After many transformations, the PGR was finally liquidated in 1995. While some of the dismissed people are currently working in nearby Czaplinek, others remain unemployed, possibly retired. Most of the young people have left. There are several gray blocks from the 1960s left of the state-owned farm, along with 5-acre plots of land belonging to them, on which the owners have built garages or sheds where they breed animals.

The PGR Museum in Bolegorzyn opened its doors on July 22, 2008, on the anniversary of the announcement of the PKWN Manifesto,[389] which was a public holiday during the PRL. The idea behind the museum was born in 2007 in the Council of the Sołecka District of Bolegorzyn and the Association of Social and Economic Initiatives of Drawski County. As Bożena Kulicz – the village leader and the project's main organizer – put it, it was about maintaining and renovating the 1973 building, which during the PGR period was used for social purposes (canteen for employees, a kindergarten, and an after-school club for children), and which slowly deteriorated after the farm was closed down. The project was financially supported by the Rural Development Foundation. Ultimately, the initiative was supposed to support the economic development of the town and become a tourist attraction of the Drawski lake area.[390] The first renovation of the building was carried out thanks to a group of intervention workers from the Ostrowice Commune Office. An "Appeal to residents" to collect exhibit objects

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388 Zofia Kawczyńska-Butrym, "Ocena szans na poprawę sytuacji i oczekiwanie pomocy – w czym i komu pomagać?," in *Mieszkańcy osiedli byłych Pegeerów o swojej sytuacji życiowej. Raport z badań*, ed. Zofia Kawczyńska-Butrym (Olsztyn: "SQL", 2001), 170.

389 Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN Manifesto) – an appeal by the Polish Committee of National Liberation to the Polish nation announced on July 22, 1944. The Polish city of Chełm was given as the place of announcement. In fact, it was signed and approved by Joseph Stalin in Moscow on July 20, 1944. The manifesto was published in the form of an announcement together with the first decrees issued by the PKWN as the provisional government.

390 The author's conversation with Bożena Kulicz, the village leader and the museum's originator and supervisor, 28 September 2017. See also *Otwarcie muzeum PGR-u w Bolegorzynie,* http://www.ostrowice.pl/asp/pl_start.asp?typ=13&sub=5&menu=12&artykul=491&akcja=artykul (retrieved: 19 September 2017).

was also announced under the slogan "Save them from oblivion – time passes so fast!"[391] In addition to small items brought and sent by post not only from the surrounding area, but from the entire country, the museum also received machines from the now closed Agricultural School in Świątki. Some vehicles (e.g. a tractor) have been refurbished.

The museum promoting itself with the slogan "We build the future on the past" is located on the building's first floor; on the ground floor there is a common room for children, reopened in 2006. The exhibition, preceded by a short introduction to the history of state-owned farms (a kind of extensive calendar), consists of thematically grouped subjects. The objects do not create a narrative, rather the previously-mentioned groups are created by assigning items to appropriate categories: agricultural equipment, household, the history and administration of state-owned farms, etc. Within the groups, sub-categories can be distinguished depending on the origin of a given artifact. The first one contains authentic items from the former state farm: agricultural tools, stamps, banners, peasant clothes. Interesting elements here are slogans motivating people to work and warning against dangers, such as "Repair of fuses with wire prohibited!"

The second sub-category consists of objects characteristic not so much of state-owned farms, but simply of the PRL period in general, objects found in houses all over Poland (and Central and Eastern Europe), regardless of the size of the town, its location or the profession performed by the inhabitants. These are typically nostalgic items related to private life: washing machines, juicers, toasters, irons, and hair dryers, all sorted according to their original purpose (Photo 38). "The term 'everyday use,'" as Beata Czajor writes,

> […] emphasizes the repetitiveness and regularity of human actions in relation to things, while it also signals a strong assignment of objects to the egalitarian sphere of everyday life and discourse related to the culture of everyday life, admittedly democratized and widely available. As a result, however, they are free of any elitism and importance, devoid of anything spectacular. Interpreting the meaning of objects and their position in relation with people only in the context of uniformity and commonness automatically imposes associations with cultural monotony and mediocrity.[392]

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391   https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/muzeum-pgr-we-wsi-bolegorzyn (retrieved: 3 October 2017).

392   Beata Czajor, "Krem Nivea. Społeczne znaczenia przedmiotu codziennego użytku," *Kultura współczesna* (2008), no. 3 (57): 219.

In practice, however, as shown by examples of nostalgic exhibitions throughout Central and Eastern Europe, this "monotony and mediocrity" evoke positive feelings and emotions among visitors and are the greatest attraction. The way we perceive an object is not primarily shaped by its physical properties, but by the artifact-subject (perceiver) interaction. The perception of the object is not shaped in the exhibition, but long before the viewer arrives at the museum. Living in a world constructed, created, and filled by material things shapes the human perspective and sensory responses, which is why it is so easy for ordinary objects from the past to evoke emotional and cognitive associations.

The third and final type of items in the PGR Museum is the so-called "post-German" facilities, taken over by Polish residents after 1945, when the German population was driven out of Pomerania. These items are few and unmarked, and include mainly farm tools and pieces of furniture, such as a carved wooden desk, which stood in a warehouse during the operation of the state-owned farm (Photo 39). Nobody knows its earlier history, but despite the damage caused by the passage of time and neglect, it is obvious at first glance that the piece of furniture comes from a different world and does not fit the rough and simple state-owned appliances. "In doing the biography of things", Igor Kopytoff writes,

> [...] one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its "status" and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the thing's "life" and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?[393]

Similar questions arise especially when the socio-cultural environment from which the item comes no longer exists.

Although the objects in the PGR Museum are not arranged into a coherent story and they do not create a "spectacle" or offer an "experience", their materiality and authenticity are of great importance, which is true above for all the mysterious biographies, which the (conscious) viewer can only guess at (Photo 40). These things are signs of the past that would undoubtedly become waste if they had not been found in the museum. Both the region's German past, faded over the course of years, and the slowly forgotten past of the PGRs, have

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393   Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66–67.

returned and merged in one place, thanks to material tatters and fragments.[394] The presence of things emphasizes the absence of their owners and a double gap in the historical process: first in connection with expulsions,[395] and then with the liquidation of state farms. The overlapping layers of meaning in the PGR Museum create a palimpsest, unparalleled in other nostalgic museums, though it cannot be read without the knowledge that the public brings to the exhibition.

Entries in the Guest Book show that only the recent past is close to viewers: "We come from here, and here we return"; "We saw a beautiful piece of Polish history"; "Congratulations on a great idea so that new generations can gain knowledge about the old times"; "Thank you for the opportunity to go back in time." Based on my conversations with Bożena Kulicz, it appears that the former inhabitants of the state farm do not feel united by a common history, do not create a collective identity, and are reluctant to engage in social activities. Young people left the region *en masse* looking for work, while old folks who remember the state-owned farms feel a strong longing for the times in which they simply felt safe. Social amenities, allowances and other privileges meant they did not have to fear for their existence; hence no one is surprised by entries such as: "The charm of memories – those were beautiful days." For them, the museum remains a memory of the relative comfort and confidence that real socialism offered them.

4.2.3. "*Ostalgia*" Materialized

Joachim Gauck, in an attempt to explain the German phenomenon of "*ostalgia*," refers to the often spoken sentence – "before, not everything was so bad in our country" – which summarizes the feelings of the inhabitants of eastern Germany towards the past.[396] In turn, Sharon Macdonald points to the evolution of this phenomenon, claiming that "*ostalgia*" in the former East Germany at first it resembled classic homesickness, given that East Germans perceived the transformation of 1989 as a sudden relocation; for some time the saying "we emigrated without leaving" was popular. From the mid-1990s, "*ostalgia*" turned

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394   After 1989, the local German cultural past and the German heritage of the region (in conflict with the Polish identity of the inhabitants) became the subject of research, but this extremely complex problem is not the subject of my considerations. There is a large amount of literature on the subject. See for example works by Robert Traba, Izabela Skórzyńska, Anna Wolff-Powęska, Anna Wachowiak, Zbigniew Mazur.

395   See footnote 171.

396   Joachim Trenkner, op. cit., 23.

into a "nostalgia industry," meaning the increased production and consumption of East German goods (individual brands of beer or detergents), which in the press was referred to as "romanticizing" the past and at the same time expressing a kind of loss. The new millennium was marked by the appearance of irony and parody, as exemplified by Wolfgang Becker's award-winning film "Good bye Lenin!", while "*ostalgia*" has also become an instrument used to criticize global capitalism.[397] Many scientific and popular texts try to explain this German phenomenon. For me, however, what is important is the most visible and popular manifestation of "materialized" nostalgia – the GDR museum in Berlin.

The GDR Museum was established in 2006 as a private institution that did not benefit from state subsidies. Dependence on private sponsorship means that, in order to survive, the museum must attract a sufficiently large audience, so the exhibition has to offer pleasant associations, organize free time, provide entertainment for the whole family. Driven by this necessity, the GDR Museum focused on the institutionalization of nostalgia and (like Polish nostalgic exhibitions) focused on the everyday life of a bygone era, correctly assuming that the private sphere is the one on which the memories of most "*ostalgians*" focus. Officially, the exhibition creators do not talk about nostalgia, only about multidimensional education. In the guidebook they inform visitors that socialism can only be taught by juxtaposing the system's positive and negative aspects, and that without knowledge of everyday practices "we could not understand the unique nature of each epoch."[398]

Before the museum opened, opinions were divided. Some in the public expressed doubts about the exhibition and claimed that by focusing on everyday life, it minimized the dictatorship's importance. In the national debate that followed, critics argued that the GDR should be seen mainly from the perspective of the Stasi's victims, that the GDR museum was a manifestation of "*ostalgia*," and that it trivialized the past. The institution's director, Robert Rückel, responded:

> The GDR was clearly a dictatorship, which meant that the state (as with all authoritarian regimes) exerted a greater influence on the lives of its citizens than would a democracy. However, this mere fact does not mean that the inhabitants of a dictatorship do not smile, laugh, play, love and disobey. This is the reality of everyday life and as such is an integral part of the history of the GDR.[399]

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397   Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands*, op. cit., 99–101.

398   *GDR-Guide. A Journey to A Bygone State*, ed. Robert Rückel (DDR Museum Verlag, 2012), 4–5.

399   Ibid., 4.

Ultimately, the GDR Museum has been a great success, with half a million visitors a year, even though it is a relatively small facility. In 2010, the exhibition was expanded with additional elements, including information about the Stasi, and a prison cell and a secret service officer's room were reconstructed.

The content of the exhibition, as mentioned above, mainly covers the private lives of East German residents from housing conditions in blocks (from the 1970s), through daily activities (kindergarten, school, sports), to ways of spending free time (cinema, Trabant tours) (Photo 41). Household appliances and items characteristic of the bygone era located on the exhibition are placed in lockers, hiding places and drawers (Photo 42). Visitors "enter" an arranged residential space by way of a large and creaking "elevator," experiencing even a simulated failure of the mechanism. The interiors serve as an exhibition area that not only the public visits, but also offers a direct "insight" into the lives of the GDR inhabitants. You can sit on chairs and sofas, touch objects, look into drawers and cabinets in search of intimate dimensions of everyday existence (e.g. in the bedroom you can find contraceptive pills for the lady of the house). Thanks to new technology, clothes from wardrobes can even be "tried on" and viewed in the mirror.

In the very center of the exhibition – that is, in the sense of space – there is the so-called half-circle of power, patronized by the symbols of socialism: Marx, Engels and Lenin. The pseudo-pluralism of the political system is represented by parliamentarian puppets who, regardless of the question, "vote" in the same way – unanimously raising their hands. Large-format propaganda photographs are also hung here. The authors of the exhibition write in the guide: "Just as the average East German citizen was able to read between the lines of the official party newspapers, the visitor is also able to delve behind the official facade. Behind the propaganda photos are doors and draws with exhibits, explanations and multi-media installations which reveal the reality of life in the GDR."[400] Curators included such "real life" phenomena as mined state borders, destruction of the natural environment, difficult interstate relations within the "Eastern Bloc," the militarization of schools and kindergartens, privileges enjoyed by the party elite.

At this point the exhibition creators reveal several completely unrealistic assumptions. The suggestion that visitors identify with the GDR citizens is acceptable only on the assumption that the audience is actually only Germans from the former People's Democracy or Central and Eastern Europeans (of the right age), but even here there are limits to identification. When the authors of

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400   Ibid., 11.

the exhibition write that "(…) a reconstructed interrogation room transforms the visitor into a suspect (…),"[401] this presumption goes too far. The exhibition is visited by many young people for whom the socialist era is the distant past, but even assuming that for some percentage of the audience it is their own biography, there are no premises that could prove that they will identify themselves as victims of crimes. What's more, the atmosphere in the GDR Museum is rather playful, sometimes sentimental, which also affects viewers' perceptions. The creators themselves assume that the museum's aim is to show that despite "often distant" politics and ideology, life in the GDR could be "very happy." One cannot ignore the large dose of "humor, optimism and cheerfulness which were to be found under Real Existing Socialism."[402]

After the tour (the audience leaves the museum through a "breach in the wall" symbolizing the fall of the Berlin Wall), you can go to a restaurant offering dishes associated with the GDR and view a mural saved in 2010 by the museum and transferred to the wall of the premises from the Statistical Office. It is a kind of fresco entitled "In Praise of Communism" (title of a poem by Bertolt Brecht), completed in 1970. The mural depicts a communist utopia: man's transition from a "meager" life under capitalism, through the struggle of the oppressed masses, to a communist "paradise." The triptych is reminiscent of medieval images of the final judgment, except that the place of Christ is taken by a worker striking a revolutionary pose.[403]

Tasting dishes "from the past" in places such as the GDR Museum or Grūtas Park in Lithuania is described by researchers as "practical nostalgia," which is a transformative activity for an individual, combining affective and aesthetic elements.[404] The tourist who eats these dishes "connects" with the everyday reality of socialism, not with the political system but with private life of family and neighborhood, because food was a constant element of friendly get-togethers and family relations. Most of the people's democracies functioned under conditions of permanent food shortages, which means that food now occupies an important place in the memory of communism. As Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz writes, we are dealing here with a certain ambivalence: nostalgia is

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401   Ibid., 11.
402   Ibid., 13.
403   Ibid., 128–129.
404   Debbora Battaglia, "On Practical Nostalgia: Self-Prospecting among Urban Trobrianders," in *Rhetoric of Self-Making*, ed. Debbora Battaglia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 78.

intertwined with memories of empty shelves and humiliating queues, crisis dishes are remembered as "disgusting" and "delicious" at the same time.[405] In modern "nostalgic" restaurants, dishes are made of good quality products; they thus resemble dishes from the previous era in name only.

However, what is most important from the perspective of my considerations is the exhibition strategy of the entire exhibition – that is, "touching" and experiencing history, in which you can "take part." The type of exhibition represented by the GDR Museum is defined as interactive and participatory. A participatory institution is a place in which the audience takes part in creating its content, shares (experiences, emotions and thoughts) and builds ties with each other around the content presented in a given institution.[406] More precisely, this means the direct contribution of visitors (in the form of ideas, provided objects, or creative expression) to the creation and functioning of the institution, sharing emotions and experiences during the visit (which may be spontaneous or somehow "forced" by curators, when, for example, launching a given device or starting a game requires more than one person), and socialization, i.e. creating social bonds with other viewers. All this is closely related to the content of a given exhibition, which means that the audience's conversations, emotions, and experiences focus on the objects and ideas that are most important for the exhibition.

The GDR Museum website invites you to visit this way: "Experience a lively and interactive exhibition based on sound academic research. At the GDR Museum you can learn everything about life in the German Democratic Republic. Visitors are invited to grow their knowledge through direct engagement with historical sources, objects, and images. We do not hide all our exhibits behind glass but instead encourage our visitors to touch, hold and interact with a range of objects and installations." And "the highlights of the exhibition include a simulated driver in an original Trabant P601 car, a fully furnished reconstruction of a high-rise tower block flat with hundreds of original objects to discovery, countless interactive games suitable for young and old alike (…)"[407] The audience at the GDR Museum is active and involved in the tour in a physical sense, not just an

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405   Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, "Smaki kryzysu. Gotowanie w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych XX wieku," in *Zmysłowy komunizm. Somatyczne doświadczenie epoki*, eds. Magdalena Bogusławska, Zuzanna Grębecka, Robert Kulmiński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo LIBRON, 2014), 183–184.

406   Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, California, 2010), ii–iii.

407   In 2008 and 2012 the museum was nominated for The European Museum of the Year Award, http://www.ddr-museum.de/en/

intellectual sense. The viewer works: he pulls out drawers, looks into containers, plays games, gets into cars, opens kitchen cabinets, sits on a living room couch, stresses about the "elevator failure," etc. Obtaining information involves taking the appropriate steps. Each subsequent compartment or shelf hides a surprise and stimulates curiosity.

Slightly less interactive, but similar in style, is another German nostalgic museum called The World of the GDR (*Die Welt der DDR*) in Dresden. The facility is located in the modern glass Simmel Center between shops offering grocery, cosmetic and industrial products. Like the museum in Berlin, this exhibition offers a journey through time by presenting specific thematic islands. The exhibition begins "classically" – that is, with the Trabant, the main symbol of the GDR. A dozen or so cars of this brand together, with a Wartbug, Lada, and Zaporozhets, represent the automotive world of people's democracy. Then, the viewers walk freely around the exhibition space, passing successive groups of objects that make up the GDR's private-public universe. Traditionally, residential interiors with complete sets of furniture from different communist periods are strongly represented (Photo 43). The image is completed by a fully equipped bathroom and kitchen. Tables covered with dinnerware, organized toys, kitchen shelves filled with equipment and utensils, a set of chandeliers, prams and electronics of the time (radios and tape recorders from different periods) – all this gives the impression of being in a warehouse or furniture store, but from the previous era. The kindergarten and school classroom are other elements of the world behind the "iron curtain." Interestingly, the museums in both Berlin and Dresden lack the representation of higher education, i.e. the university. Undoubtedly, the relatively low percentage of students meant that university life was not a common experience, but the gap is visible. Recreation and free time in the Dresden museum are symbolized by another Trabant, this time equipped with a caravan and a tent.[408] Everyday life is represented by reconstructions of a shop, a hairdresser, a doctor's office, a pharmacy and the Dresden "intelligentsia club" (resembling a library) (Photo 44). Politics do not appear on display; a government official's room or a police car do not suggest a totalitarian system and in no way reveal the real, repressive face of the system. Even the thematic representation devoted to the military shows only the conditions of everyday life of soldiers, there is no mention of the combat tasks they faced. The army's equipment is

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408   It is worth mentioning that at the Dresden airport the only museum advertising its exhibition – precisely by displaying a Trabant with a trailer – is the World of the GDR. The car arouses the curiosity of foreign travelers.

represented by small models of cars and tanks that look like children's toys. The exhibition also includes items showing the GDR "technical thought": vending machines for cigarettes and snacks, a coffee machine, computers.

The success of both GDR museums lies in the special kind of venues for which the exhibition is a platform. These are so-called social objects that easily draw attention to themselves and connect the people who create, own, use, criticize or consume them. Not all objects are naturally "social." However, they can be created for such a purpose. Most of them are personal, active, provocative, or relational. There are private stories associated with personal objects (e.g., based on childhood memories), which allow viewers to develop a personal relationship with them. Active objects are objects in action that the audience spontaneously follows and comments on. In the museum, these are often objects in the so-called intermittent movement (set in motion from time to time). Provocative objects are controversial and surprising, which means they easily become a topic of discussion (they can be metaphorical representations, artistic installations). Relational objects encourage interpersonal relationships – they require several people to make full use of them; they are an invitation to joint action; they encourage a problem or an effect to be solved; in other words, they need interpersonal involvement in order to function.[409] Of the above-mentioned categories, personal and active objects prevail in the GDR museums. Stefan Wolle, a historian involved in the creation of the Berlin exhibition, confirms that each object deliberately evokes a fragment of the past. Items have no value in and of themselves, but each one tells a personal story. "Such items resemble the shards of a broken mirror, which once broken are difficult to piece together."[410]

As a result, totalitarianism in nostalgic museums is an interesting adventure, something exciting (What is in the closed drawer? What will I see when I open this door? I wonder, are you comfortable sitting behind the wheel of a Trabant or a ministerial Volvo? Etc.). It is associated with school years and a safe domestic life. Nostalgic exhibitions are based on objects that easily evoke emotional involvement and evoke pleasant memories. Such museums are not provocative and rarely refer to political events. This is not a history of totalitarianism, but rather a selective history of everyday life under totalitarianism. The regime, from the perspective of time and through the prism of problems related to the functioning of the capitalist system, seems to many people to be harmless and safe. From the ubiquitous affective experience emerge exhibitions that are

409   Nina Simon, op. cit., 129–132.
410   *GDR-Guide,* op. cit., 12.

interactive, humorous, entertaining, lively and (not accidentally, in the end) informational. The two German GDR museums are the best examples of the institutionalization of nostalgia throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

4.2.4. Symbols of a Non-existent World

The Berlin Wall – a kind of border installation, 156 km long, consisting of a concrete wall, trenches, dams, and watchtowers – divided East and West Berlin from 1961 to 1989. After November 9, 1989 (the symbolic date of the fall of communism in the GDR), the wall was still protected by guards but was increasingly marked by holes and cracks that eventually allowed uncontrolled border crossings. Demolition, undertaken by the military, began on June 13, 1990 at Bernauer Strasse. That work officially ended on November 30, 1990.

From November 9, 1989, the issue of the wall became the subject of discussions and debates. As Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper writes, conservators wanted to preserve it as a historical structure and allow it to collapse spontaneously; according to them, the renovation of such a structure was impossible. However, the overwhelming majority of Berliners wanted the wall to be completely removed. It seemed most realistic to leave at least a few fragments of the structure standing. In the end, four sections were separated for commemoration: at Niederkirchnestrasse, at Stralauer Strasse (along the Spree), at the so-called East Side Gallery (the longest section, 1.3 km used by artists), and at Scharnhorstrasse and Bernauer Strasse, along with two watchtowers, both from 1963, at Schlesischer Busch and Keiler Strasse.[411] The preservation of even these few remains proved to be problematic because of difficulties related to the proximity of other objects (such as a cemetery) and property rights.[412] In the 1990s, the course of the entire (then non-existent) wall was marked by a line consisting of double cobblestones. The fragments of the original wall left behind are material evidence of the regime's existence and the brutal division of urban space, a symbolic sign of remembrance of communism and the victory over that system, a specific icon of the Cold War. The most symbolic and meaningful place is Bernauer Strasse, the street that forms the border between East and West Berlin. It was there that many people decided to make a deadly escape through the windows of the buildings along

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411   Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, "The Berlin-Wall: An Archaeological Site in Progress," in John Schofield, William Gray Johnson, Colleen M. Beck, eds., *Matériel Culture: The Archaeology of Twentieth-Century Conflict* (London Routledge 2002), 239.

412   Ibid., 240–242.

which the building stretched. Today, there is a memorial complex on Bernauer Strasse that includes a monument built around a fragment of the wall (the Kohlhoff Memorial), a documentation center and a reconciliation chapel. The complex also includes an observation tower from which you can view the entire memorial site. Individual parts of the "memorial complex" have been opened at different times since 1998. On the corten wall of the monument, there is an inscription: "To commemorate the division of the city from August 13, 1961 to November 9, 1989 and in honor of the victims of communist tyranny."[413] Nearby, there is also the Berlin Wall Memorial Trail (*Geschichtsmeile Berliner Mauer*), an exhibition consisting of information boards with photos and texts commemorating events that took place in a given place.

Among all kinds of commemorations, I am most interested in museum representations. In this respect, the section at Niederkirchnestrasse is the best used part of the wall. Here, a fragment of the structure was included in a complex called Topography of Terror (Topographie des Terrors) located near the Nazi government district and documenting the history of the Nazi regime. In the years 1933–1945 the Nazis' organizational headquarters were located here: the Gestapo (and a prison), the SS headquarters, the SS security service, and the Reich Security Main Office.[414]

The most popular crossing between East and West Berlin was the legendary section of the border called Checkpoint Charlie. In October 1961, American and Soviet tanks were facing off against each other and numerous escapes, both fortunate and tragic, took place. Currently, this checkpoint is a kind of center for the more or less successful commemorations of the old regime being created nearby. Right next to Checkpoint Charlie is the Berlin Wall Museum (Mauermuseum), also known as the Checkpoint Charlie House Museum (Museum Haus Checkpoint Charlie). It was funded shortly after the wall was constructed, on October 19, 1962. Rainer Hildebrandt – founder of the museum – personally protested and helped those in need at Checkpoint Charlie.[415] Initially the museum was intended to document the history of the divided city and the construction of the wall, along with the peaceful struggle for human rights, but over time both the exhibition space and the scope of topics expanded. Currently,

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413   See ibid., 242 and Elizabeth Golden, *Following the Berlin Wall,* file:///C:/Users/User/
      Downloads/ACSA.AM.99.58.pdf (retrieved: 15 September 2017).

414   http://www.topographie.de/en/the-historic-site (retrieved: 15 September 2017).

415   https://www.mauermuseum.de/ueber-uns/geschichte/ (retrieved: 12 September 2017).

the exhibition is an extremely chaotic labyrinth in which it is difficult to find any coherent narrative path.

The exhibition continues to inform and illustrate with photographs of the history of the wall's expansion and the improvement of the border guards system. Numerous original items document the dramatic and imaginative escapes from East Berlin using various installations and hiding places, such as converted cars with secret spaces, small submarines pulling refugees through the Baltic waters, kayaks, balloons, special harnesses, or custom-made kites with motors (Photo 45). A lot of space in the exhibition is devoted to political issues: the workers' uprising of 1953 (i.e. strikes, riots and protests in the GDR that were finally suppressed by the Soviet army), the Cold War, the Cuban and Suez crises, and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The exhibition also presents various forms of violence and human rights violations from different periods, from the Second World War (the Holocaust) to the present day (e.g. shocking sketches depicting torture in North Korean labor camps) and people who in any way opposed totalitarian regimes (e.g. Raoul Wallenberg). Authentic objects appear next to reconstructions and copies, photographs are set alongside charts filled with text, graphics, drawings, and paintings, and even works of art stand next to mannequins – all this adds to the impression of chaos. The exhibition even includes a stuffed badger from the apartment of Erich Mielke, the long-time Stasi head, and a kind of school display showing the world's religious diversity (!). The exhibition was "embellished" with authentic fragments of the wall placed here and there, giving visitors the impression of decoration.

The end result of this collection of artifacts resembles a large warehouse through which visitors move from all over the world, alongside guides leading groups of young Germans. In the latter case – as I noted – the exhibition is treated selectively and young audiences only stop at places illustrating the history of the Cold War and the Wall itself. The museum is difficult to classify, but due to the nature of the objects and the kind of emotions (affective) they evoke, it contains more nostalgia than traditional historical narratives, although elements of the latter can also be seen (boards with informative texts, authentic objects, NATO documents). On the other hand, its content (escapes from the GDR, violations of human rights all over the world) is by no means nostalgic; on the contrary, it is intended as a warning against totalitarian regimes. However, the museum lacks consistency in its exhibition strategies, which distorts a coherent perception and may cause cognitive dissonance. Which explains why – as I mentioned above – many people treat the exhibition selectively, trying to build a narrative that meets their expectations.

Near Checkpoint Charlie, there is the Trabant Museum (Trabi Museum), which encourages visitors to visit with the slogan: "Nostalgia guaranteed!"[416] The exhibition consists of only a dozen or so models of these cars (Photo 46). Trabant is currently the most recognizable and powerful symbol of "ostalgia." Work on the car, under the leadership of Werner Lang, began in the GDR in the late 1950s, with series production starting in 1964 (it ended in 1990).[417] For Westerners, the use of plastic (so-called duroplast) for the production of a car body was testimony to the low quality of goods produced in the GDR and the entire socialist camp. However, the significance of the Trabant for East Germans was different, because the car was associated with a wider concept for how the system functioned: first, it appeared as an element of a new socialist consumer society, which was to compete with the prosperity and "economic miracle" of West Germany. Second, it was the result of a fascination with technology and its possibilities. And thirdly, it was supposed to show the creativity and innovation of socialist thought and its courage in creating inventions.[418] For Trabant makers, duroplast meant increased resistance to corrosion and a reduced fire hazard. Because of the Trabant, the GDR stood out in a positive sense as the best motorized country in the Eastern Bloc.

After 1989, the meaning and perception of Trabant changed completely. Eli Rubin writes: "A Trabi parked in front of a 'Konsum' store with polyester clothes more befitting 1978 than 1988 looked normal, but in 1989, with the same building space now occupied by a Benetton shop, the parked Trabi looked bizarre and even comic."[419] Being "out of place," however, does not exhaust the whole range of meanings currently assigned to a car. As the socialist world and the objects belonging to that world disappeared, the Trabant began to function as an element of nostalgic adventure, a physical platform for a journey into the unknown, and finally a kind of fetish of East German "ostalgia."

Unfortunately, the Trabant Museum in no way shows how – depending on complex emotional, social, and psychological factors – a plastic "Trabi" could be an object of desire, a joke, or a nostalgic memento of a non-existent world, which is a pity, because the potential of this artifact is enormous. At the exhibition,

416   http://www.trabi-museum.com/home (retrieved: 17 September 2017).

417   Mateusz Mikołajczyk, *Król plastiku z NRD – Traban 601*, http://bezpiecznapodroz. org/krol-plastiku-z-nrd-trabant-601 (retrieved: 16 September 2017).

418   Eli Rubin, *The Trabant: Consumption, Eigen-Sinn, and Movement*, https://academic. oup.com/hwj/article/68/1/27/661625 (retrieved: 18 June 2018).

