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**Citation style:** Malczewska-Pawelec Dorota, Pawelec Tomasz. (2007). False Memory Syndrome : The Creation of a Vision of Nation's Recent History by Communist Authorities in Poland. "Interstitio" (T. 1, z. 1 (2007), s. 1-30).



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**FALSE MEMORY SYNDROME:  
THE CREATION OF A VISION OF NATION'S RECENT  
HISTORY BY COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES IN POLAND  
(in search of a research model)**

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**Abstract**

*The paper deals with the collective historical memory of Polish society and is divided into two parts. In the first one the utility of psychological categories and concepts originally developed around the recovered memory therapy and the false memory syndrome for studying attempts to change collective memory made "from above" is discussed. The second one seeks to apply some of them to the study of a radical transformation of Poles' historical memory undertaken by the new communist ruling elite after WW II. The paper is focused on the crucial aspect of this issue, i.e. school education in history and history textbooks for elementary and junior high schools that were published in the early 1950s form its empirical basis.*

The present paper deals with the collective historical memory of Polish society understood as a set of beliefs and ideas concerning the past (referring to events, figures, processes along with validating elements) shared by members of the aforementioned community<sup>1</sup>. In the considerations presented below we shall raise two issues – theoretical as well as practical and cognitive.

Within the scope of the former we shall try to prove that a network of categories, clues and associations developed around the so-called recovered memory therapy (RMT) and particularly around the idea of “false memory syndrome” (FMS), may prove useful for the reflections on intentional attempts to change/recreate the collective memory of society made “from above”. Next, within a framework of the latter, we shall strive to test the above-mentioned conceptual tools while considering some aspects of an attempt to radically reconstruct the Poles’ historical memory, which was made by the new communist rulers after World War II.

Although our investigation concerns directly Polish affairs, we believe that they may have wider references. As a matter of fact, they should be perceived as a part of the extensive and complicated problem of studying the role of the communist system in social and cultural transformations that were taking place in the states of the so called Soviet Block. The basic community of historical fates and experiences of societies in these countries, resulting from the fact of imposing the totalitarian system which was imported from the outside, encourages us to make comparisons. Also, it opens the possibility of posing similar research questions, testing the same theoretical models on empirical materials referring to various states.

We truly believe that the generalized and thorough description and explanation of the influence of communism on the Soviet Union's subject nations of Central and Eastern Europe appears currently to be the most important challenge for historians of the recent past in our part of the continent. Despite huge efforts made by a considerable number of researchers, we are still at the beginning of the way. Especially, clearly visible is a shortage of theoretical and model approaches, which would enable us to cross the level of the colloquial perception of historical phenomena. This problem always arises with respect to “the historian of yesterday” who inevitably continues to be marked by the participant’s perspective of examined events and is entangled in ideological disputes

<sup>1</sup> What we mean are the contents present in the individual memories of individual subjects since they are members of that community. For more details on the subject see A. Szpociński: *Kanon historyczny. Pamięć zbiorowa a pamięć indywidualna. Trzy wymiary pamięci zbiorowej* [Historical Canon. Collective Memory and Individual Memory. Three Dimensions of Collective Memory], “Studia Socjologiczne” 1983, No. 4 (91), p. 129-130; Idem: *Spoleczne funkcjonowanie symboli* [The Social Functioning of Symbols], (in:) T. Kostyrko (ed.): *Symbol i poznanie. W poszukiwaniu koncepcji integrującej*, [Symbol and Cognition. In a Search of an Integrational Concept], Warszawa 1987, p. 13-14.

on the sense and meaning of what directly preceded/conditioned the present (and for many it still continues to be its part)<sup>2</sup>. In the case of the above-mentioned area of research difficulties are increased by the repercussions of many decades of communist thought control and reality manipulation practices. Lack of elementary transparency in a large number of social life spheres caused that, as a consequence, today's historians frequently have to face fundamental difficulties as early as at the stage of defining source basis and formulating elementary factual statements. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the *majority* of their investigative efforts has concentrated on determining these basic facts, figures and dates; reflections on deeper mechanisms of the functioning of communism has been "put on the back burner" ("as soon as we have had a sufficient source basis and facts"). Meanwhile, such reflection seems indispensable just at the starting point. Only by virtue of this reflection – from the perspective of the proposed model – these facts would gain an essential historical significance and could enable us to explain and grasp the phenomenon under consideration. It may also constitute certain protection against submitting oneself to direct influences of diverse ideological and political "options" (attitude towards various aspects of communist "legacy" in the countries of our region is still one of the key differentiating factors in this respect). Also, it can make it easier for one to distance oneself from the subjective, individual knowledge of the living participants of events.

"False memory syndrome" is a paradiagnostic category present in the sphere of current psychotherapeutic practice. According to the most frequently quoted definition by John Kihlstrom it describes: "[A] condition in which a person's identity and interpersonal relationships are centered around a memory of traumatic experience which is objectively false but in which the person strongly believes. (...) the syndrome may be diagnosed when the memory is so deeply ingrained that it orients the individual's entire personality and lifestyle, in turn disrupting all sorts of other adaptive behavior. The analogy to personality disorder is intentional. False Memory Syndrome is especially destructive because the person assiduously avoids confrontation with any evidence that might challenge the memory. Thus it takes on a life of its own, encapsulated and resistant to correction. The person may become so focused on memory that he or she may be effectively distracted from coping with the real problems in his or her life"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Pomorski: Metodologiczne problemy historii najnowszej, [*Methodological Problems of Recent and Contemporary History*], "Przegląd Humanistyczny" 1987, No. 9, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted after the website of False Memory Syndrome Foundation, ([www.fmsfonline.org/fmsffaq.html#WhatsFMS](http://www.fmsfonline.org/fmsffaq.html#WhatsFMS) <<http://www.fmsfonline.org/fmsffaq.html#WhatsFMS>>). See also K.S. Pope: *Memory, Abuse and Science: Questioning Claims about the False Memory Epidemic*, "American Psychologist" Vol. 51: 1996, pp. 957-974.

The aforementioned category appeared at the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century owing to the rapid dissemination of the so-called recovered memory therapy in psychotherapeutic practice in the USA (and later also in different Anglo-Saxon countries). Followers of this approach maintain that the most frequent (basic) source of disorders as well as mental and psychosomatic symptoms in adults are traumatic experiences from their childhood, which a given person is not able to recall since they have been repressed or have undergone the so called dissociation<sup>4</sup>. The aim of psychotherapy is to retrieve those experiences to the patient's consciousness (i.e. reminding him/her of them) – it is assumed that it is feasible (and often just therapeutically necessary) to retrieve a memory factually faithful to what really occurred to the patient (most frequently) many years ago. In the course of this type of psychotherapy, the patient often starts recalling various acts of sexual abuse and molesting that he/she might have experienced in childhood which were repeatedly inflicted on them by their closest family members, including parents (fathers in most cases) and sometimes also acts related to satanic practices.

This kind of clinical conclusions led memory therapists, as well as numerous social workers, psychologists, psychoanalysts, lawyers and criminologists who shared their beliefs, to particular conclusions on the condition of modern society; for example, to the thesis about disseminating pedophile and incestuous practices in western societies both in families and beyond them. A considerable number of patients under the influence of recovered memory radically re-defined their family relationships; lawsuits were not infrequent, including those against closest family members – where the material of recovered memories proved to be of essential or key importance. The phenomenon under consideration (which was obviously sensationally hyped by the mass media) was accompanied by a peculiar objection movement on the part of (1) many parents accused of sexual wrongdoing by their own children who claimed the accusations were unfounded; (2) psychotherapists skeptical about some specific cases and/or certain RMT techniques or assumptions (or just about the entirety of the undertaking); (3) psychologists refuting the legitimacy of the memory conception (originating evidently from psychoanalysis), which is the basis of the above-mentioned therapy. The institutional background of these actions was the False Memory Syndrome Foundation whose members were people unjustifiably accused by means

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<sup>4</sup> Dissociation is frequently described as a form of posttraumatic dynamics of memory loss which is more typical than repression. As E. Waites points out, it is usually defined as "a disconnection of ideas from ideas or of ideas from feelings that is initially based on state-dependent forms of information-processing rather than personality conflicts. Dissociation may become a habitual coping mechanism, however, and in such cases it is interwoven with individual personality dynamics." E. Waites, *Memory Quest: Trauma and the Search for Personal History*, New York, 1997, p. 144-146. In the book, cf. more on the subject.

of recovered memory and their relatives, as well as those representatives of academic circles and therapists who are convinced about the harmfulness and the ill-founded character of the recovered memory therapy practices. It is the endeavors of people associated with the foundation that have popularized our eponymous category in public discourse, judicial practice and scientific literature; yet on the other hand, it has not been accepted in the official psychological diagnostics in the USA<sup>5</sup>.

