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## **BETWEEN TRADITIONS AND TECHNOLOGY: POLITICAL RADICALISM AND THE SPECTACLE OF MASCULINITY IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND**

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**ABSTRACT:** Radical movements of the Polish far-right consist, as elsewhere, mainly of young men. The strict gender binarism, the exaltation of men's power, homosociality, brotherhood, physical strength and subordination of women are omnipresent among 'angry white men' everywhere, Poland included. However, these general characteristics have always its local variants, trajectories, and particularities. This article is an attempt to explain the phenomenon of Polish radical right movements in its local context: cultural, social, economic. The article focuses on 'The March of Independence' – a cyclical celebration for radical groups, which proliferates the discourses of far-right radical masculinity. In the first part, the author focuses on the social and economic background, worldview and 'masculinist' ideology of Polish 'angry white men' (Kimmel 2013). The second part focuses on the historical and cultural coding of their 'aggrieved entitlement' (Kimmel 2013). The third part of the essay draws on Steve's Garlick (Garlick 2016: 163–193) concept of 'spectacular masculinity'. It analyzes how modern technology contributes to the construction of 'spectacular' masculinity among the participants of the march/members of radical groups.

**KEYWORDS:** masculinity, political radicalism, far-right movements, technology

**R**adical movements of the Polish far-right consist, as elsewhere, mainly of young men. The strict gender binarism, the exaltation of men's power, homosociality, brotherhood, physical strength and subordination of women are omnipresent among 'angry white men' everywhere, Poland included. Nevertheless, this general charac-

teristics has always its local variants, trajectories, and particularities. This article is an attempt to explain the phenomenon of Polish radical right movements in their local contexts: cultural, social, economic. The article focuses on ‘The March of Independence’ – radical groups’ cyclical celebration, which proliferates far-right radical discourses, and the type of masculinity considered as ‘traditional’. In the first part, the author focuses on the social and economic background, worldview and ‘masculinist’ ideology of Polish’ angry white men.’

In contrast, the second part focuses on the historical and cultural coding of their ‘aggrieved entitlement’. The crucial third part of the essay draws on Steve’s Garlick concept of ‘spectacular masculinity’. It analyzes how modern technology and social media contribute to constructing ‘spectacular masculinity’ among the participants of the march/members of radical groups.

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In a recent survey (Center for Public Opinion Research 2016) the researchers discovered that the acceptance of radical nationalist organizations, as Radical National Camp (ONR) is considerably higher among young men than elsewhere in the society – almost 38 percent of young Poles approved their political agenda. Three-thirds agreed with the statement that the Polish nation had suffered more than any other nation, almost 68 per cent believed that they could be proud of national history and accepted claim that the Poles acted more nobly and worthily than the others. Polish history as a source of pride is considered to be very ‘masculine’ – Maria Janion, one of the most respected historians and cultural scholar, once noted that popular heroic vision of national history practically excludes women:

Polish national culture is outstandingly masculine. The pivotal role is reserved to the homosocial unions of brotherhood and friendship. These unions are emphasized throughout our history – from ‘noblemen–brothers’ of the XVII century, through romantic formations of male students (Filomatos), patriotic conspirators, Marshall Piłsudski’s legions, the adorable uhlans, up to contemporary football hooligans. All these men communities contribute to Polish national myth. However, the homosocial character of these unions is usually marked with a hint of homosexual fascination. The latter is denied by ostentatious attachment to national heterosexual honour. Also, the Virgin Mary cult has to exclude homosexuality and set up masculine relations as exclusively brotherly ones – all the members of a group are brothers, children of the one symbolic mother. (Janion 2017: 267)

