



# THE LEGACY OF 1989 IN POLAND CONFLICTS AND COMMEMORATION 30 YEARS AFTER THE END OF COMMUNISM

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## abstract

I have analyzed the coverage of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable Agreement and June elections in Polish newspapers of all political hues. Additionally, I scrutinized several official speeches held in connection with the commemorations. The goal of my inquiry has been to examine the uses of memory of 1989 in Polish politics of 2019 and highlight the strategic choices and constraints faced by mnemonic actors in this context. Thus, the study presented may be seen as a follow-up to Bernhard's and Kubik's investigation conducted ten years ago. However, this analysis expands the focus of Bernhard's and Kubik's work by paying special attention to cultural constraints on politics of memory. Thus, the aim is both to give insight into contemporary politics of memory in Poland in relation to the recent past and contribute to the more general understanding of how culture works in politics of memory.

**KEYWORDS:** Commemoration 2019, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1989, Polish Newspapers, Bernhard & Kubik.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in the autumn of 1989 is, for most people, the symbol of the collapse of communism in Europe. But those who are more familiar with European history are well aware that the decline began much earlier, and that events in Poland had considerable significance for this development. Poland was the country in the Soviet bloc that had the most active and best organized anti-communist opposition, as evidenced by the creation in 1980 of the Solidarity movement with membership peaking around ten million. It was also the first country in 1989 to venture into the peaceful overthrow of the communist system, thereby inspiring and influencing people in other countries of the communist bloc. The dismantling of the regime started in the spring of 1989 with the Roundtable talks between the communist rulers and the opposition. These led to semi-free elections to the Polish Parliament on June 4, 1989, which in turn yielded a non-communist government, the first in the Eastern Bloc since the communist takeover in the region after World War II. The Soviet Union, which had always been ready to intervene militarily when the communist regime was threatened in one of its satellite states, this time refrained from acting.

The effect of this turn of events cannot be underestimated. Poland was the first country to enter the minefield and it survived! Poland's "spring" in 1989 opened the way for the "autumn" of other nations the same year – a series of largely



PHOTO: TADEUSZ KŁAPYTA

Strike at the Vladimir Lenin Shipyard in August 1980. Lech Wałęsa (front row, third from right) with dismissed crane operator, Anna Walentynowicz (left of Wałęsa), leading a crowd in prayer during the August Strike.

peaceful revolutions in the Eastern bloc that swept away the communist regimes.

In view of Poland's role in this historical development, one would expect that the memory of the Roundtable Agreement of April 4, 1989, as well as the victory of the opposition in the elections of June the same year, would be cherished in Poland, celebrated with state support, and become a cohesive element in Polish society. This, however, is not the case. While there is a consensus that the fall of communism was beneficial for Poland and brought the country independence and freedom, there is no similar consensus on how to interpret the events of 1989–1991 and how to remember them. Most of the studies dealing with this issue focus on the historical roots of this disagreement<sup>1</sup> or present the results of opinion polls on the topic,<sup>2</sup> while there is a lack of analyses from the point of view of memory politics. The seminal text “Roundtable Discord. The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland” by Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik constitutes one of the few exceptions.<sup>3</sup> The study appeared as a chapter in the volume that analyzed how the 1989 breakthrough was commemorated in a number of post-communist countries in 2009, i.e. twenty years after the events.<sup>4</sup> In their work, Bernhard and Kubik propose some new and useful analytical concepts, such as “mnemonic warriors” (those who fight for their own non-negotiable version of the past), “mnemonic abnegators” (who practice purposive forgetting) and “mnemonic pluralists” (who accept that the others are entitled to their own vision of the past).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in their case study on Poland they demonstrate how and by whom the memory of 1989 was used in the political struggles in the country around 2009. Ten years

have passed since Bernhard's and Kubik's groundbreaking study and in 2019 it was time for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable Agreement and the June elections: in a radically changed political context, however. This calls for a return to the question of the Polish memory of 1989. Has it undergone any transformation? Is it still deployed in political games and if so, by whom, how, and why?

**IN ORDER TO ANSWER** these questions, I have conducted a content analysis of texts in Polish newspapers and on internet portals dealing with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable Agreement

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and June elections. I focused on newspapers with national coverage and selected texts representing the whole ideological spectrum in Polish politics: starting with *Krytyka Polityczna* on the left via the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka*, *Kultura Liberalna*, *Wprost*, *Dziennik*, *Newsweek*, the center-conservative *Rzeczpospolita*, the right-wing *Gazeta*

*Polska*, *Sieci*, *Do Rzeczy*, portal *Niezależna* and the far-right internet weekly *Polska Niepodległa*. Additionally I scrutinized several official speeches held in connection with the commemorations by current and former Polish political leaders.<sup>6</sup>

The goal of my inquiry has been to examine the uses of the memory of 1989 and its legacy in Polish politics of 2019 and highlight the strategic choices and constraints faced by mnemonic actors in this context. Thus, the analysis presented below is to some extent a follow-up to Bernhard's and Kubik's investigation conducted ten years ago. The study begins, therefore, with a recapitulation of their main findings that are subsequently used to capture the changes between 2009 and 2019. Moreover,



Lech Wałęsa during the pre-election rally in front of the church of St. Brygida in Gdańsk in May 1989 (left). Wałęsa casting his vote in the Wybory Election of 1989, which gave the Solidarity-led coalition a majority in the Polish Parliament. A year later, Wałęsa would become President of Poland.

to make this comparative approach more consistent, I employ Bernhard's and Kubik's theoretical concepts of mnemonic actors mentioned above and, like these researchers, I also home in on the so-called "official memory" i.e. representations of the past propagated in public space, mostly from positions of power.

However, my study aims to expand the focus of Bernhard's and Kubik's work by paying special attention to cultural constraints on the politics of memory. I will approach this question in the final part of this study by employing the concept of "schematic narrative templates" as formulated by James V. Wertsch.<sup>7</sup> Memory narratives in general are understood as ordered stories that structure and bind together selective past events linked to memories. "Schematic narrative templates" however, represent specific kind of narratives – the generic ones. They are used to structure and generate multiple narratives about the past by anchoring them in the same basic plot.<sup>8</sup> These "schematic narrative templates" are cultural-symbolic tools that mnemonic communities produce and use to interpret a variety of the past events in order to give them meaning. They are part and parcel of a group's collective memory, i.e. the representations of the past shared within a group and used to enact the group's identity.<sup>9</sup> I will argue that the concept of "narrative templates" is both helpful in grasping the constraints to mnemonic manipulations of the events of 1989 in Poland and contributes to the more general understanding of how culture works in politics of memory.