Debates around RMT or, as others would prefer to say, the movement of implanting false memories in the minds of helpless patients, were extremely heated. As could be easily guessed, in its course questions far beyond the credibility and effectiveness of a particular model of psychotherapy appeared; yet there is no place here to discuss this matter thoroughly; it has been elaborated on in extensive literature<sup>6</sup>. Yet, it is characteristic that within the mainstream of American psychiatry and psychotherapy, the attitude of skeptical distance both towards the statements of radical RMT enthusiasts and those propagated by devoted FMS followers seems to prevail. It is relevantly expressed by the official enunciation of American Psychological Association (APA) which recognizes both the cases of recalling forgotten memories of real traumatic events in the course of therapy and the cases of imposing false memories by the therapist. As regards social and particularly legal implications of recovered memories, the APA definitely warns against trusting their factual exactness, if (which is quite often in recovered memory therapy) there are no external data corroborating the factual existence of incriminating events<sup>7</sup>.

Why do we employ this category, which is, at first glance, distant from the needs and reflections of a historian? It is because we believe that a search for categories, approaches, interpretative schemes beyond the area of the hitherto established discourse of history (and the methodology of history, too) can appear to be – the whole risk of crossing different disciplinary or conceptual boundaries notwithstanding – cognitively fertile

<sup>5</sup> We will not find it in official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* dated from 1994 (*DSM - IV*). With respect to the statements formulated on these problems see e.g. (the perspective of RMT followers) E. Bass, L. Davis: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, New York 1994. For more information on opposite opinions see e.g. F. Crews: *Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute*, New York 1995; E. Loftus, K. Ketcham: *The Myth of Repressed Memory*, New York 1994. To find out more about the establishment and the activity of the foundation itself, see the website mentioned in footnote 2 as well as K. S. Pope: *Memory, Abuse...*

<sup>6</sup> Next to the literature mentioned in the previous footnote, see a good review article - K. Gow: *The Complex Issues in Researching "False Memory Syndrome"*, "The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies" Vol. 3: 1998 ([www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/1998-3/gov1.htm](http://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/1998-3/gov1.htm)). Currently, there are over 1,200,000 websites accessible on this subject in English only! Many of those include extensive bibliographic comparisons in the area of psychotherapy, psychology, law and social guidance concerning recovered memory therapy as well as false memory syndrome.

<sup>7</sup> See the official statement on the website of the Association, ([www.apa.org/topics/memories.html](http://www.apa.org/topics/memories.html)).

for the research practice of a historian. It seems to us too that it could be also the case, especially when history confronts problems and questions that are non-traditional and still “untamed” sufficiently in the theoretical consideration and concrete research practice of our discipline. The problem of memory, though it has already been present for some time in professional historical writing<sup>8</sup>, still seems to be an area which is still rather indefinite and ambiguous. Ergo, it justifies, as we believe, our investigation.

The problem of memory, above all, continues to be the sphere of psychology studies. Not surprisingly, a historian concerned with memory looks at this direction by seeking a set of theoretical concepts or epistemic categories which would be adequate to his/her investigative needs.

It must be noticed here that the tradition of mutual relations and cooperation between historians and psychologists is not too strong<sup>9</sup>. Actually, there is one exception in this respect, which does not necessarily evoke enthusiasm among psychologists. It is cooperation of some history scholars with depth psychology which has already continued for many decades now. The stormy history of the so-called psychohistory (this paradigm of historical writing is undoubtedly the most articulate “product” of the influence of psychoanalysis on historians' research practice) testify to the cognitive fertility of insights and categories borrowed from Sigmund Freud and his heirs<sup>10</sup>. Psychoanalytic inspirations might also be found within many other trends of current historical writing; especially in gender history or the new cultural history. Undoubtedly, theoreticians of historiography reach for them from time to time as they prove to be of considerable use for them. Last but not least, we find their presence in writings dealing with historical memory<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the development of research on historical collective memory within the framework of historiography see: P. Hutton: *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover-London 1993 (esp. part 1) See also J. Le Goff: *History and Memory*, New York 1992.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on this subject see M. Dymkowski: *Wprowadzenie do psychologii historycznej [An Introduction into Historical Psychology]*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 10-16; T. Ochiniowski: *Nie tylko psychoanaliza. Wybrane programy współpracy badawczej historii i psychologii*, [Not only Psychoanalysis. Selected Research Cooperation Programs between History and Psychology], „Historyka” Vol. 32: 2002, p. 63-88.

<sup>10</sup> See T. Pawelec: *Dzieje i nieświadomość. Założenia teoretyczne i praktyka badawcza psychohistorii [History and the Unconscious. Theoretical Premises and Research Practice of Psychohistory]*, Katowice 2004; J. Szaluta, *Psychohistory: Theory and Practice*, New York 1999; P. Loewenberg, *Psychohistory. An Overview of the Field*, (in:) *Idem: Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach*, New Brunswick-London 1996, p. 14-41.

<sup>11</sup> To find more about psychoanalytic approach within the history of gender see J. Scott: *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, (in:) *Eadem: Gender and the Politics of History*, New York 1999, p. 28-52. The presence of psychoanalytic way of thinking in the area of new historical and cultural studies is also well exemplified by e.g. some works by Lynn Hunt or Lyndal Roper, and with regard to the study on memory cf. works by Dominick LaCapra (see especially his *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca-London, 1998) and partially by Franklin Ankersmit.

Basically, the psychotherapy of recovered memory is not recognized as a part of psychoanalytic movement. Its followers questioned and rejected many important foundations of psychoanalytic ontology (e.g. its notion of child's sexuality) and some fundamental principles of psychoanalytic therapy (e.g. distance and lack of involvement on the part of a therapist). They also condemned Freud along with his successors for their patriarchal bias, on which they founded psychoanalysis<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, a clear and strong relationship between these two undertakings is indisputable. The recovered memory therapy genetically originated from psychoanalysis and, for this reason, psychoanalytic thought and therapy is still the basic point of reference for therapists of memory. By rejecting some of its foundations they kept different ones, equally essential. So similarly to psychoanalysts, their basic idea is that of repression<sup>13</sup>. In the therapeutic process they employ typically psychoanalytic techniques of analyzing the patient's free associations, his/her dreams and – above all – transference relations. They believe – perhaps much more than an average psychoanalyst – in the effectiveness of regression in the service of therapy. Probably, the most crucial change is taking the position (in its orthodox, literal form)<sup>14</sup> that symptoms and the repressed contents of the subconscious almost always document – regardless of any disturbances, distortions etc. – not so much figments of the imagination, as the actual traumatic experiences from childhood. That is why they constitute the signs of the memory, which can be and have to be recovered.

Thinkers arguing in favor of the value of psychoanalytic ideas in historical research practice usually emphasize a peculiar correspondence between psychoanalytic study on the patient's personal history and investigations on past events which are typical for historians. Although they are two different undertakings, relating to different spheres of human

<sup>12</sup> This last element was adopted from the feminist thought which was very influential in the area of RMT. Here see J. Bator, *Feminizm, postmodernizm, psychoanaliza. Filozoficzne dylematy feministek "drugiej fali"* [*Feminism, Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis. The Philosophical Dilemmas of "Second Wave" Feminists*], Gdańsk 2001, chapt. II; R. P. Tong: *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, New York 1998, chapt. IV. For other differences see e.g. F. Crews: *Memory Wars...*, esp. chapt. "The revenge of the repressed".