Today the pressure to exalt such masculine unions seems to be rising everywhere and seems to be a central issue for state’s official policy – the recent example is new design of Polish passports; it features the image of exclusively masculine independence heroes. The main page of the new design also includes the motto ‘God, Honour, Fatherland’ which was the historical motto of Polish Army and, quite recently, was the

motto of ‘the Independence Day Parade’.<sup>1</sup> in Warsaw. Scholars (Tomczok 2019: 37–42; Gołuński 2019: 43–53) have observed and described an interesting phenomenon of “remilitarization” of Polish masculinity in popular culture, other authors (Olechnicki, Szlendak, & Karwacki 2016) analyze the popularity of military reconstruction groups and festivals in contemporary Poland. Scholars (Tomasik 2013; Janion 2017; Śmieja 2017) generally agree that ‘militarized’ masculinity model was dominant in Polish culture probably longer than in bourgeois societies of the West. Such ‘military masculinity’ monopolized hegemonic position throughout almost the whole 20th century. Prewar Poland celebrated Marshall Piłsudski’s legions and uhlans as those, whose efforts brought and defended the first independence (1918 – 1939), what entitled them to rule the country which was often referred to as “timocracy” (Leder 2014: 7; Miłosz 2008: 456). The cult of Marshall Piłsudski and his successor, Marshall Rydz-Śmigły, could be compared to Mussolini’s Italian fascist cult (Wójcik 1987). Postwar communists used this trust in army and military force to present them not as a means of oppression but as hereditary of Millennial statehood traditions, means of social advancement for young men from rural areas, an important element of country’s economy. Historians (Zaremba 2001; Dronicz 2002) agree that military service was highly valued *à l’époque* (young men could easily acquire new skills: driver, mechanic, electronics, etc.) and the army was granted with respect and confidence, especially in the 60’s and early 70’s, the golden age of ‘military patriotism’ (Polniak 2011). It’s the workers’ rebellion of 1980 and the Martial law introduced in 1981 and cancelled in 1983 that changed this unquestioned position of military-shaped masculinity and undermined the army’s position as the central institution of Polish statehood (Śmieja 2017: 302–317). Since then, the army and military masculinities have been losing its allure. The fall of communism in 1989 brought an opportunity to talk about the army and the mechanisms of forming military masculinity more openly and critically. Significantly, this period’s blockbuster movies (*Samowolka*, *Kroll*) dealt with bullying, humiliation, violence, and inhuman behaviour hidden behind the barracks walls. Their message was clear: institutional dehumanization was the unique mean for creating the “military men”. With its drill, the army served as a *pars pro toto* for the communist system as a system of oppression and regular violence.

With the fall of communism, the new economic opportunities opened, free market and freedom of working abroad made ‘masculinities in uniforms’ less attractive and, to some degree, obsolete. Heroes of global popular culture and the ideals of prosperous yuppie or ‘middle class’ man proliferated among young people – educational boom started, and thousands of young men studied the most popular fields: marketing, management, advertising, law (Szcześniak 2017: 40–143). Meanwhile, the new policymakers opted for the professionalization of military service instead of conscription.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2012 each year’s parade has its motto: 2012 (25 000 participants) “Let’s regain Poland!” 2013 (25 000 – 30 000 participants): “New Generation comes!”, 2014 (50 000 participants): “The Army of Patriots”, 2015 (70 000 – 100 000 participants): “Poland for the Poles, the Poles for Poland”; 2016 (75 000 – 100 000 participants) motto “Poland–the bastion of Europe”; 2017 (participants 60 000): “We want God!”; 2018 (250 000 participants): “God, Honour, Fatherland.”

[...] after 1989, the distance between the military and society started to grow, culminating in the professionalization of the army and the abolition of conscription and a replacement of defence training classes in schools with a less-militarized education for security. According to polls conducted by the IPC research institute for the Ministry of National Defense in 2013, only 9% of young Poles wanted to have a career in the military or were seriously considering it, while the percentage of those utterly uninterested in the military was the highest among the youngest members of the studied group. It seems Poles have ceased to perceive the duty to defend the country, featured in article 13 of the Polish Constitution, as a necessary and desired element of the social contract. Surveys performed for the *Rzeczpospolita* daily in 2014 showed that only 19% of Poles were willing to sacrifice their life or health for the country. (Grzebalska 2017)

At the beginning of Polish transformation, in 1994, Maria Janion noticed an even wider erosion process that traditional paradigms of Polish culture underwent. The intergenerational transfers of soldiery values were blocked:

The youth doesn't care much – and it is worth more in-depth consideration. Probably all these discussions between the combatants and the civilians are false? Youth watch with disgust the heroes of bygone wars with all their medals, bands and flags. Young people unconsciously feel that they shouldn't care, that it's not their business. (Janion 1998: 327)

Since then, however, the things have been changing, and more traditional vision of history, tradition and gender order is often considered more adequate and desired.