419   Eli Rubin, *The Trabant: Consumption, Eigen-Sinn, and Movement*, https://academic. oup.com/hwj/article/68/1/27/661625 (retrieved: 18 June 2018).

however, you can see the iconic Trabant 601, a police Trabant, a racing Trabant, convertible Trabant, and station wagon Trabant. One of the models is adapted to simulate a "test drive." On the museum's website, you can find additional technical information and sketches on individual models as well as press releases on events related to the Trabant and the museum itself.[420] Instead of information about the socio-cultural context of the Trabant's extraordinary popularity, you can treat yourself to a sensory experience by purchasing a tour of Berlin (of course in Trabant) and numerous gadgets, souvenirs, and miniature models. It is worth mentioning that the significance of the Trabant as a symbol of the socialist world is so great that other countries have also included driving this car in their travel offers "following the signs of the past" (e.g. in Kraków-Nowa Huta and Budapest). Trabants are permanent elements of museum exhibitions referring to the communist era throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

4.2.5. (Not) Remembering Leaders

> *Yugoslavism still exists in a form that does not necessarily*
> *have anything to do with statehood or nationality; it does*
> *not forget or cancel the common past and history, when*
> *whole generations have shared ideas and ideals, hopes and*
> *illusions, enthusiasm and disappointments.*
>
> *Predrag Matvejević[421]*

Another example of the musealization of nostalgia is the trend in the former Yugoslavia and, to a much lesser extent in Bulgaria, associated with leaders who, for various reasons, are fondly remembered by society.

The phenomenon of so-called "Yugo-nostalgia" is interpreted and explained in various ways. Dejan Novačić, the author of a book devoted to this subject, writes that it can be "(…) an elegant memory of life in the former Yugoslavia (…)," but also "(…) an unpleasant recollection of a previous life which we all renounced and of which we are still ashamed," though at the same time "(…) a collection of manifestations of a culture that outlived the society in which it was

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420   http://www.trabi-museum.com/home (retrieved: 14 September 2017).
421   Cited in Ana Panić, "O wystawie 'Nigdy nie mieli się lepiej? Modernizacja życia codziennego w socjalistycznej Jugosławii,'" *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) (2016), no. 3: 67.

created. (…)."[422] In the countries that emerged after the collapse of Yugoslavia, nostalgia has manifested itself, and is treated, in various ways. For example, while in Croatia just the word "Yugoslavia" was banned and the terms Yugo-nostalgic and Yugo-zombie became synonymous with a national traitor, in Belgrade in the early 1990s it represented a longing for the lost lands that formed the basis for the Greater Serbian nationalism of Yugoslav provenance, defined in the Croatian term Srboslavija.[423]

All post-transition problems specific to the entire region in the case of the former Yugoslavia turned out to be only a small part of the wider problem concerning the past. Dubravka Ugrešić writes:

> Seen from outside, (…) the Balkan peoples resemble demented gravediggers. They appear stubbornly to confirm the dark stereotypes others have of them. (…) Through their activity of digging up and ritually mourning human bones and burying fresh ones without funeral rites, the Balkan peoples are spinning in a diabolical circle: it is impossible for them to come to terms with their own past, present, and future.[424]

Not surprisingly, in many cases, Yugo-nostalgia manifests itself as an escapist strategy that helps people forget about the reality around them and construct an idyllic past.[425]

This extremely complex issue has been fully covered in the literature, but I am interested here only in the narrow scope of Yugoslav nostalgia as reflected in museums. In practice, we are also dealing here with "Tito-stalgia" – i.e. a nostalgic discourse about ex-president Josip Broz Tito,[426] which is a kind

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422 Dejan Novačić, „Jugonostalgija – istorija bolesti", cited in Anna Jagiełło-Szostak, "Jugonostalgia – pozostałość po wieloetnicznej Jugosławii," *Wschodnioznawstwo* (2012), no. 6: 241.

423 Anna Jagiełło-Szostak, op. cit., 242.

424 Dubravka Ugrešić, "The Confiscation of Memory," *New Left Review* (1996), no. 218: 33.

425 Anna Jagiełło-Szostak, op. cit., 243.

426 Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was the leader of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death. During the Second World War, Tito organized an anti-fascist resistance movement known as the Yugoslav Partisans. Later, he was a founding member of the Cominform, but, resisting Soviet influence, he became one of the founders and promoters of the Non-Aligned Movement. Tito was the main architect of the second Yugoslavia, a socialist federation that existed from 1943 to 1992 (three of the six republics broke away in 1991). He was a supporter of an independent path to socialism (referred to as Titoism). The rational policy of non-alignment and cooperation with both blocs during the Cold War resulted in an economic boom in the 1960s and 1970s. His death led to an increase in tensions

of paradox in the context of the once obligatory "Titoism" because, as Anna Jagiełło-Szostak writes: the memory of the Marshal now "(…) is not obligatory, but voluntary, selected individually and covers all aspects related to the life of the former leader."[427] Jagiełło-Szostak cites manifestations of "Tito-stalgia" in the popular culture of the former Yugoslavia: images of Tito (in all former Yugoslav republics) on key chains, portraits, postcards, lighters, magnets, pens, numerous books devoted to him, names of streets and squares, monuments. The posthumous (even religious) cult of Josip Broz-Tito is also reflected in ceremonies during which people go to his monuments, greet him, even kiss him (e.g. on his legs or a coat) or dress up as him. Longing for the times when Marshal Josip Broz Tito led Yugoslavia is also evidenced by the growing number of people celebrating his birthday in his native village of Kumrovec (in 2003, around 7,000 people took part in the celebrations). Tito remains a symbol of a strong leader, of security and solidarity, a fact which is not surprising given events after Yugoslavia's break-up. The Marshal has also become a brand used for commercial and marketing purposes ("Tito party", "Titov izvor" water), while his name is also used in advertising, for example, "Jagermeister" alcohol, Mercedes limousines and Canon photocopiers.[428]

The Museum of the Yugoslavian History (*Музеј историје Југославије*) in Belgrade (Serbia) was established in 1996 after the merger of the "Josip Broz Tito" Memorial Center (*Memorijalni centar "Josip Broz Tito", Меморијални центар "Јосип Броз Тито"*) and the Museum of the Revolution of Nations and Nationality of Yugoslavia (*Muzej Revolucije naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije, Музеј Револуције народа и народности Југославије*). The institution's organization was a purely political move with no connection to cultural activity or to a mission to preserve Yugoslavia's past, which at that time seemed rather undesirable.[429] Currently, the still unfinished museum complex consists of four elements: the May 25 Museum (*Музеј 25. мај*) in the building from 1962 (in 2017 without any exhibition), the Flower Museum (*Кућа цвећа*), i.e. the Josip

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between the republics of Yugoslavia, which ultimately led to the breakup of the country in 1991.

427   Ibid., 246. For more on post-Yugoslavian nostalgia, see Mitija Velikonja, *Titostalgija* (Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut, 2008).

428   Anna Jagiełło-Szostak, op. cit., 247–248. See also Mirella Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, "Zjawisko Jugonostalgii w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku," *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, part 2 (2009), 11–31.

429   Ana Panić, op. cit., 58.

Broz Tito Mausoleum (established in 1982 year), the Old Museum (*Stari muzej, Стари музеј*) from 1964–65, and the (quite poor) Statue Park.

The May 25 Museum originally housed numerous gifts and presents given to Tito, which are now in the Old Museum.[430] These items constitute a unique, often astonishing collection of artifacts, which include weapons and military equipment, objects belonging to traditional and folk cultures, works of art, symbolic representations of specific national and ethnic communities, handicrafts, but also models specially made for Tito presenting the technological innovations of the day (Photo 47). These gifts should be viewed as elements of a world that does not exist today – partly amusing, partly fascinating – material signs of the past. Taken together, they suggest the existence of a certain common style or mentality of the people who made them. It is easy to believe that these objects are a real product and effect of the "spirit" of the epoch, which imbued them with a certain set of features characterizing the near but irretrievably lost past. The nostalgia caused by viewing the gifts is even deeper when the viewer notices the second part of the exhibition, which is much more interesting from the perspective of a historian and museologist.

The historical exhibition in question is located on the opposite side of the room, parallel to the gifts (Photo 48). It is a collection transferred from the now defunct Museum of the Revolution of Nations and the Nationality of Yugoslavia. This part of the representation is museum-like in two ways: firstly, it is a traditional historical exhibition presenting the history of Yugoslav communism. And secondly, it is an unprecedented representation of the exhibition strategies of the previous era. In practice, both parts of the exhibition (the collection of gifts for Tito and the exhibition from the communist era) are visited at the same time because they are located on two sides of the museum rooms stretching along the entire long building. Gifts for Tito are placed in showcases according to their place of origin (from Yugoslavia and the world) and type/species (ethnographic, numismatic, weapons, etc.); the exhibition from the former Revolution Museum has maintained chronological order. The entire "double" exhibition is (as the inscription at the entrance to the museum indicates) temporary, called by the authors the "open warehouse" and "laboratory" for the future Museum of Yugoslavia. In its present (2017) shape, it lacks a basic element: the "meta" level, that is, creating a story about Yugoslavia with the (possible) use of authentic

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430   Before entering the exhibition, you can see a map of Yugoslavia for the years 1918–2006 and a graphic with a chronological presentation of the most important events in the country's history.

objects from the era. The narrative here maintains a distance between the artifacts and the audience, introduces an "off" voice, the perspective of a narrator or an expert talking about the past, which contributes to a reduction in the potential feeling of nostalgia. The concept of a "warehouse" – i.e. an accumulation of objects without comment – does not create a narrative about a non-existent state; metaphorically speaking, these artifacts simply "are Yugoslavia." They embody it, take the audience back into "the good old days." The museum-laboratory in Belgrade, apart from the objects, also exhibits old inventory catalogs of objects for inspection, which gives viewers the opportunity to peek behind the usually inaccessible "backstage" scenes, shows how a material object becomes a museum object, part of a collection after a procedural "rite of passage," how it changes meaning. This is a highly valuable experience and in practice no longer available when it comes to procedures from several dozen years ago.

The most nostalgic element of the complex, however, is the House of Flowers, the mausoleum of Josip Broz Tito and his wife Jovanka (Photo 49). The building was built in 1975 as a winter garden (designed by Stjepan Kralj), where there were also rooms for the leader's work and rest, a library and a terrace overlooking Belgrade. As requested by Tito, he was buried there in 1980 (Jovanka joined him in 2013). Here you can see personal memorabilia related to Tito, such as souvenirs from the annual Youth Relay, held on his official birthday in 1945–1988, and private items such as a desk and chair. The model of the "Blue Train," which served as a kind of "mobile residence" for Tito on his numerous journeys, is highly popular with the public. Throughout the entire complex, there is only fragmentary information about Tito and the history of Yugoslavia, and that information points only to the positive aspects of the Marshal's long rule and show special moments for the entire country (such as Queen Elizabeth II's visit). There is no mention of terror, denunciations, purges, and similar elements of real "Titoism". The House of Flowers has become a place for nostalgic pilgrimages, where visitors photograph themselves against the background of large-format photos of Tito, as if they were taking a shot of themselves with the living Marshal.

At this point, it is worth mentioning one more exhibition, a temporary exhibition but one that reflects in a significant way the nostalgic attitude of the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia. The exhibition entitled "They Never Had It Better? Modernization of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia" has traveled to various countries of the former Yugoslavia. In 2014 and 2015 it was at the Museum of the History of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, then at the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, later at the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia in Ljubljana, and finally in 2017 at the Historical and Maritime

Museum of Istria in Croatian Pula.[431] The project included the period 1945–1990 and – as the creators assumed – was looking for an answer to the question whether the Yugoslavs found prosperity in their homeland at that time and how, when and why they lost it. The exhibition presented the country's cultural and social life and emphasized those areas in which a significant civilizational leap had taken place. The exhibition, divided into two larger parts – "Rhythm of Life" and "Rhythm of the Year" – presented the life of a Yugoslavian from kindergarten to retirement and the most important socialist holidays, the cyclical rituals of which gave this life a specific pace and regularity. Objects treated as "memory triggers," as in most such exhibitions, came mainly from public collections.[432]

The curators emphasized Yugoslavia's successes, which included the modernization, industrialization, and urbanization of the country, as well as the improvement of the overall quality of life. From this perspective, former Yugoslavia appears to be a progressive, anti-nationalist, anti-fascist, and cosmopolitan country, especially compared to the "nationalist, backward, primitive, traditionalist and patriarchal" countries created after its collapse.[433] The institution's creators write:

> With this exhibition we want to encourage citizens of the former Yugoslavia to carefully consider the potential of the Yugoslav experience they have been given, as well as ways of how, by turning to accepted universal values, the past can be integrated into the foundation of the need for a "normal" future (a better tomorrow based on a better yesterday), as Yugo-nostalgia can be a useful analytical category and an important way to activate the legacy of socialism in political negotiations about the present and the future.[434]

In interviews tied to the exhibition, it turned out that nostalgia can be "inherited." One respondent (born in 1990) said: "I would like to live for at least a few years in the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and see everything with my own eyes. I feel nostalgic, but it is because my grandmother and grandfather constantly tell me how it was then and how people lived, and with a little help I feel as if I were there myself."[435] The exhibition's creators themselves comment: "Representatives

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431   Exhibition catalog, http://www.academia.edu/10246332/They_Never_Had_it_
      Better_modernization_of_Everyday_Life_in_Socialist_Yugoslavia   (retrieved:
      20 October 2017).

432   Ana Panić, op. cit., 60 and 63–66.

433   Ibid., 71.

434   Ibid., 68.

435   Ibid., 70–71.

of the older generations have an emotional attitude towards the past, while young people see universal values in the socialist past that are absent today – social justice, solidarity, perceiving oneself as a social actor, a citizen of a world-recognized country of global importance."[436]

The exhibition (at least in the creators' declarations) was also intended to shape a "critical view" and show the "negative aspects of the contemporary heritage."[437] Audience reactions included in the comments after watching it, however, testify to the deep conviction that "we really never had it better," and the story of Yugoslavia is a story about a better life, security, humanitarianism, the possibility of traveling, and above all about belonging to a state recognized in the world.

In Bulgaria, nostalgia for the times of Todor Zhivkov[438] is not as clear as in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but here too his popularity grows with the passage of time. Surveys carried out 25 years after the collapse of the system show that 55 % of Bulgarians approve of him (in 1991 it was only 16 %).[439] Krasimir Karakachanov, co-leader of the Patriotic Front, said in 2016: "Few people can

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436   Ibid., 73–74.

437   Ibid., 60.

438   Todor Zhivkov (1911–1998) – Bulgarian politician and communist activist, first secretary and then general secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1954–1989, chairman of the State Council in 1971–1989 and the actual leader of the People's Republic of Bulgaria for many years. During his rule, the Bulgarian national economy developed relatively steadily until the 1980s, which was possible thanks to cooperation with the USSR. The Soviet Union opened its market to Bulgarian products, ensured the supply of important raw materials at preferential prices, and provided Bulgaria with non-repayable aid on several occasions. The price for these benefits was the complete political and economic dependence of the People's Republic of Bulgaria on the USSR, which contributed to the country's economic crisis in the late 1980s. In 1990, Todor Zhivkov was arrested and charged with a number of crimes to which he pleaded not guilty. On February 9, 1996, the Bulgarian Supreme Court found that prosecutors had failed to provide evidence of Zhivkov's guilt, and the former leader of Bulgaria was found not guilty of all charges against him.

439   In 2013, a sociological survey showed that 60 % of Bulgarian final grade students did not know what the Gulag and the Iron Curtain were, forty percent had not heard of the existence of communist secret services, Todor Zhivkov was among the three greatest defenders of democracy, and 18 % of respondents declared that they would like to live back in those times. See *W Bułgarii nostalgia za Żiwkowem wciąż żywa*, http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/w-bulgarii-nostalgia-za-ziwkowem-wciaz-zywa (retrieved: 26 January 2017).

be compared with Zhivkov as a politician. Currently, it is not fashionable to talk highly of him, but when you compare Zhivkov with those who have ruled us over the last 25 years, the comparison speaks in his favor. Hence the nostalgia. (…) Since he ruled for so long, apparently he had the ability to rule."[440]

In Zhivkov's former residence in Sofia, the National Historical Museum (*Национален исторически музей*) was established, which presents the history of Bulgaria from the earliest times to 1948. Highly valuable archaeological and medieval collections, an ethnographic exhibition, and – surprisingly – a complete lack of representation of the communist period are the hallmarks of the exhibition. This absence seems significant. The Constitution of the Bulgarian People's Republic of 1947 and a laconic entry about the end of the parliamentary system and the beginning of the Soviet system are all that can be found in the Bulgarian National Historical Museum about this period of recent history. A few meters away, the audience experiences a kind of transfer in time and views a document confirming Bulgaria's admission into NATO in 2003. From my conversations with museum employees it appears that most of the collections from the communist period are in storage, while others are in Pravets, where in 2011, on the 100th anniversary of Todor Zhivkov's birth, a museum of his name was opened that included a collection of gifts the leader (like Tito) received during his long rule.[441] In Pravets, there is also a monument to Zhivkov, but in practice there is no trace of his presence in the capital (apart from the above-mentioned residence, unique both in terms of architecture and location). Regional and city exhibitions (as in the Sofia History Museum) repeat the pattern of the national museum – that is, they return to the past from before the communist period (the

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440 *W Bułgarii nostalgia za Żiwkowem wciąż żywa,* http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/w-bulga rii-nostalgia-za-ziwkowem-wciaz-zywa (retrieved: 25 August 2017).

441 The grand ceremony was broadcast live on television, which was a surprise even for some Bulgarians. See Dominika Pszczółkowska, *Żiwkomania w Bułgarii*, http:// wyborcza.pl/1,76842,10260212,Ziwkomania_w_Bulgarii.html (retrieved: 25 July 2017). Pierwsze Muzeum Żiwkowa w Prawecu otwarto już w 1981 roku, kiedy wsi, w której urodził się Żiwkow Rada Państwa nadała prawa miejskie. Muzeum – w domu rodzinnym przywódcy – działało (pod opieką Partii Komunistycznej) do 1989 roku. The first Zhivkov Museum in Pravets was opened in 1981, when the village where the leader was born was granted city rights by the Council of State. The museum – in Zhivkov's family house – remained in operation (under the care of the Communist Party) until 1989. See Nikolai Vukov, "The 'Unmemorable' and the 'Unforgettable'. 'Museumizing' the Socialist Past in Post-1989 Bulgaria," in *Past for the Eyes. East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, eds. Oksana Sarkisova and Péter Apor (Ventral European University 2008), 307–308.

First World War, the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the royal dynasties) or turn historical exhibitions into ethnographic ones. Nikolai Vukov describes museums being built in Bulgaria as "little homelands" (Heimatsmuseens), which emphasize local tradition instead of introducing critical historiographic reflection.[442]

Unlike other countries where rebellions and resistance to the regime mark their history, Bulgarians have difficulty finding points in the past on which to build a heroic narrative about communism. It is true that after the breakthrough in 1989 there were stories about the criminal side of the Soviet system, but most Bulgarians do not remember the terror. Human rights violations and restrictions on freedom were accepted by them as part of the times, in return for which they were provided (as they remember) with life's basic needs. The image of the Soviet Union as an "external enemy" also does not prevail in society. The discourse on "brotherhood between nations" was widely accepted and popular, which means that to this day there is also a perception of the benefits Bulgaria enjoyed as a partner of the Soviet Union. Neither Zhivkov nor anyone in his circle is perceived as an "oppressor"; even such actions as the forced "bulgarization" of the Turks or concealing information about the Chernobyl catastrophe are treated as political issues whose evaluation should be left to the future.[443]

Nikolai Vukov argues that apart from the simple opposition between remembering and forgetting, there is a third process that he describes as the "unmemorable." It is not about events consciously relegated from the kingdom of memory, but about those which are not worth remembering and which – though they exist in consciousness – do not enter the realm of representation. "Unmemorable" refers to well-known experiences that can easily be triggered in the act of recall but are not represented. At the same time, these are not traumatic events, which would explain this kind of repression. Vukov assumes that the Bulgarians remember events but remain silent about them, that these events are present in their consciousness but hidden; they are denied materialization. The basic conflict here is not between memory and oblivion, but between memory and representation.[444] However, Vukov does not seem to notice the basic problem with the above theory: if certain historical processes and phenomena are not represented, they eventually "fall" from the collective consciousness. The main reason for the gaps in Bulgarian memory seems to be the lack of an alternative discourse about the past and proposals for new interpretations of significant

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442   Nikolai Vukov, op. cit., 321.
443   Ibid., 332–333.
444   Ibid., 310–313.

events and processes, such as the role of the Red Army in the history of Bulgaria, the character of "Bulgarian fascism," attitudes towards the partisans of the 1930s and 1940s and many the central figures of that time. Contrary to the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Bulgarian nostalgia is a somewhat embarrassing and hidden feeling, and the mementos of Zhivkov (and the entire system) have been pushed aside. The lack of references to communism in museums provides testimony to the continuing problems with collective identity, the ambiguous historical policy of the state, and still unreconciled attitudes toward modern history.[445]

4.2.6. Everyday Life without Nostalgia?

In the face of the above analyses, one should ask whether it is possible to visualize the private sphere and everyday life of the communist era without falling into sentimentalism and nostalgia. How to prevent the appearance of similar emotions at the exhibitions and should it be done at all? Individual and collective memory easily evoke various ambiguous images and stories at the same time, which cannot be easily inscribed into a single basic scheme (which is discussed in Chapter 1 of this work). In my research, I found several model examples of exhibitions combining elements of everyday life with a wider context. It is difficult to classify them unambiguously because they do not fit any of the models I identified. These include the National Memorial and the Museum of Communism in Prague, exhibitions at the German Historical Museum and the Silesian Museum, and some representations at the Institutes of National Remembrance.

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445   The date of the overthrow of communism in Bulgaria is conventional (on November 10, 1989, Todor Zhivkov was replaced by Petyr Młdenov) and did not particularly fit the collective Bulgarian memory. For example, the only official commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Zhivkov's removal was a modest photographic exhibition entitled "20 years in 60 photographs" in the garden of the Bulgarian National Theater, the main sponsor of which was not the Bulgarian government, but the European Union. See Venelin I. Ganev, "The Inescapable Past. The Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Bulgaria," *Twenty Years After Communism*, op. cit., 214. Adam Burakowski also mentions a happening organized on this occasion in front of the parliament building in Sofia, one which consisted of the demolition of a polystyrene replica of part of the Berlin Wall. About 100 people took part in the event. See Adam Burakowski, "Postkomunizm w Bułgarii," *Słupskie Studia Historyczne* (2011), no. 17: 239.

The situation in the Czech Republic differs from that in other countries in that the "Velvet Revolution" marked a clear break with the regime. The Czechs also carried out a quick vetting process, which allowed them to isolate the communists and symbolically purify public life. Currently, the main state commemoration of a bygone era is the National Memorial at Vitkov in Prague (*Národní památník na Vítkově*). In 1420, a battle took place on Vitkov hill between the Hussites led by Jan Žižka of Trocnów and the crusade called by Sigismund of Luxemburg. In the nineteenth century, attempts to erect a monument to the victorious Hussite leader on the hill were unsuccessful, and the 16-ton Jan Žižka monument by Bohumil Kafka was unveiled only in 1950, on the anniversary of the Battle of Vitkov. After the First World War, plans were drawn up to establish a national memorial complex in this place. Its construction lasted from 1929 to 1939, but work was stopped after the Second World War broke out. When the communists came to power, the concept of national memory collapsed for ideological reasons. The monument was now intended to promote the history of the workers' movement and serve as a burial place for the system's distinguished functionaries. The communists added their symbols (socialist-realist statues, wreaths, sickles, stars, mosaics) to the earlier architectural guidelines.

After Klement Gottwald's death in 1953,[446] the Vitkov complex became his mausoleum. Architectural preparations under the direction of Jan Závorka were spectacular. The monumental marble-lined building housed a special underground laboratory in which the president's mummified body was stored. The catacombs consisted of several rooms maintained by doctors, nurses, and other specialists (a special unit under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, numbering about 100 people, was responsible for the protection of the body), a cloakroom, an engine room, air conditioning, a control room, a warehouse, and a "funeral room" where the mummy was displayed. The interior of the latter was kept at a constant temperature (15 degrees) and humidity (80 %). The numerous technical problems that developed were solved by leading Czechoslovak scientists and

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446   Klement Gottwald (1896–1953) – Czechoslovak politician and communist activist. Leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1929–1953. Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in 1946–1948. President of Czechoslovakia in 1948–1953. In February 1948, he led the takeover of communist dictatorial power while maintaining the facade of a multi-party system. On June 14, 1948, he became president of Czechoslovakia. Under his rule, the Stalinization of the state began. The economy focused on heavy industry and rapid collectivization of agriculture. During Gottwald's rule, over 230 death sentences were passed, thousands of political opponents were repressed or sentenced to prison.

specialists, like special color filters used to properly illuminate the corpse so it maintained a "natural" color. The devices were tested in a substitute room, and a special model of the head of the former president was built for this purpose.[447] However, despite all security measures and regular maintenance and inspections carried out by Soviet experts, the mummy deteriorated. Gottwald died on March 14, 1953, but the decision to mummify and build the mausoleum was not made until March 31. According to some experts, it was this delay that later caused problems in keeping the mummy in good condition. The body was finally cremated in 1962, but until the end of the regime, Gottwald's remains rested in a mausoleum, in a sarcophagus.

In 2012, some rooms of the former mausoleum were opened to the public, and the exhibition was called the "Laboratory of Power" (*"Laboratoř moci"*). In the basement, you can now see a room with partly preserved machinery that maintained the climatic conditions suitable for the mummy in the past, and an arrangement of a room resembling an operating room, where once regular operations were performed to prevent Gottwald's body from decomposing. The viewer can also watch a short film about the history of the mausoleum and its technical secrets. The very title of the exhibition is ironic and critical: enormous efforts by the authorities to posthumously maintain the cult of the individual led to grotesque situations that were actually doomed to failure from the very beginning. Metaphorically, this situation reflected the problems of the entire system – a huge, costly, and unsuccessful social experiment.

On the first level, in the mausoleum, there is an additional, small historical exhibition entitled "At the crossroads of Czech and Czechoslovak statehood" ("Křižovatky české a československé státnosti") presenting some key moments in history: 1918 (the Masaryk republic), 1938 (the Munich Agreement), 1948 (the communists take power), 1968 ("Prague Spring"), and 1989 (political transformation). The exhibition includes a few objects and brief descriptions of successive turning points in the history of the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia. It lacks all martyrdom and heroic elements, despite the fact that it presents such tragic events as the death of Jan Palach.[448] The curators

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447 Jan Kužník, *Tohle na vlastní oči už nikdy neuvidíte. Podzemí, kde ležela Gottwaldova mumie*, https://technet.idnes.cz/gottwaldova-mumie-na-vitkove-djl-/tec_reportaze.aspx?c=A120224_200024_vojenstvi_kuz (retrieved: 26 July 2018).

448 Jan Palach (1948–1969) – student of history and political economy at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University in Prague, who protested the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 and against general apathy in Czech

remind visitors that most of society at that time, faced with the problem of choosing its path of life under communism, withdrew from the opposition activity and focused on private life.

In its present form, the mausoleum building is a place whose ambiguity does not allow for the classification of only one of the above-mentioned trends in the representation of communism. The memory of heroes (the Jan Žižka Monument, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) and anti-heroes (Klement Gottwald) intersect on the Vitkov hill. There is also a historical exhibition in the tone of an academic lecture and a ceremonial hall used for, among other things, the ceremonial decoration of soldiers returning from missions, e.g. in Afghanistan. There is an observation deck on the roof of the building, from which you can admire the panorama of Prague, which adds to the overall experience of the landscape.

The Museum of Communism is located in the center of Prague on the first floor of the baroque Savarin Palace, near Wenceslas Square. Opened in 2001, it is a private, unofficial venture and it would seem that, as in the cases described above, the representation would be burdened with an element of nostalgia. However, this is not the case; in this respect the exhibition is in fact ambiguous. The Museum of Communism in Prague is divided into three main parts: "Dream," "Reality" and "Nightmare," within which there are smaller segments covering various areas of life in the communist state: sports, education, art, propaganda, everyday life, military, police, censorship, and law enforcement. Right at the entrance, the public can see both monuments and numerous busts of heroes from the previous epoch (this part of the exhibition is somewhat reminiscent of the Polish Kozłówka). A cursory observation shows that the exhibition contains elements typical of nostalgic representations: a "typical" apartment filled with authentic appliances and objects, the arrangement of a store (with a scale, a refrigerated counter, and shelves with few products) and a classroom (with a blackboard and benches) (Photo 50). Visitors can also admire the exemplary products of the Czechoslovak automotive industry (moped), or "inventions" characteristic of the people's democracies promoting "innovative" and "space-saving" connections (e.g. a desk with an integrated radio, or a wall unit famous in the whole region).

However, this is only part of the exhibition, and its other elements not only differ from nostalgic representations, but even prevent or block the more or less conscious feeling of longing for the "good old days." Even a poster encouraging

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society. On January 16, 1969 he committed an act of self-immolation in front of the National Museum on Wenceslas Square in Prague.

you to visit the museum shows the reality of the system. On close inspection, the seemingly "innocent" and colorful Russian Matryoshka doll turns out to have terrifying fangs. The exhibition is accompanied by boards with historical descriptions of events in the world of brutal politics and a centrally controlled economy. Viewers can read about the devastation of the natural environment (heavy industry), propaganda, the Prague Uprising of 1968, the death of Jan Palach (this part is illustrated by his posthumous press photo), and the opposition trials. The exhibition also features a visualization of an interrogation room, where we see in a showcase what is perhaps the most shocking object: a rope from a gallows on which death sentences were carried out in the 1950s. This last exhibit effectively reminds the public, or (in the case of foreign tourists) makes us aware that the world of communism, full of absurdities, followed its own cruel logic. Sometimes one object is enough to "break" the viewer from the narrative path he is expecting, change his perception, and put him in an uncomfortable situation of cognitive dissonance.

The Czech exhibition ends with a symbolic representation of the fall of the Berlin Wall with photos showing the demolition of the Stalin statue in Prague (although this event took place in 1962, it symbolizes the abrupt end of the epoch), a bust of Václav Havel, a photo of Mikhail Gorbachev and, symptomatic of the new system, a shop with souvenirs. Squeezed in a small space, the Czech museum, though sometimes amateurish, has some interesting qualities and serves as an example in which "friendly" socialist everyday life and the system's brutal face can be shown in one representation. Undoubtedly, the creators of nostalgic exhibitions are right to say that everyday rituals and social life were also components of the system and must not be omitted in museum representations. But the "dissection" of everyday life from its context and the presentation of authoritarian politics as, at best, the background for one's own life does not seem to bring the audience closer to the full picture of communism.

