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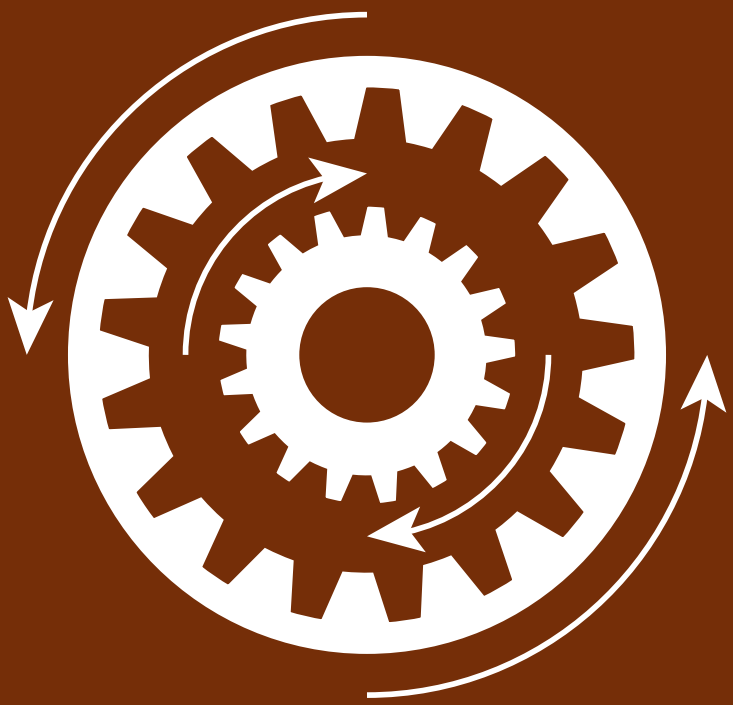

ANTI-COMMUNISMS: DISCOURSES OF EXCLUSION

Bednarek/ Dean/ Dimitrakaki/ Golinczak/ Kochan/ Majmurek/
Moll/ Mrozik/ Szopa/ Wielgosz/ Wójcik/ Zysiak/

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Anti-communisms: Discourses of Exclusion

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ANTI-COMMUNISMS: DISCOURSES OF EXCLUSION

PRAKTYKA TEORETYCZNA

Communism is a necessary starting point for any political or theoretical discussion of anti-communism. Exorcised for nearly two centuries, communism today is not just occluded by the prohibition of thinking or practicing it, but also expelled by a complete ban on desiring it. Not only does mention of communism bring disgust on the Right, fully aware that the once-horrifying spectre is just its pale shadow today; communism is also an uncomfortable relative for the Left. At best a troublesome legacy of the past – at worst, a foe actively fought against. The desire for communism – as a goal, as an experience of everyday life, as co-existence, co-production and co-abolition of constraints that stand in the way of truly democratic governance – lay at the heart of designing a better future. Therefore, only a mediation in the desire for communism can make the considerations of anti-communism something more than a mere contribution to the emergence of yet another form of "anti" politics.

As early as the 1789 revolution, one may observe the outburst of reactionary conceptions across Europe. However, they reached a more coherent form for the first time only when the Spring of Nations finally waned, at the turn of the 1840s and 1850s. Their cohesion, in turn, resulted from the huge popularity of socialist, and – in particular – of communist doctrines in 1848. The overtly communist club in Paris was the most influential among grassroots institutions flourishing in 1848, and its meetings attracted a considerable audience, as many as 5,000 people at once (Pilbeam 1995, 192).

This history should not be oversimplified: it may sound paradoxically as if the very first anti-communist conceptions were formulated by socialists, who made efforts to avoid being associated with such ardent communists as Théodore Dézamy or Etienne Cabet. However, it was the right-wing version of anti-communism which gained particular momentum after 1848. Brochures challenging communism were printed, running to more than 100,000 copies, and more ardent journals called for new crusades against the modern barbarians (Fourn 2004).

Therefore, as one may notice, anti-communism from the very beginning was not boiled down to one, right-wing ideology. Rather, it constituted a bunch of different political stances, in some cases even internally contradicting each other, but still aimed at curbing any – real or alleged – manifestations of communism.

The rapid development of anti-communist ideologies and practices had far-reaching consequences, especially in the second half of the 19th and in the 20th century. In 1871, when the Paris Commune was finally stifled, France suffered from one of the most brutal terrors against communards. During "The Bloody Week" the French army probably killed more than 10,000 revolutionaries. However, it was only a prelude to the genuine brutality of anti-communist forces. Russia suffered from the tragic civil war in 1917–1922, during which thousands were murdered by the White Army (Witkowicz 2008). Likewise, in the interwar period, Fascism and Nazism were, along with different forms of conservatism, organized forms of reaction against the red spectre. In these doctrines the spectre was embedded in different forms of minorities who were allegedly dangerous to the national substance. Virulent anti-Semitism was of course only one breed of this hatred.

Indeed, linking anti-communism with prejudice towards different social groups became part and parcel of modern reactions against the communist movement. During the Cold War any pacifist activist or partisan of Martin Luther King could easily be charged with receiving money from the USSR.

Therefore, anti-communism, as we understand and experience it, is not just the primary means of strengthening the rule of the Right in capitalism. Historically, it was inscribed into the projects of real socialism – seemingly communist alternatives, as well as counter-capitalist initiatives. Actually, existing socialism was just as anti-communist, as it logically had to rely on the capitalist logic of valorization and extraction of surplus value. Hence the suppression of workers' self-organization, workers' democracy, the progress of communism, and the progress of the proletarian cultural revolution. An additional problem was the binding of some socialist projects to the nationalist legitimization of states and the accompanying ethnic purification. All these experiences blocked the possibilities of the expansion of the common – possibilities of communist experience on a large scale, as well as the creation of stable and reproducible material, cultural and social conditions for it.

As it appears, nowadays we have to face a new wave of anti-communist momentum, and not only in Europe: the presidency of Donald Trump in the USA and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil may be seen as the most striking examples. Also, the East Central European countries constitute specific cases, given the fact that – unlike the mentioned USA or Brazil – in such countries as Hungary and Poland no well-organized communist political party exists. Moreover, it may be noted that a specific phenomenon, anti-communism without any red spectre, has gained popularity in these countries.

In Poland, those who reap the real political benefits from fueling anti-communist attitudes are, first and foremost, neoliberal mainstream and right-wing organizations. Nonetheless, they embed the red spectre in different groups of people. For neoliberals, the big social groups are evidence that the remnants of the "communist" or "post-communist" mentality are still alive. They are convinced that all pauperized groups represent the *homo sovieticus* model, consisting of persons who are unable to cope with the free labour market and its challenges. Partisans of far right-wing organizations, in turn, use anti-communism to challenge every political current which is not embedded in a clearly exposed nationalist and racist agenda. For them, both the USSR and the European Union, leftist liberals, ecologists, and supranational corporations – all of these may be called "communist" for the sake of their expediency.

This anti-communist momentum in East Central Europe takes the wind out of far right-wing organizations' sails, but even some left-wing social-democratic parties reach for anti-communist clichés. In Poland, the party Razem (Together) brought the matter before the court when neoliberal and far right-wing politicians accused them of being communists, implying in this way that being communist is something with which they wanted nothing to do.

In the following volume, we have collected research articles and review articles that confront the different facets of anti-communisms. Although most of the materials refer to the Polish circumstances, we are still convinced that – due to its multidimensionality – it may interest those reflecting on the new wave of backlash all around the world. In a somewhat twisted logic, post-socialist Central European countries are today spearheading the anti-communist paranoia. Now, more than at any time before, it manifests globally, uncovering the fact that neoliberal capitalism is basically founded on anti-communism. We can observe it not only in the emerging figures of far-right leaders, but also in the elitist and oligarchic practices of self-described "democrats" – from French president Emmanuel Macron, who rules in conditions of a permanent state of exception and repressive state violence in response to popular insurrections, to EU politicians' ruthless maneuvers to ignore or pacify democratic demands formulated in the context of dramatic anti-social austerity policies. Also, the organized crusade of the Western "democratic world" against Venezuela rests on anti-communist and so called "anti-totalitarian" imagination (we should acknowledge this regardless of our opinions on Maduro's government).

Although the authors of this issue have proposed analyses concentrated on specified facets or dimensions of anti-communism in the realm of politics, history or art, what they share is the conviction that the role played by anti-communism in contemporary capitalism is not peripheral or accidental, but rather overwhelming and systemic. We would be mistaken if we narrowed our understanding of anti-communism to openly anti-Red rhetoric, persecutions of the Left, or the operation of the inner logic of imperialism. Indeed, these phenomena are not

relegated to the past – far from that – as they aim at the eradication of prospects of egalitarianism, which is possible due to much subtler mechanisms than utter repression. The articles collected in this issue reveal and dissect some of these mechanisms. Jodi Dean offers a brief, but powerful manifesto for the necessity of analyzing and contesting today's anti-communism. In *Anti-communism is all around us* the American philosopher presents four strong theses on the general position which anti-communism occupies within the wider picture of international, capitalist ideology. The author of *The Communist Horizon* notes the rise of far-right anti-communism in many parts of the world and interprets it as a politics of fear, which utilizes the disaffection and anger generated by capitalism. Dean tries to convince readers that the strange fascination with which liberals and the Left alike react to anti-communist leaders is problematic, because it shifts attention from the real enemy of the Left: capitalism.

This over-identification with oppositional politics – or "the anti-struggles" – instead of propositional politics is also the argument on which Angela Dimitrakaki works in her article *Left with TINA: Art, Alienation and Anti-communism*. By tracing the debates and transfigurations of radical art in allegedly post-communist and post-historical world after 1989, Dimitrakaki points out that the Left is left with its futile and selective critiques on a range of problems and tensions generated by capital. The author brings our attention to the troubling fact that the effect of a "politics of anti", which has alienation as its main target, is counterproductive: it generates the strange effect of "alienation against alienation". In that context Dimitrakaki remains skeptical and suspicious of the recent popularity of commoning practices. When detached from explicitly combating anti-communism and a direct fight for communism, practices that aim for development of the common are nothing more than internal moments of capitalist logic of accumulation, which can even play a positive role for the system, generating participation, social capital and the illusion of rebellion.

After these two broad interventions, the second part of the issue is devoted to Polish anti-communism. The section starts with an article by Bartosz Wójcik, who deals with the influence which the Russian Revolution of 1917 exerted upon the structures of anti-communist discourse in Poland. The author shows how contemporary Polish nationalist historiography generates an anti-communist interpretation of Polish history during the Russian Revolution. The main aim of Wójcik's article is to reveal the logic and construction of the anti-communist narrative, which is based on, among others, the conviction that mulling over the national origin of some main Bolshevik figures (who, in fact, are often portrayed as Jews by right-wing historians) is more important than focusing on the people's activities during the Revolution. Wójcik's propositions may have general and independent application, not limited specifically to the Polish case.

The three following articles are devoted to another crucial transition period, in which contemporary discourses of anti-communism in Poland took shape. The collapse of real

socialism in 1989 and thirty years of capitalist transformation in its most neoliberal and peripheral form resulted in the emergence of right-wing and anti-communist hegemony. Katarzyna Szopa, Michalina Golinczak, and Łukasz Moll propose three ways to read the process. Szopa uncovers interesting affiliations between the rise of liberal feminism and the fall of Marxist feminism. In *Roses or Bread? Anti-communist Narration in Feminist Readings of Anna Świrszczyńska's Poetry* Szopa shows how feminist interpretations of Świrszczyńska's works after 1989 were conditioned by conscious or unconscious anti-communist bias. The fate of Świrszczyńska is presented by Szopa as a symptomatic case study of constructing liberal and Western notions of female agency and paradigms of feminism. The history and accomplishments of feminism and feminists during the socialist period have to be eradicated or rejected by liberal feminism, aimed at forging its own, autonomous and anti-communist genesis. In this way, liberal feminism has contributed to the right-wing anti-communist hegemony in Poland.