### **Revisiting Bernhard's and Kubik's Twenty Years After Communism**

In their discussion of the conflict over the meaning of the 1989 breakthrough in Poland, Bernhard and Kubik point out that the discord was rooted in the deep division inside the Solidarity movement between "revolutionaries" and "reformists". The division already emerged under communism, during Solidarity's

underground activities, but it came fully to the surface after the semi-democratic elections of June 4, 1989. The revolutionaries demanded that the electoral victory of Solidarity in June 1989 should be used to depart from the Roundtable Agreement and launch the "acceleration", a rapid transformation of the political system and "decommunization", i.e. a radical settlement with communism, its crimes and its remains in social life. However, the reformists within Solidarity, with Prime Minister Mazowiecki at the forefront, refuted these ideas due to both pragmatic and also moral reasons. The situation was still uncertain in the summer of 1989. The rest of Eastern Europe was still under communist rule at that point, and although Mikhail Gorbachev had signaled that the Poles were allowed to resolve their crisis by themselves, Soviet military forces were still posted in northern and western Poland. Besides, the reformists within the Solidarity movement were supporters of reconciliation in society and Mazowiecki spoke about the need to "draw a line" under the past and focus on the future.

Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa was allied with the reformists at the outset, but after the fall of the communist regimes in other East-Central European countries he began to change his mind, and during his presidential campaign in 1990 he sided with the revolutionaries, led by the brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński. This coalition, however, did not last long. About a year later, in 1991, Wałęsa came into conflict with the Kaczyński brothers and left their camp. This happened when he, as president of Poland at that time, supported a vote of no-confidence against the government, led by Jan Olszewski, a representative of the "revolutionaries". There were many reasons behind the termination of this weak government, created after the first fully democratic elections in 1991, but a direct cause of its fall was its threats to expose prominent political figures, (including Wałęsa) as allegedly former agents of the communist secret po-

PHOTO: POLISH HISTORY MUSEUM



The Roundtable talks took place at the Namiestnikowski Palace, Warsaw, from February 6 to April 5, 1989.

lice. Wałęsa's opposition to these plans created an opportunity for the radicals to construct a narrative about him as a traitor<sup>10</sup> and it was grist to the mill for all those who wanted to vindicate a conspiracy theory about the Roundtable Agreement. According to the radicals in the post-Solidarity camp, the Roundtable talks had resulted in a secret agreement between the elite of the Communist Party and part of the Solidarity elite. The Communist Party had accepted giving up its formal political power in return for promises of impunity and being allowed to exchange its political privileges for economic ones in the planned privatization process. In the extreme version of this strongly negative interpretation of 1989, the Solidarity elite betrayed the Polish people during the Roundtable talks.<sup>11</sup> This view was expressed by a range of the radical right-wing, clerical and nationalist forces, including a minor, but visible and outspoken group within the national conservative party Law and Justice (henceforth in this text called by its Polish acronym – PiS), created in 2001 by the Kaczyński brothers.

**BEFORE THE 2005** parliamentary elections, PiS formulated a powerful slogan about the need to create a “Fourth Republic”. It referred to the party's goal to come to power and transform Poland through radical reforms. The Fourth Republic would replace the Third Polish Republic<sup>12</sup> that was founded in December 1990 after the fall of communism and, according to PiS interpretation, was corrupt and rotten, not least because of the collaboration between the post-communist elite and the liberals and the left from post-Solidarity groups.<sup>13</sup> PiS' idea of the Fourth Republic was supported by the aforementioned right-wing theory of the elites' conspiracy at the Roundtable. The theory legitimized the need to “start over again” by implementing reforms of a nearly revolutionary nature. However, the reforms planned by PiS had to wait. Indeed, after the parliamentary elections in 2005 PiS sat in government together with two smaller conservative, populist parties – The League of Polish Families and The Self-Defense, but this coalition was able to rule only until 2007, when new,

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President Andrzej Duda talking with students at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Roundtable talks.

early elections brought to power the center-liberal party Civic Platform (henceforth in this text called PO, its Polish acronym).

Thus in 2009, at the time for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 events, PiS was in political opposition. In this context, as demonstrated in Bernhard's and Kubik's study, PiS choose to promote a negative interpretation of the 1989 history and employed it in the political and ideological struggle for its Fourth Republic. To use Bernhard's and Kubik's terms, the right-wing camp became “mnemonic warriors”.

Bernhard and Kubik identify four main positions towards the memory of 1989 as displayed in Poland in 2009. Next to the negative one mentioned above, they refer to the celebratory position, the mixed one and the silent one.<sup>14</sup>

The celebratory position was, hardly surprisingly, first and foremost strongly represented by the reformists from Solidarity scattered in 2009 among different parties but congregating around prominent former Solidarity figures such as Mazowiecki, Geremek, Michnik and Frasnyniuk. They organized the commemoration ceremonies in the Sejm and the Senate. It is noteworthy that they were joined by the post-communists represented by the Social-Democratic party, SLD.

While the negative and the celebratory visions of the events of 1989 dominated the commemorations in 2009, the mixed position was also visible since it was articulated by two prominent figures: Lech Wałęsa – the former Solidarity leader and president in the years 1990–95, and Lech Kaczyński, president in 2009. Both stated in relation to the commemoration of the Roundtable that it had been a necessary but morally troubled compromise.<sup>15</sup> However, as political enemies, they did not participate in any joint commemorations. President Kaczyński organized his own commemorative events of 1989 and withdrew from other official celebrations. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable was marked by the organization of a historians' debate in the presidential palace, which became an arena for voicing some strongly critical views on the Roundtable. However, the president distanced himself in his declaration from statements

implying that during the negotiations, Solidarity had promised economic privileges to the communist nomenklatura in exchange for power. This standpoint can be explained by the fact that Lech Kaczyński was an active participant at the Roundtable and one of Wałęsa's close advisors at this time. Thus, he was one of those responsible for its outcome.