The German Historical Museum (*Deutsches Historisches Museum*) in Berlin is another example of a successful exhibition strategy that evokes everyday life but avoids nostalgia. The part of the exhibition concerning recent times, separated by the cut-off dates 1918–1994 (internally divided into several-year sub-periods) is seamlessly inscribed in the long history of Germany starting in the museum from the year 500 and the Kingdom of the Franks. Information carriers in that part of the exhibition devoted to modern history are mainly objects associated with everyday life. Their use is intended not only to increase audience involvement, which results from the assumption that the anthropology of everyday life will be much more interesting for the viewer and closer to his

personal experiences than descriptions of events from the world of politics or legal documents, but also to show how ideology permeates every area of life and becomes the "air" that the community breathes. Because of this strategy, responsibility for the difficult German past – Nazism and communism – cannot be easily shifted onto the shoulders of a small group of decision-makers. Even in the case of artifacts such as children's toys, which usually "trigger" pleasant memories, the curators made sure to demonstrate their dark side and show how they served indoctrination and propaganda during the Nazi era (tiny portraits of Nazi leaders on the walls of dollhouses, anti-Semitic children's books). There are numbers next to the objects, explanations are offered through an audio-tour. The museum does not have a strong axis structure; the visitor is free to choose the direction of the visit. But objects are arranged to enable the chronological examination of events.

The postwar history at the exhibition begins with the representation of the period of Allied occupation (1945–1949), followed by a long phase of "divided Germany" (1949–1989). The sightseeing route is marked out by objects with clear symbolism, e.g. a poster with Stalin (as the source of the German communist system, the exhibition mentions "Soviet functionaries"), a Volkswagen Beetle and a Trabant, household appliances, TV sets and radios used every day, a large fragment of the Berlin Wall, and a reconstructed full-size political prisoner cell with a bunk and a monitor showing a personal account of a witness to history (Photos 51 and 52). The nostalgia associated with the use of a large number of everyday objects is "neutralized" by textual descriptions of dramatic events in GDR history (both political and socio-cultural). Combining privacy and politics, the exhibition shows how these two dimensions overlap and influence each other. Fond memories are effectively blocked by a reminder of the ubiquitous security service, dramatic escapes over the wall, the opposition, demonstrations, and persecution. At the same time, the exhibition does not avoid showing the brighter sides of the past period, such as the commonly shared satisfaction with sports victories, participation in the celebrations of the GDR's 20th anniversary, and a sense of social security.

As I mentioned above, the museum narrative about communism, like the story about Nazism, is not torn from the context of broader German history, but rather treated as a coherent story about history that combines elements easily inspiring pride in the community and moments with which it is difficult to identify. Such a representation of difficult heritage is a rare case in national museums, whose goal, as a rule, is to shape identity based on a nation's self-positive image.

Finally, I would like to briefly mention two Polish examples of exhibitions that confront (successfully) the danger of a nostalgic attitude towards communist everyday life. In 2015, a new building of the Silesian Museum was opened on the site of the former "Katowice" Coal Mine, which is one of the parts of the architectural complex that makes up the so-called Culture Zone. The seven-story building contains, among other things, a historical exhibition entitled "The Light of History: Upper Silesia throughout History," which was opened to the public in 2016.

The underground exhibition begins with the reconstruction of the former Katowice mine's entrance gate. The symbolic space of the mine, which was operating for 200 years, reminds us that it was a witness and an active participant in many historical events. After crossing the gate and the "markers" (the mine's ground office), the audience suddenly goes back in time and begins a journey through Upper Silesia, getting to know its history from the earliest times through the year 1989, with particular emphasis on the industrialization period, the beginning of which is represented by a steam engine launched in Tarnowskie Góry in 1788.

The exhibition is based on hundreds of authentic objects, reconstructions, and multimedia – all in a rich scenery with clear narrative and identity features. It tells about Silesia's complicated national and political situation (taking the territories from Germany, occupation by the Red Army, expelling the population), but at the same time emphasizes the Polishness of the region, the awakening of national identity, and the community's unique role in the struggle with the communist system. Emphasis on the importance of political events from the "Solidarity" period, the strike in the "Wujek" mine and the tragedies suffered by miners in their battles with the regime corresponds with the exhibition's second story – about the social, economic, and cultural development of Silesia. The everyday life of the inhabitants is shown primarily by the evolution of living conditions. Reconstruction of a room in a workers' hotel, a so-called "wulc," where young people who came to Silesia to work stopped, is the first stage of housing development, marked by pathologies typical of that time (mainly alcoholism and hooliganism). The next "rooms" in blocks made of "wielkie płyty" (concrete slabs) are characterized by an increasingly higher standard, although of course it is far from perfect. The rooms at the exhibition are filled with furniture and smaller objects that help viewers get to know the conditions of everyday life at that time. School books and textbooks, posters, educational games, magazines, electronics, and toys have a great potential to evoke nostalgic memories, so the curators took care to emphasize the less pleasant elements. For example,

in the displayed Fiat 126p model (the subject of dreams of millions of Poles), ingenious "lockers" were marked for smuggling foreign currency or Western products intended for trade (for example, cigarettes). In one of the apartments in the ten-story skyscraper model you can see SB agents at work – eavesdropping on residents (Photo 53). This was also part of everyday life in the PRL, a part which – in retrospect – viewers would like to "forget."

In general, the exhibition is not afraid to confront difficult topics; it mentions the German heritage of Upper Silesia, but at the same time allows visitors the satisfaction that comes with the formation of a Polish identity in the region. The curators recall Silesia's exceptional achievements beyond the routinely mentioned industrial development, e.g. the scientific and cultural accomplishments supported by rich infrastructure and institutions, such as the Silesian University of Technology, the University of Silesia, the Silesian Opera, the Symphony Orchestra, Puppet Theater, etc. The heroic elements that emerge do not prevail in the overall narrative; they are rather balanced by showing other dimensions of the complex borderland situation.

One of the few representations that not only talked about socialist everyday life without nostalgia, but even undermined the myth of a "beautiful era" typical of individual memories, was the temporary exhibition prepared by the Institute of National Remembrance in October 2012 entitled "Communism – La Belle Époque. Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc in the Seventies." This very traditional exhibition (documents, photos, and text panels) covered the period of so-called "Real socialism," when "the communist government had already stabilized its position and was buying social support at the price of improving living conditions." The exhibition pointed to an important factor in the emergence of nostalgia for the 1970s, noting that at that time, the first generations born under the communist dictatorship, who did not know life in a different system, were entering adulthood. "Most of these people (…) seemed to be reconciled with the reality that surrounded them and tried to derive the most benefits from it. The opposition – even if it did exist – was of marginal importance. And although communism collapsed in the next decade, the uncritically reproduced legend of the seventies as a carefree period of happiness continues."[449] This situation, at least in part, is intended to explain both support for authorities and the later myth of the "era of prosperity."

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449   All quotes come from the exposition's internet catalog, https://przystanekhistoria. pl/pa2/biblioteka-cyfrowa/katalogi-wystaw/25714,Komunizm-la-belle-poque.html (25 August 2014).

With the help of posters and photos from various Eastern Bloc countries, the exhibition showed the party and government celebrations, communist holidays with the participation of "believers" and daily indoctrination: red flags, slogans, statues of leaders, parades, press articles praising the system's series of "successes" – i.e. permanent elements of visual propaganda. However, this picture was juxtaposed with basic realities: difficult working conditions, low productivity, the inability to fight for better wages, the implementation of goals set by the party and not by social needs. Although agricultural collectivization was never implemented, rural areas were stuck in a completely inefficient economic model coupled with the lack of any modernization. At the IPN exposition, the housing situation was illustrated by photos of low-quality half-finished buildings, the lack of basic infrastructure, cramped and difficult living conditions. The economy in the 1970s, in fact, allowed for a short-lived period of consumption followed by collapse (represented by photos of ubiquitous queues).

The exhibition also showed unofficial ceremonies given that in many cases, traditional rituals had to go underground: baptisms, weddings, funerals, religious ceremonies, as well as "secular baptisms" – i.e. the ceremonial naming of military children and party officials. Free time was spent by the family, television, work on cars, spending time on allotment gardens. The status of women and apparent emancipation were mentioned: in addition to professional work, the responsibility for raising children was completely shifted to them. Everyday life, so eagerly recalled in the nostalgic trend, was shown in a completely different light, not evoking pleasant memories and positive emotions because it also included "hidden" dimensions: forbidden religious life, subcultures extinguished by the authorities, political opposition and the omnipresent apparatus of repression. The exhibition fully deconstructed the legend of "happiness" in the Gierek era, tearing away the glitter of memories, showing the brutal and real world of communism on the level of everyday life.

4.3. Nostalgia and Affect

In his analysis of the phenomenon of nostalgia for socialism, Mitja Velikonja distinguished the culture of nostalgia and nostalgic culture. The first is a discourse constructed by some social groups in order to achieve certain goals and impose them on others. It includes such phenomena as reactivating communist brands, selling memorabilia, organizing exhibitions (e.g. socialist-realist art), but it is also nostalgia deliberately induced by post-communist elites (a top-down discourse) for short-term political goals. The second type, i.e. nostalgic culture, is a certain mental pattern, nostalgic feelings / emotions and bottom-up activity associated

with a true longing for a sense of social security and stability.[450] The examples of musealization of nostalgia described by me are usually the result of both of the above types, although there are examples where one of them is dominant; the GDR Museum, for example, is mainly a business venture, and the State Farm Museum in Bolegorzyn remains the product of grassroots activity.

None of the nostalgic institutions refer to dramatic and brutal events; there are no nostalgic representations of Stalinism or oppression related to the system's daily functioning. As a rule, viewing such exhibitions is an uncomfortable experience for those who were involved in opposition activities in any way or who were persecuted by the regime for other reasons. Martin M. Šimečka writes, "For a man who places such elusive things as freedom and dignity above anything else, this system was terrible. Most people, however, give priority to the tangible. And real socialism was very concrete. It was predictable. Everyone knew where to find a doctor or employment, what to do to get a flat, how much would he pay for bread the next day."[451] Nostalgic exhibitions put the "horror" of communism into the background, focusing on everyday life, on short periods of increased consumption, drawing the public's attention to social security without mentioning its costs in other aspects of life. All of which means depriving the exhibition of full context. We are dealing here with a mechanism by which entire parts of the past are excluded, although this process is different than in the case of identity or Tyrtaean exhibitions. At the same time, however, the popularity of such exhibitions indicates a deep need for personal involvement and to establish inter-generational dialogue – museum guest books often include entries written by people thanking exhibition creators for illustrating and materializing the experience of their youth and providing an opportunity to tell children or grandchildren about it.

An important element of this type of representation is the creation of an affective experience. Affect – or, simply put, embodied forms of knowledge, "thinking with the body," the evocation of emotional reactions – influences the understanding of the past and creates new interpretative possibilities. Affective forms of knowledge play a large role in the formation and maintenance of memories and in shaping the social and cultural understanding of history.

450   Mitja Velikonja, "Lost in transition: nostalgia for socialism in post-socialist countries," *East European Politics and Societies* (2009), no. 23: 535–551.

451   Martin M. Šimečka, "110 konarów. Realny socjalizm i płynące zeń nauki," in *Nostalgia. Eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem*, op. cit, 137.

Early attempts to define affective experience date back to the 1960s, when psychologists Silvan S. Tomkins and Carroll E. Izard listed nine internal affective states: interest-excitement; enjoyment-joy; surprise-startle, distress-anguish, shame-humiliation, disgust (dis-taste); dissmell (dis-smell, or bad smell); anger-rage; fear-anxiety. It follows from this classification that affective states reflect reactions to experiences along a certain continuum: from pleasure to the abject. Art critics define affective experience as a spatial interaction between a specific work (or space) and the viewer; they focus on how the body responds to that type of experience. They record body reactions such as touching, listening, changing positions etc. The affective power of an object is measured in this case by the interest and level of the viewer's sensual involvement. Cognitivists conceptualize affect in relation to narrative (fiction). They claim that some types of fiction allow the reader to empathize with characters and situations. By creating possible worlds, fictional works allow for the opening of new interpretative possibilities, though they do not have to be closely related to a given narrative. The narratives (and worlds) created by museum spaces become potential gates to other possible worlds and can (through affect) evoke a Benjaminian "dialectical image" – i.e. a highly subjective moment of sudden cognition.[452]

Nostalgic representations are affective in all of the above dimensions; reconstructed interiors allow for the present and the past to collide, for visitors to physically move into another world, to recall the smells, tastes and colors of a bygone era. Memorial objects act as carriers of cultural memory and encourage engagement. The downside of such representations is their fragmentary nature and the fact that they evoke pleasant emotions regardless of the exhibition's subject (totalitarianism). Nonetheless, the cognitive potential of such spatial and temporal immersion is strong; we cannot help but appreciate its power. The basic question in the case of the social circumstances and everyday life of the previous epoch is not whether to represent it, but how to represent it, so that representations do not take on a standardized, predictable, and superficial form.

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452   Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, "Beyond Nostalgia. The Role of Affect In Generating Historical Understanding at Heritage Sites," in *Museum Revolutions. How Museums Change and Are Changed*, eds. S. J. Knell, S. MacLeod & S. Watson (Routledge: London and New York, 2007), 264–265.

Chapter 5 An Undesirable Heritage

The point of putting a costume on a city is to make it "your own," so that your people can feel at home in it and that others, strangers, can know that the city is not nobody's, but that it is "someone else's," someone's.

Florian Zieliński[453]

According to the definition I have adopted, heritage is a process that involves contemporary and selective use of the past at the local, national, and international levels. It consists of both tangible objects and intangible ideas. When tangible remnants offer an identity from which many people want to distance themselves, even if they consider it part of their history, the dilemma of an "undesirable" heritage arises.[454] Despite continuous demolition of the visual signs of the past, traces of communism still exist and become components of the national heritage of individual countries and a controversial element of national identities. Monuments and artistic works from the bygone era are a particular example of this difficult legacy.

5.1. Monuments in Exile

[…] the urban landscape itself is the emblematic embodiment of power and memory.

Christian Boyer[455]

This section's subject of analysis will be the present fate of monuments that were an integral part of everyday life for inhabitants of Central and Eastern European cities during the communist period. The main subject of my interest is not the functions performed by memorials and monuments in the past, but those that they perform today in the representation (or rather re-representation) of communism. Therefore, I will not analyze the biographies of monuments

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453 Florian Zieliński, "Szata ideologiczna miasta – pomniki," in *Przemiany miasta. Wokół socjologii Aleksandra Wallisa*, eds. Bohdan Jałowiecki, Andrzej Majer, Marek S. Szczepański (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2005), 221.

454 Sharon Macdonald, *Undesirable Heritage*, op. cit., 11.

455 Christian Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge MA 1994), 321.

from the moment of their "birth," but the present situation – thirty years after the collapse of the system with which they were inseparably connected. If, as Aleksander Wallis writes, the history of each monument consists of two separate and – in terms of duration – disproportionate periods (the first covering the time from the appearance of thoughts about the need for a given monument to its creation and unveiling, and the second beginning the day after this act),[456] then I am interested in a third period which Wallis did not take into account, namely the life of a monument after (symbolic or literal) death.

Maciej Kowalewski calls monuments a special form of significant places "associated with an individual map (plan) of personal space, but also defined by the arrangement of signs, associated with a specific cultural code understood by all inhabitants (…)".[457] More traditional definitions signify a monument as "a sculptural or architectural-sculptural work erected to commemorate a historical person or event, most often in the form of a statue or a sculpture group, column, obelisk, building, sometimes a mound or boulder."[458]

A monument may also be a spatial arrangement, a building, an artistic event, or a spectacle. Among the possible sculptural forms one can distinguish the realistic, naturalistic, allegorical, allegorical-abstract and abstract.[459] Monument forms are connected with specific historical epochs. In the circle of European culture, the monument was popular in ancient Greece and imperial Rome. In the Middle Ages, its role was played by tombstones and tombstone sculptures in the interiors of Gothic cathedrals and provincial churches. Later, it was reborn in Renaissance Italy and became popular in the nineteenth century.[460]

A monument is always intended to be a work of art (though sometimes imperfect or even mediocre). Artistic shape increases its prestige and power of

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456 Aleksander Wallis, *Socjologia przestrzeni*, eds. Elżbieta Grabska-Wallis and Maria Ofierska (Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1990), 226. The culminating moments of the first period were: the competition, awards, the opinions of the audience and critics, and the unveiling of the monument. Much less is known about the second period; sometimes historical demonstrations take place there, sometimes the monument deteriorates, sometimes it is restored. See ibid., 226.

457 Maciej Kowalewski, *Zmiany na cokołach. Uwagi o funkcjach pomników w przestrzeni miasta,* http://www.depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/3854/pomnik. pdf?sequence=1 (retrieved: 1 December 2015).

458 Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, *Polska rzeźba pomnikowa w latach 1945–1995* (Warszawa: Neriton, 1995), 12.

459 Ibid., 13.

460 Aleksander Wallis, op. cit., 223.

influence (through aesthetic experiences), and the language of sculptural art deepens its content.[461] Theoretically, a monument's main task is to commemorate a person or event. At the same time, it talks about a person as an individual, about people as a community, about the deeds of a single man and about collective deeds. It also testifies to the community to which it is dedicated and to the one that is its founder. As Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska writes, a monument is therefore signum temporis; it indicates the social, political, state, national or universal values of the era in which it is created.[462] However, this is only the most visible layer of a monument's "activity" because monuments are always:

> (…) erected to consolidate the continuity of certain traditions and values, i.e. to maintain the official or generally accepted version of history, or they are created to revise the prevailing ideology and impose a new historiosophy. According to these two possibilities, only those who wield power erect monuments.[463]

This means that any new authority, especially the authority that comes to rule as a result of revolutionary changes, builds new monuments by obscuring or simply destroying old ones.

Monuments are created as permanent works – that is, are intended to survive for ages or even eternity. This is evidenced by the material from which they are made, most often marble, bronze, basalt, granite or stainless steel, and the fixed, unshakable places assigned to them in the social and cultural space. They are usually located in open areas, where they occupy exposed, often central places. The location of monuments often marks a given area's climactic point. They are usually visible from all sides, and the space in which they are situated is chosen for its social importance. To sum up, monuments are usually stable, massive, and solid structures that are well-situated not just spatially but often, though not always, culturally. A monument's physical durability is transferred into a belief in the permanence of its identity and content. It should also be a legible work. Not everyone has to be aware of the entire range of meanings carried by a given monument, but its basic content must be understandable – a prerequisite for both impact and acceptance.[464]

Maciej Kowalewski divides monuments into three basic types: icons, symbols and works. The icons present in a realistic way a specific character (less frequently an event), most often well-known, easy to identify and causing no interpretive

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461   Ibid., 230–231.
462   Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, op. cit., 11–12.
463   Aleksander Wallis, op. cit., 228.
464   Ibid., 229–231.

problems. The symbolic function of monument-icons is based on recognizability, and their transparency is total (such monuments fully indicate the content they present with their appearance). According to Kowalewski, monument-symbols involve cases of non-specific but not abstract representations. The objects or characters presented are not recognized in the social consciousness as specific and individual, but rather as belonging to a certain category. The monument-symbol can be interpreted in many ways (it is not fully transparent), and its reading depends mainly on how widely the symbol's meaning is understood. Monument-works are, in turn, abstract representations that designate certain features or relations. What they represent is difficult to recognize, since physical properties are not the basis for a meaning that is beyond the monument's appearance. In this case the spectrum of potential interpretations is the widest (zero transparency); here, the aesthetic function is prevalent. The monument's meaning is not determined by pointing to the object itself, but by referring to the meaning of other signs.[465] The subject of this chapter does not require such detailed distinctions, because I treat each monument as a work of symbolic meaning, i.e. as something beyond literal reading. Interpretation changes with the changing socio-cultural and demographic context (new generations re-interpret old monuments). However, monument-icons – i.e. realistic representations of characters – are of greatest importance here because they gave rise to the most negative emotions during the systemic change in 1989 and were then burdened with the task of re-representing communism in modern times.

Memorials and monuments are an element of the cultural landscape that "transmits and communicates the views of the dominant social group to other groups, and reflects, represents and symbolizes the system and structure of authority from which it originates."[466] Managing the landscape (form and meanings) is therefore usually the authority's priority task, thus demonstrating its economic and/or political strength. Messages encoded in the landscape

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465   Maciej Kowalewski, *Zmiany na cokołach. Uwagi o funkcjach pomników w przestrzeni miasta* in http://www.depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/3854/pomnik.pdf?sequence=1 (retrieved: 1 December 2015).

466   Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power. From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley-Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1993); cited in Mariusz Czepczyński, "Nowe percepcje starych ikon krajobrazów miast po socjalizmie," in *Percepcja współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, ed. Mikołaj Madurowicz (Warszawa: Poligraf, 2007), 125. See also *Krajobrazy kulturowe. Sposoby konstruowania i narracje*, eds. Robert Traba, Violetta Julkowska, Tadeusz Stryjakiewicz (Warszawa/Berlin: Neriton – CBH PAN, 2017).

are usually very legible, and the power of the message is particularly intense. Therefore, from the very beginning, the communists viewed architecture and planned space to be highly important means of expressing power over the masses.[467] Memorials and monuments (along with patrons of various institutions and street names) became an integral part of socialist cities, the main elements of their "ideological garment," which allowed cities to present themselves as "somebody's."[468]

Contrary to urban infrastructure, the construction of which is a long-term process, a change of the ideological garment can be made quickly, sometimes even overnight. This change may have a different character; sometimes – as Florian Zieliński writes – it is even a kind of "violence," when the language and symbols of conquerors are imposed on cities. Giving streets the name "Stalin" or building monuments to the Red Army left no doubts as to who was wielding power; it taught people to view matters through the "optics" of a satellite state, and macro-buildings (such as the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw) became a kind of "stamp" of authority for their creators.[469] The ideologization of urban space began in Poland even before the return of the Soviet army from Berlin; the first competition for the Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army in Krakow was concluded on January 26, 1945, and the first of many similar monuments was unveiled on February 23 of that year in Katowice. A similar pattern was used for the next several years: two figures (a Polish and a Soviet soldier) on a pedestal. The plinth could be decorated with bas-reliefs with battle scenes, emblems of both nations, and inscriptions ("eternal glory to the heroes"). Of course, monuments of this type appeared in all countries liberated by the Red Army, and in many cases the authors of the designs were members of the Soviet military, who brought designs ready for duplication.[470] If it happened that a monument was destroyed immediately after it was unveiled by the local population, such as in Łódź in February 1946, it was unveiled again.[471]

The most important places for monuments (from an ideological perspective) were city centers. "In our system," Alexander Wallis wrote in 1979, "the city center is recognized by the public, specialists and authorities as the basis of the historical continuity of urban society's main values and of the entire nation – its

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467   *Percepcja współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, op. cit., 124–125.
468   Florian Zieliński, op. cit., 219.
469   Ibid., 221–222.
470   Irena Grzesiuk-Olszewska, op. cit., 46–47.
471   Ibid., 47.

history, culture, artistic achievements and social traditions." It is also treated as
a real material reference system for many literary works, iconographic messages
and historical legends important for culture's durability. For these reasons, the
city center and its main attractions are treated in political, social and cultural
terms.[472] Wallis emphasized the need for "secular sacred areas" in the city
center, and he included in them – alongside symbolic graves or execution sites –
monuments. The age of sacred objects, he said, is important, but they should not
be only objects from the past, because "next generations have a need to worship
people and matters pertaining to their personal, contemporary history." Thus,
the development of central areas was assumed to be based on locating new
symbols and secular values that fulfill sacred functions.[473] They were intended
to become the climax of space, counterpoints for other historical parts of the
area. "Bourgeois" monuments, tenement houses and entire fragments of the city
tissue were simply destroyed,[474] which Wallis does not mention in his article,
stating rather that the changes in city centers were carried out with full respect
and preservation of the historical value of entire complexes.[475]

According to the above assumptions, all monuments were placed in the most
representative (or least damaged) places in cities, usually on a large central
square, which was usually called Freedom Square. The monument had to
be clearly visible and placed at the intersection of the main city arteries. The
perfect location was accompanied by perfect material (usually bronze, granite or
marble). Monuments erected during the communist period – in addition to the
aforementioned emphasis on the superior role of "liberators" – were to historicize
contemporary events, give rank to certain events from the past, ennoble some
figures, express the society's desire to adopt a new system and a new social
identity. However, to achieve this, the monuments had to reach a certain social
status and gain universal acceptance. The communists hoped that monuments
"promoted by a minority" (as Alexander Wallis put it) would eventually gain

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472   Aleksander Wallis, op. cit., 132.

473   Ibid., 140.

474   One IPN exhibition, entitled „Zburzona Historia. Warszawa w latach 1945–1948",
      was devoted to this subject. It described the activities of the Warsaw City Planning
      Department established within the Capital Reconstruction Office on February 14,
      1945. The City Planning Department, led by Wacław Ostrowski, carried out mass
      demolition of buildings in Warsaw's Śródmieście district (under the pretext of poor
      technical condition), proposing, in turn, a space to indoctrinate society. See the
      temporary exhibition, May 2015, Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw.

475   Wallis, op. cit, s. 134.

legitimacy and wider recognition.[476] "Forbidden" monuments existed (or rather did not exist). There is an obvious relationship here: if monuments standing in the public space legalize certain ideas, the absent monuments mean that they are made illegal and some events and characters are pushed into oblivion.[477] Erasing the "bourgeois" past was as important as emphasizing the new order's strength and constancy.

Realistic monuments, which were the core of carefully staged celebrations and communist rituals, and numerous busts constituting instruments of public idealization of certain people, promoted the cult of personality (especially Stalin), and their ubiquity signaled the omnipotence of successive leaders and served as an expression of loyalty to both the leader and the entire Soviet Union. The celebration of Stalin's birthday created a new type of mini-chapels, sanctuaries of a kind, where Stalin's busts were surrounded by flags and socialist clichés.[478] The collapse of the system in 1989 marked the end of communism's rule in the political sphere and public space.[479] Attitudes towards communist monuments have changed over time and for the purposes of analysis, I have identified three basic stages.

5.1.1. Public Executions and Purges

The first, most brutal phase of the battle against communist monuments took place in 1989–1993. Its characteristic features are an outburst of spontaneous emotions and a desire for revenge and to emphasize change. The fall of

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476   Ibid., 227.

477   Florian Zieliński, op. cit., 228.

478   Reuben Fowkes, "The role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary," in *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in Eastern Bloc*, eds. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2002), 77–78. https://chisineu.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/biblioteca_crowley_socialist_spaces.pdf (retrieved: 24 January 2016).

479   The second element of this change, apart from the monuments, were street names, but this is not a topic of this work. It is only worth mentioning that this is a long process; in 2016 the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation published on its website a "black list" of street names that must be changed in accordance with Art. 1 of the Act prohibiting the promotion of communism or other totalitarian system by names of buildings, facilities and public utilities (Dz.U. RP z 2016 r. poz. 744), https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/dekomunizacja/zmiany-nazw-ulic/nazwy-ulic/nazwy-do-zmiany (retrieved: 22 February 2017).

communism meant a discontinuation and a sudden break in history; thus, the monuments that had stabilized the previous period and "frozen" certain values in time and space had to disappear. There were no regulations yet (such as the 1994 Polish-Russian agreement on graves and memorials), a fact which allowed for freedom of action.[480]

The way monuments were handled was then related to their form, and it was "political bodies" – i.e. monuments symbolizing a person and their body – that best serve the public execution in the form of spectacle. As Katherine Verdery writes, the monument stops the decomposition of the body, reverses the passage of time associated with a given figure and takes that figure into the realm of the timeless-sacred, like an icon and/or symbol. The destruction of such a monument not only means its removal from the landscape, but proves that it is not permanent, that nothing (no deity, authority or regime) can protect it. Deprived of timelessness and devoid of the sacred, it suddenly finds himself in the profane space; the figure becomes an ordinary person whose life is related to the natural flow of time.[481]

At this point, I will refer to what are, in my opinion, two of the most spectacular examples, and through this prism I will look more broadly at the socio-cultural phenomenon of the demolition of monuments. The first sculpture in Warsaw associated with the new regime was the Brotherhood in Arms monument (commonly known as the "Four Sleepers – Three Fighters" monument),[482] but the monument most hated by Varsovians was the image of Felix Dzerzhinsky, depicted in a romantic pose with a wind-blown cape, by Zbigniew Dunajewski. The monument was to be ready on July 20, 1951 to solemnly celebrate the 25th anniversary of the death of Dzerzhinsky, whom Stalinist propaganda described as "the pride of the Polish revolutionary movement." On July 21, a delegation of Soviet authorities, led by Deputy Prime Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, along with Bolesław Bierut unveiled the monument set up on Bankowy Square, renamed

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480   For more on monuments of gratitude to the Red Army, see Dominik Czarnecka, *"Pomniki wdzięczności" Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej i w III Rzeczpospolitej* (Warszawa: IPN, 2015).

481   Katherine Verdery, op. cit., 5. Despite the obvious differences between a monument and a dead body (while a monument is standing, a dead body is usually buried lying down), the author maintains that the treatment of both is similar. For example, in Yerevan (Armenia), after Lenin was removed from the pedestal, he was put on a truck and driven around the square like in an open coffin. See ibid., 12.