In turn, Golinczak focuses on the Polish anti-communism using discourse analysis. Golinczak utilizes especially Martin Nonhoff's theory of hegemony, which is based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's works, in order to prove that anti-communism in Poland gained the structural role of "general crime', an obstacle that must be removed so that Polish society can be entirely reconciled with itself and reach its mythical fullness. The merits of Golinczak's article lie not only in exposing how – on the right and left sides of the political spectrum alike – communism acts as a "signifier of exclusion" and as a phantasm of the Enemy, the Other, which can be blamed for political failures. Her article offers also certain methodological reflections on possibilities for studying anti-communism using tools drawn from the theory of hegemony.

The article by Łukasz Moll, *Erasure of the common: From Polish anti-communism to universal anti-capitalism*, can be read as a polemic with uses of discourse analysis, of which Golinczak's article is an example. Although Moll also points out that the theory of hegemony can be fruitful in understanding anti-communism in Poland and elsewhere and he applies its tools in his text, he nevertheless claims that its usefulness is limited. This limitation is primarily caused by the hegemonic approach's inability to note non-discursive, more material dimensions of anti-communism. Inspired by Autonomist Marxism, Moll opts for a conceptualization of modern Polish history as a politics of erasure of the common, claiming that the Polish case is symptomatic of universal anti-communist subjugation of commoning practices. In the light of the above, the institution of the common could form the basis for successful anti-anti-communist politics.

In the next section the reader can find two review articles, which are strictly related to the topic of anti-communism. Joanna Bednarek writes on Magdalena Grabowska's recent book on historical repression of feminist traditions in socialist states. *Zerwana genealogia* by Grabowska

is for Bednarek an important point in the discussion on the genealogy of feminism in post-socialist countries and on women's agency in struggles for emancipation under socialism. Bednarek agrees with the author when she complains that liberal feminism in Poland after 1989 went hand in hand with right-wing anti-communism in relegating class issues from the realm of politics. Once again, the Polish example is not a marginal one – rather, it helps to uncover the anti-communist dimension of Western feminism and liberalism.

The review article by Agata Zysiak operates in the controversial area of "politics of history", which is a crucial feature of right-wing anti-communist hegemony in Central Eastern Europe. *Historical Memory of Central and Eastern Communism*, a book edited by Agnieszka Mrozik and Stanislav Holubec, is an engaged effort to examine the socialist era beyond the right-wing criminalization and demonization. While Zysiak acknowledged revisionist demands offered by the authors of the reviewed volume, she is not fully convinced that their contributions form a coherent and effective antidote to anti-communist and nationalist historiography. Revealing ideological distortions and lies in memory narratives remains important, just the same as acknowledging forgotten or prohibited successes of the socialist era. But what is lacking in the volume edited by Mrozik and Holubec, according to Zysiak, is a counter-hegemonic articulation of history, which could endanger anti-communist domination in the field.

The issue concludes with the results of a short inquiry, which the editors sent to active figures of the Polish Left. Contributors from diverse circles of the Left were invited to answer in short two basic questions:

1) Which areas of exclusion are supported by contemporary anti-communism?
2) How to contest anti-communist hegemony?

Four participants agreed to answer our inquiry. The responses presented in this volume includes pieces by Przemysław Wielgosz (publicist, editor-in-chief of *Le Monde Diplomatique – Polish Edition*), Agnieszka Mrozik (left-wing feminist scholar in literary studies), Jakub Majmurek (publicist, *Krytyka Polityczna*) and Tymoteusz Kochan (publicist, *Socjalizm Teraz*). They definitely form a useful resource for everyone with interest in Polish anti-communism and its similarities to anti-leftist discourses in other countries.

We aim to boost the research on the contemporary forms of anti-communism. As a journal published in a country where anti-communist repression is an obvious feature of the dominant vision of society, we feel destined to point to the importance of this neglected topic. It is our conviction that anti-communism is a significant feature not only of the current right-wing offensive in global affairs, but also in the logics of capitalism. Our location gives a good vantage point from which to better grasp its contours.

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THE ANTI-STRUGGLES AND ANTI-COMMUNISM

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ANTI-COMMUNISM IS ALL AROUND US

JODI DEAN

Abstract: The essay discusses four theses on contemporary anti-communism: 1) anti-communism is general and international; 2) anti-communism is an operator within capitalist ideology; 3) anti-communism is a politics of fear; 4) anti-communism is a lure that communists should reject. It proposes new theoretical framework to understand and contest many-faced manifestations of anti-communism.

Keywords: anti-communism, critique of ideology, politics of fear, far-right politics

This essay makes four points:
1. Anti-communism is general and international;
2. Anti-communism is an operator within capitalist ideology;
3. Anti-communism is a politics of fear;
4. Anti-communism is a lure that communists should reject.

1. Anti-communism is international

A quick glance around the world reveals the international dimension of anti-communism. We find it in Bolsonaro's winning campaign for the presidency of Brazil and Duterte's presidency of the Philippines. We see it in Indian Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalism as well as the intensified nationalisms of ruling parties in Hungary and Poland. Anti-communism's international is significant because it tells us that anti-communism cannot be reduced to its specific national histories – which would repeat the nationalist gesture. Anti-communism is not simply a response by countries of the former East bloc to decades of Soviet domination. It is more than a constitutive feature of politics in the United States, with its ever-recurring Red Scares.

In fact, anti-communism has never been a strictly domestic or national phenomenon. We might note here perennial US imperialism, carried out as a defense of democracy from the Red Menace. We can observe as well the opposition of colonizing powers to anti-colonial revolution. And we might include the global networks of commercial and political elites as they conjoin and amplify opposition to communism, thirty years after its ostensible demise.

One might object that anti-communism signifies different things. It's one thing in Poland and something else entirely in the US and Brazil. This objection is unsatisfying. It fails to account for why "different things" are designated by the same signifier. So, yes, one can attend to historical and contextual differences, but it's crucial today, when we must build a new international communism, to draw out the general features of anti-communism. How do we explain anti-communism's persistence? What accounts for the broadness of anti-communism *now*?

A possible answer is that communism itself is and has always been international. There have been communist struggles all over the world. The fact that there are struggles means that there are opponents, which means that there are anti-communists. But this is not a very satisfying explanation. It assumes that anti-communism is part of a real existing struggle against powerful and popular communist parties. It suggests, in other words, a kind of empirical basis for anti-communism, as if anti-communism were a response to a real existing empirical threat. But that can't account for contemporary anti-communism in the US, Europe, and Brazil, where there is not an organized and powerful communist movement. Communism was never

powerful enough to pose a threat to capitalist state power in the US state and it was defeated in the Soviet Union and its European sphere of influence.

Another possible explanation for the continuity of anti-communism nearly thirty years after the end of state socialism is that it's a remnant of old struggles. People who once really fought against communism can "keep wearing the old clothes", playing off of the same script, deploying the old rhetoric in hope of inciting past feelings. The rhetoric works regardless of context, of history. It's a name standing it for a symbol, a nugget of affect without symbolic efficiency – it could mean anything.

This answer could draw support from *The Communist Manifesto* – Marx and Engels note how all sorts of different forces accuse their opponents of being communists – even when they are not. That's what they mean when they call communism a specter that haunts Europe. The idea of communism has power, it has force, such a force that parties fight their opponents by trying to tarnish them as communists.

Alas, this response, too, is not altogether satisfying – because communism is not completely absent of content, especially not after Marx and Engel's famous manifesto filled it out and revolutionary struggle gave it a body. Communism is a name for the political struggle of the working class and oppressed, the struggle against property and exploitation and for equality, justice, and freedom from the dictates of bosses, landlords, owners, and banks. Anti-communism isn't just an empty gesture and way to demonize opponents. It indicates an opposition to equality, the rejection of the idea of collective labor for collective benefit. The rhetoric without context charge erases this emancipatory content, the fact of real historical and ongoing struggles. In so doing, it again repeats the right-wing, neo-fascist and liberal gesture – because of course the far Right are not the only anti-communists. Liberals and social democrats join them in legitimating anti-communism. Liberal anti-communism and fascist anti-communism go hand in hand. And they do so for the same reasons: to protect capitalism.

2. Anti-communism is the ideology of capitalism

Because communism is the one ideology, the one ideal, that anchors itself in the abolition of private property, exploitation, and production for the sake of capital accumulation, capitalism *has* to oppose it. Communism is that modern ideology always and everywhere on the side of the oppressed. When labor is strong, when those who have been racially, sexually, ethnically, and colonially oppressed become more visible, more organized, and more militant, anti-communism intervenes to set up barricades. Anti-communism thus serves to structure the political field by establishing the terrain of possibility: what is available, what is off the table, what is impossible – unthinkable. And notice, even as anti-communism claims that

communism is itself impossible, it mobilizes social forces to oppose it. It fights against the impossible.

Once we recognize the broadness of anti-communism, that it's virtually everywhere, that it appears in all sorts of different empirical settings, and that it's oriented in opposition to what it claims to be impossible, we can see that anti-communism in general is not the result of an empirical analysis of communist power or the specific political strength of actual communists. Anti-communism is broader, more abstract, affective, and ideological – in other words, political. Anti-communism is a feature of the general setting of capitalism – and it has been since the 19th century. That anti-communism is a feature of capitalism also means that there is a difference between internal critiques of communism, different strategies for building communism, criticisms of these strategies and so on and "anti-communism" – the latter is this general, ideological orientation or thread through which capitalism tries to immunize and protect itself.

Anti-communism is crucial to the maintenance of the fiction that there is no alternative to capitalism. Rhetorics of anti-communism wage unceasing war to make sure that collective benefit, cooperation, and planning are off the table, suspect, impossible. The violence of capitalism disappears as communism is made into the one repository of all historical violence. We see this in the present (as in Hungary and Poland) where the extreme policies of parties that want to maintain capitalism are attributed to residual communism rather than recognized as the strongman authoritarianism long part of the far Right, rather than acknowledged, in other words, as capitalist authoritarianism, the authoritarianism that the Right uses to force an order into capitalism's disorder. Instead of the disorder of competition, markets, innovation, prices, dispossession, foreclosure, debt, and imperialist war, in capitalist authoritarianism disorder is foreign – the refugee, the immigrant, the black, the Muslim, the Jew. Or it is disorder itself, disorder without cause, that is the problem anti-communists want to address – women out of place, sex out of place, sexuality out of place, the young and the poor refusing to stay in their place. Dramatic changes in conditions of work, in the character of communities and life that accompany disruptive and ubiquitous technology, urbanization and rural depopulation, shifts from industry and manufacture to financial services, exodus of the labor force as young people look for better futures, the increase in the number of women in the paid economy all become a disorder to be dealt with by the assertion of order, church, police, family, and race. Anti-communism is the lynchpin of this assertion. The arsenal of anti-communism asserts religion, family, and law and order – even as it promotes its own unlaw and disorder.

The anti-communist script is repeated to assert, over and over, that there is no alternative to capitalism, that no matter what else happens, the system remains. Capitalism will be supported and fortified. Capitalism is the ground of freedom and individuality – private

property and choice. Capitalism's contradictions are denied, it's persistent immiseration exteriorized onto foreign and disordered bodies.