<sup>13</sup> It is "a defensive process, excluding some imagination from consciousness. The repressed imagination content contains unbearable derivatives of drives and drive impulses. What emerges is a threat of excess, stimulation, anxiety or conflict, which is related to painful passions". B. More, B. Fine: *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, New Haven 1990 (the quotation is taken from Polish edition of the book - *Słownik psychoanalizy. Klasyczne pojęcia, nowe koncepcje*, Warszawa 1996, p. 386).

<sup>14</sup> Psychoanalysis was (and still remains) ambivalent in this matter – hesitating between the belief that relevant contents are often (usually?) products of fantasy and the hypothesis that they are eventually related to the real experiences of a given individual. See E. Waites: *Memory Quest...*, pp. 141-144. For more information about the controversies on these subjects in the psychoanalytic environment see: J. Malcolm, *In the Freud Archives*, London 1997.



activities and formulating different aims, a certain kind of structural similarity<sup>15</sup> is present here according to these thinkers.

In the present paper, we would like to invoke the same type of argumentation. We do not determine the legitimacy of recovered memory therapy, and especially we do not decide whether the fact that it is criticized by supporters of false memory syndrome results from some therapists' unfortunate mistakes or "excesses" or whether it generally reveals the fundamental harmfulness and invalidity of such a therapy. We claim only that the model of implanting false memories in an individual patient's memory put forward within the framework of this criticism proves directly helpful for the considerations on the collective historical memory of Polish society (and not only Polish one), and especially on efforts to form the contents and structure of this memory made by communists being in power after World War II. In other words, it provides tools to describe the dynamics and mechanisms of memory change under the influence of particular "therapeutic" endeavors (and, undoubtedly, it is in this way that the communist power elite's attitude towards society may be interpreted, as we shall demonstrate below) useful both for considerations on a neurotic individual confined within the four walls of the psychotherapist's office and on society forming a particular (i.e. founded on memory) relation towards their own past.

Let us point to the key structural similarities; at the same time they will be the basic starting points for our reflections. The first one is related to the basic significance of memory (called autobiographical) for an individual's identity, on the one hand, and historical memory for a community's identity, on the other hand.

For the advocates of RMT remembering (precisely, autobiographical memory) constitutes the fundamental aspect of self (as a complex mental structure), to a crucial extent it determines its organization (self-scheme) and *ipso facto* ensures a sense of an individual's continuity and identity. The repressed and dissociated memories result in the loss and distortion of essential components of personality<sup>16</sup>. Thereby, it is so crucial to

<sup>15</sup> They both study human thoughts and motives in the past, and, consequently, they deal with the study and correction of memory. They both communicate their conclusions in a narrative form. They are both concerned with the genesis and development of the examined phenomena interpreted in an individualizing rather than generalizing way; hence, they both produce a multitude of explanations /interpretations of a single phenomenon. They both respect the thesis about the manifold and multi-level conditioning of studied phenomena. For more on the subject see: R. de Saussure: *Psychoanalysis and History*, (in:) G. Roheim (ed.): *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences*, vol. 2, New York 1950, p. 7-65; P. Gay: *Psychoanalysis in History*, (in:) W.M. Runyan (ed.): *Psychologists and Historical Interpretation*, Oxford - New York 1988, p. 107-120; H. Meyerhoff: *On Psychoanalysis as History*, (in:) G Cocks, T Crosby (ed.): *Psycho/History: Reading in the Method of Psychologists, Psychoanalysis and History*, New Haven, 1987, p. 17-29; M. Roth: *Psycho-Analysis as History*, Ithaca 1995. In the case of history the above assumption refers to the largest degree to the classic model of historiography.

<sup>16</sup> For more information see: E. Waites: *Memory Quest...* p. 57-72

recover the lost memory. So the implantation of false memories, which is, in turn, stressed by the critics of this therapy, gives rise to the deep transformations of a person's identity, questioning his/her hitherto ties and identifications rooted in the past. At the same time, the relation of memory with the acquisition of social competences is emphasized here - values, behavior patterns and cognitive scripts. Memory falsified by the recollections of alleged traumas may lead to their losses.

Similarly, owing to the fact that collective historical memory, performing the function of integrating a given group, co-specifies its identity, the reconstruction of the structures and contents of this memory leads to the vital changes of this identity. It also influences the shape of prospective actions undertaken by members of a given community within the present.

Another point that should be made here is related to the rejection of the conviction about the static character of memory made in the both areas – both for the representative of recovered memory therapy and for the researcher of collective memory it is not a depository of contents which are ready to be recorded /recalled. The dynamic character of phenomena of memorizing leads in both cases to the formulation of the thesis about the autonomization of a concrete memory content in relation to phenomena/experiences from the past (be it isolated or collective one), which it would refer to.

Memory theoreticians conceive that dynamics in the form of plenty of psychological mechanisms influencing the final shape of what we remember. They write about the influence of denial (of experiences and emotions), censorship, repression and dissociation, about projections, screen memories and cover stories; in memory functioning they find processes related to the dream-work as described by Freud: condensing, displacement, representability and secondary revision (elaboration)<sup>17</sup>. Their specific and final result (i.e. what we remember and can retrieve in memories) is the function of our current psychological needs, present experiences and emotions, socially conditioned possibilities of expression.

In this context we observe that historians devoted to the studying of collective memory often continue to be open to the similar way of defining the dynamics of memory functioning; they even literally borrow Freudian categories for this purpose<sup>18</sup>. Similar implications are also borne by often quoted in this context Maurice Halbwachs' idea of a social framework of memory (a set of categories, patterns and values that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 137-149

<sup>18</sup> “It is vulnerable to transferences, screen memories, censoring and projections of all kinds.” – Pierre Nora wrote about collective memory. Idem (ed.): *Realms of Memory*, vol. 1, New York 1994, p. 3.

currently functions within a given group) determining what could be remembered (retrieved in memory) and how<sup>19</sup>.

It should not escape our notice that the dynamic character of memory leads FMS supporters to the thesis about the existence of a real possibility (i.e. a threat and a danger) of manipulating the content of memory by a subject who is in the position of authority/power in relation to the owner of memory, particularly by the therapist in his office. The “therapist” (for the supporters of the syndrome the quotation marks would be necessary here) brings his own expectations to the process of memory reconstruction based on theory and clinical experience as well as on his own prejudices and stereotypes<sup>20</sup>. By analyzing the patient’s symptoms, his/her associations, dreams and transference, the therapist makes assumptions on the patient’s experiences from the past that are concealed behind them. Ultimately, he decides what ultimately should be ‘recalled’ and by virtue of his position of an authority and by using a blend of suggestions and intimidation (“the regression in the service of therapy” developed in the course of the session results in – as the critics of memory therapy point out – the patient’s total emotional dependence on the therapist<sup>21</sup>) causes that the patient accepts the verity of the contents imposed on his memories on the intellectual and the emotional level alike.

We recognize the analogous possibility in relation to the historical memory of society. Here the role of the subject intentionally manipulating the content of this memory might be assumed by a political party ruling the country (particularly, one ruling in a totalitarian way). In fact, it administers an extensive set of instruments which could influence the shape of the discourse on the past developed within the society. The need of such an interference occurs particularly noticeably when those in power attempt to establish a social and political order radically (revolutionarily) different from the hitherto existing. In other words, when those in power “...proclaim to realize a new order on behalf of the whole society, and this society, having a sense of being a nation, refers to their own past as to one of the elements of its identity, then they will face the necessity to assume some attitude to the ideas about the nation's past, [but also - D.M.P. and T.P.] and to create such an image of it, which would suggest that it is them, revolutionaries who reached for power, who are mostly predisposed to exercise it”<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See M. Halbwachs: *Les Cadres sociaux de la memoire*, Paris 1925. It is worth noticing here that Halbwachs' conceptions provided a theoretical basis of “the first wave” of historical studies on memory in the 80s. For this problem see P. Hutton: *History as an Art...*, p. 88-90.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. K. Gow: *The Complex Issues...*

<sup>21</sup> See F. Crews: *Memory Wars...*, p. 172-175.