Some of the initiatives that contributed to this flourishing of memory – like the campaign “Let's rebuild the Home Army” (‘Odbudujmy AK’) which encouraged citizens to participate in the creation of citizens' territorial defence modelled after the central Polish resistance organization (Armia Krajowa, AK) – were practical and mobilizing in character. However, the militarism that stemmed from the Polish flourishing of memory was, in no small extent rather historical and nostalgic than active in character. It was more about building cultural identification with a particular vision of the past and legitimizing the national right's political project than about inciting actual military activities here and now (Grzebalska 2017).

Although masculinity is not at stake in recent Tomasz Plata's book (Plata 2017), the author claims that situation has dramatically changed in recent years and persuasively argues that traditional paradigms rooted in early 19th-century imagination have been reinvigorating after 2010 and, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century is marked by the loss of statehood and independence, patriotism and struggle against external powers are important elements of these retraditionalizations. It is rather apparent that we cannot revive the ideology without its (gendered) bearers. The traditionalized vision of masculinity has been gaining legitimization through historical imagination, which is a vision of a war-like, ready-to-fight/die man. Attempts to remilitarize young men and signs of their spontaneous retraditionalization are ubiquitously observable phenomena nowadays. There are a few areas where we can see these processes. The most interesting and the most noticeable, yet not analyzed sufficiently, is the popularity of so-called 'military



classes' in public high schools. The first 62 classes appeared in 1999 as an effect of the Ministry of Defense project.

However, nowadays no one has control over them, and their number continually rises – according to the Ministry of Defense data, there are almost 600 schools with military classes nowadays. Such education is widespread in less developed, rural and suburban areas and among working-class environments. Young people, mostly boys, believe that graduating them will allow them to start a professional career, become professional soldiers, policeman, etc. Their motivation is, as the survey says (Urych 2017: 148–177), at least practical and partly economic – stable professional position and guaranteed income are their general expectation. Such a career model is considered as social advancement and warrant of stable income. However, the truth is that neither army nor police favour military-classes alumni, who outnumber the real needs of the army or the police. Why, then, schools decide to offer, at least partly, baseless promises to young people? Such classes are trendy (3 to 4 candidates in 1 place) and by organizing 'military classes' schools counteract the demographic decline and the loss of working positions for teachers (Łydka 2013). The journalist Ewa Turlej, who specializes in education, alarms that paramilitary–nationalist organizations often infiltrate military classes. There are no specific data, but in one of Warsaw's high schools, the whole class enlisted to 'the Shooter' paramilitary group. The organization offers practical training in police or military actions. However, it simultaneously filters ideological message that underground defence forces should be formed and its members should be ready to fight either external or internal enemy (Turlej 2014).

Except pre-military training school curricula abound in particular patriotic activities and the officially approved cult of so-called 'accursed soldiers' (Smuniewski 2016: 39–54). Many students graduating military class without the possibility to start a career in army/police etc. is a shocking moment of truth. Instead of prestigious service, they are offered low-paid jobs in services or leave home to find a job elsewhere. For many of them, it is the moment, when they could feel for the first time the emotion wittingly named 'aggrieved entitlement': they felt they are entitled to serve Fatherland, but Fatherland can do without them easily and doesn't favor their school efforts and commitment.