482   Removed in 2011 in connection with the construction of the metro, it will never return to its former location.

Dzerzhinsky Square.[483] In Warsaw, many people believe to this day that just after the ceremony, someone applied red paint to the hands of "bloody Felix."[484] It is difficult to verify this fact, but even if it is only an urban legend, it clearly proves the emotions that Varsovians felt towards the monument. The second icon-monument, very symbolic for the communist period, was the Lenin statue in Nowa Huta (Photo 54). The statue by Marian Konieczny was unveiled on April 28, 1973 in Aleja Róż in Nowa Huta. Earlier, a 1:1 scale model was made of plywood and steel so that residents could see the work of art. The figure of the revolutionary leader, cast in Gliwice, was 6.5 meters high and weighed about 7 tons. Inhabitants viewed the statue with irony, as a kind of joke, even with violence (an attempt to blow up the statue on April 18, 1979 resulted in only minor damage to the statue's legs).[485]

  The collapse of the system in 1989 meant the end of both Dzerzhinsky and Lenin's presence in the central squares. The city council decided to liquidate the Dzerzhinsky statue (under the pretext of building the metro), and the demolition was to be carried out by the Provincial Directorate of Municipal Roads. On November 17, 1989, a crowd of people gathered in the square, and some quickly decided that the work was going too slowly and began to break the pedestal. As reported by the daily Gazeta Wyborcza, the inscription was torn off the pedestal, many people took pictures. What happened next resembled a public execution or even a lynching, as evidenced by the memories of direct witnesses. Rafał Jagiełło, who took part in the statue's demolition, said: "When we entered the square, a trance had fallen over the crowd waiting at the statue. People screamed and clapped. A friend, Edward Łuczak, put a noose around Felix's neck."[486] In Nowa Huta, the battle over the Lenin statue took on increasingly severe forms. In November 1989, the following inscriptions appeared on the walls of the buildings: "Lenin, go back beyond the Don [river]," "Lenin with razor blades," and "Down with Lenin." On November 22, several hundred people

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483 Tomasz Urzykowski, *"Krwawy Feliks" i inni. Co się stało z pomnikami bohaterów PRL-u?*, http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19179707,krwawy-feliks-i-inni-co-sie-stalo-z-pomnikami-bohaterow-prl-u.html (retrieved: 31 December 2015).

484 Jerzy Besala, "Pomniki niezgody," *Polityka* 51/52 (2015): 90–93.

485 *Pomnik Lenina zniknął z Nowej Huty 25 lat temu*, http://nowahistoria.interia.pl/aktualnosci/news-pomnik-lenina-zniknal-z-nowej-huty-25-lat-temu,nId,1570306 (retrieved: 3 February 2016).

486 Tomasz Urzykowski, *"Krwawy Feliks" i inni. Co się stało z pomnikami bohaterów PRL-u*, http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19179707,krwawy-feliks-i-inni-co-sie-stalo-z-pomnikami-bohaterow-prl-u.html (retrieved: 31 December 2015).

gathered at the statue – activists of the Fighting Youth Federation, the Freedom and Peace organization, KPN, NZS, and Fighting Solidarity. The inscription was torn off the plinth, and demonstrators wrote offensive slogans on it. Ultimately, the statue was torn down on December 10, 1989 and then transported to the Wróblowice fort.[487]

As Michel Foucault wrote:

> The public execution, therefore, has a juridico-political function. It is a ceremonial by which a momentarily injured sovereignty is reconstituted. It restores that sovereignty by manifesting it at its most spectacular. The public execution (…) deploys before all eyes an invincible force. Its aim is (…) to bring into play (…) the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength.[488]

People were summoned to the spectacle because the public execution was supposed to terrorize society and to isolate "rebels" through a barrier of strangeness and horror. In the case of the execution of monuments, we are dealing with a ceremonial whose political function is reversed; it is the people who turn out to be the ultimate sovereign, and the omnipotent ruler has lost his omnipotence and (symbolic) life. This ritual process shows all the features of liminality, defined by Victor Turner as a time and place to withdraw from normal forms of social action and analyze the main values and certainties of a given culture.[489] Turner distinguishes two types of liminality: the first is associated with rituals that raise those of a lower status to a higher position in the institutionalized system. The second liminality is:

> (…) frequently found in cyclical and calendrical ritual, usually of a collective kind, in which, at certain culturally defined points in the seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors; and they, in their turn, must accept with good will their ritual degradation. Such rites may be described as rituals of status reversal. They are often accompanied by robust verbal and nonverbal behavior, in which inferiors revile and even physically maltreat superiors.[490]

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487   *Pomnik Lenina zniknął z Nowej Huty 25 lat temu,* http://nowahistoria.interia.pl/
      aktualnosci/news-pomnik-lenina-zniknal-z-nowej-huty-25-lat-temu,nId,1570306
      (retrieved: 3 February 2016).

488   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. from the
      French by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), 48–49.

489   Victor Turner, *Proces rytualny*, trans. Ewa Dżurak (Warszawa: PIW, 2010), 168.

490   Ibid., 169.

We are dealing with a similar process in the case of the destruction of the above-mentioned monuments.

The mood during the demolition of the monuments was carnival-like. The term "euphoria" appears in the memories of witnesses. Jacek Marczewski, a participant of the events in Warsaw, says: "After the sculpture was torn down, the people gathered there became euphoric. Equipped with hammers, they rushed to smash concrete, especially heads. They took the chipped pieces away as souvenirs. Dzerzhinsky lost his nose, fragments of hair, beard, neck and cloak. – I managed to grab two locks from his chin. They are with me to this day (…)".[491] The plinth was blown up with explosives. Wojciech Polaczek, one of the leaders of the Fighting Youth Federation, a participant in the events in Nowa Huta, recalls that "after dismantling the statue, we felt euphoria. It turned out that with sufficient determination, one can do something despite the resistance of the highest authorities. If Lenin had not disappeared from Aleja Róż at that time, I do not know if he would have disappeared at all, after how many years."[492] The Federation considers the destruction of the Lenin Statue to be its greatest achievement. Decisions by officials to demolish monuments were often made under heavy public pressure.[493]

According to Dario Gamboni, similar acts of ritual destruction – events which characterized all of Central and Eastern Europe – were an expression of the need for direct participation in historical change.[494] This "purge" was brutal only at the beginning, but the process of removing the monuments continues to this day. As a rule, acts of ritual destruction of monuments were a combination of top-down and bottom-up factors. Decisions on demolition in Poland were made by City Councils, encouraged by Solidarity activists and the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN). Sometimes they were accompanied by happenings, usually in a carnival atmosphere. There were also spontaneous attacks on sculptures and monuments, and there were cases of destruction of monuments

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491 Tomasz Urzykowski, *"Krwawy Feliks" i inni. Co się stało z pomnikami bohaterów PRL-u,* http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19179707,krwawy-feliks-i-inni-co-sie-stalo-z-pomnikami-bohaterow-prl-u.html (retrieved: 31 December 2015).

492 *Pomnik Lenina zniknął z Nowej Huty 25 lat temu,* http://nowahistoria.interia.pl/aktualnosci/news-pomnik-lenina-zniknal-z-nowej-huty-25-lat-temu,nId,1570306 (retrieved: 3 February 2016).

493 In Częstochowa, the Fighting Youth Federation threatened to blow up a monument of "gratitude." See Dominika Czarnecka, op. cit., 349.

494 Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 51–90.

and acts of vandalism (often during important anniversaries or dramatic events, such as the presidential plane crash in Smolensk in April 2010[495]) and robbery at war cemeteries (devastation and theft of tombstones).[496]

5.1.2. Exile and Emptiness

Urban space contains certain meanings. And, as I mentioned above, it is – in itself – the embodiment of power and memory, which means that after the fall of the communist regime it became necessary to create a new semiotics of the public landscape. All traces of Soviet ideology had to disappear or at least be isolated from the new post-Soviet experience, institutions, behavior, emotions, and urban landscape. Some memorials and monuments forcibly removed from central squares and exposed public spaces literally found themselves in the dustbin of history: completely dismantled or placed in warehouses and storage sites for discarded things. If previously they were semiophores – i.e. socially recognized carriers of meaning, objects produced or displayed to attract attention[497] – they were now degraded to the role of waste.

Let us return to the monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky: the statue (or rather what is left of it) has been located in a warehouse of the Municipal Roads Authority since 1989, but initially the location was shrouded in mystery:

> On the vast square, parking meters, lanterns and pavement slabs dismantled from Warsaw streets are stored. (…) The sculpture stands between a pile of huge steel I-beams and a pile of granite slabs. Separate legs, separate torso with head attached. The communist hero looks pathetic as if he had lost a fight. There is no nose, no ears and just a few face parts. There are rods sticking out of the shattered neck, and there are signs of blunt instrument blows on the forehead and hair. His cape is also chipped over the uniform fastened with a belt. In his right hand, Dzerzhinsky is still holding a book.

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495   On April 10, 2010, a Polish military plane crashed in Smolensk, Russia in which 96 people died, including Polish President Lech Kaczyński and his wife. It was the largest catastrophe in the history of the Polish Air Force in terms of the number of victims. Over the years, the catastrophe has become an object of public debate in Poland in terms of, e.g., the causes and course of the accident. At the same time, various conspiracy theories about the crash have emerged, suggesting that the crash may have been a political assassination, and that it could have been the result of an assassination attempt or other terrorist act. Polish and international investigations have found no evidence to support such claims.

496   Dominika Czarnecka, op. cit., 341–342, 344.

497   For more on semiophores, see Krzysztof Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2006), 100–102.

Perhaps it was Lenin's work that no one wanted to snatch from his hand. The entire sculpture is covered with patches of greenish patina.[498]

Instead of Dzerzhinsky, in today's Bankowy Square, there is a statue of Juliusz Słowacki (created by Edward Wittig), which was unveiled in 2001.

Sites of degraded, dismantled or destroyed statues are usually quickly filled with new statues, but they can also remain empty, symbolizing the old system's disappearance. In the latter case, however, ignored and quickly forgotten, they lose their importance. In this situation, forgetting has an extremely important function: it is constitutive of the formation of a new, post-communist identity of a society that gets rid of the burden of memories that do not serve current goals. The new socio-cultural perspective forces structural amnesia,[499] while the lack of traces of the socialist past in the public space supports this process.

It is worth adding, however, that the removal of old symbols is not equally intense in all post-communist countries, and the phenomenon is accompanied by lively debate. In Hungary, a survey was carried out in 1991 showing that the majority of the population did not want to destroy statues. This situation has been interpreted as a sign of how attached or accustomed Hungarians are to "goulash" communism and to the monuments themselves, despite (or because of) their political significance. It was similar in Lithuania, where 63 % of the society was in favor of preserving monuments (research from 1999), a difference being that – unlike in Hungary – there was very strong opposition to a project to create a statue park (about which I write later in this chapter).[500] In Ukraine, the situation is special due to the division of the country into its eastern part, where the communist party retained strong influence, and its western part. While the Lenin statue in Lviv was turned into a statue of Taras Shevchenko, and in Kiev the Lenin statue was finally destroyed in 2013, the destruction of a Stalin statue unveiled in 2010 in Zaporizhzhia in the east sparked accusations of terrorism. In 2007, Viktor Yushchenko issued a law according to which all monuments to

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498   Tomasz Urzykowski, „*Krwawy Feliks" i inni. Co się stało z pomnikami bohaterów PRL-u,* http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19179707,krwawy-feliks-i-inni-co-sie-stalo-z-pomnikami-bohaterow-prl-u.html (retrieved: 31 December 2015). The Felix Dzerzhinsky and Brotherhood in Arms monuments will get new lives at a Polish History Museum exhibition (the author's interview with the director of the MHP, Robert Kostro, April 5, 2018).

499   Paul Connerton, op. cit., 62–64.

500   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 80.

those responsible for the Great Famine in Ukraine were to be destroyed, which has not yet been implemented.[501]

In Estonia's capital Tallinn, the "Bronze Soldier" Monument (est. Pronkssõdur), or rather the Tallinn Liberators Monument (*Tallinna vabastajate monument*), which was erected in the city center in 1947, stood until 2007. The two-meter tall statue of a soldier was located on St. Antoni Tõnismägi Mound, at the mass grave containing the remains of a dozen or so Soviet soldiers who died in 1944. On April 26, 2007, Tallinn's authorities began exhuming the remains of soldiers that were to be moved (along with the monument) to the military cemetery. This sparked protests from the Russian minority and riots. Despite this, the monument was dismantled and moved to a new location, where it was unveiled on May 8, 2007.[502] In Riga, Latvia, the Latvian Riflemen Monument (*Latviešu strēlnieku piemineklis*) stands in its former place, as does the monument dedicated to the Red Army in Sofia (Bulgaria). The presence of the latter is problematic: on the 45th anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops, it was painted pink, and in March 2014, after the Russians seized Crimea, this "act of vandalism" was repeated.[503] The Latvian Riflemen Monument is not that controversial, because the absence of the adjective "Red" indicates that it commemorates the original organization that fought against Germany during the First World War. In 2005, a monument dedicated to the victims of the revolution of 1989 was built in Bucharest (Romania), but at the same time, despite a long debate, the monument to communist national heroes erected in 1963 in the Freedom Park remained in its old place. Comparing examples of the changing fate of monuments in Central and Eastern Europe, we can identify three clear methods of dealing with undesirable monuments: complete destruction, transfer to military cemeteries, or leaving them in the old, usually central place, which exposes them to various protest actions, happenings, or performances.

The problem of post-Soviet monuments unexpectedly returned to Poland in 2016, when, after the parliamentary elections and the change of national leadership, Paweł Ukielski, vice president of the Institute of National

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501 In their blog, Alexander Etkind and Rory Finnin write about the Ukrainian war on monuments: http://cambridgeculturalmemory.blogspot.com/2011/02/ukraines-monument-war.html (retrieved 2 January 2016).

502 *Estonia removes Soviet memorial,* http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6598269.stm (22 February 2017).

503 Michał Wachnicki, *Rosja do Bułgarów: przestańcie malować sowieckich żołnierzy na różowo*, http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,16516345,Rosja_do_Bulgarow__Przestancie_malowac_sowieckich.html (retrieved: 12 April 2018).

Remembrance, appealed to local governments to remove communist symbols (specifically the monuments of the Red Army) from public space. A quick inventory showed that about 200 (out of 500) monuments remained.[504] Despite considerable controversy and debates over fallen Soviet soldiers, and in the face of Russian opposition, the Institute of National Remembrance stuck to its position. "Monuments," Ukielski claimed, "are unequivocal glorification of those to whom they are dedicated. And one should not honor in the public space an individual responsible for the 1920 invasion,[505] for the invasion and occupation of half of Poland's territory in 1939, for such post-war crimes as, for example, the Augustów roundup."[506] Of course, there was no question of returning to the first stage – i.e. a brutal purge – because too much time has passed and the violent emotions associated with the old system's collapse have passed. Therefore, the destruction of monuments is not an option; the Institute of National Remembrance has confirmed its readiness to care for the graves of Soviet soldiers and is planning no activities related to cemeteries. That having been said, the symbolic significance of the monuments is so great that they are considered harmful, despite the fact that local residents do not mind them, in part because they have been transformed into relics of old times, even landmarks in space. In the opinion of the Institute of National Remembrance, the symbolic space should be "organized" with "references to those values on which the state wants to be based."[507]

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504   "Cmentarze tak, pomniki nie. Rozmowa z Pawłem Ukielskim," *Polityka* (2016), no. 25: 30.

505   In the years 1919–1921, the Republic of Poland waged war against the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which was attempting to conquer European countries and transform them into Soviet republics in accordance with the ideology, political doctrine and political program of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The most important and decisive military operation of the war was the battle fought on August 13–25, 1920 between the Polish Army and Red Army as it advanced toward Warsaw. Poland won that battle.

506   Ibid., 30. The Augustów roundup – a military operation carried out in July 1945 by Red Army units and separate units of the Polish People's Army. Its aim was to break up and liquidate units of the independence and anti-communist underground in the Suwałki and Augustów area. The detainees were interrogated and tortured using Stalinist methods of cruelty and terror. Only some of those arrested in the roundup returned home. To this day, it is not known what happened to the large number of missing people: how they were killed and where the bodies were buried. The number of victims has never been verified. Original estimates were 600 people, but some historians indicate that it may be as many as 2,000.

507   Ibid., 31.

In this light, plans have been drawn up to organize an "open-air museum" of monuments, with two locations under consideration: Borne Sulinowo and Czerwony Bór near Łomża. Both places are loaded with meaning. In 1945, Borne Sulinowo was taken over by the Red Army, and until 1992 the town was excluded from Polish administration. In turn, in the area of Czerwony Bór there was a military training ground (liquidated in 2001) and an internment camp during martial law. An "open-air museum" is supposed to have a well-developed "narrative path" providing the context of the monuments and their history.[508] This is not an original solution; similar places already exist in Central and Eastern Europe and belong to the type of activities referred to in this work as re-representation.

5.1.3. Re-representation[509]

By re-representation, I mean dealing with monuments in such a way as to change their undesirable meaning to another, one that is more acceptable in the new political and cultural situation. As a rule, this is done by moving monuments to a different specially prepared place (museums, statue parks, theme parks) or (as in the case of most commemorations dedicated to the Red Army) to cemeteries. Moving the facility to a less exposed environment – e.g. from the city center to a park, or from a main plaza to a square – may contribute to its acceptance. Lowering its rank also limits its impact.[510] Moving a monument to a cemetery results in a change of meaning – it begins to fulfill or supplement the function of a grave and loses the attributes attributed to monuments standing in an urban space.[511]

A rather bizarre method involves the attempt to transform a given monument into another (more "desirable") object. As Dominika Czarnecka shows, this method was intended to solve the problem of the unwanted monument and the possible spatial gap left behind, and – at the same time – to reduce the costs of building a new commemoration.[512] However, such hybrids do not acquire a

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508   Ibid., 31.

509   I borrow the term "re-representation" from Paul Williams in a slightly modified sense. See Paul Williams, "The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary's Szoborpark and Lithuania's Grutas Park," *Forum of Modern Language Studies* 44 (2008), no. 2: 186.

510   Dominika Czarnecka, op. cit., 345.

511   Ibid., 345. Sometimes, when for technical reasons it was impossible to transport the entire monument, part of it (e.g. sculptures) was moved and plinths were added. See ibid., 346.

512   Czarnecka gives examples of solutions similar to those in Darłowo, where the monument of victory was "reworked" into a monument of the millennium

completely new identity. Postcolonial categories of mimicry, farce or camouflage can be used to interpret them. Unclear relations between the old monument and the new object, an attempt to adapt to the changed socio-political context result in the emergence of a new "subjectivity" of the monument, whose symbolic meaning goes beyond traditional interpretations. A similar monument successfully fits into the category of "other," evoking ambivalent feelings both among the former "colonizers" and the liberated "colonized".

Sometimes changing meaning does not require many alterations; it is enough to enter a given monument on the heritage list. Such a situation took place in Drawsko, where two Soviet T-34 tanks, placed as a "victory gift" of the Soviet Union, were included in the decommunization act against the will of local residents, who not only had gotten used to them, but also treated them as something that distinguishes their city. City authorities entered the tanks on the list of "technical monuments" to save them from "decommunization."[513]

Changing the meaning is also possible through ironic distancing from the monument, which can be the result of artistic or commercial activities. An example of the first type of activity is the Fountain of the Future (so-called Pissing Lenin) – an installation created by Małgorzata and Bartosz Szydłowski and established on Aleja Róż in Nowa Huta as part of the Grolsch ArtBoom Visual Arts Festival in 2014. Bartosz Szydłowski claims that this artistic vision is "(…) a processed sum of various opinions, observations, and at the same time a chance to create a recognizable, bold, and liberating sign. Our district is not gray and gloomy. The happenings that preceded the implementation of this project showed how much distance and sense of humor the inhabitants have."[514] An important category in this case seems to be liberation from the burden of oppressive history, a new definition of a monument (contrary to its status and meaning) as an ordinary sculpture or a composition containing an element that is humorous, giving lightness to the sad surroundings while emphasizing the

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symbolizing Poland's return to the former Slavic lands by adding a bas-relief of a crosier and the head of Otto of Bamberg. Sometimes the changes are minimal and consist only of removing communist symbols or inscriptions from the monument. Ibid., 346–347.

513 *"Ten pomnik był tu od zawsze. To jest moje dzieciństwo". Jak czołgi z Drawska bronią się przed dekomunizacją,* http://wyborcza.pl/10,82983,23027327,ten-pomnik-byl-od-zawsze-to-jest-moje-dziecinstwo-jak-czolgi.html#HPw6 (retrieved: 6 June 2018).

514 *Fontanna Przyszłości* https://laznianowa.pl/ogloszenie/fontanna-przyszlosci-zagoscila-w-nowej-hucie (retrieved: 6 June 2018).

invigorating controversy (critical comments appeared under the article about the festival, deeming this form of art inappropriate in connection with the real and criminal activities). In the case of all artistic installations, the recipient is left with a great deal of freedom to interpret, a face which makes him, in a way, a co-author of the work.[515] The "Fountain of the Future" establishes a dialogue with the past, shows how historical monuments are entangled in the context of place and time, and illustrates the extent to which the present gives meaning to history. It is also a way to make the audience aware that history does not end with an arbitrary cut-off date (like 1989), but remains incomplete and unfinished, continuing in the present and taking various forms.

Monuments used for marketing purposes also take on an ironic meaning. In the early 1990s the Dzerzhinsky sculpture in Warsaw was an object of interest for an American company, which wanted to use it for advertising purposes. But the transaction did not take place because – as the then deputy mayor of Warsaw, Jerzy Lejk, explained – the city could not freely dispose of the monument due to copyright. According to the current regulations, those rights expire 70 years after the death of the creator (Zbigniew Dunajewski died in 1966).[516] It was different in the case of the Lenin statue in Nowa Huta, which on December 10, 1989 was moved to the Wróblowice fort, and in 1992 it was sold to a Swedish millionaire. Tage Erling Erlandsson (also known as "Big Bengt") placed it in his theme park (whose main theme is the Wild West) changing its meaning not only through physical relocation, but also through certain procedures, such as placing an earring in Lenin's ear or sticking a cigarette in his mouth.[517] The ethos of mocking irony described by Linda Hutcheon is clear here. It articulates a full array of values: from homage to ridicule, from slapstick and sarcastic mockery to layered ironic malice.[518] A cultural text (in this case, a statue) can be read in an ironic way when placed in a proper context, which requires certain knowledge not only about Lenin himself, but also about the history of the statue. It is not known to what extent visitors to the High Chaparral Theme Park in Värnamo are able to "read" the statue in a changed situation or what the intentions of the creator of this place really were.

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515   Compare Łukasz Guzek, *Sztuka instalacji. Zagadnienie związku przestrzeni i obecności w sztuce współczesnej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2007).

516   Tomasz Urzykowski, „*Krwawy Feliks*" *i inni. Co się stało z pomnikami bohaterów PRL-u* http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,19179707,krwawy-feliks-i-inni-co-sie-stalo-z-pomnikami-bohaterow-prl-u.html (retrieved: 31 December 2015).

517   *Nowohuckie dzieje Lenina,* http://www.nh.pl/lenin.htm (retrieved: 16 March 2016).

518   Linda Hutcheon, op. cit., 338–339.

From the perspective of my research, the most interesting attempt to deal with the material heritage of communism is the musealization of monuments, i.e. placing monuments in specially prepared places, which become exhibitions. This procedure is mainly aimed at the ideological neutralization of sculptures and depriving them of their symbolic potential. Separation from the original context (by removing it from public places) allows for the creation of a new situation, redefined meanings, and a change in status. In Poland, beyond the aforementioned plans to create an open-air museum of monuments, there is a Statue Park located on the grounds of the PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska (Photo 55). The Fundacja Minionej Epoki tries to acquire them on its own, though in the face of great difficulties, because monument owners are various local government bodies (municipal councils, city councils), which are not always favorably disposed to such solutions. The Russians do not agree to placing monuments to Soviet soldiers in places other than military cemeteries. The Foundation tries to obtain monuments through various contracts, such as loan or donation agreements, and brings them to Ruda Śląska at its own expense. Monika Żywot (director of the PRL Museum) views monuments as an inseparable part of that life, its everyday landscape, and this is the function they should perform in the museum. The intentions of the park's creators are to remove the monuments from ideology and associate them only with everyday social life in the PRL, with the marches and ceremonies that organized people's lives back then.[519] Monuments are also collected by art galleries in Kozłówka (Poland) and Sofia (Bulgaria), though their meaning in this case is different – they function as works of art (I will write about this in the next paragraph). The two most famous examples of musealization of monuments in Central and Eastern Europe are statue parks in Lithuania (Grūtas) and Hungary (Budapest).

In Lithuania, the communist period is referred to as "Soviet-Russian colonialism," and all remnants of the system are treated with such hostility that by the mid-1990s the post-communist landscape was "cleansed" of all remnants and references to the socialist era. New monuments celebrate the "heroic" times of the Middle Ages (e.g. in 1996, a monument to Gediminas was unveiled on Cathedral Square, and in 2003 a monument to Mindaugas was unveiled at the foot of Castle Hill). In 1998, a special parliamentary commission launched a national competition over how to preserve socialism's "forgotten" and problematic iconographic heritage. The competition was won by businessman Viliumas Malinauskas, who proposed the establishment of a park and put up

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519   Author's conversation with Monika Żywot, 20 November 2015.

$2 million of his own funds for this project. Over the next few years, socialist monuments were collected 130 kilometer from Vilnius, where the Museum of Soviet Statues – Park Grūtas (Sovietinų Skulptūrų Muziejus – Grūto Parkas) was established in a 20-hectare fenced area and opened on April Fools' Day 2001. The very idea caused controversy, and the idea of Soviet statues serving as entertainment (the very date of the Park's opening suggested a humorous approach to the subject) initiated a national debate and polarized society (some people considered such activity to be "criminal" and a mockery of the suffering of the old system's victims).[520]

Surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers, there are 86 statues throughout the Park, accompanied by small exhibitions placed in three stylized wooden barracks. After passing through the main gate, tourists walk along an alley with boards on the right side, containing fragments of articles concerning both the idea of the park and the figure of its creator Viliumas Malinauskas. On the left you can see a large cattle car used to deport people to labor camps (the original idea of using the car to transport tourists was blocked by the Minister of Culture).[521]

Wooden "exhibition" houses, one of which is referred to as a "museum," are located on the marked sightseeing route. In the first of them (Grūto Agitpunktas), reminiscent of a Soviet club or community center (similar clubs were established in the 1940s and 1950s), objects and materials of ideological and propaganda dimension were collected (sound and photographic materials, fragments of press articles in various languages), as well as flags, coins, or medals. At the exhibition, among the library shelves, you can see mannequins of children in pioneer costumes. In the second exhibition building, called the Information Center (Informacijos Centras), there are mainly press clippings from the period, busts (including of Marx and Engels) and a few socialist-realist works of art (Photo 56). In principle, there is no clear difference in content between these two exhibitions; it seems that what did not fit into the first building was simply moved to the second. The purpose of the exhibitions was to expose the Soviet policy of genocide against the Lithuanian nation by showing the means by which it was carried out,[522] but it does not seem that an exhibition that is simply an accumulation of objects, without a coherent narrative line, could fulfill the task so defined. In this form, it is simply a collection of objects from the

520   Gediminas Lankauskas, "Sensuous (Re)Collections: The Sight and Taste of Socialism at Grūtas Statue Park, Lithuania," *Senses&Society* 1 (2006), no. 1: 28–29.

521   James Mark *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 82.

522   http://grutoparkas.lt/muziejai/ (retrieved: 11 July 2016).

communist era that evokes various emotions: curiosity, nostalgia, amusement, anger, indifference. Only the third house, the so-called Gallery (*Sovietinės Dailės Galerija*) is coherent in terms of content, since it presents works of art (socialist realism and later), portraits of leaders, mascots, and trinkets from the communist era.

In the Park there are also playgrounds for children, a stage for various performances (on May 9 each year, reenactments are held with actors playing Lenin and Stalin, presenting scenes from the revolution), and a mini zoo.[523] For tourists, a restaurant was also built in the Park (on the menu, in addition to "ordinary" dishes, there are also "nostalgic" dishes) and a souvenir shop. Scattered throughout the space are objects "from the old days," which are neither monuments nor works of art (like a rusty saturator or a vehicle used to sell lottery tickets). Near the restaurant there is another building started as an ethnographic (sic!) exhibition, but unfinished and planned rather as yet another eatery.

In Grūtas Park, memorials, statues, and busts have been placed along two "alleys" – one representing the persecutors (Lenin Street), the other representing the victims (Melnikaitė Street) (Photo 57). Next to statues of communist oppressors are those representing the Lithuanian henchmen responsible for crimes against national culture and guilty of "genocide" against the Lithuanian nation. Heroes and martyrs illustrate the martyrdom of the Lithuanian people under the Soviet state. The political context of the creation of the monuments has been ignored; they are accompanied by biographical details of the people depicted, but not the creators of the sculptures or the political circumstances of their creation. Biographies were prepared by historians and curators associated with the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir resistencijos tyrimo centras) in Vilnius. The Centre is responsible for the Museum of Genocide Victims in the former KGB headquarters in Vilnius. Each of the monuments has a large space "for itself" – they do not crowd each other, but are rather placed on specially designated "clearings." The meaning of some monuments to communist heroes who became victims of communism has changed (such as Marytė Melnikaitė, a participant in the Soviet resistance, or Lithuanian communists murdered in Stalin's purges in the 1930s). In this case, the omitted context is particularly important, as these monuments were created to commemorate communists who died defending the so-called

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523 Animals are located throughout the area, with some (like birds of prey and bears) being kept in conditions that defy all possible standards; watching them is the only truly unpleasant experience in Grūtas Park.

"Lithuanian reactionary nationalism." In different circumstances, they could easily be considered persecutors.[524]

Most of the monuments come from the late communist period (the time of their creation is not really important), while the place itself (drained marsh, barbed wire) – chosen for its "Siberian atmosphere" – is supposed to resemble a labor camp from 1940–1950. The walk is accompanied by marching music emitted from loudspeakers along the route. It is difficult for me to say how the area looks in November or March, but during my visit on a hot July day in 2016, nature was in full bloom and the mood was holiday and summer-like. It is not without significance that there are bathing places not far from the Park, and 5 kilometers away is the spa town of Druskininkai, from which many patients with children come to Grūtas. It is hard to imagine anything more distant from the real Gulag camp atmosphere.

In Hungary, as in Lithuania, a competition was announced in 1991 to solve the problem of communist monuments. The concept to create a Statue Park designed by architect Ákos Eleöd won that competition. Szoborpark (also known as Memento Park) was opened on June 27, 1993, on the second anniversary of the collapse of the communist system. Tourist destinations were also of great importance, given that Szoborpark was to be part of the Expo exhibition planned for 1998 (although the project was abandoned, half of the total number of people visiting the park are tourists).[525] The full name of the place "A Sentence About Tyranny – Statue Park" is reference to a poem by the Hungarian writer, poet and journalist, Gyul Illyés.