3. Anti-communism is a politics of fear

Anti-communism mobilizes fear and anxiety. It condenses the real fears and anxieties of those living under capitalism and displaces them onto the fantastic figure of a communist threat – the specter haunting Europe. This condensation and displacement gives moral dignity and political drama to hate. To be against racial and ethnic minorities, to want to put women in their place is not just bigotry, it's not backwards and misogynistic. Rather, it has moral and political dignity as part of a world historical struggle against communism. Even national preference becomes internationalized, again worthy of admiration because of its role in the battle against infernal communism. To use one example: as Yasuhiro Katagiri (2014) documents and demonstrates, anti-communism in the US has been historically allied with segregation. After the McCarthy era hearings and show trials came to an end, professional anti-communists went to the US south to help organize against de-segregation, against Civil Rights, and in support of the old Jim Crow apartheid system. They worked to spread the sense that to support civil rights was to support communism. Even Martin Luther King, Jr. was excoriated as a communist. In an effort to appear as more than just racist, the defense of segregation used anti-communism to give itself moral legitimacy. To be sure, this "legitimacy" was clearly false and incoherent – an inversion of victimization where white people are the victims, not African Americans who are lynched and denied the right to vote. And the new victim status of whites is turned into its own weird kind of heroism: as heroes of anti-communist resistance entitled to respect and dignity. In sum, what's crucial to recognize here is the work of an underlying fantasy structure – anti-communism is not an empirical argument against a specific program but rather the mobilization of a politics of fear (Robin 2004).

Another way that the politics of fear operates is through the eclipse of the present by the past. Rather than dealing with problems in the present (such as climate change and dramatic inequality), the political battle is displaced into the past – hence, the drama around monuments and museums, the reconstruction of historical memory. Anti-communism addresses present fear by shifting focus onto the past and legitimating itself with reference to this past. As Slavoj Žižek pointed out over twenty years ago, this memory politics is not about commemorating the dead. It's a way that leaders try to legitimate themselves as continuers of the work of the dead. The dead are their redeemers (Žižek 1993, 194).

Anti-communism mobilizes a fear of loss, of theft, a fear that what you have will be taken from you. This mobilization conceals the absence of property, of wealth, of job security, of success, of sovereignty, of freedom. It posits that we have them by positioning them as stolen

possessions (Žižek 1993, 201–205). It's like, communism is what prevents you from being rich, widely admired, having lots of sex, and so on. This of course obscures the fact that the reality under capitalism is that one percent of the people have eighty-two percent of the world's annual wealth; eight men have the wealth of half the planet, etc.[1] By positing communism as a source of deprivation, as an ideology based on taking away your property, anti-communism conceals the fact that you don't actually have any property to begin with. At the same time, it provides the affective sense that the Right gives and the Left takes.

4. Anti-communism is a lure that communists should reject

Today it seems that anti-communism generates more fascination than communism. People seem to find it more interesting to focus on the renewed power of the far Right, of nationalism and fascism, than on the challenge of renewing and reinvigorating communism for our time. People –left and right – are captivated by Bolsonaro, by Trump and his former henchman, Steve Bannon. They are preoccupied with far Right's explicit illiberalism in Poland and Hungary, the openly fascist forces appearing in Germany and Italy. It's like what really captures the popular imagination is the freedom to hate, the permission to break the rules, to refuse the demands of hospitality, civility, mutual respect, and solidarity and to grab what one can. The more plausible the link to Hitler, the greater the fascination the anti-communist attracts.

This fascination is particularly powerful in the affective networks of communicative capitalism where outrage circulates more quickly and easily than long-form analysis (see Dean 2010). People are more likely to read and share something that is short and outrageous, something that they think others are likely to share, than they are something that is long and complicated (see Dean 2016). Who has time?

But there's more to the affective charge of outrageous nationalists. Another dimension concerns the way they express the extremes of the capitalist system that liberal democracy wants to disavow. Trump, for example, is at one and the same time the emblem of the system and its disavowed core – disregard for law and norms and total focus on the accumulation of capital – that's his point: there's no faux-civilized veneer of dignity, custom, respect; why bother? For those with sufficient wealth and power, there is no penalty for violating norms, changing the rules (Dean 2015). Trump proves that the system is as bad as its left critics have always said that it is. He tells us what we know. The excesses of Trump and other oligarchs challenge conventional norms, break with a certain establishment, but they don't break with its capitalist underpinnings. Instead, they deliver on its promises, providing the excess that many

[1] "Richest 1 percent bagged 82 percent of wealth created last year - poorest half of humanity got nothing", Oxfam International (22 January 2018), https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2018-01-22/richest-1-percent-bagged-82-percent-wealth-created-last-year.

thought they would get and think they have earned. The excesses of these oligarchs announce that the benefits of capitalism are for those strong enough to take them, men strong enough to fight against those who would steal their enjoyment, the thieving immigrants, the racial and sexual others, the communists. For anti-communists, the willingness to violate norms, to be strong and put things in their place, grounds the legitimation of inequality – only the strong survive.

Žižek argues that powerless fascination bears witness to an encounter with the Real of enjoyment (where "enjoyment", *jouissance*, is that intense pleasure-pain that one can neither obtain nor escape) (Žižek 1993, 207). Anti-communism commands an enjoyment of inequality, an enjoyment of hierarchy, of making suffer. On the one hand is the anti-communist's preoccupation with death, with famine and camps and body counts. The numbers provide a veneer of morality and facticity even as they distort the histories to which they claim to bear witness. On the other side is anti-communism's own violence: this lets us see that its preoccupation with the power and excess of former state socialist regimes isn't critical – it's envious. Anti-communists don't reject extreme use of state power. They desire it and they encourage their followers to desire it, to claim it. Anti-communism gives permission to enjoy extreme power – at the same time that the contemporary Left critiques, mourns, and rejects it.

To the extent that Left criticism of anti-communism – or nationalism, or fascism, or authoritarianism, or Trump – remains captivated by it, the Left is invested in the same fantasy structure as the Right. It gets off on its outrage, on the Other's power, on its own incapacity or passivity. What's crucial, then, is breaking the hold of authoritarian enjoyment. How?

The Left needs to be the communists the Right fears. Such a move of identification occasions the practical work of building power. Rather than power being the object of a fantasy, it's a capacity to be built and exercised. When we focus on building capacity – a challenging prospect – we diminish the hold of the fascinating Right and turn instead to actual political work. This has an additional benefit of shifting our attention away from the superficial enemy – anti-communism – and toward the fundamental one – capitalism. This amplifies our sense of the urgency of practical work, inciting us to consider how, exactly, do we build a new communist movement able to defeat capitalism and provide a compelling alternative.

It's easier to remain captivated by fascist power than it is to work out real alternatives and build the collectivity that can make them happen. No wonder, then, that the Right is able to garner support from some of global capitalism's losers: it offers them (at least superficially) a kind of dignity or respect. It offers them a vision – of a glorious past. It offers them a solution – restore order and you can get what you want. It's harder to say now what the Left offers in any strong and clear sense, which means that the far Left (as small as we are) are basically saying: bite the hands that feed you; rise up, reject capitalism and… do what? More of the same? It's clear that liberal democracy cannot handle the current situation. Until we have a clear

and compelling answer, anti-communism in all its rage and violence will be more powerful than communism, which means exploitation, oppression, and inequality triumph over production based on need, justice, and equality. Something generally beats nothing. In many places, the divide is between rural and urban (an old Marxist theme). People in rural areas feel abandoned – often literally because their communities are shrinking as their children move to the cities for opportunities. But rather than being a reason for despair, this should be an opportunity – if we have the will to take it.

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TYTUŁ: Antykomunizm jest wszędzie wokół nas

ABSTRAKT: Prezentowany esej przedstawia cztery tezy na temat współczesnego antykomunizmu: 1) antykomunizm jest powszechny i międzynarodowy; 2) antykomunizm to narzędzie ideologii kapitalistycznej; 3) antykomunizm to polityka strachu; 4) antykomunizm to pokusa, którą powinni odrzucić komuniści. Proponuje też nową ramę teoretyczną umożliwiającą zrozumienie i kwestionowanie różnorodnych manifestacji antykomunizmu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: antykomunizm, krytyka ideologii, polityka strachu, polityka skrajnej prawicy

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LEFT WITH TINA: ART, ALIENATION AND ANTI-COMMUNISM

ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI

Abstract: The article traces the haunting of the contemporary art field by a post-1989 cultural and political imaginary captured in Douglas Coupland's novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991). This was a formative literary work for its anti-work stance but also the narrativisation of withdrawal in awe of processes of acceleration that saw production principles translating into "dazed and confused" lifestyles. The preference of Gen-Xers for "microcosms", where withdrawal encountered low-fi collectivism, became more prevalent in subsequent decades and aligned with a democracy realised, and idealised, as the politics of "anti" (including anti-fascism) – exemplified in the art field in its association with an ethical left. Constant and glorified antagonisms join the liberal art field to the social field, forever re-scripting 'anti' as TINA – the principle that "there is no alternative". TINA, it is argued, is assuming specific figurations within the largely left-inclined art terrain where commoning practices remain cut off from the propositional politics of communism while, both within and beyond the art field, technophilia is legitimised left and right as a substitute for the desire for communism. The main theses of the article are that: (a) such developments are intertwined with a political process of struggle that delivers alienation as their main outcome – that is, alienation from an imagined endpoint of the struggle and (b) that such alienation cannot be considered separately from the hegemony of acceleration in light of the traumatic withdrawal from, and of, communism and capitalism's continuous re-working of prefigurative anti-communism.

Keywords: contemporary art, politics of anti, democracy, alienation, anti-communism, Generation X, accelerationism, anti-fascism, ethical left

A post-1989 transition: Generation X as a passage from the proletariat to the precariat

In the early 1990s, Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991) captured the state of disaffection that defined a transnational western youth stretching from Canada to Greece. A selection of the novel's chapter titles and slogans, which adorned the margins of its pages as an aesthetic hangover from yesterday's postmodernism, are revealing: (Titles) *Our parents had more. Quit your job. Purchased experiences don't count. Remember Earth Clearly. Define normal. Trans form. Why am I poor?* (Slogans) *Semi-Disposable Swedish Furniture. Economy of Scale is Ruining Choice. Eroticise Intelligence. Air Family: Describing the false sense of community experienced among coworkers in an office environment. You might not count in the new orde*r. And, importantly: *Rebellion postponement*.

Focused on labour, typically marginalised in the visual arts and literature of the postmodern 1980s, Coupland had, nonetheless, intuitively moved his narrativisation of discontent from the industrial proletariat to the service and experience economy in post-Fordism. This is where we find the novel's protagonists, ready to drop out. If in 1967 Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* provided the salient science-fiction/fantasy reference to accelerationism, where the "Accelerationists" wish to enlighten a "primitive" agrarian, non-Earth society through the speedy introduction of technology, by 1991 accelerationism had migrated into a novel title of a work that intimated to its readers the lived reality, dilemmas and sense of earthly history of a post-1989 generation. At first sight, this generation embodied the collapse of American-Dream capitalism; and at second sight (induced by the novel's subtitle), it appeared trapped in the vertigo of speed as capitalism's best, new lifestyle – generating magazine titles such as *Dazed and Confused* (which appeared also in 1991). But the generational trauma lay elsewhere. Just before the global financial crisis of 2008, a Gen-Xer (Neate 2007) reflected on what was his generation's "Vietnam" and answered "the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc", connecting this retrospective wisdom with how and why Coupland's novel became the bible of post-1989 western youth, self-diagnosed with "career insecurity" and above all "alienation". In the wake of this collapse, *Generation X* perceived and described capitalism's full embracing of accelerated production sold as ultimate freedom – a state of affairs from which the 1990s youth dis-identified by becoming, or at least posing as, "slackers" and "idlers": the iconic magazine *The Idler* was founded in 1993 (which, as Wikipedia informs us, infused its commitment to idling as a life goal with "pre-industrial revolution idealism"). Understandably, the terms in which this dis-identification from the status quo was expressed were not conducive to revolutionary action: "rebellion postponement".