Another essential factor of military 'remasculinization' is the politics of memory which is the milestone for Polish right-wingers' identity ideology. Since 2004 the issue of politics of memory is at the core of Poland's public discussions (Napiórkowski 2016: 361). Among the vast array of institutions and activities, I would like to focus on one institution whose influence on contemporary politics of memory is exemplary and served as a model for many other sources, institutions and activities. The Museum of Warsaw Uprising opened in 2004. It was created thanks to Warsaw's and Poland's former president, Lech Kaczyński, and since the beginning, it is marked by his political bias. The Uprising itself has numerous interpretations and it still provokes emotional reactions, so commemorating it should be, as I believe, very cautious, nuanced and balanced, yet we are offered only one vision of the Uprising celebrated in the Museum. The heroic one. This vision celebrates in the first place the military history, and those, who fought in the Uprising, and, at least to some degree presents the suffering of the

civilians not as an effect of political miscalculations, but as a proof of Nazi bestiality. According to a research (Napiórkowski 2016: 380)–many of the visitors leave the museum with a false conviction that the uprising was the victory, not the massacre and the annihilation of the capital with its inhabitants; the uprisers are presented as young, attractive, courageous, selfless, sacrificial and heroic ideals for contemporary youth. The Museum proved its effectiveness as the creator of the contemporary politics of memory. It initiated numerous popular films (*Powstanie '44*), TV series (*Czas Honoru*), music albums (*Lao Che*, 'Powstanie Warszawskie') and aesthetisation/gadgetization of memory (popular T-shirts, mural decorations and even blocks for children)–'remembering' became fashionable and attractive element of contemporary popular culture.

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ONR (National Radical Camp) is a far-right organization claiming itself to be an ideological descendant of the anti-semitic political movement that existed before World War II (ONR shares the same name and symbols as pre-war political group). ONR attracted publicity in 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009 for unauthorized marches during the anniversary of the anti-Jewish riots in Myślenice in 1936. In 2005 the group had a couple of hundred members. Since then, the organization has risen considerably. Today, it is a leading member of the March of Independence Association, a co-initiative of several different nationalist movements. Since 2010 the Association organizes nationalist parades on November 11 in Warsaw to celebrate Independence. On November 11 2017, 60,000 people marched in the Independence Day celebration co-organized by ONR among others, in 2018 the number reached 250 000. What is less known, ONR is also organizing marches and processions on the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. When anti-democratic organization of far right claims to be the hereditary of the Home Army it is, according to some experts (Olaszek 2017) parasitization of the memory. According to some experts (Olaszek 2017), the ONR parasitized the memory.

The unofficial form of remembering was gaining popularity and devouring more official and less politically involved ways of remembering to the degree that today it almost monopolizes National Day celebration in the Polish capital. The most exciting interpretation of this fact has been proposed by a historian and semiotics scholar, Marcin Napiórkowski (2016), who analyzed the Uprising's forms of commemoration and its political implications. He observed that under communism, the Uprising's remembering was forbidden or at least considerably limited in scope. The event itself was presented as futile; people were taught that the Red Army progress, not the Uprising, incarnated the sense of history – the sense that could not have been contradicted. Contrastively, the political and economic transformation with its neoliberal mantra dominated the 90's and the first decade of the 21st century. It was also presented as the incarnation of ubiquitous progress and inevitable historical logic coming to Poland from abroad. With famous TINA (there is no alternative) claim to be an universal economic and cultural model. However, in the second decade of the 21 century, the ubiquity and the impact of the belief in the neoliberal economy and liberal democracy as the embodiment of Fukuyama's end of history considerably weakened. They