Ákos Eleöd's concept called for the division of the entire space into two separate spheres: the Statue Park arranged in six fields forming circles and a trapezoidal square with two buildings functioning as educational and exhibition facilities. The architect emphasized that Szoborpark should not be read in an ironic dimension, but in a commemorative one that serves as a warning. He paid particular attention to the trapezoidal "Witness Square," which was intended to symbolize all the squares of Central and Eastern Europe where breakthrough events took place: Széna tér in Budapest, Václavské náměstí in Prague, Castle Square in Warsaw, Piata Operei in Timisoara, Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Народно събрание (Narodno sabranie) square in Sofia.[526] The main entrance

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524   James Mark *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 84.

525   Paul Williams, op. cit., 190.

526   See *In the Shadow of Stalin's Boots. Visitors' Guide to Memento Park* (Budapest: Premier Press Ltd., 2016), 8–9.

to the park was to be a combination of ancient columnar style with elements associated with socialist realism (red brick wall).

Unfortunately, the project has not been finished and, as I learned from the guides, it is "constantly developing." A special bus runs from the center of Budapest to the Park. During the trip you can listen to marching songs from the era and a short outline of the history of the place itself. In Szoborpark, in the "monumental" part, there are 42 monuments from the period 1947–1988, embodying communist ideology in the Hungarian public space. On each of them there is information containing the title of the work, the name of the artist and the place where the monument was located before being transported to the Park. Some of them, such as the "cubist" Marx and Engels by György Segesdi, which in the past occupied an "honorable" place at the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, are of great artistic value (it is the only monument of this type in the world and its unusual form caused controversy at the time). Beyond that, it is not entirely clear for what purpose a Trabant, a symbol of the communist automobile industry, and a telephone booth, once popular in the region, were placed on the gravel near the entrance. It is difficult to connect these elements with a "commemoration" or warning against tyranny, and should rather be interpreted as nostalgic curiosities.

Instead of the planned Witness Square in the Statue Park, there is a grassy square bordered by two buildings in the form of wooden barracks. In one of them you can see a small exhibition about two groundbreaking events in the history of Hungarian communism: the uprising in 1956 and the collapse of the system in 1989. A small cinema contains a surprise: an over-hour-long instructional film for members of special services entitled "An Agent's Life." The film, made by a secret production company owned by the Minister of the Interior, features officers who stage short scenes on how to search apartments in an exemplary manner, to set wiretaps, to talk to secret collaborators in public places, to recruit collaborators (e.g. by means of blackmail), to track "characters," and to observe "suspicious" apartments. The instruction concerns the regime of János Kádár, i.e. the period between 1956 and 1988. The film is interspersed with illustrative material from authentic observations more or less (most often less) skillfully conducted in the field. This film introduces elements of comedy to the exhibition, comedy which, in a surreal and grotesque way, was part of the system. To this day, Hungarians interpret "goulash communism" in ambiguous ways.

For supporters of the idea, statue parks are simply democracy's "civilized" response to dictatorship. According to the founder of the Szoborpark, Ákos Eleöd, democracy is the only system that allows a dignified look at the past's mistakes and failures. "This Park," the architect writes, "is about dictatorship, but

as soon as this can be talked about, described, and built, the park is already about democracy. After all, only democracy can provide the opportunity for us to think freely about dictatorship, or about democracy, come to that, or about anything (…)."[527] Monuments in Hungary were not so much dangerous as embarrassing (due to the fact of their survival), because the lack of iconoclasm could be interpreted as evidence that Hungarians adapted too readily to the system (especially in the 1960s and 1970s). Which is perhaps why the main monument, towering over the entire park, is a replica of "Stalin's boots" – i.e. the remains of the Stalin statue, completed in 1951 and torn down in 1956 during the revolution in Hungary. All that remained of the sculpture were boots attached to the statue's base and perceived as a mockery of the dictator. The remains of the statue were finally removed and in 2006 a monument to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was erected. A copy of Stalin's boots was placed in Szoborpark in 2008 (Photo 58). A second copy – made of plaster – is located in the above-mentioned wooden barracks, in the exhibition area. While it is true that the boot copy ruins the image of the park as a place with authentic objects, it also proves that sometimes the originals are not "ideologically" sufficient. "Stalin's boots" are a symbol of the fact that the Hungarians also attacked the communist system.[528] The time of the monuments' erection is irrelevant (as in Grūtas), regardless of whether it was the 1950s or the 1980s; the monuments are meant to signify the past, indeed the distant (preferably Stalinist) past, so the message remains consistent.

The aesthetic level of the monuments in the Statue Parks varies; while some are of high value (e.g. the Béla Kun statue or the aforementioned Marx and Engels in Szoborpark), others contain important historical details (e.g. Rusu Karys, or the Russian Soldier in Grūtas Park with a list of prisoners of war), though there is no indication that these features were decisive when choosing statues or placing them. Sculptures that once dominated the public space have been reduced to mnemonic curiosities accompanying socialism (Photo 59). After decades of privilege and domination, they are now – literally and metaphorically – on the margins. As Gediminas Lankauskas writes, from the position "above" they were brought to the ground and are within reach of the touch and sight of every human being; one can stand next to them and take a photo. Currently, it is public

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527   https://www.mementopark.hu/en/concept/commendation/ (retrieved: 23 November 2022).

528   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op. cit., 82–83. The photograph of Stalin's giant head on the pavement was a symbol of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. See also Rodney Harrison, Heritage. Critical Approaches (London – New York: Routledge, 2013), 175.

visitors to the parks who have a sense of superiority in relation to both the statues and the regime they supported, legitimized, and served.[529]

Writing about Szoborpark, Anne-Marie Losonczy recalls the metaphor of a cemetery[530] where society "buries" dead monuments. For Lankauskas, parks are rather places of imprisonment. The monuments stand (they do not lie flat like dead bodies), they are still "alive" but locked in a place of isolation. According to Lankauskas, Grūtas Park is an "inverted" Gulag, where the Leninist-Stalinist state was detained as punishment for many crimes against its own nation.[531] One of them – the deportations of Lithuanians to labor camps in Siberia – is commemorated in the park by the aforementioned freight car. The sliding door is open, revealing the interior. The inscription says that the wagon is a symbol of the Stalinist era (1940–1950), when "mass genocide of the Lithuanian nation" took place.

However, the cemetery metaphor seems to me off the mark since the statues in the Parks are not dead objects but are rather still "alive" and supposed to fulfill specific functions. The very decision to create the Parks allowed their curators and originators to produce new narratives for them. Depriving statues of the political and ideological potential from the past provides an opportunity to fill the resulting void or a certain ambiguity with a new meaning. The parks took over representation and gave the statues a second life. I also disagree with the opinions of Western scholars who (like James Mark) treat Statue Parks as places of terror, arranged to portray communism as a criminal system. The argument that they were created out of fear that such objects may enable real ideological communication between the collapsed system and post-communists,[532] or that they are a warning to people with particular political sympathies,[533] is equally weak. These suggestions seem far-fetched. Even if these were the goals of the initiators and creators (which I doubt), the implementation is far from the alleged intentions. Recreational areas have been created for tourists from the West (or people interested in communist monumental sculpture) and focused on entertainment and time spent with children.

I am also unconvinced by the argument put forward by Paul Williams, who writes that preserving the material heritage of communism may mean a desire to stand out and maintain the status of a non-Western state while searching for a

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529   Gediminas Lankauskas, op. cit., 36–37.
530   See Anne-Marie Losonczy, "La patrimoine de l'oubli: Le 'parc-musée des statues' de Budapest," *Ethnologie française* 3 (1999), 455–452.
531   Gediminas Lankauskas, op. cit., 38.
532   James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution,* op. cit., 82.
533   Paul Williams, op. cit., 195.

new, post-communist identity.[534] The "new" identity of the Central and Eastern European countries is most often treated as a return to what is "old" from the pre-communist period, which requires a complete separation from the socialist stage in the life of these societies, and they prefer not to maintain the status of "non-Western" countries. The statues are meant to serve as reminders of the socialist past, so that it would be easier to distance oneself from that past and prevent a possible return to the Soviet identity. Lankauskas uses the term "dis-identify," which means the process of distancing oneself from the communist heritage through its isolation in Statue Parks.[535]

The parks' main task (apart from the above-mentioned recreation) is, in my opinion, to reinterpret the communist period for visitors' needs. This requires facing certain difficulties, which Ákos Eleöd (speaking in terms of his concept of the Szoborpark) calls "paradoxes": "The first paradox is that the monuments are a remnant of an anti-democratic state, but at the same time remain part of our history, the second: they symbolize authoritarianism. but they are also works of art; third and finally: although they were undoubtedly created for propaganda purposes, it is important not to interpret them as anti-propaganda, as this would mean a continuation of the dictatorial mentality."[536] Parks suggest a clear ambivalence as to whether communism was "our own" (through adaptation to existing conditions) or completely foreign (imposed). The creator of the Grūtas Park, Viliumas Malinauskas, points to a similar problem: "(…) it is a cruel story but it is our story, and its destruction would be tantamount to the destruction of a part of the Lithuanian past."[537] Their physical relocation from cities meant that the monuments are still "ours, but not with us";[538] they provide opportunities to spend free time, but are no longer part of everyday life. The point is thus to rewrite the past to suit the present, to neither demonize the statues on display nor celebrate them, but rather to present them in such a way as to suggest that the system's collapse was necessary for the present freedom of political expression.

A statue in a Park can also be interpreted as a kind of counter-monument, undermining the ethical and aesthetic assumptions of its creation by emphasizing current artificiality and adding a counter-effect – i.e. an entertainment element. Humor is possible because Parks represent only symbols of ideology without

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534   Ibid., 191.
535   Gediminas Lankauskas, op. cit., 39.
536   Quotes from an interview with Ákos Eleöd from the years 1992–2003, https://www.mementopark.hu/en/concept/concept-2/ (retrieved: 20 November 2015).
537   Cited in James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution,* op. cit., 81.
538   Paul Williams, op. cit., 193.

going into political details.[539] The very location of Parks (outside the city center or even beyond the city limits) also allows viewers to treat the monuments not as powerful icons or symbols, but as objects that can be laughed at or interpreted in an ironic way. They are treated as kitsch for entertainment (not as art); they are denied respect. Both of the Parks discussed above abound in various forms of ironic events (such as reconstructions), which additionally indicates that we are dealing here with business ventures that "sell" the properly-packaged socialist past.

In the case of the Polish Statue Park (in the PRL Museum in Ruda Śląska), it is mainly about evoking close, prosaic, and nostalgic memories evoked by everyday objects associated with ordinary life. Socialism is commonly mentioned not through references to an anonymous totalitarian system, but through the prism of individual biographies and experiences. Statues and monuments were "organizers" of public space, landmarks, and central places for various ceremonies, and as such evoke various, not only negative, memories.

I agree with Gediminas Lankauskas, who emphasizes that for many people (in the past), the ability to navigate the socialist system, overcome the difficulties of everyday life, and to gain knowledge of the rules in force, were together a major contribution to their identity; those skills gave them a sense of control over their own lives. The collapse of the system rendered all this knowledge obsolete and irrelevant. Socialist rules and principles, social roles, everyday routine, hierarchies of values and material surroundings – all of this became irrevocably a thing of the past. Thus, memories of life under the regime are very complex, operating at the intersection of biographical and ideological, individual, and collective discourse, longing and nostalgia and hatred and contempt.[540]

While the metaphor most often used by researchers to describe parks is, as mentioned above, a cemetery or a prison, Paul Williams also proposes "banishment." A banished person remains absent, but their absence is significant because it is supposed to be visible as a lesson for others.[541] However, I believe that in the case of monuments, their absence from the urban landscape and public space causes them to disappear from the social consciousness. Memory of places where "outdated" monuments once existed can be erased very quickly, and subsequent generations have no chance to gain any knowledge about them. As Dorota Jarecka writes:

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539   Ibid., 191.
540   Gediminas Lankauskas, op. cit., 36.
541   Paul Williams, op. cit., 194.

Destruction always has the same effect: an empty space is left behind and after a year no one remembers what happened there. A properly described testimony of totalitarianism is better than a pretty square studded with pansies. Today, Germany is building an educational program around the most terrible remnants of Hitler's totalitarianism. In addition to the buildings erected for party rallies in Nuremberg, a new museum-documentation center has recently been opened. Each place emanates meaning; the historical context and environment are at work every day, as are the emotions people feel looking at the monument.[542]

The "banishment" or exile of monuments is associated with an additional problem, or rather a danger, one that involves the complete separation of the communist period from the present, the lack of any real possibility to confront the past, to take a critical view of particular societies and their relations with communism. Christoph Stölzl (director of the German Historical Museum in the 1990s) claims that the movement of monuments to museums or open parks is primarily an expression of the lack of other ideas about what to do with them.[543] The discussion in Poland, which resumed in 2016, indicates that there is a great deal of truth to this claim, though other, more important premises are also at play. Getting rid of monuments is important mainly from the perspective of historical policy. Even if the public is not bothered by monuments – as in Hungary, where acts of vandalism or anger were, in practice, quite rare and where people treated monuments as harmless landmarks in their personal cultural and geographical city landscapes – politicians who define themselves as being in opposition to communism find it necessary to create a sense of breakthrough, complete change. As Maya Nadkarni rightly observes, it also involves efforts to set in stone the experience of transformation.[544] Exile is a symbolic separation from the past, throwing it outside a given country's "normal" course of history.

Łukasz Kamiński (former president of the IPN) claimed: "Leaving them [communist monuments – A. Z-W] is a consequence of the unfinished transformation in Poland from the early 1990s. (…) We will transfer the monuments to the museum, let them remain as a testimony to dramatic times. They should not remain in city centers, because who will explain to young people in 50 years that there is no monument to a hero in such a place? Today, knowledge about the circumstances of the construction of these monuments is

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542   Dorota Jarecka, "Co robić z tymi pomnikami?," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 111, supplement *Kultura* (14 May 2007), 18.

543   Cited in Dario Gamboni, op. cit., 77.

544   Maya Nadkarni, op. cit., 194–195.

quite common, but in several decades that will change."[545] With the disappearance of the monuments from the public space, the last act of the country's de-Sovietization is taking place. On the other hand, Statue Parks are places that remind people of the past and where communism is externalized, materialized, and charged with various meanings and emotions. The idea of public exposure will always remain more constructive than destruction because it opens a field for discussion. Monuments remain Pomian-esque semiophores; though they have no political and ideological power, they emanate the power of attraction, even as a tourist attraction.

5.2. Socialist Art

Art belongs to the people. It must leave its deepest roots in the very thick of the working masses. It should be understood for the masses and loved by them. It must unite the feelings, thoughts and the will of the masses and raise them. It should awaken artists in them and develop them.

Vladimir Lenin[546]

We demand that painting contain a new content of life, a socialist content. […] By connecting art with the people and imbuing artistic creation with values with which the people in their struggle for progress permeate national life, by relying on the progressive traditions of our national culture, we will create a Polish style of socialist painting, an equivalent of the patriotic impulse that animates the entire nation in the battle for socialist Poland.

Juliusz Krajewski[547]

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545 Katarzyna Szewczuk, "Wojna pomnikowa" z Polską? Reakcja Rosji jest absurdalna [interview], http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/prezes-ipn-wojna-pomnikowa-z-polska-reakcja-rosji-jest-absurdalna-wywiad/dzdglc (retrieved: 24 February 2017).

546 Cited in Jolanta Studzińska, *Socrealizm w malarstwie polskim* (Warszawa: PWN, 2014), 32–33.

547 Kuźnica (1949), no. 28, cited in Sławomir Grzechnik, "Sztuka zapomniana, sztuka odkrywana. Powojenna twórczość polskich artystów plastyków w zbiorach Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce", *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) (2015), no. 2: 15.

For the story of the socialist-realist creative method (the term appeared in 1932), one should start with the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organization "Proletkult" officially established in the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution (the idea itself came even earlier, from the year 1905). The organization took patronage over the paintings of amateur workers and organized exhibitions for them. But the achievements of amateurs could not fulfill the tasks set by the theory of proletarian culture, in which the image was to be closely connected with reality and the work class. Therefore, socialist realism ultimately excluded the possibility of creating art by amateurs; the works were to be made by professionals.[548]

The socialist realism program was officially proclaimed in the Soviet Union by Maxim Gorky in 1934 at the Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow. It was based on Stalin's texts, especially "On Party Policy toward Belles-lettres" and initially referred to literature, though – at the request of Andrei Zhdanov – it was later extended to all fields of art. In its strict definition, socialist realism lasted until Stalin's death in 1953 and Khrushchev's 1956 speech closed its most vital phase. In a nutshell, Soviet socialist realism required the presentation of the imaginary socialist reality with the realistic language of art. Although it referred to nineteenth-century classical realism, the key difference was that the artist's task was to present a postulated reality, absolutely positive and optimistic, devoid of any critical view, and not real in the sense of faithful reproduction or imitative manner of presentation.[549]

The harbinger of socialist realism in Poland was Bolesław Bierut's speech "For the Dissemination of Culture" delivered on November 16, 1947 during the opening ceremony of Polish Radio in Wrocław. Bierut stated at that time:

> Artistic and cultural creativity should reflect the great breakthrough that the nation is experiencing. (…) It is necessary for our contemporary artists to remember that their works should shape, inspire, and educate the nation. It is necessary that our artists, our literature, our theater, our music, and our film be as closely connected with society as possible.[550]

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548   Wojciech Włodarczyk, *Socrealizm. Sztuka polska w latach 1950–1954* (Paris: Wydawnictwo Libella, 1986), 21–23.

549   Jolanta Studzińska, op. cit., 43.

550   Bolesław Bierut, „O upowszechnianie kultury. Przemówienie Prezydenta Rzeczpospolitej Bolesława Bieruta na otwarciu Radiostacji we Wrocławiu 16 listopada 1947" (Warszawa-Kraków, 1948), 16–17, 20–21, cited in Jerzy Eisler, op. cit., 77.

The successive stages of introducing socialist realism into other fields of Polish art were the following conventions and conferences held in 1949: the Szczecin Congress of the Polish Writers' Union, the Conference of Visual Artists in Nieborów (the acceptance of the program was finally confirmed by the 4th National Congress of Delegates of the Association of Visual Artists in Katowice), and the Conference of Party Architects. Polish socialist realism, copied from the Soviet version, not only did not expose the problems of the depicted everyday life, but excluded even ordinary objectivism (in the sense of the existence of the position of the painter-observer). The dominant threads in artistic creation – the figure of a worker, his workplace, production, political activity, science – had to be in line with the principle of "ideologicality" – i.e. involvement in the class struggle on the side of "progressive forces."[551] The essential features of socialist-realist paintings are space: a worm's-eye view, the monumentalization of figures, a conscious deformation of the principles of linear perspective, the unnatural extraction from the canvas plane of the heroes of presented events, resignation from the compositional role of light. These procedures were to facilitate the achievement of the "ideological" (i.e. propaganda) character of painting. Two genres dominated: portraits (usually leading leaders and revolutionary activists) and the so-called thematic painting, i.e. figural scenes, with the exception of collective scenes from the times of the revolution, which were painted with caution due to the ever-changing assessment of individual participants and their activities.[552]

One of the most imprecise categories of the doctrine of socialist realism involved "national form." This concept appeared in the texts of theoreticians and politicians of the 1920s and 1930s in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin announced in 1925:

> We are building proletarian culture. That is absolutely true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, assumes different forms and modes of expression among the different peoples who are drawn into the building of socialism, depending upon differences in language, manner of life, and so forth. Proletarian in content, national in form – such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding.[553]

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551   "Ideologicality" was also the main criterion by which a work should be evaluated. See Wojciech Włodarczyk, op. cit., 18–19.

552   Wojciech Włodarczyk, op. cit., 17.

553   J. V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7: 1925 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 140.

Ultimately, the "national form," never well defined, indicated various models to follow, e.g. classicism or, as in Poland, the Renaissance (the famous "Polishness of the Renaissance attic"), but since there were no practical guidelines to follow, the category remained just theory. Its most important task in the people's democracies was to consolidate socialist realism imported from the East and adjust work to the Soviet pattern. It was thus a kind of pragmatics, defining a set of rules of conduct triggered by the doctrine of socialist realism towards the artistic achievements of the nation in which it was implemented. "It meant the mechanism that the doctrine of socialist realism offered to an artist freshly converted to socialist realism. The slogan 'national form' can be treated as a definition of the principle conditioning the stability and continuity of Stalinist culture, as a guarantee of its memory."[554] As Wojciech Włodarczyk writes, from the artistic point of view, the category of national form was used to fight the avant-garde, and over time it was narrowed down and reduced to two issues: Russia and the Western world and the issue of national minorities. During the period in which the doctrine of socialist realism crystallized, it became dangerous for the coherence of the doctrine and subsided.[555]

After the Stalinist era, socialist realism as a dogma and doctrine was condemned and abandoned, as were the works produced during this period. In Poland, in 1955, most art critics and artists conducted a revision of their views and an "examination of conscience," and articles about the "mistakes of the past system" began to appear in the press.[556] Frequently organized art exhibitions have left behind thousands of paintings, graphics and sculptures created in the "national form," which converged with the experience of an uneducated recipient and respected the linear perspective and a "natural" color scheme. Jacek Szczepanik writes: "Shortly after the introduction of socialist realism, a huge production of paintings, sculptures and graphics began, which were presented primarily at four National Art Exhibitions in the years 1950–1954. About 3,000 works were submitted for each, of which the artistic commission selected 600–700. And various exhibitions – thematic, cyclical, anniversary, May Day, traveling, national and regional – were also organized."[557]

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554   Wojciech Włodarczyk, op. cit., 36.

555   Ibid., 31.

556   See Joanna Studzińska, op. cit., 393–404.

557   Jacek Szczepaniak, "Sztuka narzucona i wyrzucona. 10 lat Galerii Sztuki Socrealizmu w Kozłówce," in *Socrealizm. Fabuły – komunikaty – ikony*, ed. Krzysztof Stępnik, Magdalena Piechota, Wydawnictwo UMCS (Lublin 2006), 515.

Thus, almost overnight, thousands of works were rejected on such topics as individual leaders, the construction of socialism (and then communism), work-production (i.e. large construction sites), changes in the Polish countryside, civilizational development and technical progress (with clear symbols like a tractor, light bulb, radio), labor leaders (without showing the beauty of the human body, nudity or eroticism in any form), and military issues (most often with the participation of soldiers in peaceful work for the homeland). Suggestive titles of paintings usually involved the simple transfer of poster slogans or newspaper headlines.[558]

The subject of my research does not cover the history of socialist realism, but rather the current situation of works created over a short period of time (in Poland, the years 1948–55/56[559]) and later hastily thrown out of galleries, museums, and official spaces. Writing about contemporary methods of using socialist realism's heritage, Małgorzata Lisowska-Magdziarz employs the term "utilization," that is their use mainly in advertisements, as a "springboard" consisting in their creative use in one's own work (elements of socialist-realist iconography serving aesthetic purposes and ideological expression) and a panoptic indicating the treatment of works of art as curiosities, market entertainment, marvels.[560] As an example in the latter case, Lisowska-Magdziarz offers the gallery of socialist realism in Kozłówka, with which I cannot agree in any way because such places fulfill completely different functions.

The only Socialist Realism art gallery in Poland was established at the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka, which in itself is an interesting example of an unexpected paradox: the fate of art banished from public space coincided here with equally "cursed" – though for completely different reasons – "bourgeois property." The residence in Kozłówka was created by Konstanty Zamoyski (1846–1923), the first ordinate of Kozłówka, and the property's last owner was Jadwiga Zamoyska, who left it in 1944. In July of that year, Aniela Zaleska appeared in Kozłówka. She met Jadwiga Zamoyska in Warsaw and undertook to maintain the abandoned palace. Zaleska tried to turn it into "state property" as

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558 Sławomir Grzechnik, *Sztuka zapomniana*, op. cit., 16–17.

559 Different researchers mark the decline of socialist realism in Poland differently. See for example Jolanta Studzińska, op. cit., Zbigniew Jarosiński, *Nadwiślański socrealizm* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 1999).

560 Małgorzata Lisowska-Magdziarz, "Socrealizm bez wartościowania. Fascynacja socrealizmem w tekstach kultury popularnej w Polsce po 1989 roku," in *Socrealizm. Fabuły – komunikaty – ikony*, op. cit., 435–438.

soon as possible, which would deprive it of the stigma of "bourgeois" property and give it "an ideologically correct character, in line with the encroaching communist reality."[561] In fact, as early as October 10, 1944, the Kozłowiecki estate was partially excluded from the land reform process and allocated for the "maintenance of historical monuments."[562] November 15, 1944 is given as the date of the museum's establishment.[563] Its collection at the time was described as "historical and moral, coming from prewar times."[564] Beyond the museum, in the residence's outer buildings, an orphanage and a school functioned for a certain period in the 1950s. In 1954, the Central Board of Museums resigned from its role in maintaining the museum facility in Kozłówka, and on June 29, 1955, it transformed the existing institution into the Central Museum Repository of the Ministry of Culture and Art. The facility was closed to the public.[565]

The Repository's task was to implement the nationwide management of museum exhibits, which was conducted by the Central Board of Museums and Monuments Protection, and which consisted mainly in directing collections to other museums and serving as an intermediary between museums in the exchange of exhibits.[566] The repository functioned in the years 1955–1977 and received "formerly German" property from the so-called Recovered Territories, "courtyard" objects (taken from the estates of the Polish aristocracy and landowners on the basis of PKWN decrees[567]) and – as of the 1960s – works from the era of socialist realism which, by the end of the 1950s, had become embarrassing for the authorities. This unwanted legacy was collected primarily

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561 Katarzyna Kot, "Muzeum w Kozłówce. Początek," in *Muzea – rezydencje w Polsce II*, ed. Anna Fic-Lazor (Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce, 2015), 101–102.

562 Akta PKWN, V/13, cited in Katarzyna Kot, op. cit., 103.

563 The person who received the first subsidy was Kazimierz Biernacki, described in the documents as the "director of the National Museum in Kozłówka," ibid., 107.

564 Ibid., 111.

565 Ibid., 111–115.

566 Document from the Centralny Zarząd Muzeów i Ochrony Zabytków dated 3 December 1958, cited in: Sławomir Grzechnik, "Centralna Składnica Muzealna Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki w Kozłówce 1955–1977," in *Muzea – rezydencje w Polsce II*, op. cit., 118 and 124.

567 The Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN, see footnote 390) On September 6, 1944, PKWN issued a decree on land reform in Poland. The decree expropriated, with immediate effect and without compensation, all owners of land estates with an area above 50 hectares (over 100 hectares in the western voivodeships), depriving them, apart from land, of livestock, buildings and their furnishings, including the manor house.

in the warehouses of the Ministry of Culture and Art and the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions in Warsaw (Zachęta) and its branches in large regional cities.[568] It was the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions, on May 17, 1960, that delivered to Kozłówka the first batch of 108 "politically incorrect" paintings on socialist topics.[569] Very quickly, successive transfers made the Repository the largest warehouse of ill-regarded and rejected art in Poland. Until the 1970s, the forgotten socialist-realist collections were stored in Kozłówka's warehouses, which were "discovered" by Andrzej Wajda shooting scenes for "Man of Marble" in 1977 (the National Museum's warehouses presented in the film are the Repository's warehouses).[570] In the same year, in place of the Repository, a museum facility was established again under the name of the Museum-Palace in Kozłówka.

Works of socialist realism were presented to the public for the first time in 1990 at an exhibition entitled "Stalin's breath. Art in the Battle over Socialist Realism." At the time, mostly sculptures and paintings from the first half of the 1950s were exhibited (in a temporary exhibition hall). The curators treated them as a kind of counterbalance to the nineteenth-century art collections presented in the palace. In 1992, the exhibition was shown again, with interest being particularly high because of the transfer of monuments from city streets to Kozłówka, including Bolesław Bierut from Lublin, Vladimir Lenin from Poronin, or Julian Marchlewski from Włocławek. The exhibition also featured smaller busts.[571] In 1994, a permanent Socialist Realism Art Gallery was officially opened in Kozłówka, located in a renovated eighteenth-century coach house. Krzysztof Kornacki writes:

> The exhibition prepared for the inauguration of the gallery was anti-totalitarian in nature. This was achieved by juxtaposing three cartoons by Franz Eichhorst from 1936 with the flagship works of socialist realism – designs for frescoes in the Berlin-Schöneberg town hall. A forest of flags, boys from Hitler Youth, Jungvolk, trumpets and snare drums were juxtaposed with analogous representations of Stalinist youth. The similarity of the props was shocking for visitors.[572]

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568   Sławomir Grzechnik, *Sztuka zapomniana*, op. cit., 18.

569   Sławomir Grzechnik, *Centralna Składnica Muzealna Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki w Kozłówce 1955–1977* op. cit., 133.

570   *… zaczęło się w Kozłówce. Historia dokonań pierwszego muzeum w powojennej Polsce (1944–2014)* (catalog), intro. Krzysztof Kornacki (Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce 2014), 93.