As the 1990s advanced, the anti-globalisation movement opposing G7, the IMF and the World Bank mobilised only part of this disaffected youth, setting the tune to the oppositional

politics of "anti", while the suspicion that "you might not count in the new world order" became a certainty in the advent of "the precariat" of the early 2000s (Standing 2011), so familiar to the art world, as suggested by a voluminous art literature (indicatively, see Abbing 2002; Aranda et al. 2011). A generation less bonded by birth date and more by a shared historical experience of redundancy, the precariat included anyone from students trapped in unpaid internships, the "economically active" trapped in job poverty, pensioners robbed of their pensions, not to mention those hit by capital's commitment to expelling labour – associated with accelerated automation by Jeremy Rifkin's *The End of Work* in 1995 but reviewed in terms of more but worse jobs by contemporary Marxists (see Moody 2018). The precarious were forced to take louder action in their confrontation with the intersecting and varied forces sustaining neoliberalism and its political outcomes. Who does not remember 2011 as the year of the protester, as per the *TIME* magazine cover? Insurgencies were noted across the best part of the globe. Hopes arose. In 2012, Jodi Dean would write about Occupy in terms of offering the outline of a new party: "the remarkable rupture the movement effects arises out of its organisation of a radical collective response to capitalism" (Dean 2012, 246). In January 2015, a coalitional "radical left" party drawn from social movements and headed by a late Gen-Xer (Alexis Tsipras, age 15 when the novel came out) seasoned in the 1990s student uprisings, became government in Greece on which a very dirty debt game was, and is, being played. In 2019, hardly anyone needs to be reminded what the fate of Occupy and the party of Syriza has been. In both cases, considerable and diverse forms of violence – from bulldozers to capital controls – were exercised to make the insurgents capitulate. If such a development was up to a point predictable, the basic lesson to be learned is that that mobilisations relying on collectivism and scripted merely as oppositional politics tend to not deliver, with the anti-globalisation movement being already symptomatic of the limitations of an "anti" political culture and carrying the GenXers' alienation – an *anti-work stance without an alternative* – at its core. The principal contention of this article is that this complex configuration of a political impulse premised on "without" and witnessed, at the very least, in the western 1990s still haunts what Fredric Jameson identified as a historically shaped "political unconscious", arguing already at the dawn of the 1980s that:

> […] a Left which cannot grasp the immense Utopian appeal of nationalism (any more that it can grasp that of religion or of fascism) can scarcely hope to 'reappropriate' such collective energies and must effectively doom itself to political impotence (Jameson 1981, 298).

In 2019, Jameson's words can be rethought as a warning to the left – a warning that the left ignored. As the second decade of the 21st century is drawing to a close, nationalism, religion, and updated iterations of fascism are a winning political formula filling the void of a so-called

"utopian" vision that the left abandoned in succumbing to the historical pressures of the 1989 trauma.

The 'anti' struggles

Yet the world (read: history) did not end with these and similar containments. The anti-capitalist struggle goes on as part of a wider political culture attached to what we could call "opposition politics" or "politics of response" to the phenomenal range of offensives launched by the *status quo*: police brutality, low pay, debt, privatisation of resources, environmental destruction, attacks on reproductive rights, welfare, and education; border fortification and new concentration camps; structural adjustment policies, settler-colonialism and land grabbing, and so on. All these, and more, are vehemently opposed. It would be disingenuous to say that the left has given up. Yet my main tenet in this exposition (as part of a broader, incomplete enquiry) is that the historically specific articulation of this struggle as a political process premised on opposition, or "anti" politics, is but another expression of the angst-ridden withdrawal at the heart of the post-1989 political impulse. It is an expression that makes, in fact, this angst-ridden withdrawal less and less recognisable, more and more disavowed – *an alienation of the alienation*, if you will – and threatening to hollow out the struggle in terms of an updated Sisyphus parable: a project of estrangement between *the actually existing subject-in-struggle* and *the actually non-existing end-point of the struggle*.

Gen-X lasted very little, the short '90s, a threshold decade with "change" on the agenda: this is when the women of Eastern Europe were instructed to move speedily from feminism to post-feminism so as to catch with a particular expression of Western hegemony serving the interests of capital in its most powerful global moment (Dimitrakaki 2000), given the feminisation of labour and of poverty that was underway and the analysis of which required an updated rather than a dead feminism; this is when, in the concluding chapter of his highly influential study *The Return of the Real*, American art historian Hal Foster detected the speedy return of a fascist subject in electronic culture (Foster 1996); this is when those who followed upon a defeated, dispersed, pacified or even suburbanised, and eventually indebted, proletariat would exorcise their alienation from a world in which they "did not count" by seeking refuge into "microcosms". In 1997, I described my own alienated microcosm, an Athenian communal apartment the residents of which shunned both their immediate urban reality and the global whirlpool outside the apartment as alien – in the semi-autobiographical novel *Antarctica*. But as regards the art field, French curator Nicolas Bourriaud's "microcosms" of interpersonal relations re-purposed alienation as pragmatism conducive to "better living" (Bourriaud 2002), renewing thus art's promise of de-alienation in a surprising way that captured the art field's imagination.

As a trope for turn-of-the century living, microcosms proved enduring: preserving collectivity in an elementary form while allowing for atomised *ennui*, they legitimised further an articulation of the social through "different" and, why not, antithetical goals. The ongoing mutation of feminism into plural "feminisms", strongly present since the 1990s, is but an example – where, for instance, neoliberal feminism could forever run in parallel with anti-capitalist or Black feminism. Justifying the co-habitation of microcosms, "difference" and "diversity" became the buzzwords of the liberal West and its "healthy" democracy where "political correctness" was prescribed as the medication of choice for addressing chronic antagonisms. As divisions deepened and antagonisms became exacerbated, microcosms pulsating around the negative space of the "postponed rebellion" eventually flourished into the all-engulfing culture of "anti" politics. In environments defined by steep divides, such as crisis-ridden Athens, this is plain for all to see – from the city's now ubiquitously marked walls (with people coming from all over the world to stamp their "anti" as graffiti), to a parliament of regular fierce debates, to endless issue-based street protests (on "issues" that can range from the abhorrent "accidental" public lynching of an HIV-positive gay activist to sector-specific strikes over pay), to packed art events of heightened affect and deferred effect: the participants' raw emotions and agitation seldom translate into actual change.

Given the above, it strikes one as less of a coincidence that the Athens Biennial 2018 edition came under the theme and title of ANTI[1]. The Athens Biennial 2018 theme became known to me through a controversy carried out through the social media and the international art press and involving two invited artists: Luke Turner withdrew from ANTI after the Athens Biennial refused to drop Daniel Keller, who had reportedly abused Turner on Twitter in support of artist Deanna Havas (not invited to the Biennial), known for her alt-right posturing – Havas had "liked" an image where a far-right symbol subverted an anti-Trump piece by Turner. This tragedy of tweets has many jaw-dropping aspects that relate to our proliferating "anti" culture – especially the gluing of emancipatory politics (in this case, feminism) to whatever reactionary posturing: in his tweets, Keller repeatedly stated that he was defending a "woman artist" drawn from "poverty" (read: working class) and abused by an established male artist. Yet this woman artist's tweets included "Bannon is cool" as well as her wish to issue "a

[1] I was unaware of the Athens Biennial 2018's title ANTI when I started working on an earlier version of this paper on "anti" politics upon the invitation of Kunsthalle Wien to contribute to Antarktika: A Symposium on Alienation, 4-6 October 2018, details of which can be found at http://kunsthallewien.at/#/en/events/antarctica-symposium-alienation-2. For a summary of the symposium, see Chwatal, Christoph. 2018. "Notes on Antarctica: A Symposium of Alienation." *Kunsthalle Wien Blog*, October 12, http://kunsthallewien.at/#/blog/2018/10/notes-antarctica-symposium-alienation.

fatwa on socialist students" (a selection was wisely anthologised by Turner on this webpage: http://luketurner.com/Deanna_Havas/).

Following the social media heat, the controversy quickly unfolded as a questioning over the role of an art institution in the specific form of alienation known as the aestheticisation of politics – with the crux of the matter being that this could apply to *any* politics. Critics of the Athens Biennial's stance in the controversy took issue with its very focus on "anti":

> The Biennial's vision of "ANTI" […] as an "attitude", as non-conformity detached from any definite political orientation, and of "marginality" abstracted from social history, is presented as a daring transgression of rigidified political correctness. It is in fact a badly written celebration of the "pleasure" of political centrism. […] ANTI begins with a list of places where middle-class artists go […]: "[T]he gym, the office, the tattoo studio, the dating website, the migration office, the shopping mall, the nightclub, the church, the dark room" (SDLD50 2018).

And the critics, the London-based anti-fascist group SDLD50 that in 2017 had led the protests against gallery LD50's platforming of neo-reactionaries, conclude:

> They [the Biennial] say that "ANTI is not a neutral discussion platform but an agonistic space hosting different approaches on how to deal with ominous tendencies in politics and culture. Diverse voices are essential to initiate a meaningful discussion on how to combat such issues. Dealing with these controversial issues is the exact core of the conceptual framework of the exhibition and denotes the urgency of ANTI". But all that this amounts to is yet another confirmation of the disabling self-regard of the bourgeois arts professional for whom nothing is more urgent, or more terrifyingly under threat, than the "diverse", "meaningful", "controversial", and "agonistic" sound of their own voice, along with all of the vulnerable adjectives that they are paid by the word to say it (SDLD50 2018).

The crucial question for SDLD50 is one of *strategy*: anti-fascists in the art field must prioritise the material impact felt by those oppressed and destroyed by such hatred. SDLD50 accused the Athens Biennial that rather than doing that, it adopted the liberal strategy of dialogue – effectively, a dialogue among the proliferating "anti" – thus offering public visibility to positions that can range from the "non-explicitly anti-fascist" to the "fascist-curious", to the "crypto-fascist" (to my knowledge, the Biennial would exclude self-identified fascists). In short, SDLD50 implicitly charged the Biennial with *replicating the model of representative parliamentary democracy* where a spectrum of fascist-related political parties such as Golden Dawn (Greece), the AfD (Germany), the Front National (France), to name but a few, compete with everyone else for attention and power. Indeed, the argument that art institutions "reproduce the

limitations of parliamentarianism and retain the concrete space of liberal democratic parliament as a kind of imprint or inner image wherever they go and whatever they do" was recently made by Egyptian curator Bassam El Baroni (2017, 232–233), who has examined a number of nuanced philosophical positions on the matter.

There is nothing simple then about this "anti" controversy in the art world. The contradictions this seemingly internal controversy reveals constitute the consensus on what democracy means at present: a "democracy of equivalence", an electoral accounting potentially at least legitimising the power of *any* majority over *any* minority. It is this equivalence that we witness as "the free, public expression of opinion", registered in Artur Zmijewski's *Democracies* (2009) where micro-collectivities advocate their possibly antithetical politics (Dimitrakaki 2015). This is then registered and signified as an unsolvable problem, a necessary shortcoming of the condition of democracy as practised in civil society. But if so, on what grounds can an antifascist group criticise an arts organisation for operating according to the consensus on democracy, committed to engaging "diverse approaches on how to deal with ominous tendencies in politics and culture", as per the Biennial's ANTI mission statement?