both have lost part of its charm; the economic aims turned out to be challenging to reach. The democratic procedures appeared as alienating and ineffective in solving social or economic problems. When the logic of the victorious march of progress fails, the triumphant march stops and gives way to an emotional funeral procession and – according to Napiórkowski – the appropriation of the Uprising memory by those, who do not fit to the narratives of progress or, less metaphorically, those whose economic, social or cultural resources made them vulnerable to move downward social ladder (the only well-organized voice of the resistance against neoliberal economy was the voice of football hooligans – Antonowicz, Szlendak, & Kossakowski 2015). Such people turn to the past, not into the future; they search for the sense of being in the history or rather mythical vision of history not in everyday reality, nor unsure future. The admiration for the heroic commitment of the uprisers is seen as a miraculous panacea for dehumanized global capitalism and intangible sense of bureaucratic institutions. Napiórkowski didn't mention 'aggrieved entitlement' (Kimmel 2013) of men, but we must add masculinity to his equation as young men dominate the nationalists' parades. The ONR members are often recruited among football hooligans, who did not accept the neoliberal capitalism and liberal democracy. As the official ideology of the ONR is at odds with the ideals of the Home Army and Warsaw Uprising it has to be said that the ONR members exalt a particular form of belligerent masculinity they believe the uprisers embodied (and the liberal democracy together with neoliberal economy denied or made useless). According to the research (Malinowska, Winiewski, & Górka 2016) the participants of the March of the Independence share the similar social profile as the boys and girls from military classes – they come from small towns in provincial Poland, (85%), they're young, they're mostly men (but the March attracts many women and families either). They use some historical symbols to gain political legitimization and expression for their anger, their 'aggrieved entitlement' (both fascist, like the Celtic cross or Roman salute, and traditionally patriotic as 'Polska Walcząca' sign or emblems of 'the accursed soldiers').

The research on the march participants' convictions and preferences was carried out by the Center for the Research on Prejudices in 2015. The researchers managed to ask 296 participants to answer the questionnaires. Three-thirds were men, half of them between 21 – 30 years old and almost 30 per cent between 15 and 20, 6 per cent younger. Twenty-one per cent declared living in the countryside or rural area, but only 15 per cent lived in cities bigger than half a million. Eighty-five per cent of participants arrived at the march from outside Warsaw. The political views – 75 per cent declared 'conservatists' (32 per cent declared themselves as 'definitely conservatives') only 13 per cent liberals. However, 75 per cent believed in a free market economy, while only about 10 per cent accepted the ideals of the social welfare state. Almost 70 per cent accepted the view that Poland's economic situation is worse than in non-defined other countries.

Nevertheless, at the same time, they scarcely consider their economic situation as worse when compared with fellow citizens. That is probably why they accept 'patriotic' vision and deep conviction that they act in the name of the whole nation. What is impressive – a considerable number of interviewees accepted illegal action. Forty per



cent declared their readiness to participate in illegal demonstrations and marches, 35 per cent were ready to occupy governmental buildings, and 18 per cent accepted vandalizing public property. The researchers also asked the participants to answer right-wing authoritarianism questions (6 questions, RWA-scale; Altemeyer 1988). They have also been answering the *Social Dominance test* (5 questions, SDO; Sidanius & Pratto 1994). The results obtained proved that the participants had the higher level of AVO than their peers, SDO was also considerably higher: the march participants respect group authorities, strong leadership, tradition, their worldview is hierarchical, the world is seen as a place where stronger dominate over weak, inequality is natural and desired.

After interviewing the participants, scholars concluded shortly: ‘It seems that this hierarchical attitude, not authoritarianism itself, is a distinctive feature of the march participants’ (Malinowska, Winiewski, & Górska 2016: 13). When one is convinced that the world is a jungle where only the fittest survive, it is natural that they want to be healthy and play a central role in it. The Polish radical movement consequently struggles to gain a dominant position in the social and political scene. The occupation of central and symbolic places of the capital on November 11 and monopolization of patriotic, national symbols which mingle smoothly with fascist emblems and football clubs logos in the march visual aspect fulfils young men’s sense of power, mission and brotherhood. Simultaneously they leave little or no place for other ways of celebrating and understanding Independence, patriotism, attachment to the republican values (Olaszek 2017).