Last but not least, Bernhard and Kubik point to "silence" as the fourth position regarding the memory of 1989. It was visible on the part of the Civic Platform (PO), the ruling party at that time. "Silence" did not concern the semi-democratic elections of June 1989 that were indeed solemnly celebrated by the PO government, but it was clearly observable in the commemorations of the Roundtable. The PO avoided the issue and did not take any initiative for its commemoration. In this way it wanted to prevent PiS' accusations of collaboration with ex-communists and present itself as a moderate party, remaining beyond the clashes over the past. Thus, according to Bernhard and Kubik, in this context the PO played the role of "mnemonic abnegators".

The conclusion of the study of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of the 1989 breakthrough in Poland was that in relation to this topic the memory regime, i.e. the organized way of remembering a specific issue, was fractured and moving from being multipolar to fractured and bipolar,<sup>16</sup> that is, towards a fierce confrontation between representatives of the negative and celebratory positions.

Bernhard and Kubik noted at the same time that the propagation of the negative view of 1989 seemed not to help the cause of the right-wing, since they lost both the presidential and the parliamentary elections in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

### **The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 events – clashes over commemorations**

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of 1989 took place in a very different political context from the anniversary ten years earlier. In 2019 the center-liberal PO was no longer in power. It had lost the parliamentary elections in 2015 when PiS received enough votes to form a government. Thus, in 2019 Poland had for four years been ruled by the national conservatives (the kernel of the former post-Solidarity revolutionary camp) who consequently began to implement their ideas about the Fourth Republic. The leitmotifs in their politics became de-communication and nationalism and they took a firm grip on the judiciary, public media, culture and education.<sup>17</sup> Their criticism of liberalism and total disregard of all opposition may justify describing them as "illiberal democrats" or majoritarian authoritarians.<sup>18</sup> The opposition parties including PO and other liberal groups as well as the fragmented left have constantly and vigorously fought against these politics both in parliament and in street demonstrations.<sup>19</sup> 2019 was the time for the showdown between the opposing political sides due to the two important elections scheduled for

that year: elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 and the Polish parliamentary elections in October the same year. Thus, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 events took place in the middle of a fierce electoral campaign that influenced the politics of memory, as will be argued below.

### **Commemoration of the 1989 Roundtable**

In general, the commemorations of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Roundtable Agreement and the 1989 June elections differed significantly. The Roundtable anniversary received rather moderate attention. The public TV and radio controlled by PiS barely mentioned it and the conservative nationalist press more or less ignored it. Neither of the two main right-wing journals, *Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy*, or the popular conservative Catholic *Gość Niedzielny*, wrote a word about the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable. The weekly *Gazeta Polska*, the mouthpiece of the PiS party, published just one article whose author, its editor-in-chief, presented a concise interpretation of the Roundtable, wholly following the line of the late president Lech Kaczyński, one of PiS' founders. According to it the Roundtable had been a necessary compromise, but its provisions should have been totally abandoned as soon as the communist party lost the semi-democratic elections in June 1989 or after the first democratic elections in 1991 at the latest. A

## **"THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1989 EVENTS TOOK PLACE IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIERCE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN THAT INFLUENCED THE POLITICS OF MEMORY."**

continuation of the Roundtable arrangements in any form after that moment should be described as a collusion (*zmowa* in Polish) against democracy.<sup>20</sup> Besides this semi-official statement on behalf of the party ruling in Poland in 2019, *Gazeta Polska* issued two texts in connection with the Roundtable anniversary that did not attack the Roundtable Agreement itself, only the Solidarity leaders behind it. The first article was a kind of posthumous panegyric written by Antoni Macierewicz, deputy leader of PiS, to commemorate the recently deceased Jan Olszewski. Macierewicz praised Olszewski as an uncompromising fighter for independence and contrasted him with, in his view, the treacherous Lech Wałęsa together with reformist camp within Solidarity that voted to bring down Olszewski's government on June 4, 1991. Macierewicz called this historical incident "a night-time coup d'état"<sup>21</sup>.

The second article that appeared in this context had the title "*Gazeta Wyborcza* – the rotten foundation of the Third Republic". It fiercely attacked that liberal daily and its founder Adam Michnik, a renowned former dissident and one of the main figures at the Roundtable. The author of the article groundlessly accused Michnik of being a former communist agent.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to the commemorations in 2009 there were no official celebrations of the Roundtable by the government or in Parliament. The only representative of the central authorities who officially marked this anniversary was the president of Po-

land and PiS-member Andrzej Duda. However, it passed largely unnoticed since his contribution was limited to official speeches at the opening of two rather poorly publicized conferences. The first of them, organized on February 4, (the formal date of the beginning of the Roundtable) took place in the presidential residence and had the character of an Oxford debate, i.e. a debate on a predetermined motion where the two sides argue against each other “for” or “against” a proposed thesis. In this case it was a competition between high school pupils who debated for and against the statement: “the negotiations between the communist authorities and the opposition were the only way to a peaceful overthrow of communism in Poland”.<sup>23</sup> Thus on this occasion, the Roundtable was presented as a highly controversial historical event.

The second conference held on April 4, (the date of the signing of the Roundtable Agreement) under the heading “How Communism collapsed. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe”, was an international scholarly event. In the opening speech the president was keen to point out that the Roundtable should be an object for debate and further investigations, but at the same time he targeted the international public by emphasizing the leading role of Poland in bringing down the communist system. It is worth noting that when Duda in his speech enumerated the names of those who, in his opinion, had played a particularly important role in this historical development, he mentioned John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev and Lech Kaczyński but never Lech Wałęsa.<sup>24</sup> In general, Duda’s speech followed the above-mentioned narrative about 1989, developed by Lech Kaczyński ten years earlier, presenting the Roundtable as a necessary but troubling compromise. According to this view, the semi-democratic parliamentary elections were a much more important moment in 1989 than the Roundtable, because they demonstrated the Polish people’s rejection of the communist system. In line with Lech Kaczyński, Duda saw the June elections of 1989 as a great victory that the Polish people should be proud of, although a number of mistakes were made afterwards, and the fruits of the victory were not properly exploited.