I might as well ask, as a self-identified anti-fascist: is there anything that makes my position not equivalent to that of a fascist within the current consensus? The moral argument – that I am in solidarity with the oppressed whereas the fascist is on the side of the oppressor – does not stand. Neo- and historical fascists typically name an oppressed group (e.g. x nation oppressed by "foreign" elements figured as an external or internal enemy) they speak for and, as populism puts it, *with*. In the politics of anti, their oppressed are locked in an endless confrontation with my oppressed. In the art field of anti, I have also been asked if a "cool antifascist" throwing a stone and killing someone is better than a "fascist asshole" who does the same – and the language used, here culled from my private communication with a leading curator (that I will keep anonymous), reveals the easy corruption of political positions into lifestyles. In the political culture of anti, it has been possible to claim that neo-reactionary philosopher/eugenicist "[Nick] Land could be a Marxist deep troll" and, that "Land himself even remarked that the Alt Right is a mass political movement against capitalism incubating, unexpectedly, from the right" (SDLD50 2017). In this context of ideological daze and confusion, it is thus unsurprising to hear that both artists implicated in the Athens Biennial controversy place themselves on the left – with Keller claiming that their disagreement is merely on "tactics" (Christie 2018).

Observing all this as symptomatic of an accelerated ideological interchangeability, I propose to also read it as a political process which has alienation as its main outcome: embedded in the political culture of anti is the constant threat of being drawn into identifications with what one dis-identifies from. This is not experienced as open-ended textual practice (postmodernism) but as dead-end social practice locked in the Athens Biennial ANTI's

anagram: TINA. There is no alternative. There is only a loop in which everything can be connected with everything. In the political culture of anti, anyone can be praised as an anti-capitalist and anyone can be accused as a fascist. Marx can be called, and has been, "the first accelerationist" (Beckett 2017). Deanna Havas – defended as "poor" and a "woman artist" by Keller in his tweets – stated in an interview that her political sympathies change according to "moods" – and specifically: "My job is really to be apolitical. I can feel one way one day, and if my mood is different another day then I can try on different ideas and ideologies, and just step out of them —and that's fine" (Havas 2016). Or, "we are considering untapped possibilities", arch-accelerationist Robin McKay said – friend of both NRx-er Nick Land and the late author of *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher (Beckett 2017). This is not a hollowing out of political positions, what we would call an "emptying of meaning", along the lines of Jameson's famous appraisal of postmodern art as "surrealism without the unconscious" (see Jameson 1991) – that is, as a paradigm that deploys the fragment yet disinvested from any source that might anchor it to meaning (though the self-association of many Surrealists with communism indicates that more can be read into Jameson's formulation). Rather, we are faced here with an over-abundance of meaning, with a proliferation of content making the form appear rock solid. Before considering why we have a high concentration of content but no indication of social transformation, I will briefly sketch out why the art field is such a fertile ground for the politics of anti and what interests this alignment serves.

The art field as ideal democracy: The labour - participation nexus

The contemporary art field is very hospitable to political struggles because of the blurry line between *labour* and *participation*, both of which are required for the production of value (indicatively, see Sholette 2010; Vishmidt 2013). In the art field, the *exchange* – between (or partial and nebulous overlapping of) the wage-entrepreneurial condition and the uncorrupted-from-money "life" (protest, affect, play, activism, intellect, exploration) of civil society – may not be experienced as an exchange at all, but rather as a fusion of work and life underpinned by relative autonomy. In other words, the art field achieves and glorifies the exact opposite of what *Frédéric* Lordon sees as imperative for extricating the social from the subjugation of desire to capital: "the (re)separation of work and activity" (Lordon 2014, 134).

If your work-*form* as an artist or curator is exhausting and oppressive, at least you can devote its substance-*content* to the political cause of your choice – given especially that the 24/7 work-form leaves no time for "external" occupations. Art is where a social subject can spend, self-consciously and by choice, a lifetime dedicated to a political cause without the pressure of taking power and without changing the world – turning thus John Holloway's political

proposition "to change the world without taking power" on its head (Holloway 2002) and instantiating it as the distillation of what is worth preserving from the messier world of actually existing democracy. The struggle continues in the art field day and night, when the outside world goes to the gym, watches Netflix, worries *only* about money, migrates for work rather than rebel against work, joins the protest rally but then returns to flattening everydayness for the next two months. "We're here all night debating nationalism, and the nation watches football!" an artist from post-Soviet Estonia complained to my art history student-self in 1998. This state of affairs is well known. It is, in fact, the one described in the curatorial statement of ANTI twenty years later.

I did not include however "*goes to artist-run space*" as part of this state of affairs because doing so would have brought forth the charge that by "state of affairs" I mean the middle class – just as SDLD50 connected the Athens Biennial ANTI theme with "the bourgeois arts professional", irrespective of the class background of the curators. Investigating and identifying individuals' class backgrounds would have been superfluous – as superfluous as the adjective "bourgeois" in the phrase – because art as an "ideal democracy" carries an indelible class stamp, marking anyone who enters it, and no number of precarious art workers has been big enough to challenge the radiance of the imprint. There is, of course, adequate evidence about the diverse connections between art and the rich: from British Petroleum sponsorship to offshore and real estate (for instructive recent cases in relation to offshore and real estate see Garside, Bernstein and Watt 2016 and Miranda and Lane-McKinely 2017, respectively). Yet here I am not referring to this kind of articulation of art and class, analysed extensively in contemporary art literature (indicatively, see Davis 2013). Instead, I am interested in how the *process of struggle in the art field's ideal democracy* serves specific class interests.

First, this process makes failure acceptable and heroic by incorporating contemporary struggles into the lineage of the "failed" historical avant gardes – a position polished to sparkling clarity by Boris Groys in his positively inflected account of the dead ends of activist art:

> […] art activism cannot escape a much more radical, revolutionary tradition of the aestheticization of politics—the acceptance of one's own failure, understood as a premonition and prefiguration of the coming failure of the status quo in its totality, leaving no room for its possible improvement or correction. The fact that contemporary art activism is caught in this contradiction is a good thing. First of all, only self-contradictory practices are true in a deeper sense of the word. And secondly, in our contemporary world, only art indicates the possibility of revolution as a radical change beyond the horizon of our present desires and expectations (Groys 2014).

What makes, then, art an ideal democracy is that it also includes the revolution that never comes – is there a position that captures more exuberantly the hypocrisy of the so-called liberal left? Why bother to identify with precision "desires and expectations" when you can remain in the familiar, nebulous but all the same hopeful state of "possibility" and operate as if an unspecified "revolution" is bound to happen at some point? As such, the process of struggle in the art field becomes the salient, updated case study of Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* (1974 (1983)) where selective enjoyment of oppression is linked with the suspicion that "the system of capital is, when all's said and done, natural" (Lyotard quoted in Beckett 2017).

Second, the art field pacifies critique, in self-identifying as the most experimental, open-minded, self-critical context for pursuing political causes, where the most acute and animated exchanges are safely accommodated as pre-eminently *discursive*. Art is where the far ends of the spectrum of the politics of anti can sublimate their antitheses in a shared room as words separated from deeds, despite the materiality of object-based or performative artworks – and the relatively recent adoption of so-called discursive practices by art institutions exemplify this. The art field *is* the over-production of discursivity. Art, for the most part (unless it collides with the law), is the opposite of what in recent years has been identified as "Trump-ness". As Dean notes in claiming Trump as "the most honest" US politician, Trump-ness ultimately reveals the "truth of economic inequality: civility is for the middle class" (Dean 2015).

Accelerationism, commoning, alienation, art: The politics of anti as the hegemony of prefigurative anti-communism

In the beginning, we are told, there was May '68, the Western political experience, which marks the rise of contemporary art, often posited as distinct from, if related to, modern art. American art historian Grant Kester, in his article "Lessons in Futility" (2009), and especially the section "May '68 and the Third Way", summarises the intellectual justification of the Foucauldian take on diffused power and of postmodernism (without naming either) following the dead end of May '68 as a politics of opposition – or "refusal": "We push our refusal to the point of refusing to be assimilated into the political groups that claim to refuse what we refuse", as the Student-Writers Action Committee wrote in a statement on 20 May' (quoted in Kester 2009, 411). Kester comments ironically on the outcome: "We cannot yet be trusted with the freedom that would result from a total revolution. Instead we must practise this freedom in the virtual space of the text or artwork, supervised by the poet or artist" (Kester 2009, 412). When it comes to how these developments impacted post-2000 art, he lists the following: "dissensus over consensus", "rupture and immediacy over continuity and duration", "extreme skepticism concerning organized political action", "re-coding of political transformation into a form of ontic disruption directed at any coherent system of belief, agency or identity" (Kester 2009,

407). Yet, the list provided by Kester has a longer history, as it outlines the political programme of postmodernism, at least as implemented in the art world – merely hinted at by Kester who notes "the rapprochement between neo-conceptual art practice and poststructuralist theory during the 1990s" (Kester 2009, 407). Yet, had he paid attention to the direction of feminist art theory from the mid-1970s onwards, he would have been able to piece together a longer narrative implicating precisely his noted "rapprochement": gradually abandoning both Marxism and references to the material articulation of gender and class, feminist art theory focused on artworks as "texts" requiring complex decoding. Let us then say that Generation X lived the post-1989 "disappeared" East as trauma *because* it was already told repeatedly that whereas opposition is desirable, only failure is possible – at least when the battle is situated in the material field of socio-economic relations; and that failure can still be celebrated, with art providing a roller-coaster model of climactic promises and anticlimactic groundings, available to the individual and collective libidos of its workers/participants.

Writing in 2008–2009, Kester notes however the change underway: the mass shift to collectivism in contemporary art, highlighting both "the possibilities" but also "the aporia of contemporary collaborative art practice" (Kester 2009, 419). A decade on we are confronted mostly with the aporia and must wonder why the wave of collectivism is proving powerless against the seemingly invincible principle of "dissensus". What the wave of collectivism has led to is the disposition of the art field as an *ethical left* – what outspoken right-wingers or "centrists" complain about in arguing against this left's "political correctness" – which cannot be comprehended in isolation from the trajectory of the political left. Both lefts exist as spectrums that at times align and at times do not – the ethical left mostly given to grassroots activities, activisms and "communing"; the political left organising into programmes that entail access to state and institutional power (ridiculed by the right as "Corbynomics") that respond to "ills" and "injustice". Both lefts find it altogether hard to overthrow the consensus on "There is no alternative", TINA, which permitted both the dominance of neoliberalism as a decades-long project of restoring and securing "upper-class power" (Harvey 2007, 28) and the impoverishment of democracy as the political culture of "anti". In this system of values and evaluation of social movements and social practice, dissensus has been extolled as the single possible consensus. This is the case at least since 1985 when Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* launched post-Marxist political theory. Providing us with two lengthy critiques of the influential book, Norman Geras notes (among many other things) that the argument "is […] normatively indeterminate, fit to support virtually any kind of politics, progressive or reactionary" as well as how "disappointingly thin are the ideas on democracy" and indeed connected with "some of the more standard tropes of Cold War anti-Marxism" (Geras 1988, 35; see also Geras 1987). To remind us, this is the book that British art historian Claire Bishop cited in her widely influential *October* article (Bishop 2004) in developing

her argument about how art can be *really* a site of democratic politics and revelatory aesthetics, as a response to Bourriaud's investment in temporary, site-specific conviviality despite antagonisms in his *Relational Aesthetics*. That is, anti-politics is promoted as the *sine qua non* ground of contemporary art entanglement with the social, from which we learn that all roads lead to Rome. Needless to say, but I do, that both Bishop and Bourriaud's position form part of art's left critique.