<sup>22</sup> A. Szpociński: *Kanon historyczny...* [*Historical Canon...*] p. 138-139.

Psychotherapists manipulating memory are subjectively motivated by the intention of treating individuals affected with traumas, who, as being devoid of a grip with the supplies of their memories, have lost the ability to creatively integrate the essential experiences which are of key importance to their existence. They believe that the retrieval of even extremely painful memories will ultimately enable their patients to function in more realistic and even less pathological way within the present and in the future.

Authorities' actions in the sphere of the society's historical memory marked with painful experiences in the past may also be dictated by similar motives. We claim that this is the case with politics of memory adopted by Polish communists after the Second World War. In our opinion their therapeutic motives should not be considered to be solely the rationalization of striving for power and totalitarian control. They genuinely structured the communists' perception of Polish society as an object of "therapeutic" actions, and also, to a certain degree at least, the actions themselves.

Now let us introduce our collective "therapist" - the communist power elite. First and foremost, the fact that the then Polish authorities<sup>23</sup> embarked upon the operation of reconstructing the Polish society's historical memory resulted from the authorities' specific perception of social reality. In their vision of man and the world, the society (as a certain whole) was objectivized. It was described as an (passive) object of diverse endeavors made by external subjects rather than a spontaneous and active causative factor. It was interpreted rather vaguely, e.g. it was not specified who constitutes it (certain social groups such as "the bourgeoisie" and "landowners", as well as individuals were excluded from it). Unclear was also the relation between the "society" and the equally vague "nation". Generally, two metaphors were commonly employed: that of "a child" who could be subject to the indispensable educational process and that of "Pandora's box"<sup>24</sup>. Especially the latter is interesting because *implicite* it refers to the luggage of memories and tradition "burdening" the "historical mortgage" of the Poles. "Poland - Jakub Berman<sup>25</sup> maintained - is Pandora's box. It is easy to let evil spirits out of it but it is difficult to pull them back. [...] Here is the whole syndrome: dreams about great

<sup>23</sup> This perception originated from a peculiar philosophy of history shared in the circles of the communist elite. To find out more on that see R. Stobiecki: *Bolszewizm a historia. Próba rekonstrukcji bolszewickiej filozofii dziejów* [Bolshevism and History. An attempt to Reconstruct the Bolshevik Philosophy of History], Łódź 1998.

<sup>24</sup> D. Malczewska-Pawelec, „Oni” – *polscy ludzie Stalina. Rekonstrukcja wizji świata i człowieka polskiej elity władzy lat 1944-56* [„They” – *Stalin's Polish People. A Reconstruction of the Vision of Man and the World of Polish Ruling Elite in the Years 1944-56*], (in): M.W. Wanatowicz, I. Panic (ed.): *Wiekii stare i nowe* [New and Old Ages], Vol. 4, Katowice 2005, p. 234-235.

<sup>25</sup> One of the three most important people in the party's ruling elite in Poland during Stalin's times.

Poland, Poland superpower, Poland - Christ of the nations, the Poles - the elect nation; [...] all these Jagiellonian delusions coupled with dreams about a great expansion to the East, which we know from Sienkiewicz, constantly reside in the consciousness of the Poles because they have been cultivated in different circles for ages"<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, they assumed that, in society's consciousness, there existed contents, experiences, emotions, which they considered highly harmful - thus requiring a deep correction<sup>27</sup>. Eventually, it allowed them to "assume the role" of a therapist and to treat the society similarly to the patient who cannot help himself and passively seeks therapeutic treatment. Curiously enough, the patient himself did not ask for advice but was diagnosed and qualified for "treatment" contrary to his own will. After all, the moment was special. As a result of traumatic experiences caused by the Second World War, the society was decimated and devoid of its elites. Many of its members painfully experienced individual tragedies. Hence, it was somehow defenseless in the face of "therapeutic" manipulation.

The therapy was conducted in many areas and in many ways. We can hazard a guess that actually the whole discourse articulated by the ruling group more or less performed the task of "creating" new, i.e. "socialist" man who would have a modified identity and altered memory. Particularly, what was applied to change the historical memory (since this issue is of our special interest here) were: school education (particularly yet not only - history teaching), media broadcasts concerning the past (in the press and on the radio) and at least part of the then literary production. The process of creating realms of memory<sup>28</sup> that were alternative to the hitherto existing got underway on a large scale. As a consequence, new monuments were erected, streets were called new names, thus considerably transforming the symbolism of urban spaces. The meticulously orchestrated mass ceremonies and parades, as well as changes in the calendar of public holidays and anniversaries were all used for that purpose too. We could say that a new historical canon was initiated<sup>29</sup>. By no means do the above-mentioned remarks aspire to exhaust the subject; however, they indicate quite sufficiently how extensive, multi-faceted and complex was the program of reconstructing the historical memory of Polish society during Stalin's times. At the same time they point at the

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 235, quoted after T. Torąńska, *Oni [They]*, Warszawa 1989, p. 173 and 177.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 239.

<sup>28</sup> The concept was popularized by Pierre Nora. See Idem (ed.): *Realms of Memory...*, Vol. 1, p. 14-20 (the original edition of the French volumes about realms of memory started to appear in 1984).

<sup>29</sup> We refer here to the concept proposed by A. Szpociński. By the concept of historical canon he understood "a set of realms of memory recognized by a given community". He defined realms of memory as "proper names of objectivized cultural products as well as names of historical events and names of heroes, which are believed by members of a given group to conceal important contents for them". A. Szpociński: *Kanon historyczny... [Historical Canon...]*, p. 134-135; see also B. Szacka: *O pamięci społecznej [On Social Memory]*, "Znak" 1995, No. 480 (5), p. 71.

wide spectrum of research efforts indispensable for the full and comprehensive consideration of this phenomenon.

The present paper focuses on a crucial segment of this issue. We shall look in close-up at school education and particularly at the content of history textbooks published in the years 1951-56<sup>30</sup>, that is, in the period of the most intensive attempts to reconstruct memory and simultaneously in the times of their largest radicalism<sup>31</sup>. The modification of the content of school history education appeared to be an urgent and top priority assignment - the authorities were trying to keep the new generations of children and youths exposed to this channel of implanting a "modified" memory. It was simultaneously this segment of society whose set of beliefs on what had happened formerly were subject to manipulation most easily because the ideas of the past shared by its members were subject to limitation by the then "social frameworks of memory" to the least degree. A child's range of social experiences is limited and so is the scale of reflection on the past. In addition to this, the possibility of confronting the vision of the past taught at school with the memory and social experience of a child's own family circle was reduced at the moment of history concerned. With the Polish society staying increasingly under surveillance, the adults fairly often avoided talking on "dangerous" topics with their offspring.

We shall analyze the material from Poland's recent history<sup>32</sup>. The reason for that is that most appropriate for considerations in the

<sup>30</sup> Out of the textbooks of history of Poland which were on the syllabus back then, we have considered those which referred to the history of Poland after 1864: M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV [History for the Fourth Grade]*, Warszawa 1953; G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski [History of Poland]*, Warszawa 1952; G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski. Materiały pomocnicze dla klasy IV zeszyt 2 1795-1919. [History of Poland. Auxiliary materials for Fourth Grade. Exercise Book 2 1795-1919]*, Warszawa 1951; Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski Materiały do nauczania w klasie IX [History of Poland 1864-1945. Teaching Materials for the Ninth Grade]*, Warszawa 1952. For the lists of all history textbooks approved for use in post-war years (until 1956) see B. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia w szkolnej edukacji historycznej w Polsce w latach 1944-56 [Transformations in School History Education in Poland in the Years 1944-1956]*, Warszawa 1986 p. 303-308.