IT COULD BE EXPECTED that the silence around the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable on the part of the right-wing political circles would be counteracted by the opposition. This indeed happened, but the coverage of this event in the liberal and leftist media was rather modest. Most of the articles that appeared around the anniversary dates contained just brief historical information reminding the readers of what had happened thirty years earlier and pointing to the conflicting interpretations of the Roundtable as either a big success of the opposition or “a rotten compromise between elites”.<sup>25</sup>

Not surprisingly, the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza* paid more attention to the anniversary. It published, among other things, an

extensive interview with Adam Michnik, one of Solidarity’s main negotiators in 1989. He gave a detailed account of the proceedings in 1989 and emphasized the pragmatism and wisdom of the decisions made at that time. Referring to the current divisive politics of PiS, he pointed out that the Solidarity negotiators behind the Roundtable Agreement had wanted to include the whole of Polish society in the work for democracy.<sup>26</sup>

For the liberal media, the commemoration of the Roundtable was in general an occasion to discuss the ongoing sharp political polarization in Polish society and express the need for dialogue.<sup>27</sup> They wondered if the current political enemies would be able to compromise as it had been the case in 1989.<sup>28</sup> A similar concern was expressed in *Krytyka Polityczna*, representing the new (non post-communist) left in Poland. The journal appealed for the overcoming of the polarization and saw the Roundtable as a useful lesson of pragmatism for all Poles. Interestingly, it postulated that it was time to stop the quarrels around the interpretations of the Roundtable, since its significance for the

further course of events seemed exaggerated. The mistakes made during the post-communist transformation were, according to this view, not a result of the Roundtable Agreement, as claimed by the right, but of the short-sightedness of all Polish political elites as well as their corruption and egoism.<sup>29</sup>

In general, the analysis of the writings about the Roundtable in the press connected with the opposition shows that its commemoration was not disregarded, but the real focus of the celebrations

of the 1989 events became June 4, i.e. Solidarity’s victory in the semi-democratic elections.

### Commemorations of the 1989 June elections

Given the ruling party’s negative view of the Third Republic, the opposition parties expected that the central authorities would hesitate to celebrate the anniversary of the 1989 June elections. This evoked the need among the opposition to mobilize behind the celebration of the anniversary to counteract the negative interpretations of the role of Solidarity reformists in the historical development in Poland, but also to protest against the current politics of PiS. Since the presidential and governmental power in 2019 was in the hands of PiS, the opposition had no influence on state decisions regarding the commemoration. Nevertheless, MPs belonging to the liberal and leftist opposition made an attempt by proposing that Parliament should declare June 4., the day of the semi-democratic elections, an official holiday. However, the MPs from the right ostentatiously ignored the initiative by not showing up at the parliamentary session scheduled to discuss this matter.<sup>30</sup> Thus, since they constituted the parliamentary majority, the project had to be abandoned.

The initiative to celebrate the anniversary was instead taken over by local self-governments around the country in which the

**“THE REAL FOCUS OF THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE 1989 EVENTS BECAME JUNE 4, I.E. SOLIDARITY’S VICTORY IN THE SEMI-DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS.”**



The main celebration of the 1989 event took place in Gdańsk on June 4, 2019.

PHOTO: ALAMY

opposition had their say. As early as in January 2019, a number of mayors of Polish cities formed an organizational committee for the celebrations of the 1989 events. The leading role was played by Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, mayor of the city of Gdańsk (the cradle of the Solidarity movement in 1980). Dulkiewicz followed the wish of her predecessor Paweł Adamowicz, a well-known liberal, assassinated by a mentally ill man in January 2019. A few days before his death, Adamowicz had written an open letter to the self-governing municipalities in Poland inviting their representatives to come to Gdańsk on June 4, for a joint grand celebration. The letter also included an appeal to give the commemoration a nationwide dimension by organizing commemorative events in localities around the country. Adamowicz wanted the celebration to become a manifestation against the PiS government's attempts to undermine the rule of law and to limit the prerogatives of the territorial self-government.<sup>31</sup> In his letter Adamowicz pointed to the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk (archive and museum of the Solidarity movement) as the main venue and co-organizer of the celebration. His successor as mayor, Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, accompanied by the mayors of the seven largest Polish cities, presented the letter at the press conference on January 18, 2019 as Adamowicz's last wish to be fulfilled.

The seven largest cities and a significant number of smaller ones (congregated in the Union of Polish Towns) did in fact organize a series of celebrations and commemorative events under the common heading "Festivity of Freedom and Solidarity" from June 1–11, 2019.<sup>32</sup> They included open conferences, lectures and public debates about 1989, outdoor exhibitions, screenings of documentary films, meetings with Solidarity leaders of that time, and plays and concerts for different age groups. The main celebration took place in Gdańsk on June 4. A big Roundtable

was set up in front of the European Solidarity Center to remind the public that the road both to the June elections 1989 and finally to freedom and democracy had been paved through the Roundtable negotiations. The original plan had been to place the symbolic Roundtable at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers at Solidarity Square. However, the vice chairman of the trade union Solidarity that has its headquarters there did not agree. He argued that in view of the sharp conflict between the ruling party and the opposition, also regarding the memory of 1989, he did not want Solidarity Square to become the scene of any political manifestation.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, there was no celebration at the monument except wreath-laying ceremonies, held separately by the prime minister on the one hand and the representatives of the opposition on the other.

**THE CELEBRATIONS** in Gdańsk culminated in a big political manifestation on June 4, with the participation of about 220,000 people, the main representatives of the liberal and leftist opposition (including some post-communists), representatives of many municipalities from around the country and, last but not least, veterans of the Solidarity reformist camp such as Frasnyniuk, Michnik and Wałęsa. The latter was in the center of attention, celebrated as a hero and the creator of the Third Polish Republic. He and Donald Tusk, former chairman of the liberal party PO and at this time president of the European Council, were the main speakers at the event. In their speeches both praised the achievements of the Solidarity movement in 1989 as well as the accomplishments of the Polish post-communist transformation. At the same time, they expressed their worries about the fate of Polish democracy since the nationalist conservative PiS came to power in 2015. Both called on all the opposition parties to unite



in order to defeat PiS in the upcoming parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2019. Tusk was especially sharp in his statements. He described, for example, the upcoming elections to the Polish parliament as a moment of choice for the Poles, between the Chinese political model and Western democracy.<sup>34</sup>

The peak moment of the celebrations in Gdańsk was the solemn reading (by a famous Polish actress) and signing of the Declaration on Freedom and Solidarity, specially prepared for this occasion.<sup>35</sup> Symbolically, the declaration was signed at noon, alluding to the famous election poster used by Solidarity in June 1989, depicting Gary Cooper as the main hero of the American western “High Noon” with the Solidarity badge. The text of the declaration expressed the main values of the opposition and highlighted the main lines of conflict and disagreement between liberals and leftists on the one hand and the nationalist conservatives on the other. Thus, it mentioned the importance of Poland’s anchoring to the European Union and the necessity to stand for democratic traditions, free from national and religious fanaticism. The declaration referred specifically to Lech Wałęsa as the leader of Solidarity, clearly in response to PiS’ campaign to discredit him. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the declaration foregrounded the role of self-governance and civil society for the future of democracy in Poland. The text was signed by all the guests at the ceremony (including all Polish former presidents) and thousands of Gdańsk inhabitants.