571   Ibid., 93, 95.

572   Krzysztof Kornacki, "Zbiory sztuki okresu realizmu socjalistycznego w Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce," *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Cepernici. Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo XXIX – Nauki Humanistyczne* (1998) no. 326: 78. As Kornacki writes, 294 objects were presented at the exhibition, including a selection of works

The exhibition maintains a division between painting and sculpture, while paintings were themselves divided thematically into two groups, with one depicting members of party and state authorities as well as foreign activists, and the other depicting labor leaders like such well-known Stakhanovites as miners Wincenty Pstrowski and Czesław Zieliński and the builder of Nowa Huta, Piotr Ożański (the prototype for Mateusz Birkut, the protagonist of Andrzej Wajda's film). In addition, a number of images illustrating historical events in post-1945 Poland were presented, along with propaganda illustrative material (nationalization of industry, agricultural reform, reconstruction of destroyed towns and villages, combating illiteracy).[573]

Monuments standing outside, gathered in one place and with attached descriptions, formed the so-called "avenue of merit." The statue of Bolesław Bierut – which is several meters high and was unveiled in Lublin as part of the process of restoring the good memory of the former president in July 1979 (on the 35th anniversary of People's Poland) – is of particular interest to this day. Following the transformations after 1989, the Lublin Municipal National Council was one of the first to decide to remove from its plinth the monument erected 10 years earlier. Dismantled on July 31, 1989 (the sculpture lost its right arm during the operation), the monument was transferred to the Museum of Socialist Realism in Kozłówka. Bierut Street was renamed Lwowska, and the square (initially unnamed) is now named after Isaac Bashevis Singer.[574]

The new arrangement of the socialist realism exhibition (since 2004), developed by Romuald Kołodziej, introduced a thematic principle: spaces were organized dedicated to the countryside and agriculture, the development of industry and industrialization, internationalism, the battle against colonialism and imperialism, and the role of women in society. Large-format photos were used for the arrangement, additional objects were introduced (e.g. a tree, a fence, an electric pole, scaffolding, bricks). There was also a "home corner" (table, chairs, sink, everyday objects).[575] Another change of the exhibition took place in 2012 From then until today (2017), the exhibition presents only works of art (without additional elements, without arrangements or reconstructions)

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by well-known and respected Polish painters and sculptors (Tymon Niesiołowski, Konrad Winkler, Ludomir Sleńdzińki, Franciszek Strynkiewicz, Alina Szapocznikow and others). See ibid., 78.

573   *… zaczęło się w Kozłówce* (catalog), op. cit., 98.

574   *Pomniki lubelskie – pomnik Bolesława Bieruta,* http://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/pomniki-lubelskie-pomnik-boleslawa-bieruta/#opis (retrieved: 7 November 2017).

575   *… zaczęło się w Kozłówce* (catalog), op. cit., 101.

and reproductions. In total, 294 objects are exhibited in Kozłówka (paintings, sculptures, drawings, posters, archival photographs, carpets, and small items such as organizational badges, emblems, and postcards) (Photo 60).[576] Currently, paintings and sculptures are not separated from each other. The works are signed sparingly (author, date of creation, title). The walls of the gallery are painted white.

Exhibition space in art galleries is never accidental, it always affects both the work and its reception. In his works from the 1970s, the art historian Brian O'Doherty described the white space of the gallery, which should always look the same everywhere and offer the same surface against which art is presented. The "white cube" changes what is inside it. This is a viewing convention designed to guarantee neutrality and maintain focus on specific works. An important element of this exhibition strategy is also the fact that white walls can be rearranged quickly. The white cube was supposed to create a unique aesthetic of the gallery, where the viewer also became an element of the work of art through the way he experienced the space. For O'Doherty, it was a space without space, transforming everything that was added to it. Art in the white walls of the gallery becomes eternal; time ceases to exist.[577] However, it is known that the white cube has its limitations, or more precisely, consequences. Charlotte Klonk pointed out that the use of white cubes since the 1930s has been less about creating an enclosed space and more about creating fluid, open spaces that are flexible.[578] White walls are not neutral; it is an illusion rooted in cultural beliefs and judgments. Since, as O'Doherty writes, "the development of the pristine, placeless white cube is one of modernism's triumphs – a development commercial, aesthetic, and technological,"[579] understanding it requires the existence of a community that shares common (modernist) ideas and attitudes. O'Doherty described the gallery and the museum as places that show timelessness by means of specific arrangement conventions, while in practice the white cube appears to pull the viewer out of his social world, which is cut off, and the viewer himself is included in a kind of extra-contextual emptiness.

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576   Sławomir Grzechnik, *Sztuka zapomniana, sztuka odkrywana,* op. cit., 22.
577   Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1986).
578   Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience. Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven–London 2009), 218, cited in Anke de Heesen, *Teorie muzeum*, op. cit., 171–173.
579   Brian O'Doherty, op. cit., 79.

In the case of socialist-realist art, the above considerations are of fundamental importance, because people without knowledge of the doctrine underlying works of art can at best "discover" the banality of the subject matter and its more or less efficient execution. Viewers with basic knowledge of art history will undoubtedly notice the difference between the "human" and tired "Stalin" by Alina Szapocznikowa from 1953, and other sculptures of the "leader" from the same period, but the potential of the gallery is much greater. The mere fact that most of the works are authentic (it should be remembered that a lot of the works from this period sent to schools, public institutions, offices simply disappeared) determines the power of the exhibition. Sławomir Grzechnik emphasizes the cognitive value of socialist-realist works and emphasizes historical continuation:

> [Collections] gathered in the space of the former palace and park complex of the Zamoyski family are an obvious, though usually imperceptible, complement to the main exhibition of palace interiors. They are a picture of the continuation of the history of the Polish state and nation in the very difficult communist times of the second half of the 1940s and 1950s, and of the "little stabilization" of the communist period.[580]

Undoubtedly, the collections would become more "perceptible" if the traditional concept of an art gallery was supplemented with discreet historical and artistic commentary. It is not about elaborate arrangements or multimedia kiosks, but about basic information provided to understand the context.

The research I conducted at the Socialist Realism Art Gallery indicates that the audience treats the collections as documents and witnesses of the times, while their aesthetic value recedes into the background. Viewers pay equal attention to painting and sculpture, but they are more willing to justify it in the case of sculptures. When asked about the reason for their interest in sculptures, they point to the "great visual impression" they make, their "monumentalism," "uncommonness," "faithful reflection of historical characters," "representation of history and the spirit of those times." Paintings arouse curiosity because of the "realistic representation" of the past. Only one person (out of 125) indicated an interest in propaganda art.[581] Additional information provided to the audience by curators would allow the gallery to operate on at least three levels. First, they would explain the aesthetic assumptions of socialist-realist art. Secondly, they would show that totalitarianism and censorship limit not only the personal freedom of an individual or entire societies, but also incapacitate and enslave art, which in practice leads to its collapse. The third level involves the problem of how

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580   Sławomir Grzechnik, *Sztuka zapomniana,* op. cit., 24.
581   Survey research at the Socialist Realism Art Gallery in Kozłówka, July–August 2017.

to deal with unwanted, rejected heritage which, after all, belongs to European heritage and from this perspective is highly important and worth showing.

A place similar to the Polish Socialist Realism Art Gallery is the Museum of Socialist Art (*Музей на социалистическото изкуство*) in Sofia, which was established in 2011 as a branch of the National Art Gallery. The idea of organizing an institution on this subject in Bulgaria appeared much earlier, but it was implemented only by the Minister of Culture Vezhdi Rashidov. Since 1990, several communism museum projects have failed, and numerous sculptures and works from that period have been destroyed or become targets of attacks. Rashidov, himself an artist-sculptor, decided that many works of socialist art had an artistic value that goes well beyond the framework of mere propaganda, and should be saved. In the end, the Bulgarian government allocated 1.2 million Euros for the new museum, and Rashidov personally supervised the entire project.

The Museum of Socialist Art is the first state institution in Bulgaria that refers to the communist era. Its creation caused controversy because of its name (the initial proposal was the Museum of Totalitarian Art) and fears of "rehabilitation" of the system or "perpetuation" of communist ideology. The matter was not helped by the lack of a broader public debate before the museum was established.[582] On the eve of the museum's opening, photos of the Minister of Culture, personally washing granite monuments, appeared in the newspapers.[583] The ceremony was accompanied by speeches, and Vezhdi Rashidov announced, significantly, that this was a step towards putting the previous system "where it belongs" and expressed hope that the exhibition would become a tourist attraction.[584]

At this point, it is worth mentioning that for a planned tourist attraction, the location of the museum seems completely wrong; it is far from the city center and not easy to reach. From the metro station, the tourist has to walk about forty minutes through a large housing estate, with no signpost, arrow, or even a small sign to indicate the right direction. As the plaque at the entrance says,

582   Nikolai Vukov, *The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia nad the Politics of Avoidance*, https://digital.herder-institut.de/publications/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/30/file/Vukov_The_Museum_of_Socialist_Art_in_So.pdf (retrieved: 7 November 2017).

583   *Bułgaria: pomniki z okresu komunistycznego w specjalnym muzeum*, http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/bulgaria-pomniki-okresu-komunistycznego-w-specjalnym-muzeum/203mh (retrieved: 3 April 2017)

584   *Bulgaria opens its first museum of socialist art,* http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/bulgaria-opens-its-first-museum-of-socialist-art-2357566.html (retrieved: 7 November 2017).

the museum is located in a reconstructed building belonging to the Ministry of Culture. This building is adjacent to apartment blocks on one side and a small bus station on the other; there is no infrastructure to encourage tourists to linger in this place.

The museum consists of three elements: an open courtyard with almost eighty monuments from the 1950s through the 1980s, a picture gallery, and a small room where you can buy souvenirs and watch several communist-era propaganda documentaries (Photos 61 and 62). Monuments and paintings were found in warehouses and cellars, transported from city streets. The first curator of the exhibition Biser Josifowa once stated: "We are trying to read this work anew, we do not want to glorify it or demonize it. We approached the matter as art historians." Josifowa warns that it is not only about totalitarian art, nor just about art from the period when socialism was the official system. Works were collected that are united by the idea of socialism; some of the paintings even date back to the 1920s.[585] When entering the museum, visitors are greeted by the 2-meter red star that adorned the Communist Party headquarters in Sofia from 1954 to 1984. Statues, monuments and busts of Lenin, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, the Bulgarian communist leader Todor Zhivkov, Che Guevara, communist ideologues, partisans, and Red Army soldiers are positioned with no clear order related to chronology, artistic level, or subject matter. At the beginning of the museum's existence, there was an idea to move the 38-meter-high monument of the Red Army from the center of Sofia to its premises, but that never happened. The largest statue in the museum is Lenin, several meters tall, moved from the city center, towering above all the others. The only thing that connects this rather random collection of monuments is (as in similar places in Central and Eastern Europe) the rather long and unspecified period of their creation. Extremely laconic notes containing the title of the sculpture, the creator's name, and sometimes the city in which the object was located certainly do not help tourists in building a context, or even getting information about the circumstances of a given monument's creation. This lack of information is all the more painful since some of the monuments are actually works of great artistic value.

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585 Cited in Nikolai Vukov, *The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia nad the Politics of Avoidance*, http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/exhibitions/bulgaria/ the-museum-of-socialist-art-in-sofia-and-the-politics-of-avoidance/#part3 (retrieved: 7 November 2017) A special exhibition was supposed to be devoted to totalitarian art from the 1950s, but in 2017, when I visited the museum, there was no such exhibition.

The image gallery is somewhat better organized. The small collection (about sixty objects) consists of propaganda works, portraits and landscapes. However, in Sofia, unlike Kozłówka, the curator of the exhibition, Nikolai Ushtavaliiski, took a step that helps provide a certain amount of context. On the white walls there are short and sometimes surprising, but interesting texts that explain, for example, the origin of the term "Big Brother," or that bring the concept of "portrait" closer to the viewers. There are also quotes from publications from the communist era (e.g. a fragment of a text about expectations towards Bulgarian artists from the work of Luben Belmustakov "Realism in New Bulgarian Art" from 1950), as well as curatorial explanations about the formation of canonic representations of party leaders (characteristic poses, stylizations and hyperbolizations of certain anatomical features, etc.). The texts do not constitute systematic or problem-oriented instruction, nor do they provide context about the creation of specific works (here, as in the case of monuments, the viewer only learns the title of the work and its author's name), though even such modest and rather accidental knowledge offers at least partial information that helps to better understand the exhibition.

The museum evokes mixed feelings among Bulgarians. Opponents fear that it may become another source of nostalgia for communist times. Some, such as Petyr Nikolov, a journalist working for the Internet newspaper "Webcafe," demanded that in addition to the museum, an institute of national remembrance be established in order to tell the "truth about history," while others openly question whether the institution is a "hall of fame or shame."[586]

The problem with the identity of socialist art exhibitions is that they do not entirely fulfill the function of an art gallery; there are no clear and explicit criteria for the selection of works, the exhibitions are neither thematic nor chronological, making them ambiguous and problematic for viewers, and there is a great difference in the artistic level of individual works and their affiliation to various genres or types (sculpture, painting, poster, propaganda and works expressing various trends in art). From this perspective, the gallery in Kozłówka is much better than the museum in Sofia, because it focuses on a specific and short period – socialist realism. Such museums hardly fit into the canon of historical exhibitions, since they lack information with which viewers could build a broader vision of the era. This kind of ambivalence ultimately forces the visitors to lend meaning to the works, who interpret those works broadly depending on their

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586   Maria Guineva, *Bulgaria's Museum of Socialist Art – Hall of Fame Or Hall of Shame?*, http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=131527 (retrieved: 7 November 2017).

level of knowledge, age and personal commitment; interpretations run from the "dustbin of history" to remnants of a non-existent civilization, cultural heritage (whether unwanted or highly important and requiring protection), a space for nostalgia and reflection, a warning against totalitarianism, or a commemoration of a specific part of the past.

Chapter 6 Stories about Nowa Huta

One needs to be aware of the enormous negative heritage of Nowa Huta. Many in opinion-forming circles perceive it as a great industrial behemoth, whose development in the past had a negative impact on the development processes of Krakow and its communities.

Jacek Salwiński[587]

We're going to Nowa Huta, where we'll show you some communism, we'll show you some of the 80's atmosphere.

Michał Ostrowski[588]

The metallurgical plant in Nowa Huta, which was built in the years 1949–1976, was a closed production plant of strategic importance for the Polish national economy and surrounded by a certain degree of secrecy. For Polish conditions, it was an object of exceptional concentration and scale of metallurgical production. At the end of the 1960s, it was one of the largest metallurgical plants in the world.[589] A socialist (in form and content) city was established around the steelworks, which was a symbol both of Stalinism and of new opportunities and social advancement for thousands of people. After the rejection of the Marshall Plan, on January 26, 1948, a Polish-Soviet economic agreement was signed, based on which the USSR was to hand over to Poland a complete plan for the construction of the steel plant along with basic machinery and metallurgical equipment. Soviet specialists would help in the design of executive devices, the construction and assembly of basic steelworks facilities, and the training of staff. According to some scholars, the decision on the plant's location was made by Soviet experts in January-February 1949, mainly in the light of the area's transportation and geological conditions, and Polish authorities saw the construction of the plant

587   Jacek Salwiński, "Muzeum rozproszone nowej Huty. Idea," in *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja. Studium muzeum rozproszonego*, eds. Jacek Salwiński, Leszek J. Sibila (Kraków: Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, 2008), 18.

588   For a fragment of a reportage shown on TVN about the activities of Crazy Guides, a Krakow company offering trips to Nowa Huta, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slbexkQ3tEw (retrieved: 31 May 2016).

589   Jerzy Duda, Henryk Kazimierski, Stanisław Pochwała, "Dziedzictwo przemysłowe kombinatu metalurgicznego w Nowej Hucie. Wstępne rozpoznanie na przykładzie walcowni zgniatacz," in *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja*, op. cit., 144–147.

as an opportunity to solve the problems of poverty and overpopulation in the villages of southern Poland. Of course, the construction had its social and political factors, but they were not decisive.[590] According to another theory, the location of the steelworks was primarily an attempt to neutralize the conservative-patriotic Krakow by quickly changing its social structure and served as a punishment for the city's rebellious attitude toward communist rule. It is difficult to deny that the project was a great demographic and social experiment aimed at quickly re-shaping an urban-industrial community. Stanisław Juchnowicz, who participated in the construction of Nowa Huta as an architect and urban planner, writes that the decision of the central authorities was accompanied by protests from regional institutions (such as the Regional Spatial Planning Directorate, the Krakow Voivode, and city authorities) whose members warned against devastation of the natural environment, the destruction of historical monuments, damage to agricultural facilities, and threats to inhabitants' health.[591]

In the twenty-first century – almost 70 years after the construction of the plant and the city began – there were three coexisting narratives about Nowa Huta that represented different approaches to the communist past. The first story, to which I will not devote deeper reflection because it differs thematically from the scope of this work, is the "black legend" – rooted in the PRL, still present in common and collective imaginations, and sustained (and even intensified) by the media – of Nowa Huta as a symbol Stalinism.[592] This vision consists of several basic elements, including the decision regarding the location of the plant, the memory of the city's first inhabitants, the de-sacralization of urban space and the contemporary view of the district as a kind of post-communist hotbed of crime and moral decay. As Golonka-Czajkowska writes, the builders themselves and Nowa Huta's first inhabitants are, in the popular imagination, "(…) a primitive and wild people, 'without culture', devoid of moral principles, not adapted to urban life."[593] Adam Ważyk's "Poemat dla dorosłych" (Poem for Adults), published in Nowa Kultura in 1955, had a significant impact on the

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590   Andrzej Chwalba, Dzieje Krakowa, vol. 6: Kraków w latach 1945–1989 (Kraków 2004), 208, cited in Monika Golonka-Czajkowska, *Nowe miasto nowych ludzi. Mitologie nowohuckie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 303 and 305.

591   Stanisław Juchnowicz, "Nowa Huta, przeszłość i wizja – z doświadczeń warsztatu projektowego," in *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja*, op. cit., 179.

592   This topic was explored by Monika Golonka-Czajkowska in her work *Nowe miasto nowych ludzi*, op. cit.

593   Monika Golonka-Czajkowska, op. cit., 309–310.

dissemination of this vision. Nowa Huta's image as a desacralized space is still alive, and it was not until the famous battle for the cross in 1960 that, in the minds of many people, the area was "Christianized." In fact, there were old churches in the city (in Mogiła, Czyżyny, and Pleszów), and collected testimonies show that the inhabitants of the oldest housing estates attended the church in Mogiła.[594] Currently, the "black legend" of the city (or rather, the Krakow district) is maintained and even created by media visions of a "ghetto" with high crime rate, banditry, hooliganism, etc. As Golonka-Czajkowska writes, this image is the result of, among others, the quantifier used by journalists (when writing about crimes, they place them "in Nowa Huta," despite the fact that this area consists of over 30 housing estates inhabited by 250,000 people), which paints a portrait of pathology and degeneration covering the entire urban area.[595]

The other two narratives run against the above vision and emphasize the positive elements of the post-communist heritage. I will take a closer look at them because both constitute an institutionalized form of talking about the past, though they stand in opposition to each other. I would describe the first as an objectivized traditional narrative, the second as a non-classical form that uses contemporary performative and participatory trends.

6.1. The "Dispersed" Eco-museum of Nowa Huta

The 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage lists "groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science."[596] This definition can be applied to tangible industrial remains, although the real heyday of tourism in industrialized areas dates back to a later period, associated mainly with the liquidation of entire industries and their replacement with new

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594   Ibid., 307–308. The famous battle for the cross involved an action to pacify the riots that broke out on April 27 and 28, 1960 in connection with the decision by authorities to withdraw consent for the construction of a church in Nowa Huta and the order to remove the cross placed and consecrated by Bishop Eugeniusz Baziak in the area of the planned construction. For more see, for example, Jerzy Ridan: "Walka o krzyż w Nowej Hucie," *Kwartalnik Historyczny Karta* (1997), no. 21, 119–141.

595   The author points out that such a picture is also influenced by real social processes resulting from the economic transformation after 1989 – unemployment and the population's pauperization. See Monika Golonka-Czajkowska, op. cit., 301–302.

596   *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/ (retrieved: 10 January 2023).

technologies. In the 1970s, Western Europe saw intense deindustrialization and the first major revitalization projects. In 1971, a ground-breaking debate over industrial heritage took place in Ironbridge, which resulted in the creation of The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage in 1978. The legal regulation in the European Union is Recommendation No. R(90) 20 of the Committee of Ministers On the Protection and Conservation of the Industrial, Technical and Civil Engineering Heritage in Europe, which recognizes industrial heritage as part of cultural heritage and recommends its protection, documentation, research and revitalization.[597] Over time, particular trends have emerged: while fragments of industrial heritage are transformed into museums or individual exhibits-monuments, other objects are transformed into residential buildings, art galleries, shopping centers, restaurants, etc.[598]

Viewed from the above perspective, the metallurgical plant in Nowa Huta, together with the entire urban surroundings, meets all the conditions to be considered an item of valuable heritage and to be covered by appropriate revitalization and protection measures. The fact that this has not yet happened (below I write about the planned design) seems to be because of two reasons: firstly, the emergence of a new investor resulted in decreased interest in non-productive investments (what's worse, historic buildings in the area of former steelworks including the mill hall, one of the symbolic objects of the Lenin Steelworks),[599] and secondly, the fact that the above-mentioned strong negative narrative about Nowa Huta still affects its contemporary image.

The combination is only an element of the cultural and industrial heritage, and the entire urban and spatial arrangement surrounding it is of great importance, constituting (together with the Palace of Culture and Science and the MDM housing estate in Warsaw) a paradigmatic example of the application of the principles of socialist realism about which I wrote in the previous chapter. The formal adoption of socialist-realist doctrine for architecture took place in Poland on June 20–21, 1949 during the National Party Conference of Architects in Warsaw. According to the declared assumptions, architecture should reflect "the ideological richness of the era in which socialism is being built, and create national forms that are close and understandable to the people (…). New

597   Jerzy Duda, Henryk Kazimierski, Stanisław Pochwała, op. cit., 144.

598   Anna Kaczmarska, *Tereny przemysłowe i zurbanizowane jako czynniki rozwoju turystyki miejskiej*, http://www.ue.katowice.pl/fileadmin/_migrated/content_uplo ads/6_A.Kaczmarska_Tereny_przemys%C5%82owe_i_zurbanizowane_jako.pdf (retrieved: 1 May 2016).

599   Jacek Salwiński, op. cit., 18.

social architecture through organic cooperation with painting and sculpture (…) will create a new and rich art, opposing the poverty and plastic sterility of constructivism."[600] The doctrine was cut short in March 1956 at the National Council of Architects.

Socialist realism in architecture was to dominate the urban space, give it a new symbolism, showcase the successes of socialist development, educate people in the spirit of communism, and show the world as it should be as a result of revolutionary transformations.[601] Discussions about the idea of an ideal city (socgorod) continued in the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s and 1930s. New cities (as a counterbalance to the traditional ones) were planned for workers employed in nearby industrial plants of various types. Magnitogorsk, a prototype for other socialist cities,[602] along with Moscow of course, became a synonym for the socgorod. In the resolution of the Central Committee of the WKP(b) of July 10, 1935, no. 1435 entitled "On the general plan for the reconstruction of the city of Moscow," it was noted that in a socialist city the historical foundations of the urban layout should be taken into account, but:

> (…) they they should be thoroughly remodeled in order to organize the network of streets and squares. The most important conditions for redevelopment are: the correct location of residential buildings, industry, railway transport (…) the correct organization of residential districts with the creation of normal, healthy living conditions for the population (…) during our work on city planning, the architecturally consistent creation of squares, main roads, waterfront [boulevards] and parks must be achieved (…).[603]

The Nowa Huta plan was based on the concept of an ideal city, though Polish artists approached the subject creatively and transformed European theories by adapting them to the doctrine.

The most important features of socialist realism in urban planning and architecture are the desire to create a system of wide streets and build monumental houses, with streets converging at the city's tallest building surrounded by a square designed for mass events. Classicist styles were to dominate with such

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600   "Rezolucja Krajowej Partyjnej Narady Architektów," *Architektura* (1949), R. III, no. 6–8, 162, cited in Magdalena Smaga, "Przyczynek do studium historyczno-architektonicznego kina 'Światowid'," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) (2014), no. 1: 147.

601   Maria Strelbicka, *Krótki przewodnik po architekturze socrealistycznej*, http://belfer.muzhp.pl/?module=details&id=109 (retrieved: 11 May 2016).

602   Magdalena Smaga, op. cit., 148–149.

603   Cited in Maria Strelbicka, *Krótki przewodnik po architekturze socrealistycznej,* http://belfer.muzhp.pl/?module=details&id=109 (retrieved: 11 May 2016).

features as the three-division of the facade (plinth, main body, finial), entrances to buildings reminiscent of portals of ancient temples (colonnades, monumental stairs), and attics in the Greco-Roman style. Architecture was supposed to refer to the national tradition, with elements of a given country determined arbitrarily in accordance with the principle of "national form."[604] Socialist realist architecture was treated as art that directly reflected and confirmed reality. "In this case, the power to implement the vision outlined by the political doctrine did not result from the obvious fact of the visual importance and accessibility of works of architecture for the average citizen, but from the internal predispositions that architecture, as a specific type of art, carried in itself."[605] Wojciech Włodarczyk emphasizes that focus remained largely on sketches and architectural designs because a specific building in the reality of socialist realism would have to come into contact with "life" and tradition in a variety of ways that were not controlled by the doctrine: an unselected audience, a neighborhood with an older avant-garde building, or impassable technological barriers.[606] The buildings were characterized by grandeur, gigantism and theatricality. Architectural socialist realism also featured rich external and internal decorations – sculptures, reliefs, mosaics, candelabras, and chandeliers. The theme of decorations was most often related to life in the new socialist society so that workers, including kolkhoz workers, would be immortalized, but also to outstanding scientists, explorers, and war heroes. Expensive materials such as bronze marble and granite were used to decorate the interiors.[607]

These elements can be admired today in Nowa Huta. The conceptual assumptions of the city, in play until 1960, were consistently implemented despite later changes in attitudes towards socialist-realist architecture. The oldest housing estates – Wandy, Willowe, and Na Skarpie – referred to the Polish modernist traditions of the interwar period, Anglo-Saxon ideas of garden cities and German concepts of worker colonies from the turn of the nineteenth and

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604   Wojciech Włodarczyk, op. cit., 31.

605   Ibid., 42.

606   Ibid., 43.

607   As Strelbicka writes, in the early 1930s (the Moscow redevelopment plan was approved in 1935), Soviet architects traveled to the USA to study "capitalist principles and architecture." At the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, high-rise buildings inspired by American skyscrapers were built in Moscow, although officially the USSR was tyring to "catch up and overtake" America. See Maria Strelbicka, *Krótki przewodnik po architekturze socrealistycznej*, http://belfer.muzhp.pl/?module=deta ils&id=109 (retrieved: 11 May 2016).

twentieth centuries.[608] It was only in the second stage of construction (after 1956) that loosely connected housing estates were built. The very social concept of the city was based on the Anglo-Saxon idea of a "neighborhood unite concept" grouping a certain number of inhabitants around elements of social bond. This was connected with a hierarchical system of service centers. The concept of a neighborhood unit was used when creating the regional plan of New York in the 1920s.[609] The city plan resulted from the characteristic features of the area; five main communication and composition directions radiating from the central square connect the city center with the most important centers located outside the layout. The main routes of the historical road system were preserved. The range of urban areas to the east and north, and the way the city outskirts are shaped, are related to the course of the Dłubnia river valley, which is an area of recreational greenery that also isolates the city from the plant. Housing complexes are closely related to the composition of the city.[610]

Among Nowa Huta's architectural and urban advantages, Waldemar Komorowski lists the natural genesis of communication routes, the symmetrical layout of the center (Plac Centralny at the intersection of Aleja Róż and Aleja Przyjaźni) and the independence of Nowa Huta as a kind of organism composed of autonomous units with basic service facilities connected through a transportation system. The layout of the buildings is harmonious (the highest in the center, lower as you move toward the outskirts), spatial elements (walls, grilles, artifacts, fences, sculptures) are carefully designed, original and characterized by a high aesthetic level.[611] The lavish Ludowy Theater attracts attention, as do the monumental buildings of the "Świt" and "Światowid" cinemas with their decorations modeled on French classicism. "Architectural interior solutions," Komorowski writes, "(…) are usually functional, furnishing and decoration are restrained, movable objects exhibit the basic assumptions of the Polish school of design from prewar "Ład" times. There is a noticeable strong connection with the tradition of interwar art, especially in its classicized version. Some interiors are strikingly similar to those found in representative buildings of pre-1939 Poland, both in terms of architectural design, as well as equipment and decorations."[612] There are few bars or cafes in Nowa Huta (the most famous

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608   Magdalena Smaga, op. cit., 150.
609   Stanisław Juchnowicz, op. cit., 180–182.
610   Ibid., 180.
611   Waldemar Komorowski, "Wartości kulturowe Nowej Huty. Urbanistyka i architektura," in *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja*, op. cit., 110–114.
612   Ibid., 114.

is the "Stylowa" restaurant, opened on July 22, 1956), but they are representative in character: rich stucco decorations, floors, chandeliers, sconces, individually designed furniture. An inseparable element of the interiors and their stylish feature is the stone-substitute terrazzo (featured usually in the form of multi-colored floors decorated with decorative motifs).[613] The buildings and interiors of Nowa Huta's oldest part are the result of the work of many outstanding urban planners, architects, engineers and artists whose names we do not know (though it is known that eminent artists were employed in some projects, such as the interior designer Władysław Wincze or Marian Sigmunt – both associated with the State Higher School of Fine Arts in Wrocław[614]) and to this day remain a historical testimony to the era of socialist realism in Poland.

The value of the communist period's architectural heritage was an issue raised as early as the 1980s, but what prevailed after that (roughly until the mid-1990s) was criticism of communist doctrine and a strongly negative opinion about Nowa Huta. In 1996, in the context of Nowa Huta, the idea of an eco-museum formulated by Zbigniew Beiersdorf became an object of discussion, and in 1999 the concept of a "dispersed museum" or "spatial museum" emerged. As Jacek Salwiński writes, the above ideas were intended to "(…) promote a new image of Nowa Huta, freed from the burden of the communist past."[615]

The eco-museum, i.e. a local museum that engages the community and deepens the understanding of its own place and the past, is the most important concept in the so-called "new museology," a trend which crystallized in the West in the 1980s.[616] As the concept's main creator, Georges Henri Riviére, writes: "An eco-museum is an instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population. The public authority's involvement is through the experts, facilities, and resources it provides; the local population's involvement depends on its aspirations, knowledge, and individual approach."[617] An eco-museum (or community museum) is designed to integrate archaeology, social history, natural history, geology and, in practice, all disciplines that contribute to the understanding of people and places. Therefore, it is necessary

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613   Ibid., 115–116.

614   Ibid., 115.

615   Jacek Salwiński, op. cit., 11–12.

616   The museum that opened in Le Creusot, France in 1971 is considered to be the first eco-museum. Ecomuseums are not only about rural communities, which is the way some might understand the term "eco."