Young Polish sociologist Bogna Kociołowicz (2017: 65–76) has analyzed ‘the Independence March’ member-organizations discourse (official statements, websites, discussion groups, FB profiles) to reveal the vision of masculinity they embody. She described the ideal type of Polish Man as courageous and ready to defend the Fatherland and women, controlling women’s fertility as it guarantees the survival of the nation, homophobic and contemplating gayness (or gayness visual attributes) as useless in the highest vocation of a man: defence of the country. Such men are ‘true men’ in contrast with their ‘European’ counterparts, presented in propaganda materials as emasculated by gender education and ‘tolerantism’ wimp – the symbol and the reason for the decline of the West in Polish nationalists’ eyes. Last but not east, such traditional Man is attached to the Catholicism and embodies the tradition of ‘antemurale Christianitatis’ (Christianity is attacked from the Western secularism and the Eastern Islamism). To successfully defend women and Fatherland, men should work on their physical strength and sustain the cult of heroes embodying such virtues as courage and sacrifice for the sake of the country and the nation. Popular t-shirts, Internet graphics, mural graffiti, invade public space popularizing slogans as “Army of patriots”, “Poland–first to fight!”, “Death to the enemies of our fatherland!” Prevalent representation and identification unite contemporary radicals with the so-called ‘accursed soldiers.’ The Young radicals identify themselves as the inheritors of them. What can we learn about Polish angry Young men from that fact? The ‘cursed soldiers’ (*Żołnierze wyklęci*) is a term applied to various Polish anti-Soviet or anti-communist resistance movements formed in the later stages of World War II and its aftermath by

some members of the Polish Underground State. The clandestine organizations continued their armed struggle against the communist government of Poland well into the 1950s. The guerrilla warfare included an array of military attacks launched against the communist regime's prisons and state security offices, detention facilities for political prisoners and concentration camps set up across the country. No one denies the guerrillas' existence, but they did not call themselves 'accursed soldiers' (the term was invented in mid-90' by historians) and their fight, as described by historians, is highly controversial. First of all – they fought against the High Command in London orders which decided to stop any military action after January 1945. Secondly, a significant part of them were the groups of demoralized 'dogs of war' without any sublime ideology or sense of a mission, as documented by historian Marcin Zaremba (Zaremba 2012). Thirdly, the accursed soldiers committed numerous attacks, massacres and war crimes on civilians, Jews, Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities. Today the cursed soldiers, yet controversial, are officially celebrated on March 1 (National Day of the Cursed Soldiers), their struggle is popularized in schoolbooks and popular culture (Łabuszewski et al. 2016). Besides this official politics of memory, the accursed soldiers are the patrons of radical groups: these groups cherish their radicalism and the spirit of independence from external powers and commands, what is highlighted is the desperado character and the hopelessness of their struggle against the overwhelming powers of treacherous West and Soviet East. In contrast to the Home Army and Warsaw uprisers, whose social background is considered slightly elitist, 'the accursed soldiers' are believed to incarnate the people's will. And their social profile, more egalitarian, is considered to be closer to the profile of the radical right-wing movements as ONR. It was the Yalta treaty of 1945 that forced them to fight. Their situation is often compared to Poland's contemporary 'EU-occupation', which nationalist have to confront as it is seen as aiming at annihilation of Poland emasculating Polish men. The discourse of radical right confronts with women's mobilization (Black Protests, Women's Strike) against implementation of anti-abortion law. 'Black protests' gathered hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women, to resist. The far-right groups stand against 'feminists, lesbians and gays.' Far-right organizations actively supported conservative part of Polish society and the Polish Church in their struggle to enforce this law. On this basis, the radical movements present themselves as the protectors of 'traditional values', 'Christendom' and the Nation against morally corrupted West with its gender and sex education, the liberation of women and respect for minorities. Nationalists' websites, marches, FB profiles abound in slogans like *Here's Poland, not Brussels; here we do not support perversions*. Both liberal women and LGBT people are considered as the internal enemy. The participants of the March of the Independence set fire into Julita Wójcik's artistic 'Rainbow' installation. The eradication of LGBT symbol out of cityscape is seen as a major symbolic victory of the radical movements. The homophobic fury of the ONR is so frenzied that sometimes it simply becomes funny and subverts the strength of homosocial bonding. In 2013 the ONR demonstrated against LGBT parade in Warsaw – one of the slogans became famous and is often satirized and laughed at: *We want men, not fags* motto with horrible spelling mistake in a word 'mężczyzn'; (i.e. 'men') reveals surprisingly queer meaning and denounces miserable cultural cap-

ital of the banner-holders.