Obviously, the shape of school history education in the dimension which is of our interest was also created by other elements, such as the calendar of historical anniversaries recommended by authorities, contents and teaching syllabus instructions as well as historical radio broadcasts for school. See B. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia... [Transformations...]*, p. 239-242; A. Szpociński: *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski. Analiza słuchowisk historycznych dla szkół podstawowych [Transformations of the Image of Polish Past. An Analysis of Historical Radio Broadcasts for Elementary Schools in 1951-1984]*, Warszawa 1989.

<sup>31</sup> For more see M. Hoszowska: *Praktyka nauczania historii w Polsce 1944-1956 [The Practice of Teaching History in Poland 1944-1956]*, Rzeszów 2002, p. 99-199, M. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia... [Transformations...]*, p. 189-272. The turning point of "Post-October Thaw" (what we mean here is the period after October 1956 when the regime has become less oppressive) does not mean the end of such attempts. In fact, in the mild version they were continued until 1989.

<sup>32</sup> For the basic models of teaching recent history in Polish schools see J. Maternicki: *Trzy modele szkolnej historii najnowszej [Three Models of Recent History Teaching at Schools]*, "Wiadomości Historyczne" 1997, No. 1, p. 29-37..

categories of memory seem to be those contents of textbooks that, above all, (1) are related to the fairly non-distant past; (2) concern the history of one's own group, the knowledge of which constitutes a crucial component of collective identity. In other words, we shall try to determine, in which direction and within what scope the authorities were attempting "to re-define" (or "to work through") the historical memory referring to the last decades of the national history by means of the contents of school textbooks.

Our analysis of the contents of relevant textbooks allowed us to identify particular areas of memory, which were supposed to be falsified. We find here (1) complete pictures of certain sorts of historical processes and/or longer highlighted fragments of history which could be distinguished<sup>33</sup>; (2) realms of memory, especially a list of positive and negative figures of national history. In other words, we would be concerned with the contents one should bear in mind in order to understand national history properly. Naturally, the essential dimension of the "correction" made on each and every of these areas was the sphere of values – in the process of reconstructing memory the valuing of certain phenomena or figures often changed from positive into negative and the other way around.

Above all, the fundamental image undergoing a change was the one relating to history formation mechanisms. It was the class struggle that became a central issue. As a catalyst for history, it was a decisive factor of individuals' and collective beings' (be them states, nations or social groups) strivings and aspirations<sup>34</sup>. The elements of this picture are visible in texts themselves (a wide spectrum of phenomena and dependencies described there is accounted for by means of direct and/or indirect references to class struggle), as well as in the are of (usually poor) didactic props and supplements such as, for example, subchapters and chapters titles which evidently were inducing the perception of the past through such a prism. As an example, in junior high school (Polish: "gimnazjum") textbook the issue of Polish society during the period of partitioned Poland in the second half of the 19th century is described in the form of two chapters entitled: "Polish possessing classes; the policy of triple loyalty

<sup>33</sup> We make a reference here to the concept of historical images (or narrative entities) proposed by J. Topolski, i.e. structurally linked related sets of historical statements, which are not reducible to the "sum" of sentences composing a given set. Each statement "refers" to the past by means of (i.e. as a component) a given entity or an image. J. Topolski: *Teoria wiedzy historycznej* [*Theory of Historical Knowledge*], Poznań 1983, pp. 305-308. Cf. Idem: *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*, [*How One Writes and Comprehends History. Secrets of Historical Narrative*], Warszawa 1996, p. 103-106.

<sup>34</sup> The directive of such an approach was openly formulated by teaching syllabi and ministry instructions regarding all historical epochs. See e.g. B. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia...* [*Transformations...*], p. 237 and *passim*; M. Hoszowska: *Praktyka nauczania historii...* [*The Practice of Teaching History...*], p. 108-109 and *passim*.

in the conditions of national oppression” and “The Polish working class and the beginning of the worker’s movement”, respectively<sup>35</sup>.

The consequence of the above is a peculiar picture of the Polish society and nation<sup>36</sup> of the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century that a student was supposed to remember. It was a divided community, which was in a way “cracked” along the line of the class conflict. Noticeable in it were beings personifying the then antagonistic classes: the bourgeoisie, landowners and kulaks on the one side, and workers and sometimes peasants (poor ones) on the other. Hence, the approach in which the community would exist as a less or more organic entirety joined through common objectives and values was excluded “by definition”. Even in the most tragic moments for the Poles which were favorable to social and national integration, only “objective” colliding interests, divisions, conflicts, and finally ignoble attitude of those staying on the “inappropriate” side of the class barricade were worth noticing.

Therefore, during the partitioned Poland period “the bourgeoisie and landowners condemned the nation’s struggle for freedom and fought against it, they propagated submissiveness to invaders. [...] People’s masses had persistent, obstinate fight with the invaders”<sup>37</sup>.

During the First World War “...the possessing classes, landowners and the bourgeoisie along with rich peasants grew rich on war. It was them who raised food prices. They speculated on starving town populations. They reaped the benefits from profitable trading with the invaders. Their hope was to wage imperialistic war. The possessing classes divided into two camps. One allied itself with the imperialistic coalition, the other united with German imperialism. They both were hostile to the Polish people’s masses”<sup>38</sup>.

A similar polarization of attitudes took place during the Second World War and occupation:

•“despite terrible persecutions the Polish nation did not break down, it opposed invaders. Thus, in factories employees would work slowly, carelessly, they would sabotage by damaging machinery [...]. In the country peasants would delay submitting foods to the invader [...] Teachers and youths would organize clandestine teaching. Lessons were held in various conditions, in workers' flats, craftsmen's workshops [...]. While the working masses were fighting in different

<sup>35</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski 1864-1945...*, [History of Poland 1864-1945...], p. 64, 84.

<sup>36</sup> Lack of clear distinction between nation and society is noticeable; perhaps more often we encounter the category of “society”. In textbooks also the term “people’s masses” is often employed, sometimes it is simply equivalent to “society/nation”, sometimes only to those, who are on the “right class side”.

<sup>37</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [History for the Fourth Grade...], p. 146.

<sup>38</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski. Materiały pomocnicze...* [History of Poland. Auxiliary Materials...], p. 109.



ways with the invaders, a considerable part of the bourgeoisie entered into an agreement with them. Many manufacturers recognized themselves as Germans by signing the so called 'volkslists'. Many salesman and vendors would trade with the Nazis, they would speculate, grow rich on smuggling commodities at high prices to the ghetto, they would become rich on somebody else's harm. Numerous landowners and kulaks made good business on the general public poverty and misery<sup>39</sup>;

•“From the first days of occupation, the Polish nation was involved in a struggle against the Nazis. At the same time, a sharp class struggle within the society was continuing. The bourgeoisie and landowners as well as part of intelligentsia and lower middleclass subordinated to them banked on capitalists to restore power in Poland after the victory of England and France”<sup>40</sup>.

Accordingly, the internally divided society/nation could not act as a causing entity in the historical process. Its active role was vanishing, e.g. in the process of regaining independence after the First World War: “at the end of 1918 Polish territory was free from the invaders' rule. Thus it was due to the victory of the socialist revolution in Russia and in the situation of the outbreak of the revolution in Germany and Austria that the independent Polish state came into being after 123 years”<sup>41</sup>.

In the image of class struggle created by the world of textbook narratives a crucial influence on the course of events was exerted by rather indeterminate forces/beings which were presented antropomorphically. In other words, they acted like certain living individuals endowed with emotions, having definite intentions and objectives. What came into the fore was “the bourgeoisie”, “imperialism” and “reaction”. The first one was the most crucial and we shall draw our attention to it. It was represented as a permanent and overpowering antagonist of any progressive social forces. e.g. the people's masses and workers. It was a subject that was ruthless in acting as well as cunning, calculating and scheming. As an example, it would change its ruling ways so as “to suppress revolutionary turmoil and be able to exploit the huge masses in a **more brutal way**”<sup>42</sup>. “Under the veneer of 'the defenders of peasants' masses' it would attempt to force its way in the peoples' movement, it would endeavor to “**implant**” “**a deceitful and cynical opinion**” in the working masses, it would try “to **darken** the class consciousness” of the proletariat, it would weaken “the swing of revolutionary struggle by means of **deceitful maneuvers**”, it would attempt “to **subordinate** the healthy,

<sup>39</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner, *Historia dla klasy IV* [History for the Fourth Grade...], p. 192-193.