**THE LIBERAL AND LEFTIST** media, both nation-wide and local, covered the celebrations in Gdańsk and in other cities and published several articles presenting and discussing the historical parliamentary elections of 1989. Most of them had a rather eulogizing tone with the exception of the left-wing *Krytyka Polityczna*, that criticized all post-Solidarity elites in the Third Republic for their disparagement of civil society and the needs of those disadvantaged in the neo-liberal economy.<sup>36</sup>

The right-wing press on the other hand did not show much interest in the commemoration of the June elections. Instead it focused on marking the fortieth anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s first visit to Poland in 1979. Thus, the right-wing media in May and June 2019 were filled to the brim with articles about John Paul II, while at the same time they neglected to report about the celebrations of the June elections taking place locally around the country.

The center-right newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* constituted an exception to that rule as it covered the commemorative events properly, although without enthusiasm.<sup>37</sup> On this occasion *Gazeta Polska*, the PiS organ, published just one article,<sup>38</sup> whose author emphasized that June 4, 1989 was not worthy of celebration since it had given rise to a state that was only partially democratic. It was only with the electoral victory of PiS in 2015 that a new properly democratic order could be introduced. A similar message, although formulated in a milder tone, was to be found in the conservative magazine *Sieci* in an article written by Marta Kaczyńska, daughter of the late Lech Kaczyński. She referred to her father’s words, pronounced in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the June elections, but in her opinion still valid: It

was important to remember June 4, 1989 but the date should not be overestimated or idealized since the elections had not been really democratic and their results not used in a proper way.<sup>39</sup>

The same view was articulated by President Duda and Prime Minister Morawiecki in speeches<sup>40</sup> delivered during the official celebrations at the special commemorative session of the Senate, preceded by a mass in the cathedral and followed by an evening concert in the National Theater. It is noteworthy that while in 2009 the official celebrations had included both Parliament houses, in 2019 there was a celebration only in the Senate. In this way the PiS government wanted to emphasize that it was only the Senate that had been freely elected in 1989, while the composition of the main house – the Sejm – was to a large extent the result of the contract signed at the Roundtable between the communist party and the opposition. The president’s and the prime minister’s involvement in the commemoration of the June elections ended in principle with this commemorative ceremony in Warsaw. Actually, the prime minister went to Gdańsk at the same time as the Festivity of Freedom and Solidarity took place there, but the purpose of his visit was to open a conference commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s first visit to Poland in 1979. Yet Gdańsk was not one of the places visited by the pope at that time. Thus, the choice of place and time for this commemorative conference clearly indicated that it was arranged by the right as a rival event to the opposition’s commemorative festivities in Gdańsk. The government’s and PiS attitude to this celebration was hostile from the beginning. A clear sign of this hostility was the decision by Piotr Gliński, Minister of Culture, to reduce the budget of the European Centre for Solidarity in Gdańsk as soon it became known that the Centre would actively participate in the grand celebrations of 1989, planned by the opposition. The governmental contribution to the Centre was cut from seven to four million zloty with the motivation that the institution was involved in political activities and took sides instead of staying neutral.<sup>41</sup> To compensate this serious loss the mayor of Gdańsk organized nation-wide fundraising that turned out to be successful.<sup>42</sup>

## Changes in the standpoints on 1989 between 2009 and 2019

The analysis of the commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Roundtable and the 1989 June elections demonstrates the continuous lack of a coherent narrative about these events and the disagreement as to how they should be remembered. The four positions in relation to the memory of 1989, identified in Bernhard’s and Kubik’s study of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations in 2009, can still be discerned, that is: celebratory, negative, mixed and silent. However, in comparison to 2009, significant changes have occurred as to which groups and political actors hold the respective positions.

While in 2009 the celebratory position was first and foremost advocated by the remnants of the reformist Solidarity faction as well as the representatives of the Post-communist SLD party, in 2019 this stance was articulated by much wider circles. The members of the liberal party PO, who in 2009 had preferred to stay silent in relation to the Roundtable, gave their full support

ten years later to the clearly positive and celebratory interpretation of the 1989 events. Indeed, they remained more reserved in their acclamations of the Roundtable, but in the face of PiS' sharp criticism of the whole period of the Third Republic that had its roots in the Roundtable Agreement, they took up a stance in favor of a positive holistic interpretation of both 1989 events. This was signaled by making the roundtable an important symbol during the June celebration of 1989 in Gdańsk. A specially designed, white-and-red, 168 square meter Roundtable was constructed for the occasion and used as the central point for the main commemorative events, including the signing of the Declaration on Freedom and Solidarity.

It is noteworthy that the initiative to organize the impressive celebration of 1989 in Gdańsk came from a PO member, namely Paweł Adamowicz. After all, the Third Republic included eight years of PO rule and the members of this party were involved in building the new post-communist Poland that PiS did everything in their power to delegitimize. Moreover, in 2019 the liberal PO was no longer in government but in opposition, and engaged in a parliamentary election campaign that seemed difficult to win due to the glaring fragmentation of the opposition parties. In order to have a chance to challenge the power of PiS, the opposition needed all kinds of symbols they could unite around and the memory of the struggle in 1989 for a democratic and independent Poland could serve this purpose. Indeed, the Festivity of Freedom and Solidarity became a big manifestation of unity of the opposition, offsetting existing disagreements. The former president and legendary Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, who ten years earlier had voiced a mixed stance towards the Roundtable, joined the celebration. He was treated with veneration although in previous years he had been marginalized and often criticized by both the liberals and the left. Both Wałęsa and the PO former leader Donald Tusk used the commemorations of 1989 in Gdańsk to call for a fight against PiS and the radical right and for the unity of the liberal and the leftist opposition in the face of the upcoming elections. Consequently, in 2019 the opposition played the role of mnemonic warrior. They defended the achievements of Solidarity in 1989 and indirectly also the Third Republic, despite the internal dissent in form of the new left's critical evaluation of the neoliberal system adopted in post-communist Poland.