What is really desired are not the only men but also God as a metaphysical warrant of 'traditional values'. Each of the Independence Parades co-organized by the ONR has its leading slogan. In 2017 it was *We want God*, the 2018th year's march's motto was *God, Honour, Fatherland* (the same as in newly designed passports then). The slogan is deeply rooted in Polish history and for many years it was the lemma for the armed forces fighting with, considered as godless Nazis, and the Soviets. Indeed, religion, the Roman Catholicism, plays a crucial role in the concept of Polish far-right masculinity. Jasna Góra (Clara Montana) is a Catholic monastery with symbolic meaning in Poland (in 1656 the Poles successfully defended the cloister against the Swedish protestant siege and it was believed that the Holy Mary intervened miraculously to save its people). The monastery kept functioning during Poland's partition, during the German occupation and under communism – it is a symbol of the national idea's continuity and strength. Each summer, hundreds of thousands of people from around the country pilgrim to participate in religious celebrations and listen to the bishops' statements on current issues that traditionally accompany religious meetings. However, for seven years, the ONR has organized its pilgrimage to get the benediction from favourable bishops and priests. It is a true spectacle, where patriotic and religious traditions interfere with purely fascist iconography and requisites. The Catholic creed is an important ideological glue for ONR masculinist ideology. ONR manifesto accentuates it clearly<sup>2</sup>.

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The 'retrotopic' (Bauman 2017) model of masculinity, as it is celebrated by the radical groups and performed during their parades, is neither a simple repetition nor the full-scale reconstruction. It has to be said that the historical props and images function in radically different economic, social and, what is even more important, technological environment. The adequate description of this 'multiple' (Hardt & Negri 2004: 287) body of 'spectacular masculinity' is provided by Steve Garlick (Garlick 2016: 163–193). The Canadian philosopher described the emergence of 'spectacular masculinity' during 2011 worldwide riots (Arab Spring, Vancouver riots, protests in England after police shooting in London). He concentrated on the Vancouver riots of 2011 as they are easily compared with a similar event in 1994. The most crucial difference between the events was the use of social media: 'During the 1994 riot they had 100 hours of VHS tape, now with every teen holding a different kind of cell phone camera, they were dealing with 5000 hours of 100 types of digital video.'<sup>3</sup> Compared to the 1994 Vancouver riot, Garlick comments, arguably the most distinctive feature of the 2011 version was the extent to which it was staged as *spectacle*. The attraction of the young men involved in the violence and destruction seemed almost as though they were performed for the sake of the cell phones that constituted their audience." (Garlick 2016:

<sup>2</sup> Deklaracja ideowa ONR. Retrieved November 2, 2021 (<https://www.onr.com.pl/deklaracja-ideowa/>).

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved November 2, 2021 (<https://www.citynews1130.com/2012/06/13/the-riot-one-year-later-the-effect-of-social-media/>).

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To understand what is happening during such riots as in Vancouver or in Warsaw, we have to develop new modes of explanations:

Vancouver riot was an incident in which sport, technology and violence mixed in a complex interplay of factors that fostered the emergence of a spectacular mode of hegemonic masculinity. This does not mean that rioting or violence can be reduced to the influence of hockey culture, technology, or gender. On the contrary [...] these factors possess significant explanatory power only if incorporated into a complexity perspective that foregrounds the nonlinear circulation of affects that allows for emergent realities. (Garlick 2016: 165)

The 2011 Independence March in Warsaw initiated wide-scale rioting and looting – the TVN television car was burned then. The next year the riots, violence and looting were much more intensive and broader in scope – after the battle with the police 176 people were arrested. The symbolic burning marks the 2013 parade down ‘the Rainbow’ (the artistic installation on one of central Warsaw’s squares presumed to symbolize ‘gayness’, *pedalstwo*), burning down the kiosk in front of Russian Federation Embassy, attempts to destroy squat building ‘Przychodnia’. All these ‘spectacular’ events were reported or streamed immediately by the participants. Garlick suggests that social media are crucial participants in the riot, and photography, even if banal as technology nowadays, shouldn’t be underestimated, as it ‘includes the ability to stabilize identity in the face of an uncertain world, which has always been central to the appeal and promise of photography’ (Garlick 2016: 173). The circulation of photos is employed ‘toward the end of stabilizing the situation and [...], producing emergent masculinities that endured beyond the instant to claim some form of recognition and ontological security.’ (p. 175)