<sup>40</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [History of Poland...], p. 306.

<sup>41</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [History for the Fourth Grade...], p. 177.

<sup>42</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [History of Poland...], p. 275. All the quotations in bold originate from the authors of this text.

patriotic and rank-and-file movement of working masses ideologically and organizationally”<sup>43</sup>.

Also, it had wide possibilities of actions. For instance, “it **put forward** a rich peasant to hold power”, “it would **organize** bourgeois government, army and offices”<sup>44</sup>, it would introduce “fascist rule” (in 1926); before that “it **suppressed** Cracow Uprising”<sup>45</sup> and “**decided** that a significant part of western Polish territories would remain beyond Poland's borders”<sup>46</sup>.

Despite these possibilities, the bourgeoisie would generally remain in a defensive position as it was afraid of the working masses' wrath. Therefore, “it would observe an increase in the proletariat's activity **with anxiety**”<sup>47</sup>; it felt “that (...) it **was no longer able** to keep the masses obedient to it”. It “was terrified” by the working masses' movement, since “it was **afraid** of revolution”<sup>48</sup>, “in the stirred peasants' masses” it saw “**real danger** to itself”. Generally though, “it **hated** its own working masses and **feared** them”<sup>49</sup>.

However, from time to time it seized the initiative and then “**launched an open attack** on the working class and on the working masses' achievements”<sup>50</sup> and “**seized**” power in Poland<sup>51</sup>.

Now let us look at the concrete picture relating to a particular period of history. Out of many possible periods to consider the most interesting seems to be that relating to II Republic (Commonwealth) of Poland (1918-1939). Memories about between-the-wars times were particularly exposed to the endeavors of falsifying and manipulating because the ideological program as well as the political practice of Poland's communist rulers was in direct contradiction to what was happening in the country prior to September 1939. Hence, the memory about this period had to be shaped in such a way that the new rulers' actions that were antithetical to its legacy appeared legitimate and legally valid. Also, additional difficulty appeared. In contrast to the dramatic times of occupation and the turbulent years of the formation and coagulating of the so called “people's rule”, what was directly “before” could be remembered – regardless of the actual pros and cons of II Republic of Poland – much more vividly and

<sup>43</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski*. [*History of Poland...*], p. 157, 159; 312, 157.

<sup>44</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 268, 263.

<sup>45</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth Grade...*], p. 185, 184.

<sup>46</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 337-338.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 185.

<sup>48</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 275, 263.

<sup>49</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski* [*History of Poland...*], p. 157, 158.

<sup>50</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 264.

<sup>51</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth Grade...*], p. 178.

positively than necessary. Thus the process of nostalgic recollections<sup>52</sup> was thwarting the communists' intentions.

In the discourse of the examined textbooks, the notion of II Republic (Commonwealth) of Poland communicating the symbolic continuation of the "first" Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania was absent. Rather than that, they were writing about "the bourgeoisie and landowners' Republic of Poland"<sup>53</sup> or just about "Poland". As one can expect, actually all matters relating to the Polish state between 1918 and 1939 was depicted as a gloomy period. The government of landowners and the bourgeoisie invariably acted against the state's and society's/nation's vital interests. Hence, in the times of the struggle for the borders "they did not care" about Pomerania, Masurias and Silesia<sup>54</sup>. However, they referred to the "...former magnate tradition in the east at the cost of renouncing the western lands and at the cost of disregarding the nation's most important needs"<sup>55</sup>. Accordingly, war against Bolsheviks was "Polish landowners' and capitalists' invasion of the Soviet State"<sup>56</sup>. An example of another "betrayal of the nation's interests" was making an agreement with the Nazis in 1933 (sic!)<sup>57</sup>, who were the Polish nation's blatant and worst enemies. The Polish capitalists and landowners along with Hitler were scheming to invade the Soviet Union"<sup>58</sup>. Also, the "support for Spanish fascism"<sup>59</sup> and the occupation of Zaolzie as well as the supposed rejection of "all proposals" (not clarified, though) "of an agreement with the Soviet Union" were interpreted likewise<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> For the relation to the past built on nostalgia cf. W. Burszta: *Nostalgia i mit [Nostalgia and Myth]*, (in:) E. Domańska (ed.): *Historia: o jeden świat za daleko? [History: One World Too Far?]*, Poznań 1997, p. 119-128. Cf. also E. Domańska: *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach, [Microhistories. Encounters in Interworlds]*, Poznań 2005, p. 121-122.

<sup>53</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 304.

<sup>54</sup> For instance: "The imperialistic Polish government did not support the people's uprising [Third Silesian Uprising - D.M.P. and T.P.]" (G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski ... [History of Poland...]* p. 269); "by betraying Silesian masses, not supporting the fight of Polish people in Masuria..." (Ibidem, 270, cf. also Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 337).

<sup>55</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 270, cf. ibidem, p. 266 and M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV [History for the Fourth Grade...]*, p. 180-181.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 181.

<sup>57</sup> In fact, it was about signing an agreement about renouncing use of violence in mutual relations in 1934. From the Polish part - next to the non-aggression pact signed with the Soviet Union in 1932 - it constituted a political sign of keeping an equal distance towards both potentially stronger and aggressive neighbors.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, p. 186, cf. G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 289.

<sup>59</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV... [History for the Fourth Grade...]*, p. 186.

<sup>60</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 289. The conclusion of the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union was underestimated by the authors of the textbooks as "an obligation treated not seriously by Piłsudski".

The authorities' heaviest "sin" was obviously lack of the country's preparedness for war with the German invasion in 1939 as well as the civil and military authorities' attitude in the face of aggression: "The first day of fight showed that the Polish fascist government was unprepared for defense; that it dishonorably betrayed the country by making it fall prey to the deadly enemy. No sooner had the Nazi troops forced their way to Poland than the fascist Polish government, the president, the commander-in-chief, high-rank commanders ran away from the burning country to Romania, where also a fascist government was in power. They took away the state treasury and priceless works of art with them. Officials and the police ran away too. The fascist state collapsed"<sup>61</sup>.

Internal affairs looked equally bad. They were presented as – sometimes bloody – a series of conflicts and struggle between the "government"<sup>62</sup> and the society. Other issues did not exist. It happened so because the government represented mostly the bourgeoisie and landowners<sup>63</sup> rather than society. The following chapters titles suffice to prove this point: "Revolutionary fights against the rules of the bourgeoisie in Poland in the years 1918-1923"<sup>64</sup>, "The Polish nation under KPP<sup>65</sup> struggling against the fascist government for saving the country's independence"<sup>66</sup>. The most crucial and important event concerning internal affairs were incidents in Cracow in 1923 referred to as "Cracow Uprising"<sup>67</sup>. In some books they even completely overshadowed the May Coup d'Etat in 1926.

In textbooks we find numerous examples illustrating how the authorities oppressed the citizens, i.e. "people's masses":

- "The army would shoot at the demonstrating workers. This time it was not a foreign army, but the Polish one serving the Polish bourgeoisie commanded by reactionary officers";
- "In open battles the troops would shoot at peasants using machine guns, aircrafts patrolled the battlefield from the air";
- "The fascist Polish authorities suppressed the peasants' uprising cruelly. The arrested leaders were tormented under interrogation,

<sup>61</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth Grade...*], p. 189.

<sup>62</sup> In higher grades textbooks some particular Cabinets were distinguished but this did not influence negative evaluations.

<sup>63</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth grade...*], p. 178, 181.

<sup>64</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 270.