Yet, what counts as "left critique" in times of ideological interchangeability boosted by social media plots is an issue in its own right. This is clearly demonstrated in a 28 February 2019 podcast (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvUcO8sQZSI) where renowned Marxist feminist philosopher Nina Power is in conversation with the neo-reactionaries DC Miller (who opposed the closure of antifascist activists against the LD50 gallery among his other achievements) and anti-secularist, pro-Catholic Justin Murphy (who tweets "Make Communism Elite Again", 31 August 2018 and writes even more confused stuff at his theotherlifenow blog). The video is a textbook case of how the erosion of left credibility is actualised in the political culture of anti where "anything goes". It presents a vista where a Marxist feminist scholar embraces paganism and spiritualism but rejects "contemporary feminism" (including, one assumes, the International Women's Strike and any other anti-capitalist feminisms) and advocates "free speech" while counselling us against the repudiation of "fascists" and "Trump supporters"; where "communism" and actual, historically documented religious "human sacrifice" are matters that elicit silence and giggles by the philosophically inclined interlocutors; where anti-intellectualism is adopted as a starting point for discussion; where Catholicism is promoted as a community while not a word is uttered about women's oppression and abortions. The video has been promoted by platforms such as Red Scare on Reddit, as it expresses adequately the platform's purposeful ideological confusion which, in its own right, exemplifies the lengths at which neo-reactionaries will go to undermine any vector of the critical left and especially anything and anyone associated with communism. In the politics of anti, self-identifying as a communist, as Justin Murphy does, can be the most effective anti-communism. Indeed, Power herself brings up Slovenian band Laibach to argue the benefits of "testing the limits of society", obscuring completely, or being ignorant of, the political context of strategies of over-identification in parts of pre-1989 Eastern Europe. Yet "testing the limits of society" clearly belongs to the privileged, and embracing such "testing" proves right the suspicious stance of anti-fascists such as SDLD50 (discussed earlier in this article) over how the art field accommodates such privilege against the material reality of the social subjects that suffer these "limits".

The contemporary "anti" political culture of accelerated ideological interchangeability lends Geras's remarks from thirty years ago the clout of a prophecy. Saving face as "post-Marxism" while the Soviet paradigm was being discredited and China was "reforming" (de-

collectivisation of agriculture, foreign investors, private businesses between 1978 and 1985), the left did participate and even led the democracy of equivalence or "of any kind of politics". Yet I disagree with Geras when he proposes "Cold War anti-Marxism" as the pool of ideas responsible for this twist of the plot. The anti-Marxist turn was rather symptomatic of capitalism's most successful and long-term campaign – anti-communism – always adapting to capitalism's own complex trajectory. Along with the ascent of neoliberalism, we see Marxism itself becoming the endless analysis of capitalism, marginalising severely the analysis of communism (bar the historical execution of state-run experiments) and elaborations of a communist imaginary.

If it can be inferred from Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (2004) that capitalism arose as a response to the emergent threat of communism, if the suppression of the Paris Commune by the Republic fits in such a narrative, the story of modernity splinters from the outset – making capitalism as anti-communism the terrain of realised modernity. Yet fleshing out speculations over "what would have happened if…" lies beyond the scope of this article. The fact is that, today, a left unable and in part unwilling, to deploy its intellectual, organisational and grass-roots capacities to foreground communism as an alternative, lacks orientation and is confined to a politics of opposition (including anti-fascism) when it faces again an updated, techno-modernised fascism as an increasingly credible *politics of proposition*. It is this ominous yet actual political development that forces me to suggest that the first step towards ending the left as merely a politics of opposition and response and towards re-uniting the ethical and the political left is to combat the hegemony of anti-communism and its power of shaping subjectivities through degrees of alienation.

Such combating would require careful analysis and mapping to join the dots of the many facets of this – at times, violent; at times, subtle – evacuation of the historical scene. The hegemony of anti-communism is global – executed materially and discursively. We can observe it across the former East in long-term campaigns of evacuating public space from any traces of an annoying and embarrassing past: change of street names, removal of statues, closure of archives (and of course, reclamation and normalisation of reactionary histories). We can observe it in the former West's regular press features against "totalitarianism", including the European Union's Remembrance Day for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, agreed in 2008, as the combined evils of fascism and communism – while, as curators Antonia Majaca and Jelena Vesić have noted in the context of the outstanding *Parapolitics* curatorial project (HKW, Berlin 2017), totalitarianism, "a term of cultural othering during the Cold War […] became a pretext for the birth of contemporary art and the process of its elusive canonization" (Majaca and Vesić 2017). In post-2010 Greece, with the right fighting endlessly the grab of power by the left (no matter how humiliated the latter is), we note particular variations of anti-communist propaganda, with the mainstream press featuring recently an article on how Greece is the only

communist country in the civilised world thanks to Syriza (Παπαδόπουλος 2018), and with right-wing ideologues rewriting the history of the country's Civil War. We find anti-communism in China where the regime reportedly attacks and imprisons communist students who, in taking seriously their school texts, reflect on what communism can be and take action (indicatively, see Haas 2018; Hernandez 2018; Yang 2019). Even the "communist" party leading capitalist China is worried about the possibility of people thinking seriously about communism – at present, all regimes sustaining the global distribution of power and wealth are.

Indeed, the perception that contemporary China *is* communist plays perfectly as part of global anti-communism, making Stalinism as communism a less exciting episode of the saga. In his chapter on "communist accelerationism", Benjamin Noys points to the connection between the pitfalls of Soviet accelerationism, especially in its mutation to Stalinist "labour discipline", to the thread that leads to the current status of China in technophiles' imaginary when he says that "the Maoist 'Great Leap Forward" would also repeat the tragedy' (Noys 2014, 35). At the core of this tragedy, we find the resistance of capitalist technology, inevitably adopted by the young Soviet Union, to be re-purposed towards "communist ends" (Noys 2014, 33) – a lesson of history still not learned by some on the left. Predictably, China pleases accelerationists enormously – first and foremost, the afore-mentioned Nick Land, born 18 days before Douglas Coupland and a founding member of Warwick's Cybernetic Culture Research Unit in the 1990s. Land eventually moved to Shanghai and in 2004 "described the modern Chinese fusion of Marxism and capitalism as 'the greatest political engine of social and economic development the world has ever known'" (Beckett 2017). Eleven years later, Land became the "guru for the US-based far-right movement neoreaction" or NRx, advocating the "replacement of modern nation-states, democracy and government bureaucracies by authoritarian city states" (Beckett 2017). Fifteen years later, he participated in the neo-reactionary conference accompanying a neo-Nazi art show at the now shut LD50 Gallery in London, whose director and Trump-policy-supporter, Lucia Diego, described the left as "more like a fascist organisation than the real fascists" while claiming that the audience was "liberal" (Ellis-Petersen 2017). As argued already, one never escapes the accelerated ideological interchangeability of the "anti" loop. More important however for the purposes of the present account is that accelerationism – a technophilia with a philosophical and a flexible social programme – has come to fill the void in the social imaginary created by the hegemony of anti-communism, satisfying simultaneously a left that sees the mirage of a "future [that] remains open as a site of radical recomposition" (Hester 2018, 1) and a right that pushes for the legitimation of assisted yet "natural" supremacy of the fittest. If "openness" is the inherited yet futurological essentialism of post-structuralism (nothing is fixed; everything can change forever), supremacy, from the NRx perspective, is the historically lived yet also *projected*

outcome of openness: technology will rescript "natural selection" as a matter of course if obstacles are removed from technology's way, and this carry on and on in an infinite evolution. This, of course, presupposes an abstract view of what we apprehend as technology today rather than an understanding of its origins in capital's biopower exercises and capitalist modernity at large. But, as Groys assured us earlier, "contradictory practices", or for that matter contradictory techno-speculative propositions, "are true in a deeper sense of the word". True in proclaiming antagonisms as the eternal curse of post-Eden humanity, perhaps? This is history seen through the prism of 'anti' politics.

But, you will say, it is not exactly like this. Civil society is not just a loop of "anti" and the left is not just a politics of opposition. There are many, if dispersed, initiatives of proposition, clustered around the common and the commons – words that, after all, have *the same root* as communism. The art field is a keen facilitator and mediator of such practices: the previous iteration of Athens Biennial (2015–2017) focused on "communing"; as also partly did the public programme of Documenta 14 (2017), especially its leg in Athens; as many others. The irony underpinning my choice of art-field examples should not be lost. This irony does not refer to the two institutions per se, but to how they became engulfed in the political culture of anti, despite intentions – with Documenta 14's entrapment in the debt-nationalism nexus defining the post-2010 relationship of Greece and German capital preoccupying the international press since 2015.

Without irony, I want to follow Dmitri Vilenski of Chto Delat who said a decade ago: "Notice how few people would call themselves communists, but there are many 'commonists'" (Riff and Vilensky 2009, 469). The conversation in which he made this remark was appropriately titled "From Communism to the Commons?" and another issue raised in it was that "neoliberalism is all about allowing commons to arise for the sole purpose of their subsequent privatization" (Riff and Vilensky 2009, 466–467). The language of "social innovation" oft-deployed in justifying such initiatives outside the art world is symptomatic, as is the fact that worker-owned cooperatives such as the Greek VIO.ME must ultimately sell products in a competitive market, as seen on the site www.viomecoop.com. As for the art field, insofar as "society is outsourcing its politics to art, and that has become extremely profitable", it is hard to rid yourself of the impression that "you have been installed as a readymade on a certain cultural field, and […] given a set of privileges, which even include free collaboration and political radicalism" (Riff and Vilensky 2009, 470): this is both the metaphorical and at times literal script of alienation in the struggle's *political process* that acquires clearer contours in the art field's ideal democracy. It is a cumulative but also dispersed effect that organises subjectivity by asking it to self-organise within a setting that resembles that of drama-fantasy film *The Truman Show* (directed by Peter Weir, 1998): the point of the film is not that the protagonist unknowingly lives his life observed by an audience but that his world has no real

horizon – yet, unlike many commoners, he at least eventually confronts his reality of "nowhere to go" within his current setting (sic).

For these reasons, I would argue that the proliferation of commoning practices today, in art or the broader social field of antagonisms, *when detached from explicitly combating anti-communism*, intellectually and on the ground, merely recycles alienation as much as it helps make life livable, generating heterotopias of conviviality or controlled conflict, not too far removed from the principles of relational aesthetics and its obverse manifestation as the replication of friction – after all, is there anything else to do? I fail to see how this differs from the stance of Generation X in the 1990s: "We didn't believe in global communism, but that doesn't make us advocates of global capitalism" (Neate 2007). Thirty years later, does it not?

Capitalism, which presents the democracy of equivalence as its great achievement, will have no problem with anti-fascism, diluted as yet another "anti". Anti-fascism becomes more content *within the form*. Capitalism hardly has a problem with anti-capitalism, including the soft proposition politics of commoning without communism. As for art's attachment to "agonism", I concur with El Baroni that this "franchising [of] the empty signifier of democracy" happens "in the hope that this in itself will disrupt normal flows of information and exchange, and destabilize the totalitarian streak in liberal capitalism" (El Baroni 2017, 234). The futility of the hope is analogous to the number of destabilisation strategies we have seen since the emergence of post-structuralism. Yet El Baroni's suggested solution of bringing forth "intersubjective practices of reasoning" would not break the loop of the politics of anti, precisely because such practices would merely "set out to construct new shared perspectives irreducible to, and transformative of, our individual perspectives" (El Baroni 2017, 235). Such practices would just generate more resilient forms of collectivism, but, given that this would necessarily happen within the democracy of equivalence, what would actually prevent such resilient collectivisms from being contained into fascist politics, which by default must always seek out and identify "the other" as the locus on which necropolitical power must be enacted? Understanding the project of 21st-century fascism is crucial here, and it becomes transparent in the case of Bolsonaro's election to the Presidency in Brazil, of which Antonio Negri has offered an engaging analysis (Negri 2019), focusing precisely on what the Frankfurt School had identified as more perilous: fascism's grab of power through democracy than through a *coup*:

> What is 21st century fascism? That of the 20th century sought to destroy the Soviets, in Russia or in any other part of the world where they could be found. Where are the Bolsheviks today? They are obviously fantasies. But neoliberalism's fatigue in consolidating itself and the political crises that are added to the economic ones revive the fear of Bolsheviks. That insistence is astounding (Negri 2019).