In 2009 and in the years that followed PiS and the far-right parties had been the mnemonic warriors and propagated a negative interpretation of this past. Thus, in 2019 one could expect direct clashes between the right and the opposition over the commemoration of the anniversaries. However, as demonstrated above, PiS chose instead to avoid direct confrontations. Negative provocative statements were not encouraged. Antoni Macierewicz, a prominent PiS politician well-known for his radical views on the Roundtable as an act of betrayal, was quite

invisible in connection with the commemorative events and debates. To make his opinion heard he had to circumvent the issue in the way he did in the article about Olszewski in *Gazeta Polska* mentioned above, or use less visible fora such as the right-wing online media portal *Niezależna* to vent his radical views.<sup>43</sup> Another evidence of PiS' attempts to downplay the negative narratives was the case of Andrzej Zybertowicz, advisor to President Duda. Zybertowicz participated as a panelist in the Oxford Debate on the Roundtable in the presidential palace, and concluded the meeting by stating that the Roundtable had been a bargain between the Communist Party and their agents".<sup>44</sup> This evoked strong reactions from all sides, forcing Zybertowicz to apologize.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, PiS set here the limits for the negative

**“BOTH WAŁĘSA AND THE PO FORMER LEADER DONALD TUSK USED THE COMMEMORATIONS OF 1989 IN GDAŃSK TO CALL FOR A FIGHT AGAINST PIS AND THE RADICAL RIGHT.”**

interpretations of the Roundtable and Zybertowicz's declaration did not represent the government's official view. Since the chairman of PiS Jarosław Kaczyński as well his twin brother the late Lech Kaczyński had participated in the Roundtable, the latter even as one of the main advisors to Lech Wałęsa, this kind of interpretation discredited them. Thus, this extreme negative position was officially discarded<sup>46</sup> and could be found almost exclusively in the extreme

right's internet fora.<sup>47</sup> Instead the right adopted a hybrid approach, a combination of the mixed position and silence.

**AS POINTED OUT** by Bernhard and Kubik, the mixed position was advocated in 2009 by Lech Kaczyński. The analysis above indicates that ten years later, at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989, it was embraced as the official stance expressed by the PiS government and the president in relation to the commemorations. The anniversaries of both the Roundtable and the June 4 elections were officially celebrated, although in a much more modest way than by previous liberal governments. In the official speeches given on these occasions, both Morawiecki and Duda acknowledged the Roundtable as a necessary, although troubling, step towards the democratization of Poland. They also praised the June 1989 elections as a manifestation of the will of the Polish people. At the same time they expressed their reservations, propounding the theory of a lost opportunity in the aftermath of these events.<sup>48</sup> They did not use words such as “betrayal” or “collusion” in reference to the Roundtable, as had been the case previously in the rhetoric of the right. Instead both Duda and Morawiecki pointed to the fall of Jan Olszewski's government on June 4, 1991 as a crucial moment that had derailed the development of Polish democracy. The decommunization proposed by Olszewski that might have overcome, in their view, the negative effects of the Roundtable, was halted, allowing the former communist nomenklatura to nest in the new economic and political structures. Consequently, the alleged betrayal on the part of the Solidarity elites did not take place in connection with the 1989 events, when the Kaczyński brothers played an active role, but

in 1991 when Wałęsa broke with the Kaczyńskis' political fraction and voted for Olszewski's dismissal together with many MPs from the post-Solidarity parties.<sup>49</sup> This version of events allowed the right to celebrate the anniversary of 1989 and at the same time keep a distance from its political enemy by blaming the liberals and the left for upholding the supposedly "rotten" order created in the Third Republic after June 4, 1991.

The mixed position was accompanied by silence on the part of the right. One of the best examples is the right-wing MPs' reaction to the opposition's initiative to declare June 4 a public holiday. Instead of debating this question and declining the proposal using their parliamentary majority, they just did not turn up at the scheduled session. The silence was also noticeable in the right-wing media. The number of articles dealing with the historical dates of 1989 was very limited and the coverage of the celebrations organized by the municipalities around the country almost non-existent. The right-wing press preferred to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Paul II's first visit to Poland in 1979, which was used to diminish the visibility of the opposition's celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 events. It is noteworthy that instead of taking up an open fight over the significance of those events, the right adopted the strategy of ambiguity, marginalization, purposive forgetting and silence aiming at blurring their positive meaning in Polish collective memory. A clear demonstration of this was the PiS politicians' avoidance of mentioning Wałęsa's name in the context of the commemorations. Instead of launching their usual fierce attacks on him they just tried to erase him from their version of the history of 1989.

The right tried at the same time to prevent the opposition's use of the commemorations in the political struggle. Evidence of this was the already mentioned reduction of the budget of the European Centre for Solidarity in Gdańsk as well as attempts to block the celebrations at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers. Thus, it can be concluded that the right changed its politics of memory in regard to the events of 1989 from playing the role of mnemonic warriors in 2009 to become mnemonic abnegators in 2019.

### Constraints to PiS politics of memory in regard to 1989

As Bernhard and Kubik have demonstrated, it was PiS that in 2009 had used the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989 in the political game in order to compromise the Third Republic and legitimize their own idea of rebuilding the Polish state under PiS leadership. This kind of politics of memory mobilized the political right which at that time was in opposition. However, the same study pointed out that this strategy of being mnemonic warriors and promoting the negative assessment of 1989 did not pay off in the form of increased popular support. PiS lost both the presidential elections in 2010 and the parliamentary elections in 2011 to the center-liberal PO.

My analysis of the anniversary of 1989 conducted ten years later than Bernhard's and Kubik's clearly shows that PiS still did not succeed in establishing the negative memory narrative of 1989 as hegemonic, despite its continuous efforts to do so and its five years in government since 2015.