<sup>65</sup> I.e. the Communist Party of Poland.

<sup>66</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth Grade...*], p. 184. This last suggests that Poland was threatened with losing independence because of the sheer fact of having a particular government.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 181. We refer here to turbulent workers' demonstrations in this city which resulted in some dead casualties.

they were battered and consequently three of them were sentenced to death and one to life sentence”<sup>68</sup>.

While reading communist history textbooks, one can infer that citizens lived lives of hardship in interwar Poland since it was affected by permanent economic crises. Also, it allocated half of its revenue into armed forces and police; it leased the most important branches of economy (oil and coal industry) and the most crucial enterprises, e.g. the railways to foreigners<sup>69</sup>:

•“Unemployment was spreading, thus causing hunger and misery among workers. Factories were closed down, workers were deprived of jobs. All this was demanded by the international unions of the richest capitalists called cartels; members of these unions were also Polish capitalists and landowners”;

•“Thousands of workers’ families were homeless, they squeezed in weary sheds and gloomy, moist households hopelessly waiting for fate improvement. Hunger, diseases, early mortality infested a plethora of victims. Nobody cared about the fate of workers, the government was indifferent to their worries [...] Incessant poverty reigned in poor and landless peasants’ huts [...] Peasants could not save their situations by seeking jobs in factories because the industry was not developing and there was constant unemployment in the country. Last but not least, the government would mercilessly collect taxes from peasants and take away the last cows and household appliances because of arrears”;

•“Hard living conditions entailed the peasant’s and worker’s children’s harm. The bourgeois Polish government did not care about education; it did not consider establishing free, elementary school for all children”<sup>70</sup>.

The aforementioned examples, quoted among many other possible ones at our disposal illustrate pre-September Poland as a country of exploitation and social suppression, where the government continues to be indifferent to the inhabitant’s needs. This negative picture was enhanced by the vision of the state devoid of civil and democratic liberties<sup>71</sup> as well as that of the authorities constantly ready to use violence against citizens. The climax of all these atrocities was the “fascisation” of the country implemented from 1926 on<sup>72</sup>.

Thus depicted II Republic of Poland had naturally its heroes, i.e. both positive and negative, individual and collective ones. In this last category

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 178, 187.

<sup>69</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 275.

<sup>70</sup> M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [*History for the Fourth Grade...*], p. 181, 182, 183. See also Ibidem, p. 185; G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 272, 273, 288.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, p. 271.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. B. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia...* [*Transformations...*], p. 257-258.

there was solely one positive - the Communist Party of Poland. It would strive for the improvement of inhabitants' fate, it fought against "fascisation" and, in fact, it coordinated the whole struggle with the government, landowners and the bourgeoisie - for the good of revolution, nation and the future of the state<sup>73</sup>. Obviously, the major negative hero was the Polish bourgeoisie and landowners. Through its emanation which was the government or in fact the whole apparatus of the Polish state<sup>74</sup> it was the cause of the Polish nation's and society's all vividly depicted misfortunes<sup>75</sup>.

What is particularly worth paying attention to is a list of individual heroes who noticeably differ depending on students' age. This "blackened" image of II Republic of Poland notwithstanding, students of lower grades were supposed to memorize only the positive figures of the time. So they learned about one Engel and Nafali Botwin – the activists of the Communist Union of Polish Youth, as well as about the communists Henryk Hibner, Władysław Kniewski and Władysław Rutkowski – the heroic victims of the government's persecutions. They also read about General Świerczewski – "Walter" and the text implied that this Soviet general set off right from Poland to fight against Spanish fascism. None of the truly significant figures of this time was worth remembering for children – if only in a pejorative manner!

Students of higher grades were expected to remember one leading negative figure of that epoch – Józef Piłsudski<sup>76</sup>. On the other hand, "the creators of the Polish revolutionary government in Białystok": Feliks Dzierżyński, Julian Marchlewski and Feliks Kon were propagated as positive heroes. Also, the names of the communists Hibner, Rutkowski

<sup>73</sup> For instance M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV...* [History for the Fourth Grade...], p. 185.

<sup>74</sup> In one of the works we came across the phrase that "national democracy" (i.e. nationalist party) constitutes "the bourgeoisie emanation". Yet this last category occurs completely episodically.

<sup>75</sup> While we look at this special image of II Republic of Poland, we should not confine ourselves only to the documentation of its obvious inadequacy or blatant falsifications present in it. Perhaps we should read it in a different, deeper way. This image certainly was a particular result of the communist perception of history, but was not this overview justifiable in a special sense? In fact, it conveyed – as a matter of fact, not directly, but rather by means of a projection mechanism – the state of social life present at the beginning of Polish People's Republic (PRL) which the ruling group apparently perceived in a fairly adequate way. Does not the image of e.g. pre-September Poland, marked with dramatic social and political conflicts, with the alienated ruling tier, the image of the society reluctant to the government, the omnipotent power of violence apparatus, violation of civic liberties corresponds closely to the factual reality created by communists in Poland after 1945?

<sup>76</sup> Other crucial figures of the political and economic elite of II Republic of Poland mentioned (mostly and especially in the textbook edited by Kormanowa) were usually described in relation to the plans and actions of this main "black character". Generally, to find out how Piłsudski was portrayed at school see A. Suchoński: *Postać Józefa Piłsudskiego w podręcznikach szkolnych* [The Figure of Józef Piłsudski in School Textbooks], (in:) A. Suchoński (ed.): *Józef Piłsudski i jego współpracownicy*, [Józef Piłsudski and His Associates], Opole 1999, p. 139-149.

and Botwin<sup>77</sup> that were introduced in lower grades kept reappearing too. Remarkably, no single figure from the circle of the leading elite of the Communist Party of Poland is mentioned. It was after all propagated as the only positive collective hero.

Let us proceed to the question of realms of memory. As we have already pointed out, we will only concentrate on a set of figures who constituted the realms of both “good” and “bad” memory<sup>78</sup>. With respect to the latter, the unique casus of Józef Piłsudski draws one's attention. He was clearly an extremely “uncomfortable” person for the authors of the textbooks under consideration. On the one hand, we notice a tendency to totally blot out the memory of this figure (in some textbooks “he does not exist”). On the other hand, a phenomenal causative power was attributed to him, especially concerning his doing evils. It was related to his status of the major “advocate” and defender of the bourgeoisie's interests in Poland or, to refer to the phraseology of the textbooks, to his status of its main “sycophant”, who, in addition to that, was consorting with foreign superpowers:

- “The man, whom the bourgeoisie perceived as a providential figure at that time was Piłsudski. He knew how to use pseudo-left-winged platitude; he had his people in each part of the partitioned country; he was in charge of armed forces -- the remainders of legions and the sabotage and reconnaissance organization called POW”<sup>79</sup>;
- “He was a nationalist and the enemy of Russian revolution. He blatantly co-operated with the bourgeoisie, hus being the traitor of the working class”<sup>80</sup>;
- “Understandably, German imperialism was also interested in seizing power in Poland by virtue of Piłsudski, who had been linked with German intelligence for years”;
- “In the situation of such an escalated class struggle, Piłsudski was not able to play his former role of a blatant “sycophant of German imperialism” any longer.
- “Piłsudski and Wrangel – they were as if two hands of international imperialism trying to strangle the Soviet State”;
- “U. S. and English imperialists have already banked on Piłsudski for years”<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 268; Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 362.

<sup>78</sup> We borrowed the category of the realms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ memory from A. Szpociński: *Przemiany obrazu...* [*Transformations of the Image...*], p. 42.

<sup>79</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 314.

<sup>80</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski. Materiały pomocnicze...* [*History of Poland. Auxiliary materials...*], p. 110.

<sup>81</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski...* [*History of Poland...*], p. 314, 278, 328, 366.