617   Georges Henri Riviére, "The Ecomuseum – an evolutive definition," *Museum* 148 (1985): 182.

to reform local museums, which are usually full of objects taken out of context and, what is worse, usually do not involve the local community at the level of creating and developing exhibitions. The eco-museum consists of the following elements: a consciously selected area combining the natural environment and cultural heritage, a particular heritage (tangible and intangible), formulated goals and tasks related to active education and the protection of the values of natural and cultural heritage, interdisciplinary activities, and the local community's participation.[618] Places are to be understood within their landscapes, not just in terms of buildings or monuments, but as part of a palimpsest that points to a constant process of change and stability. The environment is not only a background for human activity, but also a factor that enters into a kind of dialogue with people. The eco-museum is therefore meant to facilitate understanding or raise awareness of how given places are a construction of human interactions with the environment in time and space.[619]

In 2004, on the initiative and under the auspices of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow, research was undertaken on the Nowa Huta plant, as a result of which the idea of a "dispersed museum" (i.e. an industrial variation of the eco-museum) began to take shape. The scope of work covered the areas occupied by the plant's oldest facilities, which were destined for physical liquidation: the "old" agglomerate plant, the "old" coking plant, blast furnaces, open-hearth steelworks, a stripping rolling mill, slabing rolling mill, wire mills, and administrative buildings at Ujastek Street and on the premises of the plant (administrations of the oldest technological faculties). In addition, archival documentation (technical, files, architectural, photographic) was identified, local inspections were made along with field measurements, photographic and

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618   Jacek Salwiński, op. cit., 14. For more on eco-museums, see Anna Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach*, op. cit., 27–29. On Polish eco-museums, see Jan Pazdur, "Ekomuzeum aglomeracji staropolskiej w Starachowicach – zamysł i propozycje," *Muzealnictwo* (1984), no. 28/29: 39–50.

619   Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Postmodern World*, Routledge 1992, 161–167. The dangers associated with the creation of eco-museums are described by Peter Howard, who points to the threat that institutions will be taken over for the benefit of visitors (and not local communities), the influx of tourists changing the area's economy (based solely on tourism), increased state control, bans on changes in areas within the limits of a given eco-museum, and finally the resemblance of a given site to similar heritage areas around the world. See Peter Howard, "The Eco-museum: innovation that risks the future," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 8 (2002), no. 1: 63–72.

descriptive documentation, and an assessment of the overall cultural value.[620] The entire project involves connecting several cultural trails in a small space, the elements of which will be the facilities of the former industrial plant, the architecture and urban planning of Nowa Huta (especially from the first period of the city's construction, i.e. until 1960), a complex of relics from before the construction of Nowa Huta (the so-called rural part of Nowa Huta: manor houses, palaces, sacral buildings, historical rural layouts, wooden architecture, forts) and natural elements (with particular emphasis on the Łąk Nowohuckich).[621]

It is worth mentioning here (this element is often omitted in discussions about eco-museums) that the original concept of "community" in the eco-museum – and in new museology in general – is associated with a radically democratic resistance to the dominant culture. According to this paradigm, the "community" exists outside of government and local government politics, even in opposition to it. Placing the "community" at the center of the museum's interest means to overcome its role as a hegemonic institution, and to give voice to groups without power in order to facilitate the processes of self-discovery and empowerment; in this regard, the curator plays a supporting role, not an authority role. The example of a "dispersed museum" in Nowa Huta, however, supports arguments made by Tony Bennett, who criticizes the above (romantic) concept of "community" as the driving force behind museum activities. Bennett questions the thesis that a museum can become an instrument for community in the processes of legitimation and dialogue. He also suggests that it is the museum that shapes and controls this "community" in ways that reflect the cultural policy pursued by political actors. There is not always a conflict between government and community interests; in some cases, the concept of a community's "resistance" to authority does not make sense. Bennett's intention is to read the activities of government institutions, such as the museum, in a more positive way. The museum appears here as a pedagogical institution whose task is to constantly reform communities and turn into modern civil societies. This role was played by museums as early as the nineteenth century, but it remains relevant today, although the reform goals have of course changed. Curators are seen in this concept as "cultural technicians" working within the framework of government policy, not in opposition to it. Intellectuals in government structures

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620   Jerzy Duda, Henryk Kazimierski, Stanisław Pochwała, "Dziedzictwo przemysłowe kombinatu metalurgicznego w Nowej Hucie. Wstępne rozpoznanie na przykładzie walcowni zgniatacz," in *Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja*, op. cit., 149–151.

621   Jacek Salwiński, op. cit., 17.

have a political role to play; they engage in modifying the functioning of culture by means of technical regulation in accordance with government strategies. The activities of museums are practical solutions in the government space, in a wide range of private and public government institutions involved in shaping society. The museum is not an institution representing given communities and cultures, but one that creates the concepts of community and culture in practice. It is better to understand its role as a creator of culture which supports the political principles sustaining the very notion of representation.[622]

In accordance with the above thesis, as the interest of central and local government actors increases, interest also increases in the new steelworks perceived as a historical performance, which is more and more often mentioned with nostalgia. By the decision of the Lesser Poland's Provincial Conservator of Monuments in Krakow, Nowa Huta was entered into the registry of monuments as a cultural good and a representative example of socialist realism urban planning in Poland.[623] Residents began to express pride in their place of residence, and the city finances projects related to the district's reevaluation. Negative opinions remain about the city related to collective memory of the Stalinist era, but they are accompanied by an awareness of the district's extraordinary and unique nature, which allows for a slightly different narrative about Nowa Huta, one which took the form of a city route (about which I write below).

A very important element of the Nowa Huta project are temporary museum exhibitions in the "Światowid" cinema organized by the PRL Museum (still in the organization stage). This institution was established based on the initiative of Elżbieta Zachwatowicz-Wajda and Andrzej Wajda, and since 2008 it has been part of the Krakow branch of the Polish History Museum. In 2012, the Krakow City Council decided to establish the PRL Museum as an independent institution.[624] In April 2018, the PRL Museum of the (still in the organization

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622   Tony Bennett included his critique of the romantic concept of community in his work Culture: A *Reformer's* Science (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

623   Waldemar Komorowski, op. cit., 99.

624   The history of the museum begins even earlier, because Andrzej Wajda and Krystyna Zachwatowicz long worked toward its creation. In 2004, the "Socland" Foundation was registered, which aimed to build the PRL Museum. Ultimately, it started operating in April 2008 in "Światowid" in those years when the PRL Museum was a branch of the Polish History Museum in Warsaw, i.e. between 2008 and 2012, during which five large time exhibitions were organized there: "Od opozycji do wolności," "Wojna polsko-jaruzelska," "Wojenne rozstania," "Projekt HardKOR," "Do przerwy 0:1. Piłka nożna w PRL," and "Nowa Huta Underground." For a description of these exhibitions and their educational aspects, see: Zbigniew Semik, "Muzeum PRL-u w

stage) was merged with the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow by a resolution. There are plans to establish the Museum of Nowa Huta as a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow.[625] The "Światowid" cinema was the first panoramic cinema in Nowa Huta. The building, designed by Andrzej Uniejewski, was erected in 1955–1957, and the cinema was in operation from 1957 to 1992, when it was turned into a shopping mall. In 2006, the building was purchased by the City of Krakow for cultural activities.[626] Currently, despite the change in its function, the building's original context and shape have been preserved, so it is not difficult for visitors to imagine a cinema hall in a place where exhibitions are now organized.

During my research, I visited two temporary exhibitions in the "Światowid" cinema. The first of them (January 2016) was entitled "The PRL lives in us? – free time culture" and consisted of a dozen or so objects from the era, photographs and information boards arranged and categorized as: "Świetlica," "Działka," "Cinema," "House of culture/club-café" and "Empik" – i.e. representations of particular PRL "microcosms." The exhibition was not so much poor as, in my opinion, poorly conceptualized and did not reflect the atmosphere of spending free time in the old era. Some of the arrangement's elements made a rather strange impression. For example, the recreational plot was represented literally, with soil brought into the exhibition. A surprising part of the exhibition, unrelated to the subject, was the "Trash Bin of History" showing examples of signboards with old street names and photos of the statue of Lenin from Nowa Huta. In fact, there was no coherent narrative connecting the exhibition's parts into an understandable whole. To sum up, the interesting subject of everyday life, away from politics and official celebrity, was poorly arranged; there was no truly interesting scenario. Such an exhibition could appeal only to people who personally remember communism, evoking memories of childhood and youth, although this effect was not entirely certain.

The next temporary exhibition (December 2017) was much better. Entitled "Parcel from America," it dealt with the problem of contacts between the Polish People's Republic and the Western world, and its leitmotif involved packages

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Krakowie. Oddział Muzeum Historii Polski w budynku dawnego kina "Światowid" w latach 2008–2012," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) (2014), no. 1: 129–143.

625   *Połączenie Muzeum PRL-u i Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa*, https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/wladze-krakowa-chca-polaczenia-muzeum-prl-u-z-muzeum-historycznym (retrieved: 25 April 2018).

626   Zbigniew Semik, op. cit., 129.

sent from the "free world," the symbol of which at the time was the United States. The exhibition's interesting arrangement touched on a fundamental issue – i.e. how to deal with the communist system's "economy of shortage." The exhibition presents phenomena such as sending gifts under the UNRRA, private transfers, an organized action to help Poland in the 1980s, and ways in which Poles obtain desirable items: black market trade, or economic trips called "trade tourism." The exhibition space was divided by a symbolic border, which more or less tightly separated Poland from the Western world. Objects, photographs and reconstructions (e.g. of a bazaar or a post office) as well as specific individual stories made up a broader story about economic difficulties, society's resourcefulness, and manifestations of solidarity on the part of the free world.

However, the most interesting element of the Nowa Huta museum is not so much the changing temporary exhibitions as the shelters prepared and open to visitors.[627] The exhibition "Atomic horror. Shelters in Nowa Huta" was opened to the public in 2016. The act establishing the Terrain Anti-Aircraft Defense (TOPL) was passed by the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic on February 26, 1952. TOPL supervised and organized activities aimed at defending and protecting the population against the effects of air attacks. The emerging network of shelters was one element of this action.[628] In the years 1953–1960, at least 260 shelters were built in Nowa Huta, most of which were located in the basements of blocks of flats. About 44 shelters were placed in public utility buildings (as a place of shelter for employees and potential applicants). Each shelter's basic space consisted of a shelter chamber (sometimes divided into several smaller ones), whose main equipment included benches arranged in rows back to back. Necessary elements were also vestibules with protective and gas-tight doors.[629] At present, there is no definition in Polish law of a protective structure, shelter

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[627] A more extensive shelter exhibition can be seen in Prague, Czech Republic. The exhibition, advertised with the slogan "Journey through communism and a nuclear bunker," concerns not only shelters, but both the exhibits and the narration provided by a guide (disguised in a Soviet uniform) refer to the history of communism and the "Cold War." The style of the exhibition (its arrangement) is the same as in Nowa Huta.

[628] Tomasz Mierzwa, "Schrony Terenowej Obrony Przeciwlotniczej w Nowej Hucie," *Światowid. Rocznik Muzeum PRL-u* (still in the organization stage) (2015), no. 2: 143. See also: Tomasz Mierzwa, Zbigniew Semik, *Atomowa groza. Schrony w Nowej Hucie* (Kraków: Muzeum PRL-u, 2015).

[629] Tomasz Mierzwa, op. cit., 147, 151–152.

or hiding place,[630] and many shelters have been destroyed, reconstructed, and liquidated since the 1970s. As Tomasz Mierzwa writes, bringing still existing shelters to technical readiness would require huge financial investments and resolution of the usually complicated ownership situation; thus, the only chance for shelters is the popularity that comes with "military cultural tourism" and social commemoration initiatives. One such initiative is the activity of the Nowa Huta OdNowa Residents Forum, which proposed the concept of an "Underground Nowa Huta" tourist trail. The exhibition in shelters under "Światowid" involves one part of this idea.[631]

In the basement of the Nowa Huta cinema, there were two air-raid shelters that could accommodate a total of 140 people. One of these objects, after a renovation carried out in 2015, regained its original arrangement of rooms, while the other, as a result of earlier reconstruction, completely lost the character of a protective structure (Photo 63). Each of these shelters consisted of three shelter rooms, two vestibules with external reinforced concrete doors and internal steel doors, toilets, a ventilation room, an emergency exit and a corridor with water tanks.[632] The renovated shelter under the former cinema has been turned into an exhibition and consists of original elements, which include the layout of rooms and posters, archival photos and charts, combined with such elements as medical and communications equipment. Visitors who do not demonstrate a typical "military" interest in viewing the shelters with deep curiosity can learn about their history through period materials and replicas of items from the 1950s. Certain elements of the tour, such as an opportunity to try on a gas mask or overalls to take a commemorative photo, turn a traditional museum tour into a kind of experience characteristic of a theme park. The possibility to touch objects and experience a specific smell intensifies the reception and impressions of visitors.

The hypersensuality (over-sensuality) of contemporary exhibitions as a certain exhibition strategy has been adopted by museums, including the more traditional ones, through marketing. In the era of late capitalism, companies and corporations are increasingly willing to engage all human senses in order to distinguish their product from others, to "seduce" consumers. "Multisensory

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630   Pursuant to the Act of October 29, 2003, as of July 1, 2004, the last statute regulating protective structures ceased to apply. See Tomasz Mierzwa, Zbigniew Semik, *Atomowa groza*, op. cit., 20.

631   Tomasz Mierzwa, op. cit., 155.

632   Ibid., 153–154.

marketing" culminated in the late twentieth century when artificial fragrances were added to various products, and cafes and fast-food outlets sprang up in shopping malls to instantly satisfy customers' cravings. It is about multiplying the use of various sensory channels through which the information "buy me!" is transmitted. In this way, hyperesthesia was born, i.e. hypersensuality in the sense of an excess of sensory stimuli.[633] The hypersensuality of the modern market has been theorized by business professors. In the article "Welcome to the Experience Economy" published in the Harvard Business Review in 1988, Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore stated that forward-thinking companies do not produce things and do not provide services, but use services as a stage and goods as props to create "experiences" that are stimulating and memorable for the consumer. The authors write about the principles behind creating various types of experiences, e.g. to "theme the experience," to "mix in memorabilia," and – in the fullest experience – to "engage all five senses."[634] An exhibition in shelters, which provides a bodily experience (through simply being in shelters, or the possibility of putting on a gas mask), is an example of creating a full experience, given that it adds sensual and affective experience to the sum of tourist experiences, which affects the way the entire exhibition is perceived and has an impact on the creation and maintenance of memories.

Before the audience leaves the cinema building, they can stop by the souvenir shop. "Szpeje" (i.e. "rummage," "clutter," "trifles") offer "various pieces of equipment and knickknacks recalling the previous system."[635] You can find trinkets there (e.g. erasers) and cult items with no great value (e.g. "Azor" – a dog with a bouncing head), but also highly valuable objects, design icons, furniture, glassware. In addition to the curiosity or instinct of a "treasure hunter" common to every person, especially a tourist, the store also satisfies the need for a special, tangible relationship with the past. In his work Consuming History, Jerome

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633 David Howes, "Hyperesthesia Or The Sensual Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Empire of the Senses. The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2005), 288. Usually, museologists are not aware that the famous museological theories, from which such projects as participatory or narrative exhibitions derive, have their source in economic or business theories; curators usually do not combine the desire to intensify the museum experience with other cultural phenomena.

634 see Joseph Pine II, James Gilmore, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* (July–August 1988), https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-exp erience-economy (retrieved: 15 June 2016).

635 *Szpeje – tutaj kupisz wyjątkowy prezent!,* https://hiphuta.wordpress.com/2015/12/ 18/szpeje-tutaj-kupisz-wyjatkowy-prezent (retrieved: 14 June 2016).

de Groot writes that today's ties with the past can shape relationships with the present, can serve as a source of self-knowledge and self-definition, can offer a set of easily identifiable cultural clues, and can provide patterns that help indicate the "other," while they can also be a "brand" exploited for economic purposes, as well as something that can be bodily experienced, consumed and "commodified."[636]

In contrast to museum objects, which are distinguished by the mere fact of being selected, removed from the scope of economic activities (including commercial activities) and put on display (a special status of objects that Igor Kopytoff calls "singularization"), objects intended for trade are subject to a process of commoditization, i.e. they can be freely exchanged on the market, have a monetary value, and are available to everyone who can afford them.[637] In the case of items that can be purchased in "Szpeje," accessibility does not mean universality, because these objects exist in limited quantities, resisting excessive commodification, which would lower their status. At the same time, they function as souvenirs, material fragments of the past and – bearing a vintage or retro label – as a symbol of a specific ideological and aesthetic attitude. For a tourist from abroad, they can become part of a journey to "another world," serving to authenticate the story after one returns home as part of the tourist experience. They are important because, unlike words, deeds, looks and other elements of this experience, they have durability resulting from their materiality, durability that they transfer from the past to the present.[638] Urban tourism almost always includes the element of shopping, and the souvenir is a "trophy" from the trip.[639] The products that can be purchased in "Szpeje" are unique, associated with a specific place, so they meet the basic requirements of shopping. In the case of people who remember the PRL, we are dealing with a different type of relationship, because similar products are directly related to their past lives, as

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636   Jerome de Groot, op. cit., 8.

637   Expanding the category of goods leads to the homogenization of values, while excessive commodification is hostile to culture, so societies separate a certain part of their environment, marking it as sacred. In this way, culture guarantees unquestionable individuality to certain things, resists the commodification of others, and sometimes what was already a commodity becomes individual again. In every society there are things publicly excluded from commoditization. See Igor Kopytoff, op. cit., 258 ff.

638   Susan M. Pearce, *Collecting Reconsidered*, op. cit., 140–141.

639   Armin Mikos von Rohrscheidt, "Nowoczesne trasy miejskie jako forma prezentacji historii i kultury oraz oferta turystyczna," in *Kultura i turystyka: wspólnie zyskać*, ed. Andrzej Stasiak (Łódź: Wydawnictwo WSTH, 2009), 100.

elements of autobiography; as I wrote in previous chapters, they are therefore touching, important and nostalgic.

To sum up, the institutionalized story of Nowa Huta – i.e. the project of a dispersed museum covering a traditional museum facility and a proposal to walk in the footsteps of socialist-realist architecture – is an example of how central government or local government actions can change the negative image of a given area/city/district, even if that image seems to be rooted permanently in the public consciousness. We can talk here about a kind of revitalization of a worldview, thanks to which both tourists and residents gain not only additional knowledge, but also a sense of uniqueness (positively characterized), and show a willingness to be active for the benefit of their local environment.

6.2. *A Crazy* Tour through Nowa Huta

The idea of showing tourists a "communist open-air museum," as well as material support in the amount of $1,000 for the establishment of Crazy Guides, are things its founder Michał Ostrowski (then a graduate of law studies at the Jagiellonian University and a receptionist in one of Krakow's hotels) attributes to Americans whom he showed Krakow.[640] From the beginning (i.e. from 2004) they were intended for foreign tourists and they remain so to this day. Maciej Nyzio, the guide with whom I visited Nowa Huta in January 2016 in a Trabant, confirms that over 90 % of the company's clients are English-speaking tourists from abroad, sometimes mixed couples (one of whom wants to show the other a part of his/her past and identity). It often happens that a trip to Nowa Huta is a gift for someone or a company event.[641] The main purpose of trips is entertainment and education (in that order) as well as to offer an original and non-classical way of visiting the city. For the few Poles who take advantage of the offer, it is a nostalgic journey or (in the case of the younger generation) a search for an experience "in the climate of PRL comedies."

The company's advertisement posted on YouTube encourages this form of learning about the past to "bored foreign tourists," for whom Nowa Huta is "practically a trip to Mars." The narrator promises that "today we will not visit monuments." Rather, "our guides will take us back in time," inviting us to the "communist open-air museum" where "you can easily find signs of a bygone

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640 The author's conversation with the owner of the company, Michał Ostrowski, January 29, 2016. See also the company's website: http://www.crazyguides.com/pl/jak_sie_zaczelo (retrieved: 1 June 2016).

641 Author's conversation with guide Maciej Nyzio, 29 January 2016.

era" and see "what it was like to live here under communism."[642] The sightseeing program is determined by the city's infrastructure and its most important objects. The guide's narration begins already on the way from Krakow (starting with the history of the Polish partitions) and depends on the knowledge of individual members of the group, their interests, and questions (while some know at least some historical facts, others know absolutely nothing, and the common interest rests in everyday life in the communist era, its product prices, store supplies, etc.).[643]

The story does not take the form of an instructive lecture, but develops freely; the guide creates an atmosphere of unforced reception of a rather anecdotal story filled with curiosities, biographies, childhood memories (or as in the case of my guide – from parents' youth). This is the basic but not single difference between the Crazy Guides offering and the "educational walks around Nowa Huta" prepared by the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow. In the latter case, the offering includes the possibility to download a PDF with route descriptions and short sound files from the website in order to "go and discover the non-obvious Nowa Huta."[644] The museum offers three routes ("The first housing estates of Nowa Huta," "Direction: Combine," and "On the Trail of the Troublemakers"), all of which start from the Central Square. The way the reader reads the text is the quintessence of the talk, which can hardly be called engaging or attractive. A monotonous voice conveys basic historical information in a way that hardly encourages walking. This objectified narrative is completely different from the entertaining experience contained in the tourist meeting with the city offered by Crazy Guides, enriched with plot threads and the so-called experience elements – i.e. micro-events, which include a meeting with an "autochton," food tastings, theatrical elements, etc.

Crazy Guides offers two sightseeing options: the "ordinary" tour includes: Aleja Róż, Plac Centralny, the Sendzimir Steelworks (former Metallurgical Combine of the Lenin Steelworks), shelters in Nowa Huta, and a visit to the "Stylowa" cafe. The extended offer (the so-called "Communism de Lux") additionally includes a visit to an apartment in one of the Nowa Huta housing estates (rented and

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642   Crazy Guides Communism Tours in Krakow, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= slbexkQ3tEw (retrieved: 31 May 2016). Similar tours are organized in various cities throughout post-communist Europe. In Prague, apart from the history of communism, the narrative also covers the traces of the Second World War.

643   Author's conversation with guide Maciej Nyzio, 29 January 2016.

644   *Spacery po Nowej Hucie*, https://muzeumkrakowa.pl/oddzialy/edukacyjne-spacery-po-nowej-hucie (retrieved: 11 June 2016).

furnished especially for this purpose) (Photo 64), even a meeting with "Wiesław" in a characteristic "worker's" outfit: a donkey jacket and an eared cap.[645]

Such short trips can be classified as urban tourism (so-called city breaks), in which trips lasting several days or weekends in the country or abroad consist in visiting monuments and/or specially prepared historical or thematic tourist routes. As Armin Mikos von Rohrscheidt writes, "(…) numerous city tourists visit centers known on a global or national scale, not necessarily for cognitive, experiential or entertainment reasons, but as part of the implementation of a certain "pattern," shared by those within a given cultural circle, on the basis of a kind of "credit." However, they also expect from their tourist destination such a degree of attractiveness and appropriate services that they can spend their free time there pleasantly, devoted to (and thus "invested" in) a "trip" to meet cultural standards."[646] From such trips the audience usually expects to get to know and experience the "essence" of a given place and to have a certain amount of fun.

A short film on YouTube provides a record of one of these trips organized by Crazy Guides for a group of tourists from England ("PRL de Lux").[647] A big attraction for foreigners are the vehicles themselves (Trabants or, in the case of larger groups, the so-called "cucumber" buses – i.e. Jelcz 043, produced by the factory in Jelcz in the years 1959–1986 as a vehicle for intercity transport). Communism itself – as a tourist attraction – becomes a distinguishing feature of the city of Krakow, something different, exotic, but positive, light, and funny. The guide's narration lends the communist past an aura of "good old times."

In the film, we witness an apartment scene during a meeting with an "exotic autochthon" (an appropriately stylized Mr. Wiesław Syrek) drinking vodka and eating pickled cucumbers. Eventually, the time comes for reflection and free conversation. The guide's narration is broken in several places, because on the one hand he mentions opportunities for social advancement brought by the new system to thousands of people ("When someone moves here from a poor village, it is something for them," "These people built it themselves, they had housing, a job, what more do you need?"), about shaping a mythical community ("It wasn't so bad, there was no division into rich and poor. (…) The years of communism in Poland, except for all those political matters, killing people (…) of course it

645 *Crazy Guides Communism Tours in Krakow,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= slbexkQ3tEw (retrieved: 31 May 2016).

646 Armin Mikos von Rohrscheidt, op. cit., 97.

647 *PRL de Luxe czyli dawny komfort*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWaBo2Wd 7fk (retrieved: 31 May 2016).

happened. But from the economic and social point of view it was good. Life was easier. Definitely."). But, on the other hand, he talks about the people uniting "against a common enemy."[648] Questions arise about who the enemy was, since communism improved citizens' living conditions, about why opponents were killed given that everyone was happy? Such narration is a conscious move on the part of the guide, who is "against capitalism" but who creates, at the same time, a nostalgic illusion of a unique, irretrievably lost world.

Similar and frequent situations in contemporary tourism, which Dean MacCannell calls "authenticity in tourist settings," express the visitors' longing "to get off the beaten path" and be "in with the natives." A peek "behind the scenes" creates the appearance of participation in the "real" life of the inhabitants.[649] In an apartment in the Nowa Huta housing estate, authentic objects from the era are accumulated in excess and represented in completely artificial contexts, e.g. toilet paper hangs on the wall next to a framed banknote from the period; a small portrait of Pope John Paul II is adjacent to photos of Lenin, Gierek, and Gorbachev; the shelves of the wall unit are lined with food stamps, a Soviet military uniform cap and Polish police helmets. This arrangement of objects is more characteristic of a museum exhibition than a private apartment, though such a set design would probably not surprise Anglo-Saxon visitors – it is "presented as disclosing more about the real thing than the real thing itself discloses."[650] Simulations more real than reality can be currently found in all exhibitions that focus on the everyday life in the PRL, and MacCannell's view of them is unequivocally negatively:

> (…) the lie contained in the touristic experience […] presents itself as a truthful revelation, as the vehicle that carries the onlooker behind false fronts into reality. The idea here is that a false back is more insidious and dangerous than a false front, or an inauthentic demystification of social life is not merely a lie but a superlie, the kind that drips with sincerity.[651]

But how do such simulations differ from other historical reconstructions, for example in an open-air museum? In both cases, we are dealing with an arrangement, a laid out graphic or scenographic arrangement, ordered objects and

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648   *PRL de Luxe czyli dawny komfort,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWaBo2Wd 7fk (retrieved: 31 May 2016).

649   Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 96–97.

650   Ibid., 102.

651   Ibid., 102–103.

a "mystification". Objects from different places often have no integral connection with each other, apart from an unspecified origin in a certain period or region. This could be considered a "fraud" if not for the attitude of the audience, which is aware of the limitations of a given medium (museum exhibition, historical reconstruction). Audience members enter a familiar convention, and it would be wrong to assume that they do not notice the differences between performance and the past reality.

Another obligatory place on the sightseeing route (one which belong to the category of "stage," not "backstage") is the "Stylowa" cafe, which functions in guidebooks as a "real" space, little changed since the communist era, a zone where "as a rule, there are no tourists" (Photo 65).[652] This last statement is completely different from reality, because "Stylowa" is an obligatory element not only on the Crazy Guides route, but in practice for all tourists visiting Nowa Huta. In "Stylowa" over coffee (brewed in a glass), guides talk about the history of the city, illustrating the narrative with photos from the 1950s. The cafe gives this story the appearance of direct contact with a bygone era, a tangible and visual embodiment of history; it evokes the feeling of physical participation in the past and supports personal commitment and a desire to understand those times. Regardless of the artificiality of the context ("Stylowa" now serves as a theatrical setting), for many people this type of experience speaks better than a visit to a museum. The frequently cited problem of "fake" authenticity should not obscure the fact that the objectified museum narrative is also an artificial creation, the difference being that it is backed by the "authority" of the institution, which allows many museologists to criticize other forms of representation of the past.

The Nowa Huta tour organized by Crazy Guides can be viewed in four dimensions: as an urban tourist route, as a non-traditional form of visiting the city (the "eventization" of the tourist space), as a traditional presentation of the architectural heritage of socialist realism, and as a nostalgic journey into the past. In practice, we are dealing with a collage of all the above elements. According to the assumption of urban tourism,

> (…) destinations should take care to show visitors a kind of unicum of the place, its identity. This identity is expressed both in the material and spiritual dimension, and therefore, apart from unique places and objects or monuments that are unique in form, it also includes a particular atmosphere (traditions, typical ways of living and being), specific features of the functioning of the urban organism, everything tied to

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652 *PRL de Luxe czyli dawny komfort,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWaBo2Wd 7fk (retrieved: 31 May 2016).

local history, it creates a genius loci – a set of factors that are difficult to define, which determine the uniqueness of life (and residence) in this particular place. Uniqueness is an important added value in a cultural tourist's subjective perception. The postulate of the genius loci presentation includes a guideline for the construction of tourist routes, which should include the most characteristic places and objects that identify a city.[653]

The route around Nowa Huta meets all the above requirements; it is in line with the trends of contemporary tourism, including urban multi-thematic routes that seek new and attractive ways to represent the uniqueness and (variously understood) authenticity of a particular urban space, which usually includes sightseeing, shopping, events of various kinds, culinary opportunities, anecdotes from the life of local residents.

For me, however, the basic question is this: how does the communist heritage of the city and the plant fit into the above strategies? In similar forms of sightseeing (the passage of time plays a large role here), all the negative aspects of the era disappear, but the uniqueness of the place and all the features positively distinguishing the city from other places are emphasized. Information with negative overtones takes the form of mild irony and distance; it is not dominant in the narrative. It is worth mentioning here that the group guides are too young to remember the PRL era other than as childhood, and the Stalinist era is as distant to them as the Second World War. It is thus easier for them to emphasize the positive elements of social life under communism (community, lack of competition, relative ease of life related to, for example, the lack of need to make difficult choices), because their main life experience involved the difficult period of transformation and the development of predatory capitalism. The guide with whom I visited Nowa Huta was a native of the city, and apart from the natural sentiment associated with the family home, he emphasized the uniqueness of the space itself, recalled his childhood and early youth ("in this cinema I saw "Indiana Jones" for the first time"[654]), which lent the entire experience a nostalgic dimension.