This failure can be confirmed by two large opinion polls: the first, conducted in 2018 by Kantar Public (commissioned by the governmental Pilecki Institute) and the second – the 2019 survey by CBOS (an independent polling institute). Both showed that the Poles' opinion of the events of 1989 is decisively more positive than negative. The majority (54%) pronounced some critical views about the extent of the compromise with the Communists at the Roundtable, but at the same time a majority (70%) judged it positively and 51% saw it even as good model for other countries aiming at democratic transformation.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the respondents considered Lech Wałęsa to be one of the most important figures in Polish history (in the second position, just after Pope John Paul II). They also pointed out the history of the overthrow of Communism in Poland as one of the most important events in Polish history and a source of national pride.<sup>51</sup>

It is noteworthy that both surveys compared the results from 2019 with similar investigations from 2009 and 2014 (made in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> and twenty-fifth anniversaries) and found that the changes in opinions were generally small.<sup>52</sup>

In order to explain the resilience of the memory of the 1989 events against PiS criticism, I would like to point to two main constraints against imposing a negative interpretation. First, the historical

events of 1989 are part of the personal experience of numerous Poles. Many people still recollect their life under communism, the tense and insecure atmosphere around the Roundtable talks, the confrontations between Solidarity and the communist government, as well as the euphoria of the electoral victory in June 1989. They also remember that the Kaczyński brothers and a significant part of PiS' members actively participated in these events. Thus, refuting the important historical achievements of 1989 as a bargain of elites or "rotten roots" of the Third Republic collides with personal, "living memories" in Polish society and undermines the credibility of a radically negative assessment.

The second reason for the resistance to a negative interpretation lies in schematic narrative templates imbedded in Polish culture. As mentioned in the introduction with reference to James V. Wertsch, the members of mnemonic communities produce and are (via socialization) exposed to narrative templates which they often use to interpret various events according to the same plot line. These general, schematic patterns of interpretation<sup>53</sup> are instrumental for the social construction of groups. They are often part of their identity claims. They become mnemonic habits, are emotionally loaded and used for making judgments about narrative truths.<sup>54</sup> For these reasons they are difficult to change. Invoking this theoretical conceptualization, I want to argue that

## "THE RIGHT-WING PRESS PREFERRED TO MARK THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN PAUL II'S FIRST VISIT TO POLAND IN 1979."

the Solidarity movement and events of 1989 fit well into the Polish narrative template that can be summarized as “a history of Poland as leader of the nations in their fight for freedom”. It originates in 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish Romantic culture and since then it is encapsulated in the frequently quoted Polish catchword “For your freedom and ours”. As shown by previous research, this generic narrative has been employed to make sense of numerous historical events in Polish history, including the activities of the Solidarity movement in 1980–1981.<sup>55</sup> The interpretation of the semi-democratic elections of 1989 as a great victory of the Polish people over communist rulers that opened up the road to democracy for Poland and for other nations in the communist bloc is very much in line with that narrative template. It puts Poland in the position of leader in the struggle against the communist system, resonates with the national self-image and boosts national pride.

**MOREOVER, THE MEMORY** of the electoral victory of 1989 can be interpreted along the lines of yet another Polish generic narrative that can be described as “a story about national miracles taking place in Polish history as a divine reward for the Polish peoples’ tribulations and fidelity to God and the Virgin Mary”. It is epitomized in the popular motto of Polish Catholics: “Polonia semper fidelis”. This narrative template is built on a popular Polish, Catholic myth, originating as early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Poland, about the miraculous interventions by Virgin Mary from Częstochowa (called the Black Madonna) in Polish history. As I have demonstrated in my previous research on Polish national myths and their use by the Solidarity movement, a number of unexpected, positive turning points in Polish history have been inscribed in this mythological narrative template, including the emergence of Solidarity in 1980.<sup>56</sup> In connection with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the June 1989 elections, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published two articles that referred explicitly to that narrative. In the first, historian Tomasz Nałęcz compared the results of the June elections with one of the events, interpreted in popular memory as a national miracle, the so-called “Vistula Miracle”<sup>57</sup> – the victorious battle near Warsaw of the Polish army against the Red Army in 1920.<sup>58</sup> In the second, Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, returned to this idea. In an effort to include the Roundtable in the same narrative template he called the whole year 1989 “the year of miracles”.<sup>59</sup> Michnik and many others within the opposition knew that the Roundtable, as a non-revolutionary moment, fitted less well than the June elections with the established patterns of meaning-making of the past in Polish culture. Therefore, in order to protect the positive memory of the Roundtable they framed it together with the June elections in one big celebration of “national miracles” and referred to it as “annus mirabilis 1989”.

## Conclusions

For more than two decades the representatives of the post-Solidarity revolutionary group as well as their followers among the Polish right have argued for a negative interpretation of the Roundtable in particular, but also the 1989 June elections, as a

“collusion of elites” and a “derailed revolution” respectively. The effect of these memory politics has been that the Poles have not forged a coherent memory narrative of 1989. The memory of 1989 has been used to polarize Polish society. This diagnosis made by Bernhard and Kubik in their study of the commemoration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of communism in Poland still applies, as shown in the analysis above. In 2019, thirty years after the events of 1989, Polish collective memory is still fractured. These findings might not be surprising. Much more interesting is the discovery that the positive memory of 1989 has proved resistant to the revaluations proposed by the Polish right, and that PiS restructured its politics of memory in response to this fact.

Since coming to power in 2015, PiS has used the public media to hammer out its negative message about 1989, but in 2019 a vast number of Poles around the country still wanted to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roundtable and the June elections. Grassroot initiatives emerged in many municipalities to organize commemorations. As has been argued above, an important explanation for that should be sought in the high congruence of this memory with other mnemonic narratives shaped in Polish culture according to two existing narrative templates: “Poland as a nation leading in the fight for freedom” and “national miracles as rewards for suffering and the fidelity to God and the Virgin Mary”. The embeddedness of the memory of 1989 in these national generic narratives made it difficult to challenge. This finding points to the limits on the freedom of memory actors who want to construct new versions of the past and make them broadly accepted by conducting specific memory politics. Memories are dynamic but not freely molded. The case of the Polish memory of 1989 gives evidence of an inertia built into the collective memories. Memory narratives, once deeply embedded in a group’s culture, attached to the narrative templates and thus central to a group’s identity, are easy to revive and hard to replace.

**THE ABOVE ANALYSIS** of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989 indicates that PiS have learnt the lesson that politics of memory have constraints that should not be neglected. This might have made the leadership of PiS realize that propagating a totally negative interpretation of 1989 in order to delegitimize political opponents and legitimize the idea of the Fourth Republic could be a risky gambit. Since the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989 occurred the same year as parliamentary elections, PiS saw engaging in battles over this memory at this point in time as a disadvantage and adopted a more cautious, less confrontational strategy.