In textbooks all his achievements starting with his participation in the development of workers' movement, contribution to Poland's regaining independence, his role in the fight for the borders formation or his being a factor stabilizing the Polish political arena after 1926 were falsified and discredited. Hardly ever was his surname provided with the first name, position description he held (e.g. Head of State, Commander-in-Chief) or with his military rank. He was portrayed as a traitor of the working and people's masses' interests as well as a person acting to the detriment of his state and nation:

- “He could count on PPS leaders, **trained to cheat the masses under his command** to break their revolutionary zeal and struggle”<sup>82</sup>;
- “**Using** the errors and instability of ‘the young’ (...), he took over the Wydział Spiskowo-Bojowy CKR PPS [Department of Conspiracy and Combat of Polish Socialist Party - D.M.P. and T.P.] (...). Piłsudski **used in a subversive way the workers'** justified drive to finally defeat tsarism...”<sup>83</sup>;
- “Piłsudski's first steps already revealed the **true character of his** revolution...”<sup>83</sup>;
- “Piłsudski previously **entered into an alliance with** counterrevolutionary generals: Petlura and Wrangel, the enemy of Poland's independence”<sup>84</sup>.

The intentions of all his actions were low and sleazy. His ability to profit from the then unfavorable economic situation, his cunning, dishonest and immoral methods, domineering character and plotting were stressed as those characterizing his conduct:

- “Further service in the camp of Austrian-German imperialism was **no longer profitable** or Piłsudski”<sup>85</sup>;
- “Piłsudski and his camp was **plotting conspiracies** in the East, was linked with German imperialism”;
- “Piłsudski from 1923 **seemingly quit** politics; yet in reality he had his own people everywhere, especially in the army”<sup>86</sup>;
- “**His tactic consisted in ‘sticking’ his agents** into different political parties”<sup>87</sup>.

Evidently, this unintentionally special causative power and ability to act attributed to Piłsudski resulted from the fact that he constituted a personalized "emanation" of the bourgeois evil, cunning and hypocrisy

<sup>82</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 286.

<sup>83</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 222, 368.

<sup>84</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 267.

<sup>85</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 280.

<sup>86</sup> G. Missalowa, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 266, 286.

<sup>87</sup> Ż. Kormanowa (ed.): *Historia Polski... [History of Poland...]*, p. 319.



(it is repeatedly and extremely clearly showed). However, the consequences of promoting such an image of Piłsudski turned out to be unexpected and inconvenient to communists. In textbooks his figure was predominant in the Polish history of the last decades (counting from of the then perspective, obviously).

No matter how magnified the figure of Piłsudski appeared to be however, the new rulers' conscious intention was to put forward and perpetuate in the minds of the new generations and the whole society – as a realm of “good” memory – new heroes of Polish history. With the scheme of the communist vision of a struggle between good with evil, where “good” was definitely and solely related to the activity of “the revolutionary movement”<sup>88</sup>, they **had to** originate from his circles. The intention of memory reconstruction is revealed by the special pattern of presenting a given figure recurring in all textbooks under consideration<sup>89</sup>. The hero must be illustrated by means of his picture (unless this element of didactic props is absent in a given textbook), and the narrative describing a course of historical events is interwoven with more or less extensive characteristics of a person and a hero's accomplishment (in textbooks for higher grades it can be a considerably complex biography). An element of this characteristics is always a short story on some special, frequently little event, in which a hero took part<sup>90</sup>. It helped highlight the hero's positive qualities (its typical set being: militant, brave, straightforward, ready for sacrifice, devoted to the revolutionary cause), or some special act which is worth remembering. Quoted are also words, which the hero might have once uttered, or a favorable anonymous (usually) testimonial of a person in relation to that hero.

So the list of the leading heroic figures for the period we are concerned with in textbooks includes (basically, the list continues to be stable regardless of a textbook size and age group it is intended for): Ludwik Waryński portrayed as the first Polish socialist/revolutionary as well as such figures as Felix Dzierżyński, Róża Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski. Apart from the above-mentioned 'head' heroes being part of “classical canon” (they recur in the narratives of the events of various historical moments from the end of the 19th century until interwar times), also figures related with only one significant historical event and/or distinguished period appear there. Accordingly, such events as:

<sup>88</sup> See D. Malczewska-Pawelec: „Oni”... [“They”...], *passim*; R. Stobiecki: *Bolszewizm a historia... [Bolshevism and History...]*, p. 141-146.

<sup>89</sup> It is used so consistently that its presence can serve as a basis to rule whether a given figure is a hero or not.

<sup>90</sup> For example, a young elementary student Bolesław Bierut threw an ink-bottle at the tsar's portrait during school strikes in 1905. M. Dłuska, J. Schoenbrenner: *Historia dla klasy IV... [History for the Fourth Grade...]*, p. 129 (Bierut was the leading figure in the communist power elite in Poland until 1956).

the Revolution of 1905, the First World War and “October Revolution”, let alone the Second World War and the times of Nazi occupation had their “local” heroes.

We can deduct from our analysis that in the area of the history school education communist authorities provided the youngest generations of Polish society with the version of memory diametrically opposite to the then existing one (at least in the part relating to the latest several decades)<sup>91</sup>. Changes were related not only to the sphere of general images but also to the specific realms of memory. Eventually, similarly to a patient entangled in the therapy of memory who “uncovered” in his personal past unexpected traumas of a special kind, the Polish society was supposed to “recover”, i.e. to assimilate and accept a basic and formative truth about its own past a special experience of oppression, violence and persecution which came into being on the basis of class inequalities, class conflict and an open class struggle.

The patient would uncover persecutors among people, whom he/she was acquainted or familiar with and used to maintain emotional ties with. They were frequently and literally his/her loved ones. Similarly, the Poles were supposed to find their “persecutors” very near to them, somehow among themselves – in the form of specifically identified, definite social groups (beings) and individuals, especially those present in the hitherto historical canon. They also had – let us add in passing – “to recall” those (i.e. communists), who were allegedly trying to counteract the appearance of these traumas or to relieve them.

The establishment of traumatic memory marked not only the change of the vision the past, but also that of the present<sup>92</sup>. For a patient the memory of a trauma constitutes a point of departure to construct/reconstruct his identity and to re-establish relations with others (which often results in breaching relationships with the people accused

<sup>91</sup> It is enough to look (with respect to the contents of the contemporary history of Poland) through any publication among school history textbooks on the syllabus during II Republic of Poland to arrive at the conclusion that we are dealing with a radically different history of Poland. We have the irresistible impression that we read the history of some other country, nation and society. See for example, J. Schoenbrenner: *Dzisiaj i dawniej na ziemiach polskich. Historia Polski dla VI klasy szkoły powszechnej*, [On Polish Land Now and Before. History of Poland for the Sixth Grade of Elementary School], Warszawa 1937 (it is the same author who wrote Stalinist textbooks analyzed above!); W. Jarosz, A. Kargol: *Opowiadania z dziejów ojczystych dla VI klasy szkół powszechnych [Tales from National History for the Sixth Grade of Elementary Schools]*, Lwów 1934; T. Bornholtz: *Historia dla klasy IV gimnazjów [History for the Fourth Grade of Junior High School]*, Lwów 1937; W. Moszczeńska, H. Mrozowska: *Podręcznik do nauki historii na trzecią klasę gimnazjalną [History Textbook for the Third Grade of Junior High School]*, Lwów 1935; Eadem: *Podręcznik do nauki historii na czwartą klasę gimnazjalną [History Textbook for the Fourth Grade of Junior High School]*, Lwów 1937.

<sup>92</sup> B. Jakubowska put it in the following way: “...a one-sided and pessimistic image of history of Poland was created. It could not contribute to the stimulation of national pride and on many occasions there was a possibility of evoking distress and reluctance to one’s own nation and state.” B. Jakubowska: *Przeobrażenia... [Transformations...]*, p. 262.

of traumas). The Poles' altered historical memory was supposed to alienate the social groups burdened with the responsibility for evil, to reject figures, events and symbols associated with traumatic oppression and favor the construction of a social/national identity based on new references. The past remembered in a new way was supposed to provide ideas and values supporting the then conducted radical reconstruction of social order and to ensure the justification of new communist authorities.

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01.07.2007