The socialist-realist architecture of Nowa Huta is both a tourist attraction and a scenography for the guides' developing narration. In addition to appreciating its undeniable architectural value and true uniqueness on a national scale, tourists establish a closer relationship with the city, which is the result of the guides' stories about everyday life taking place in a specific space, in specific

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653   Armin Mikos von Rohrscheidt, op. cit., 99.
654   Author's conversation with guide Maciej Nyzio, 29 January 2016.

buildings and locations, such as a cafe. We learn names once known only to local residents (e.g. the "vaticans" are twin buildings by Janusz Ballenstedt and Janusz Ingarden, erected in 1952–1955 as administrative buildings for the steelworks). The city reveals itself to the tourist, tells him its history, while the material heritage of communism adds authenticity to the experience, provides testimony to the past, and strengthens the aura of uniqueness. The negative aspects of Nowa Huta's construction, such as the degradation of the natural environment or the destruction of traditional social structures, recede into the background. The plant itself, once an "industrial behemoth" associated with the period of forced industrialization and the Stalinist era, is now a functioning workplace, which also evokes rather positive feelings in the era of new capitalism marked by the struggle against unemployment.

For a foreign tourist, after visiting Nowa Huta with Crazy Guides, communism will eventually be associated with well-planned housing estates, architecture referring to the Renaissance, a large workplace and "vodka with a pickle." Such models of sightseeing can be accused of reinforcing stereotypes, artificiality of conventions and nostalgia of narration, but we should also remember that they meet the expectations of many people who perhaps otherwise would not visit Nowa Huta at all, limiting themselves to the traditional brand of sightseeing in Krakow.

Urban tourist routes are criticized for the lack of authenticity. Similarly, tourists who choose this sightseeing option are chastised for their passive and demanding attitude towards the world, which encourages organizers to stage "pseudo-events." In the 1960s, Daniel J. Boorstin was writing: "The traveler (…) was working at something; the tourist was a pleasure-seeker. The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing.' He expects everything to be done to him and for him."[655] In practice, however, not only is it true that all types of space can be turned into tourist attractions, and that each staged cultural event can be treated as a "pseudo-event" or spectacle. It is also true that the very category of authenticity, which is a socio-cultural construction with no fixed meaning, can be questioned. In this perspective, the promise of good entertainment, fun with a grain of salt, does not have to mean that such trips lack cognitive value or exclude authentic experiences and emotions on the part of the audience. As mentioned above,

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655 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 85.

guides usually modify narratives depending on the questions and level of knowledge of a particular group. In this relationship, there is great potential; the possibility is real that historical knowledge can be increased and that interest in a specific topic can be aroused.

Conclusion

> *Memory's anachronistic quality – its bringing together of now and then, here and there – is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones.*
>
> Michael Rothberg[656]

Thirty years after the transformation of 1989, the Polish canon of knowledge and memory about communism is still being shaped and debated (sometimes in a stormy fashion). Polish society's memory of the recent past remains divided and often contradictory. The situation is similar in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but the degree of consensus reached is different in each of them; it is closely related not only to past political and social circumstances, but also to the particular course of transformation and the specific economic and political situation after 1989.

In the light of my research, it would be fallacy to argue that there exists a common memory of communism for the entire region; too many differences, both at the level of historical facts themselves and their representation, work to exclude such a possibility. Nonetheless, we can identify certain processes and types of exhibitions that appear in all countries of the former Soviet bloc. The processes in question concern certain elements of historical policy pursued by individual states and the establishment of a new identity in post-communist societies. The types of exhibitions, in turn, indicate similar directions towards which museum policy is moving.

A phenomenon common to all of Central and Eastern Europe is the introduction in large state institutions of official lines by which the communist period is represented in museums. Narratives supported by decision-makers usually present a coherent story about heroic nations fighting against an imposed regime that is treated as alien to individual communities and their true "natures." This heroic and martyrological version of recent history is designed to fulfill identity functions in all cases and promote a positive image of individual countries around the world. Such visions of the past are supported by a more or less effectively pursued historical policy. We should remember that an affirmative image of a community helps create a positive self-image of individuals, and

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656 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

therefore usually evokes approval from viewers who are reluctant to confront the inconvenient (and not always glorious) past.

Another element of the process of creating a canon of memory common to all of the former people's democracies is progressive forgetfulness. In the literature on the subject, it is too seldom emphasized that while remembering is an exceptional activity, one that requires special tools, forgetting is a natural process.[657] Indeed, forgetting has become a constitutive element in the formation of new (post-communist) identities in Central and Eastern Europe societies: communities toss aside memories of those historical facts and processes that do not serve today's goals and "current" identity, but they remember phenomena significant from the new socio-cultural perspective,[658] a fact which is clearly visible in museum exhibitions. Usually, resistance to the regime is willingly presented, which at exhibitions embraces great swaths of society and takes on significantly larger dimensions than past reality would justify. What is missing are representations created in a critical paradigm that would indicate the degree to which societies adapted to dictatorship, moral corruption and overt cooperation resulting from conformist attitudes and from the simple hope that social inequalities would be eliminated. The above phenomena were a real consequence of communism, and their absence in exhibitions paints a portrait that is significantly incomplete.

As a result, there is a kind of process duplication as diagnosed by Piotr Kwiatkowski, who claimed that knowledge about the sources of national pride has a different social status than knowledge about reasons to be ashamed:

> The view view that we can be proud of certain figures and phenomena in the national past belongs to knowledge that is widely shared, socially established, and recorded in texts and works of art – considered obvious in the community and passed on through various channels of education and communication. Meanwhile, the view that one should be ashamed of some of the deeds of one's ancestors is largely a matter of private knowledge that individuals acquire on their own, even though the specific set of social and political conditions stimulates the process of acquiring it to a greater or lesser extent.[659]

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657   See Aleida Assman, "From 'Canon and Archive' " in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy (Oxford 2011).

658   See Paul Connerton, op. cit., 59–71.

659   Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, "Jaką historią interesują się Polacy? Pytanie o kształt pamięci zbiorowej i jej przemiany po 1989 roku," in *Historia Polski od-nowa. Nowe narracje historii i muzealne reprezentacje przeszłości*, eds. Robert Kostro, Kazimierz Wóycicki and Michał Wysocki (Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Polski, 2014), 137–138.

Interestingly, the process of forgetting moves forward, despite the fact that the memory of communism is still an autobiographical memory for many. Inconvenient or embarrassing facts are removed from both the public sphere and individual recollections.

The above phenomenon is related to another common and dominant fact in the region, which is the desire to definitively isolate the undesirable communist heritage and identity by closing it off in museums, a process which serves as a symbolic end and completion of a certain period in history. This is evidenced by the ongoing process of decommunization in the public sphere, the removal of statues and monuments to ontologically safe areas, the organization of special exhibitions or galleries for "inconvenient" art. Strong and widespread nostalgia for the "good old days" is not a contradiction of the above thesis, because it does not mean nostalgia for the old system, but rather pride at most in the achievements of one's own countries against the system and emphasis on one's own uniqueness compared to other communist bloc countries. The nostalgia filter "tames" communism, but does not negate its absurdities and drawbacks. Only in exceptional cases (e.g. communities in state farms) does nostalgia mean a genuine desire to go back in time. The emergence of the nostalgic trend itself, however, is symptomatic and means that, despite strong support for specific lines of interpretation, various narratives about communism appear in the public spheres of post-communist countries.

The multifaceted nature of memory is another feature of the current situation in Eastern and Central Europe. In addition to mainstream visions, stories are created in a bottom-up manner, which are usually developed by smaller and often private museum institutions. Such representations, not necessarily in sync with the official line, refer to everyday life in the old system and to the viewers' childhood and memories from youth. It seems that the emergence of highly nostalgic representations is the result of the one-sided nature of narratives represented by large, state-owned museums and the omission of daily life shared by millions of people.

Summing up, even if we cannot talk about a single supranational memory for the entire region, it can certainly be argued that a multi-track model of memory is being implemented in all countries of the former Soviet bloc, one in which we can identify three main currents common to the whole region: identity-heroic, martyrological and nostalgic. They function simultaneously, side by side, and are materialized in specific types of exhibitions described above. In some countries hybrid exhibitions have been created, combining two of the above-mentioned types, most often heroic and martyrdom exhibitions, e.g. the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius, less often heroic and nostalgic ones, e.g. the House of Terror in Budapest.

Identity-heroic museums are the most common. In the presentation of their version of the past, they mainly use moral, less political, and almost non-material categories in an attempt to express collective (not individual) experiences and create or restore the sense of national community lost after the 1989 transformation. Despite the changes in historiography, which has gradually shifted interest from political history to micro-history and historical anthropology since the 1970s, the paradigm of traditional, event-based narration from a privileged (all-knowing) point of view still prevails at such exhibitions. Such additional elements as witness testimonies (oral history), which arouse empathy for characters and legitimize the story, do not change its overall order, reflecting the principles of classical, objective narration in the form of a visual reconstruction of the past. A clear narrative line excludes ambiguities and controversies. Topics that could raise doubts or cause debate are simply omitted. In addition to traditional display methods – i.e. artifacts from the era – identity exhibitions often use the most recent technology. Visitors have access to multimedia formats and databases that constitute the narrative's second or third level. These elements serve to legitimize the presented vision of history. Exhibitions form a logical whole, while they appear to be objective and scientific. Key words and categories in the case of identity narratives are Sovietization, ideology, resistance (armed and civil), and social engineering.

The second, highly popular type of exhibition are those showing the martyrological ethos of independence in an extreme form, i.e. martyrdom for freedom. Their aim is to isolate events and figures from the past that can be used as elements of a founding myth for the renewed community, and to pay homage to them. Such representations use authentic spaces (usually prisons or torture rooms) through which they create an affective experience. Evoking emotional reactions influences the viewers' understanding of the past and engages them emotionally. Objects used as relics enhance the sacral atmosphere of the exhibitions. Strong emotions evoke fascination, but limit the possibility for critical analysis of the past. Keywords for such exhibitions are terror, victim, and martyrdom.

The last type are nostalgic exhibitions, which are usually the result of a grassroots and commercial initiative, and which fulfill social functions differently than the above-mentioned exhibitions by ordering and legitimizing an individual past in order to give sense and meaning to the present. They focus on the everyday and private life of societies in the communist era. Their main elements are reconstructions and arrangements recreating domestic spaces and those elements of the public sphere that were permanent parts of the everyday lives of millions of people behind the "Iron Curtain." Such stagings help to

achieve the effect of "time travel" – objects become souvenirs, communism in the political sense recedes into the background, serving as a backdrop for individual memories. The basic categories for such exhibitions are autobiographical memory, nostalgia, and everyday life.

According to the theory of key educational experiences, museum exhibitions use three basic ways of influencing the audience so that the effect is long-lasting and intense. First, "cognitive excitation", i.e. acting through the presentation of information (e.g. in the form of maps, documents, objects) in order to engage and stimulate viewers to deepen their knowledge and tie these facts to their own lives. Second, emotional excitement, which is intended to stimulate sensitivity and encourage viewers to ask themselves moral and ethical questions. Third, deepening self-awareness, understanding oneself through the prism of individual and collective identity (self-discovery) and revealing the connections between national and local history and the visitor's life.[660] Large, complex and expensive museum projects influence the viewer using all three methods at the same time, but one also notices that each type of exhibition mentioned above chooses its basic means of impact: identity exhibitions – cognitive, martyrological – affective, and nostalgic – personalizing.

Looking at all the above-mentioned types of expositions from the social perspective, it must be said that politics and public life remain a male domain in them. Men are the main actors at identity and martyrdom exhibitions; they are the ones who fight and make sacrifices in the name of freedom.[661] Minor exceptions, such as the figure of Anna Walentynowicz in the European Solidarity Center, serve only to prove the rule. Even in this case, however, it is not Walentynowicz herself that is important, but the fact that she was dismissed from her job, which was presented in the exhibition as the direct cause of the strikes at the shipyard. Men are fighters, prisoners and leaders, while women are presented most often as "elements" of domestic life, i.e. everyday life. Female figures can be seen (in the form of mannequins) at nostalgic exhibitions (the GDR Museum and GDR World), mainly in the bedroom and kitchen, which in itself is also symptomatic.

Contrary to the fears of individual governments promoting uniform versions of the past, consistent not so much with past reality as with current political

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660   Gad Yair, "Neutrality, Objectivity and Dissociation: Cultural Trauma and Educational Messages in German Holocaust Memorial Sites and Documentation Centers," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 28 (2014), no. 3: 485.

661   I am writing here only about the exhibitions, not about past reality. For more on the latter, see e.g. Natalia Krzyżanowska, *Kobiety w (polskiej) sferze publicznej* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2012), 160–180.

needs, the existence of different memories of communism does not threaten or undermine versions of identity. It is not the case that the representation of one story (e.g. a nostalgic one) removes other narratives from the public space. One concept that is helpful in understanding this phenomenon is Michael Rothberg's multidirectional memory, which goes beyond the competitive memory model and poses the question: what happens when different stories are confronted with each other in the public sphere?[662] Rothberg questions the belief held by many people that "(…) the public sphere in which collective memories are articulated is a scarce resource and that the interaction of different collective memories within that sphere takes the form of zero-sum struggle for preeminence."[663] In the competitive memory model, public space is predetermined and limited, and within that space specific discourses/groups "engage in a life-and-death struggle." Rothberg continues: "In contrast, pursuing memory's multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public space as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction."[664] We are thus dealing with an interaction, a permeation of many stories about the past that do not battle against each other, but on the contrary complement each other. Rothberg puts forward the thesis that acts of remembering functioning side by side can cause both competition and mutual understanding, which sometimes occur simultaneously.

Let us repeat once again that all of Central and Eastern Europe shares not so much one story about the experience of communism, but rather a strong and socially justified need to discipline the produced narratives about the past and the accompanying meanings, to "tie" them permanently to specific objects, to give them an appropriate historical and political place within a chronological and teleological story. This process is demonstrated and naturalized in museums where the past is shown as a precursor to what is current (i.e. the present) and what will be (the future). As a result of the promotion of a single vision, grassroots initiatives emerge and the popularity of nostalgic representations or tourist trips to places associated with communism (e.g. Nowa Huta) is growing. At the same

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662   Michael Rothberg, op. cit., 2. Rothberg deals with the memory of the Holocaust and colonialism, but the conclusions and his model of multidirectional memory can be easily applied to the memory of communism. See also *Historie wzajemnych oddziaływań*, ed. Robert Traba (Berlin/Warszawa: CBH PAN, 2014).

663   Michael Rothberg, op. cit., 3.

664   Ibid., 5.

time, this proves that concepts claiming that museums are transparent in their activities and show the will to share power – in the sense that they allow the public to control cultural heritage, memory, and history – are not confirmed by research and remain in the realm of theory.

An important consequence of curators' efforts to achieve and convey one universally valid version of the past is a situation that can be described as breaking the autobiographical pact in historical museums. In museum exhibitions, a particular culture creates a visual story about itself (cultural self-reflection), and the exhibition is a projection of the way a given community wants to perceive itself. Therefore, one can argue that there is a relationship resembling an autobiographical pact between a specific exhibition and its audience. The author of the concept behind such a pact is Philippe Lejeune, who relates it to literary autobiographies by defining them as retrospective stories in prose in which "(…) a real person presents his fate in its individual aspect and with particular emphasis on the history of personality."[665] Lejeune writes that, unlike various kinds of literary fiction, biography and autobiography are reference works. As in a scientific or historical discourse, they are supposed to provide information about some extra-textual "reality," information that is verifiable. The goal is not a simple probability, but a likeness to the truth – not an illusion, but a picture of reality. Such texts refer to the referential pact which defines both the sector of reality under consideration and the principles and degree of similarity to be achieved. In autobiography, the referential pact usually accompanies the autobiographical pact. The former is summarized by the words: "I promise to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth," while the latter is expressed in the words: "I, the undersigned." Lejeune points out that this pact resembles the contract that a historian, geographer, or journalist concludes with his reader.[666]

The application of Lejeune's concept in a historical museum does not mean that every exhibition referring to the past should be regarded as a national autobiography (this would be a too far-reaching analogy), but in the relationship

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665   Philippe Lejeune, "Pakt autobiograficzny," *Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 23 (1975), no. 5, 31. The similarity of relations taking place in national museums to the autobiographical pact has also been noticed by Ilaria Porciani, though she does not give broader thought to this phenomenon. See "History Museums and The Making of Citizens and Communities," in National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750–2010: Mobilization and Legitimacy, Continuity and Change, eds. Peter Arronson and Gabriella Elgenius (London-New York: Routledge, 2018), 121.

666   Philippe Lejeune, op. cit., 42–43.

between the historical exhibition and the audience one can find elements that can be included in the concept of an autobiographical pact. First of all, according to Lejeune, the identities of the author, narrator and main character coincide.[667] In other words, exhibition creators (curators), narrators (curators, experts and – in the case of participatory exhibitions – the audience) and the main exhibition protagonist (a national group, from which the viewers also come to a large extent) – are all representatives of one cultural and usually national community. This relationship is very close, and all the actors are aware of it. Another issue concerns representation itself. Lejeune claims that autobiography creates a certain model, or fragment of reality, which the narrative is supposed to resemble. This similarity is realized on two levels: in relation to individual elements of the story (it is based on the criterion of accuracy), and in relation to the whole story (it is based on the criterion of truthfulness). Accuracy concerns information, truthful – meaning.[668] Museum exhibitions (especially identity exhibitions) are guided by similar assumptions, and go even further in terms of adequacy, given that they willingly create the impression of objectivity and truthfulness in the Aristotelian sense – i.e. full correspondence between representation and past reality. At this point, however, the autobiographical pact is weakened and even dissolved, because – as my analysis shows – exhibitions are ultimately neither accurate nor truthful, and certainly not real (in the above sense). Here, we should emphasize strongly that there is no requirement, or even the possibility, to convey detailed academic knowledge and all historical facts regarding a given phenomenon or fragment of the past through an exhibition; it is always necessary to make selections – on both the level of facts and of the objects, documents and arrangements that represent those facts. The same applies to autobiographical works whose authors make choices, but they do so in such a way that the principle of truthfulness and accuracy is maintained. In the case of historical museums, on the other hand, we are dealing with a high selectivity conducted so that the facts fit the chosen line of interpretation. Those that do not match the community's positive self-image are omitted. Such manipulations change the meaning of the entire narrative and the represented past. The recent past is particularly susceptible to manipulation, a fact which can be clearly seen in the exhibitions devoted to communism in Central and Eastern Europe.

Poland is hardly different than other countries of the former Eastern Bloc; although it does not have a single museum devoted to communism (the closest

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667   Ibid., 32.
668   Ibid., 43.

one was the unfinished project of the SocLand Museum of Communism in Warsaw), the numerous representations that do exist reflect and represent all three of the current trends found throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In practice, one can conclude that many exhibitions present a narrative about communism in which the old system is perceived nowhere as, for example, a failed project for modernization designed to promote social advancement, even if it in fact inspired such hopes and was supported as such by part of society. At exhibitions, communism is only condemned as a criminal system (the identity and martyrdom trend) or presented as an evil to which one had to adapt, and this shared national misfortune created strong social bonds that gave it a familiar dimension (nostalgic trend). My analysis confirmed that, according to the thesis I put forward, historical exhibitions cannot be treated only as a collection of information about the past, because the range of their impact is far greater than just cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic: they create meanings and control the understanding of represented phenomena and processes. The goal of all representations is to meet contemporary needs for meaning and orientation in the context of complex modernity, to evoke pride in one's own heritage and to present one's uniqueness to the world, though they can also influence the dissemination of particular worldviews and ideologies.

What is most problematic in a museum is the fluidity and indeterminacy of the bond between object and meaning, which is why exhibitions can become dangerous tools for manipulation, especially in the case of a narrative model in which few objects act as scenography for a coherent narrative and elements of drama and the application of other strategies make the story highly convincing. The narrative model restricts the audience's independent interpretative activity because it presents a ready-made story. Paradoxically, it is the traditional representation of history in museums – i.e., generally speaking, objects (preferably authentic) with short descriptive texts and the minimal use of new technologies – that give viewers a greater margin of interpretative freedom, allowing them to create their own narratives based on the artifacts they see. In the new museum theories, what is more important than technological advancement is the modification of attitudes towards the museum audience, transparency of curators' activities and readiness to share with viewers both authority and control over cultural heritage. In none of the museums I analyzed did I notice any desire to redefine the identity of the institution or to change curatorial practices that have traditionally had power over knowledge of the past.

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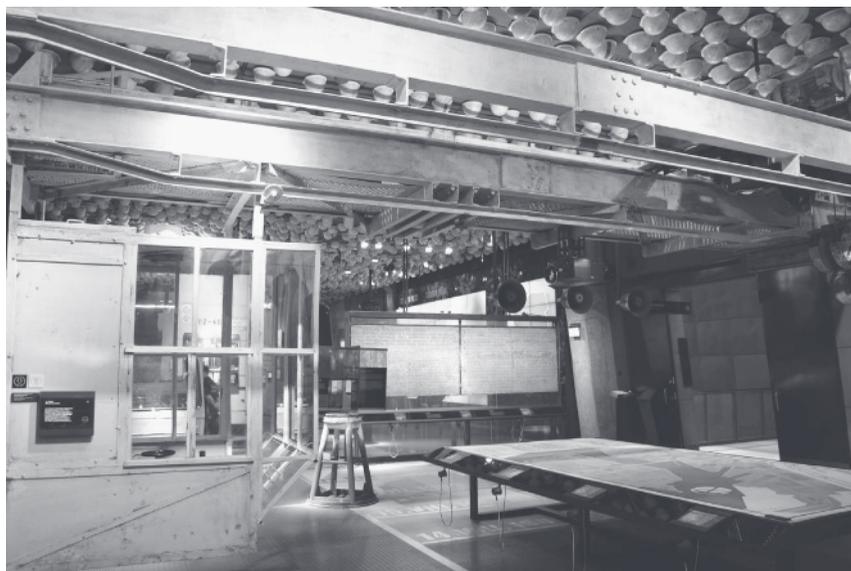
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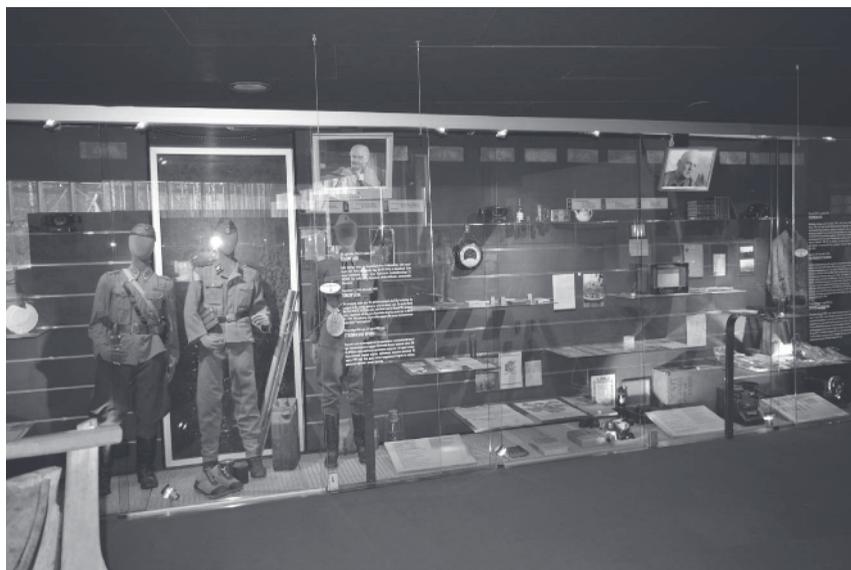
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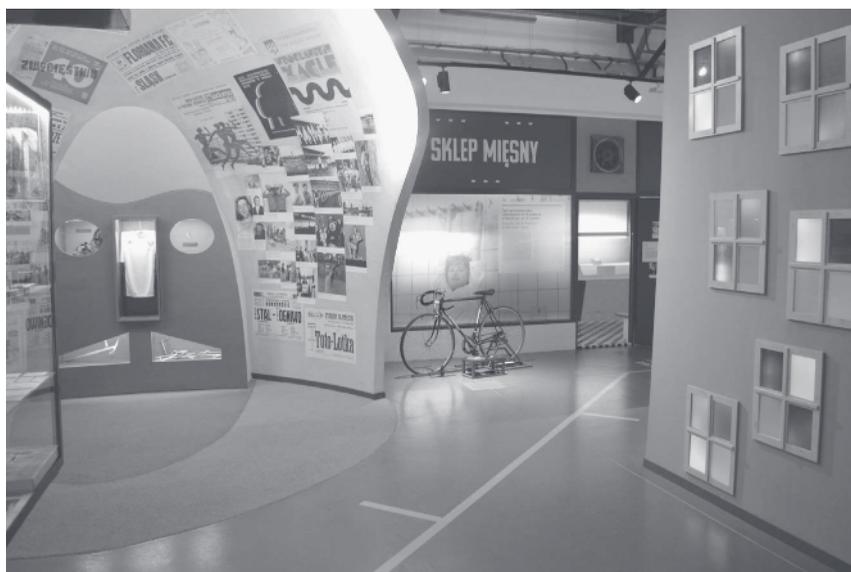
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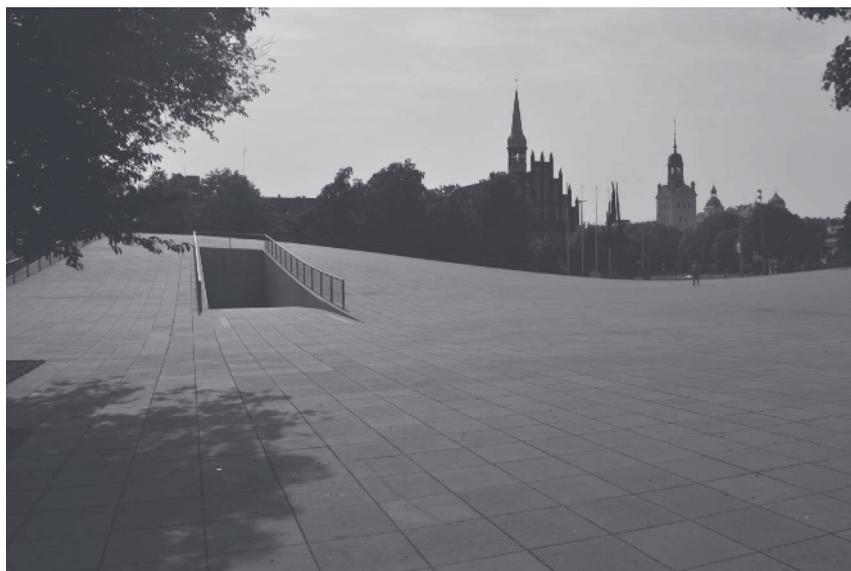
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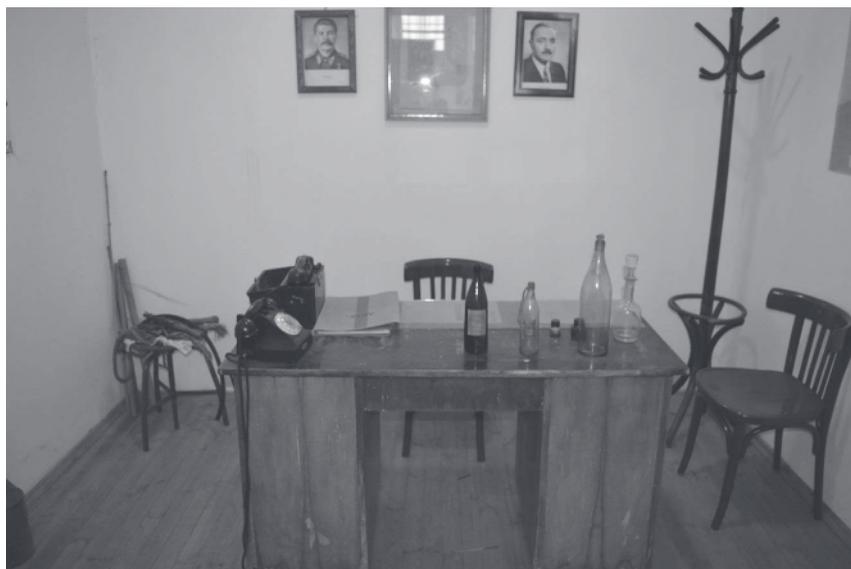
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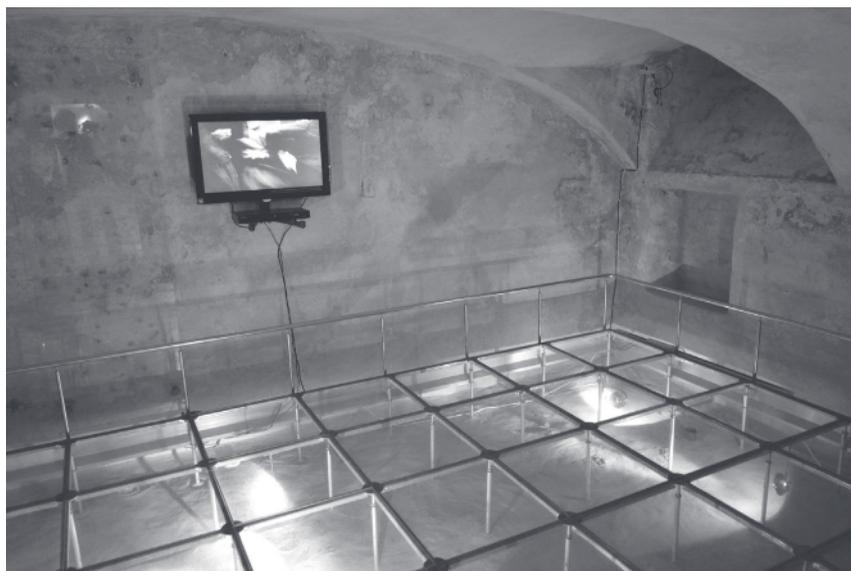
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