Polish radical movements intermingle with football hooligans organizations, so we should not be surprised that the expressions of ‘spectacular masculinity’ adapt forms and props from football stadium tribunes (club emblems, balaclavas, flares, however, banned, are an iconic element of the marches). Similarly, like in Vancouver, the Warsaw riot “was an incident [...] that fostered the emergence of a spectacular mode of hegemonic masculinity” (Garlick 2016: 165) – what was marginal and despised, for example, suburban football culture, became central and frightful. In the local Polish context, it is worth noticing that the liberal government started acting against football fans in 2007. The action reached a peak in 2011–2012 (UEFA Euro 2012 Cup was organized in Poland and Ukraine) – new football infrastructure pushed radical football fans out of the stadiums, which are no longer ‘territories for the expression of social discontent and arenas for articulating frustration and tensions located in social and economic processes of transition’, the stadiums were ‘the oasis for social and cultural activities of those who are excluded from modernization’ (Antonowicz, Szlendak, & Kossakowski 2016: 218). The key-role technology in shaping this form of expression of masculinity is, according to Garlick, photography circulating in social networks which turns riots into a direct media spectacle. Warsaw riot produced a ‘spectacular masculinity’ that, ‘via the digitized photographic image, secured its repetition in time but at

the expense of reifying its nature' (Garlick 2016: 178). Garlick claims that Vancouver riots (the event took place in the vicinity of the tv station building) that "participants appeared to desire just such a spectacle as they sought attention from the cameras and the assembled crowd" (Garlick 2016: 185).

Similarly, the tv crew car was burnt down the same year in Warsaw – and what could be more attractive to the media than attacking the media? According to Garlick, a photographic form of commemoration is a technology of nature, quite similar in its essence to gender (Garlick 2016: 176) as a technology of mastering nature. Spectacular media-narcissistic gender performances we witness during the *Independece Marches* have in their retrotopic attitude decidedly postmodern character:

Today, however, in the fluid and uncertain world of liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), the assumed guarantees of rational, techno-scientific control over the world appear no doubt for many men. The riot is both a symptom of this condition and a vehicle for restoring masculine power and ontological security. If hegemonic masculinities prescribe a position of power and authority over one's environment, today this imperative increasingly means attempts by young men to establish control over the city. From this perspective, young men burning police cars and looting or trashing department stores amounts to an implicit challenge to the control of the state and capital over the urban environment. [...] More than anything, the riot was a spectacle of masculinity. (Garlick 2016: 187)

The Canadian scholar concludes that these anti-capitalist and anti-modern modes of expression of masculinity are side effects of the modern economy. However, their violent revolt has not got revolutionary potential:

Men's violence expresses the desire for more control and greater ontological security than on offer in contemporary gendered, capitalist societies. However, instead of fostering relationality, creativity and the expansion of life, such violence is directed toward a negation of complexity and restriction of 'erotic' energy within the boundaries of gender, while deflecting attention away from the political and economic institutions that limit collective freedoms. On the other hand, participation in the riot, like Adorno's (1997) notion of "shudder" has an aesthetic dimension that momentarily re-enliven bodies suffering from the diminishment of their capacities under the standardization of gender and economic regimes (among others). (2016: 193–194)

To conclude briefly, the *Independence March* is a spectacular mode of hegemonic masculinity, or, to be more precise, of masculinity aspiring to hegemony through a wide array of means: historical claims and subcultural appropriations, violent demonstrations on the streets and the use of modern technology, which gives young men and participants a sort of positive and reinforcing feedback.

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