What makes Bolsonaro a pertinent case study is, as Negri also asserts, his explicit commitment to eliminate the left (alongside his racial project of attacking "Blacks", Brazil's largest constituency) as the crucial (pre)condition for securing and deepening neoliberalism. Negri however does not refer to the left in his text but to "communists", though we have not seen more self-identified communists in Brazil than in anywhere else. It would be more accurate to suggest that the revival "of the fear of Bolsheviks" pushes for a *prefigurative anti-communism*, which is what 21st-century fascism is fundamentally about. Negri himself briefly insinuates this when he tries to explain how the authoritarian turn of capitalism relates to the multitude:

> In productive terms, that cooperative power leads the multitude toward the common. However, when strong tensions intervene that act on the singularities (that compose the multitude) in terms, for example, of economic or environmental insecurity and fear of the future, then the multitudinous cooperation can implode as a defense of identity. The fascism of the 21st century seems to be sustained by such incidents in the cooperative nature of the multitude (Negri 2019).

The issue raised deserves much more than the one paragraph Negri devotes to it, but we may wish to observe that the multitude, as Negri himself asserts, is led "toward the common" because "*the development of the mode of production* has placed the multitude in the center of class struggle" (Negri 2009, emphasis added). It should be obvious then insofar as the common serves the development of the mode of production, capitalism's survival is dependent on keeping commoning separate from the prospect of communism – which is what requires both the violent anti-communism of Bolsonaro (and others) and the ideological anti-communisms elsewhere: liberal contexts take care of the matter not by direct suppression but by naturalising an anti politics without end as the essential feature of democracy. Art is such as liberal context – its illustration as an ideal democracy serves this purpose – and as artist Owen Logan noted in his talk "The Spirit of Fascism in the Arts" (19 January 2019, City Art Centre, Edinburgh), contrary to popular opinion, art, in general terms, has the effect of keeping subjects tied to hegemonic ideology as opposed to making subjects "open minded". Logan's analysis proceeds from reminding us of art as a "state craft" already in the service of "despotic Enlightenment in the 18th century" to the inscription of the "master" through authorship retained to this day. Thus, Owen's recent analysis affirms Kester's observations, cited earlier in this article, about the supervisory role of the artist in overseeing the desire for revolt carried from the field of the social to aesthetico-critical practices. Making this view more concrete, Marxist art historian Danielle Child (2019) recently showed through case studies how contemporary art is literally patterned on changes in capitalist production. Her narrative allows us to see that art, even if unwilling to admit it, exemplifies the limits of an imaginary rooted in the actually existing

economy. As I have said elsewhere (Dimitrakaki and Lloyd 2015), it is capitalism that practices economic reductionism rather than Marxism.

If then El Baroni sees his preferred practices of reasoning as realised principally in the art field, would they not contribute further to the latter's pacifying function as an even *more* ideal democracy? Intersubjective practices of reasoning are adequate guidance for the minute microcosms of love relationships – but to this we should counter-argue not only that fascists also love (on this see Håvard Bustnes's documentary *Golden Dawn Girls*, 2017) but that when such practices are executed in the field of the social, dominated by the politics of anti, no one's reasoning is ultimately better than anyone else's in undermining the affective bonds required by the utopias that capital authorises as beneficial to its reproduction – as per Jameson's quote in this article's first section. This is why Lordon proposes a move to a reconfigured binary, which I would see as a way out of the recycling of anti:

> Today's situation echoes the long-past slogan "socialism" or "barbarism": on the one hand the paradoxical idea of the artist-employee escaping into the free association of workers, and on the other hand capital's demand for the total subordination of the desires and affects of its subjects. The two seem to usher the present toward a formally very simple bifurcation: *communism or totalitarianism* (Lordon 2014, 126; emphasis added).

The question is therefore whether reasoning might evolve into a political process that would eradicate alienation-in-the-struggle by returning to the negative space at the heart of democracy the content of a future in terms of this bifurcation – already underway where capitalist totalitarianism is concerned. Communism is, at present, the absent problem for capital, but which capital nonetheless foresees and solves with prefigurative anti-communism. Can this problem become present through the art field's commitment to the radicalisation of the desiring subject? We have good reasons to doubt it. And yet, bringing this question into our field of vision might help at least to make us aware of the splinters of ideology in our wide-open eyes that, in constant surprise, survey the dominion of sameness as the outcome of the procedures that turn us into the means of capital.

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ABSTRAKT: Prezentowany artykuł śledzi, w jaki sposób współczesne pole sztuki bywa nawiedzane przez kulturową i polityczną wyobraźnię właściwą dla czasów po 1989 roku, a uchwyconą w powieści Douglasa Couplanda *Pokolenie X: Opowieści na czasy przyśpieszającej kultury* (1991, 1998). Książka ta okazała się formacyjna z uwagi na prezentowane w niej stanowisko antypracy, jak również narrację wycofania w podziwie dla procesów przyspieszenia, która opisywała, jak zasady produkcji przekładają się na „oszołomione i zdezorientowane" style życia. Uprzywilejowanie przez przedstawicieli Pokolenia X perspektywy „mikrokosmosów" – gdzie wycofanie spotyka się z niskiej częstotliwości kolektywizmem – staje się jeszcze bardziej powszechne w kolejnych dekadach i utożsamione z demokracją realizowaną i idealizowaną w kategoriach polityki „anty" (w tym antyfaszyzmu), co znajduje liczne przykłady w polu sztuki

w jego powiązaniu z etyczną lewicą. Stałe i gloryfikowane antagonizmy łączą w tym kontekście liberalne pole sztuki z polem społecznym, każdorazowo przepisując „anty" na TINA – zasadę „braku alternatywy" (ang. „there is no alternative" – TINA). TINA, jak argumentuję, przyjmuje szczególne figuracje w ramach przeważnie lewicowego obszaru sztuki, gdzie praktyki uwspólniania pozostają odcięte od polityki komunizmu, a technofilia – tak na gruncie, jak i poza polem sztuki – jest legitymizowana przez lewicę i prawicę jako substytut pragnienia komunizmu. Główne tezy artykułu prezentują się następująco: (a) opisane wyżej zjawiska są powiązane z politycznym procesem walki, którego głównym efektem jest alienacja – alienacja od wyobrażonego punktu końcowego owej walki; (b) wspomniana alienacja nie może być rozważana oddzielnie od hegemonii przyspieszenia, zwłaszcza w świetle traumatycznego wycofania z komunizmu i wycofania się samego komunizmu oraz stałego dla kapitalizmu przepracowywania prefiguratywnego antykomunizmu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: sztuka współczesna, polityka anty, demokracja, alienacja, antykomunizm, Pokolenie X, akceleracjonizm, antyfaszyzm, etyczna lewica

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THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION IN POLAND: A HISTORY OF ANTI-COMMUNIST REPRESSION

BARTOSZ WÓJCIK

Abstract: The paper supports the following thesis: the October Revolution influenced the constituency of the Polish independent state in 1918 as well as the structure of class struggles in Poland. The history of this impact is absolutely ignored or even denied in contemporary Polish anti-communist ruling historical discourse. The centenary of the Russian Revolution triggered debates presenting this event as "a demonic source of the 20th century totalitarianism", without mentioning the enthusiasm the Revolution provoked in Polish people (who were both actively participating in it and inspired by it). The nationalist historical policy, which idealizes Poles at any cost, attempts to erase Polish engagement in "Red October" or belittle it as an insignificant episode. For this reason, by analyzing the dominant narrative about the Bolshevik Revolution in Poland *via* the example of Mateusz Staroń's book *Traitors: Poles the allies of Lenin*, I will show how anti-communist discourse reshapes the past to serve its own ideological purposes and present an alternative narrative about the Russian Revolution in a Polish context, against these dominant anti-communist clichés, concerning 3 issues:

1. Polish participation in the October Revolution,
2. The Revolution's influence on Poland's independence,
3. The Polish workers' council movement as a direct response to the Russian Revolution.

In the context of the above, the aim of this paper is not limited to providing an alternative to the ruling discourse, being just another exercise in political and historical imagination, or attempting to bring to light repressed aspects of Polish history. Rather, it is to show the logic and structure of the anti-communist narrative as such.

Keywords: Russian Revolution, Polish independence, anti-communism, historical discourse, rightist ideology, worker's councils

The October Revolution influenced both the constitution of the Polish independent state in 1918 and the structure of class struggles in Poland. However, the history of this impact is absolutely ignored or even denied in contemporary Polish hegemonic historical discourse. The centenary of the Russian Revolution triggered debates – in national television and mainstream newspapers – presenting this event as "the demonic source of twentieth-century totalitarianism", or as "a terrible crime without punishment". Virtually no one mentioned the enthusiasm which the 1917 Revolution generated in Polish people (who actively participated in it and were inspired by it). Partisans of nationalist historical policy made massive efforts to erase any narration about Polish engagement in "Red October", or at least to belittle its significance.

In this article, I discuss Polish anti-communist discourse about the Bolshevik Revolution in contemporary Poland via the example of Mateusz Staroń's book *Traitors: Poles the allies of Lenin*[1]. The rightist journalist argues that Bolsheviks of Polish descent who actively participated in struggles during the October days, and thereafter in the building of the Soviet state, were *traitors of the nation*. As Staroń states, "The bond of Polish communists with their native country was paranoid – regardless of their motives, acts and words, many of them remained national traitors" (Staroń 2018, 14).

Such a plea is of crucial importance in the frameworks of this discourse. Following this logic, these Poles committed a double crime: firstly, they contributed to the establishment of the "most genocidal communist system"; secondly, they betrayed their nation, acting *de facto* to the benefit of the foreign country. They were treated as Soviet agents, who placed their imagined class identity above their allegedly natural national identity. Actually, apologists of anti-communist discourse accuse Polish revolutionaries not only of their presumed or real crimes, but also of their perverse decision to deny their Polishness.

It is important to recognize how the concept of national identity is perceived in this context. Belonging to a nation becomes naturalized; people inherit a genetic nationality that predisposes them to act in a specific way, i.e. to realize traditional patriotic values through placing nation as the highest value (worth dying for its cause). In that light, a decision, made by Polish communists, to replace their national identity with a class one meant moral corruption, or an evil act against nature itself. Submitting to the communist ideal, they betrayed not only their nation, but also most of all themselves. How could Polish-speaking representatives of the patriotic intelligentsia become communists? According to Staroń and other rightist historians, it is the biggest, almost metaphysical mystery, something lying beyond

[1] Staroń's book is the only popular publication (printed in Bellona publishing house – known for the popularization of history) about Polish engagement in Soviet Russia published on the centenary of the October events. The author also runs famous historical blog (http://blog.surgepolonia.pl/) and patriotic clothes company Surge Polonia.

any logical explanation, a pure aberration of mind, a kind of *sacrifizio dell'intelletto* to the fake god. As Staroń claimed: "Indeed, it is beyond simple logical explanation why these prominent and intelligent persons chose communism as their way of life. (…) We could only suspect what in fact were their motives. Unfortunately, they took their secrets to the grave" (Staroń 2018, 291, 293–294). Therefore, Staroń's position resembles the famous anti-communist idea by Francois Furet: for him communist ideology is a dangerous mental illness, an intellectual virus, which inflicted the most prominent minds of the twentieth-century intelligentsia (Furet 1999, vii–xii).