Since its coming to power in 2015 PiS has been involved in divisive politics of memory provoking immense controversies: for example about the contents of the exhibition at the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk,<sup>60</sup> the commemoration of the “cursed soldiers”<sup>61</sup> and the “memory laws”,<sup>62</sup> to name but a few. Before the 2019 elections, PiS wanted to show a society exhausted by continuous political quarrels that the party was capable of a more moderate approach to mnemonic issues. The commemoration of 1989 could serve this purpose since PiS’ previous warfare against the positive evaluations of 1989 had not

been to the advantage of the party. Thus, the strategy embraced was to avoid open conflict over the issue and take a position of mnemonic abnegators, hiding in this way an essentially negative standpoint. The strategy included practices of active forgetting (silence in the right-wing media), marginalization (i.e. modest celebrations or commemoration of other events to overshadow the anniversary) and production of the ambiguous interpretations of 1989. A special variant of the latter was PiS' modification of its original version of the history of the Third Republic by moving its critical turning point (moment of "betrayal") from 1989 to the circumstances around the fall of Olszewski's government in 1991 and the whole period thereafter. This might indicate that PiS began to accept its failure to impose the negative interpretation of 1989 on the Poles at large.

The above analysis shows at the same time that the liberal-leftist opposition was aware of the positive, emotional connotations of the year 1989 in Polish collective memory and that it was determined to protect it against the assaults on the part of PiS by anchoring it more strongly in Polish narrative templates. In the context of the upcoming electoral parliamentary campaigns in 2019 the oppositional parties used the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989 as an asset in the political struggle. This is why they became memory warriors in relation to this memory and displayed a unified position, while in fact marginalizing dissenting voices on the left, critical to the outcomes of the transformation 1989–1991.

**IN SUM, COMPARING** the studies of the commemorations of 1989 in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries it can be stated that the political groups changed their positions in the mnemonic discursive field. PiS, that in 2009 had acted as a memory warrior, adopted in 2019 a position of memory abnegator, while the liberal party PO (the Citizens' Platform) moved in the opposite direction – from being a memory abnegator and memory pluralist to taking a position of memory warrior. This analysis shows that the memory of 1989 in Poland remains a hot and contentious issue in Polish politics. This is regrettable, since through its embeddedness in the Polish cultural patterns that memory has great potential to be a cohesive element for Polish society. A strong, public assertion of the positive meaning of 1989 as a foundation of Polish modern democracy could become an invitation to a respectful dialogue in the country that is at present sharply politically divided. ❌

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- 44 Stachowiak, Paweł, “Chcieli dobrze, skończyli jak zwykle. Po wizycie u pana prezydenta”, <http://wiesz.com.pl/2019/02/07/chcieli-dobrze-skonczyli-jak-zwykle-po-wizycie-u-pana-prezydenta/> (accessed April 2, 2020)
- 45 <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/96182/Zybertowicz-Tych-ktorzy-nie-byli-zamieszani-w-zadne-konszachty-ze-sluzbami-PRL-u-serdecznie-przepraszam.html> (accessed April 4, 2020)
- 46 See the statement by the minister of culture Piotr Gliński at the conference “How Communism collapsed. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe”, published on the Polish government website <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/jak-upadal-konizm-rok-1989-w-europie-srodkowo-wschodniej-dwudniowa-konferencja-w-30-rocznice-zakonczenia-obrad-okraglego-stolu> (accessed April 6, 2020)
- 47 E.g. <https://polskaniepodlegla.pl/opinie/item/19424-18-czerwca-1989-r-i-4-czerwca-1992-r-to-dwie-strony-tego-samego-medalu-i-dwie-symboliczne-daty-konserwujace-na-dlugie-lata-iii-rp> (accessed April 6, 2020)
- 48 Compare with the statements by Lech Kaczyński, see Bernhard and Kubik (2014), op.cit., 69–70.
- 49 Links to the speeches by the president: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHy4ilqoBPc> and by the prime minister: <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/30-lat-od-wyborow-4-czerwca-1989-roku-przemowienie-premiera-morawieckiego,941879.html> (accessed September 1, 2019)
- 50 CBOS “Trzydziesta rocznica obrad Okrągłego Stołu”, Komunikat z badań”, nr 16 (February 2019).
- 51 The project “Totalitaryzm. Solidarność. Męstwo” April 2018, conducted by Kantar Public and Pilecki Institute. The results were made accessible to the author by courtesy of the sociologist Piotr Kwiatkowski.
- 52 The most striking change was the growing indifference to the events of 1989 among the youngest respondents, CBOS (2019), op.cit., 6.
- 53 Wertsch (2008), op.cit., 140.
- 54 Ibid. See also Wertsch (2018), op.cit.
- 55 See for example Janion, Maria (1980), *Odnawianie znaczeń*, Kraków: Wyd. Literackie. For specific examples in connection with the Solidarity movement see Törnquist-Plewa, Barbara, *The Wheel of Polish Fortune: Myths in Polish Collective Consciousness during the First Years of Solidarity*, Lund Slavonic Monographs, 2. (Lund University, 1992), 115–253.
- 56 Törnquist-Plewa (1992), op.cit., 31–111.
- 57 Nałęcz Tomasz, “Wybory 4 czerwca 1989 r. drugim Cudem nad Wisłą. Wałęsa wołał: “Zamieście kosy na głosy”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 20, 2019.
- 58 For a more information about how this military achievement became established in the Polish mass imagination as national miracle see Törnquist-Plewa (1992), op.cit., 49–51 and 79.
- 59 Michnik Ada “To był rok Okrągłego Stołu i pierwszych wyborów. Rok cudów”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 4, 2019.
- 60 See Machcewicz, Paweł, *The war that never ends. Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk: Memory, culture and political interests* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).
- 61 A popular term referring to Polish partisans fighting against the Soviet and Communist authorities around 1945. See Kończal, Kornelia, “The Invention of the ‘Cursed Soldiers’ and Its Opponents: Post-war Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland”, *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, August 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419865332>
- 62 This refers to laws criminalizing claims of Polish responsibility or co-responsibility in genocidal actions. See Gliszczyńska-Grabias Aleksandra (2019), “Deployments of Memory with the Tools of Law. The Case of Poland”, *Review of Central and East European Law*, (December 4, 2019), vol.44, no. 4, 464–492. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15730352-04404002>