This narrative goes even further and suggests that Polish communists paid the highest price for loyalty to Bolshevism – as we know most of them died in Stalinist purges. For this nationalistic historiosophy, this tragic end of their communist engagement was a fair punishment for the sin against nature, for their betrayal of the nation. The fact that Poles did such horrible things as turning against their own national roots was so shameful that their history deserved to be totally forgotten, or at best to serve as a warning for the next generations.

These anti-communist contentions exert a strong influence upon the ongoing processes of delegitimization of communism in contemporary Poland, because the very idea of internationalism – so the very core of communist identity – is reduced to a mental disease resulting in hate, hypocrisy, lies and mass murders (see Staroń 2018, 15)[2]. The history of Polish Bolsheviks within this frame functions as an argument for the causal relation between concept (utopian internationalism) and its necessary practical outcome (totalitarian nightmare). This perspective is based on the so-called "totalitarian model" of interpretation of Soviet history, which is dominant in Polish historiography (Malia 1994, 8–12). The main Polish authors with international renown who represent the totalitarian school are Leszek Kołakowski and Andrzej Walicki, recognized in Poland as the key experts in this field; even the originator of this model was a Pole, Zbigniew Brzeziński, who for the first time used this term in the mid-1950s (see Suny 2017, 74). For Domenico Losurdo this totalitarian approach is an example of influential historical revisionism[3], which aims at the erasure of the revolutionary tradition as such; its most

[2] Staroń's main source about the real views and activities of Polish communists was Jan Alfred Reguła's (Józef Mützenmacher) book "History of CPP in the light of facts and documents". The author was a former member of the party, who in the mid-1930s became a Polish police informer (he was probably also a Gestapo agent during the Nazi occupation of Poland). It is hard to imagine a more biased historical source than police denunciation; that should give us a hint about Staroń's methodological reliability. Besides Reguła's publication, Staroń most often recalls studies written by contemporary Polish anti-communist historians like Miodowski (2017) and Zieliński (2013), whereas from international historiography he refers to the so-called conspiracy interpretation of Bolsheviks funded by western capitalists (see McMeekin 2009).

[3] However, it is important to distinguish between the *revisionist tradition* within western Sovietology (represented by leftist and Marxist historians such as Isaac Deutscher or Moshe Lewin, who *revised* the dominant 'totalitarian model') form Losurdo's notion of *revisionist historiography*. The latter, similarly to Eduard Bernstein's original 'revisionism', attempts to expunge the Jacobin-Blanquist legacy, which in the twentieth century manifested itself in Bolshevik practice (Losurdo 2015, 5).

eminent representatives were, among others, Ernst Nolte, Francois Furet and Richard Pippes: "The main theme of this comprehensive reinterpretation of the contemporary world thus becomes even clearer: it involves the liquidation of the revolutionary tradition from 1789 to the present" (Losurdo 2015, 5).

According to this mode of interpretation the Bolshevik revolution was just a political *coup d'état* without any democratic legitimization, without the people's support – the ultimate aim of Bolsheviks was to seize the power and retain it at all costs[4]. Hence, for totalitarian Sovietologists, there was a direct continuity between Lenin and Stalin: the latter stemmed from the former and the seeds of the Stalinists' horror were sown from the very first days of October 1917. From the philosophical viewpoint, this perspective is profoundly *idealistic*, that is to say it neglects certain social conditions and focuses only on abstract and hypnotic ideas (the revolutionary utopia) which political fanatics want to impose on people:

> The concrete agenda of this book [Maila's *Soviet Tragedy* – BW], therefore, is to reassert the primacy of ideology and politics over social and economic forces in understanding the Soviet phenomenon. It is rehabilitating history "from above" at the expense of history "from below" as the motive force of Soviet development. Finally, it is to resurrect the totalitarian perspective (…); for it was the all-encompassing pretentions of the Soviet utopia that furnished what can only be called "the genetic code" of the tragedy. (Malia 1994, 16).

Utopianism in this idealistic and totalitarian perspective[5] is understood in a traditional conservative manner. At least from Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution, utopian ideas are perceived as dangerous illusions. Even if they are grounded on noble and humanistic premises (justice and equality), their realization leads directly to monstrous consequences – terror and genocide – because human nature is ultimately evil and irreparable.

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[4] Losurdo argues that the thesis of the Bolshevik *coup d'état* functions as a main argument for the total delegitimization of communist revolution: "The starting point of the catastrophe of the twentieth century is Bolshevism, an extension and paroxysmal intensification of Jacobinism. It might be said that ideological intoxication is present in the pure state, this time, since October 1917 was not even a revolution, but a mere coup d'état – one that felled not the *ancient regime* or its residues, but democracy" (Losurdo 2015, 76). For Losurdo's brilliant polemics with self-contradicted coup d'état thesis see: Losurdo 2015, 76–81.

[5] The most comprehensive philosophical theory of totalitarianism is provided by Hannah Arendt. She recognized the very source of totalitarian monstrous aberrations in the very ideology that stands behind the Stalinist as well as the Nazi system. Ideology is understood there as a kind of logical blanket that individuals impose on their thoughts – simplistic and aspiring to a totality world-view, an abstract and messianic idea, whose actualization necessarily leads to the outburst of terror. Slavoj Žižek deconstructs this totalitarian concept of ideology, exposing its inability to analyze the complex dialectic of Stalinism. The internal dynamics of the Stalinist semiotic universe could be demonstrated by the phenomena of "ultra-orthodoxy" (overidentification with the core of the official ideology): the official façade (communist phraseology) is not a mere illusion hiding the brutal reality of terror (Gulag). Because the ideological façade and terror as its supplement hinge together, both moments are necessary for the existence of the Stalinist system. (Žižek 2004, 196, 262).

For this reason, the very concept of "utopia" became for Sovietologist revisionists synonymous with Stalinist social engineering, radical transformation of the world, not counting the human and social costs of the process. In other words, communist utopia was a sinful attempt to create heaven on earth, as Kołakowski and Walicki like to emphasize (Kołakowski 1978; Walicki 1995). In consequence, people for "totalitarians" are rather passive instruments than active agents in the events, because the only revolutionary subject is a party elite full of utopian schemes. No wonder this historical approach provides the theoretical matrix for the anti-communist narratives about the USSR. Staroń and other Polish rightist historians interpret the Soviet experiment as a totalitarian embodiment of unrealistic and delusive ideas (like international solidarity of the oppressed, common property, or equality of the people). And the only acceptable idea, for them, is the idea of nation. References to "totalitarianism" function today as, to quote Slavoj Žižek's felicitous claim, *denkenverbot* (the prohibition of thinking) – "the moment one shows the slightest inclination to engage in political projects that aim seriously to challenge the existing order, the answer is immediately: 'Benevolent as it is, this will necessarily end in a new Gulag!'" (Žižek 2002, 3–4). So, at stake here in confrontation with anti-communist historiography is not only the narrative about the past, but most of all the prospect of the future.

On the contrary to these revisionist contentions, my aim is to propose an alternative, materialist and revisionist interpretation of the Russian Revolution within the Polish context. To challenge prevailing anti-communist clichés, I discuss below three areas:

1. Despite the allegations of the rightist propaganda, many Poles actively participated in the 1917 revolution, among both field and rank militants, as well as Bolshevik elites;
2. The revolution had a profound and beneficial influence on the dramatic Polish political situation at that time, contributing to resolving the burning issue of independence.
3. "Red October" empowered Polish proletarians to engage in class struggle and inspired them to organize their workers' councils (Polish Soviets) from the bottom up.

1. Polish Red October

Imperial Russia in 1917 was a multinational state with one hundred and eighty million inhabitants, including approximately four million ethnic Poles (i.e. those who identified themselves with the Polish nation and used the Polish language – because Poland as a country did not exist at the time). Most of them were civilians, but there were also six hundred thousand Poles – mostly peasants – in tsarist uniforms (Toporowicz 1988). In the aftermath of subsequent Russian defeats on the Eastern Front, they were becoming more and more radical and willing to rebel. These soldiers, together with workers from factories in Petrograd and

Moscow[6] (which were moved from Congress Poland during wartime), were the main Polish force in the Russian Revolutions: both February and October. Poles (including Polish Jews) were – besides Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians – one of the most active national groups engaged in these events, especially in the Bolshevik uprising. The Party program of distribution of land to poor peasants and immediate peace were attractive for former serfs and soldiers exhausted by war disaster. The exact number of Poles participating in the October Revolution, however, is the subject of ongoing controversy among historians. The Marxist researcher suggests that it was at least one hundred thousand people, and two hundred thousand more joined the Reds during the civil war against the Whites (Toporowicz 1988, 8). On the other hand, right-wing authors, like Staroń, try to underestimate the size of Polish involvement in the revolution as about eight thousand participants (Staroń 2018, 79), doing so, nevertheless, without any convincing sources. The exact number is almost impossible to verify, but within these numbers one can detect the ideological and methodological differences between both perspectives. Staroń does not count the popular support for the revolution, i.e. the engagement of common folk – peasants and workers – who were not members of any political organization, because, like the rest of rightist Sovietologists, he considers the party activists as the only active subject of the events. Ideas and great personalities are what matters in history for totalitarian anti-communists, not the masses and their grassroots activities. The main difference between left and right-wing historians could be reduced to this simple question: who is the subjective agent of history, the people or individuals?

If the scale of the Polish masses' approval of the Bolsheviks is still ambiguous, the support of Polish professional revolutionaries for socialist transformation in Russia is unquestionable. The two main Polish radical leftist political parties in Russia, the Polish Socialist Party – Left (the internationalist, Marxist faction of the Polish Socialist Party[7]) and the

[6] For example, in Putilov Mill in Petrograd, which was famous for the revolutionary activities of its workers, there were several hundred Polish proletarians (Toporowicz 1988, 22). For a complete list of factories transferred from the Kingdom of Poland to Russia see: Najdus 1967, 8–24.

[7] The crucial difference between the right and left factions of the Polish Socialist Party was related to the dilemma "revolution or independence": the leftist internationalists did not accept the demand to build an independent state, unlike the rightist patriots, who acknowledged an independent Polish state as a necessary precondition for the socialist transformation. There were also internal divisions in the two parties that merged in the Communist Party, to quote Isaac Deutscher's observation: "Each of these two parties had its own traditions. The Social-Democratic Party grew in opposition to the nationalism and patriotism of the Polish nobility, harking back to the insurrectionist romanticism of the nineteenth century, and placed its main emphasis on proletarian internationalism. The Left Socialist Party had at first adhered to the patriotic-insurgent tradition, and the restoration of Poland's independence had occupied a central place in its programme, but later on it came closer to the internationalist attitude of the Luxemburgist party. The Left Socialist Party had its affinities with the Left Mensheviks; only under the influence of the October Revolution did it move closer to Bolshevism. The Social-Democratic Party adopted – as the proceedings of its Sixth Congress show – an attitude very close to that of Trotsky, remaining independent of both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. At the time of the revolution, the Luxemburgist party – again like Trotsky – identified itself with Bolshevism. Here we must take note of the differences within the party between adherents of the party's official leaders (Rosa Luxemburg, Marchlewski, Jogiches) and the so-called "Splitters" (Dzierżyński, Radek, Unszlicht). This was, however, a discord, not a genuine split. The "splitters" represented a certain opposition to the centralism of the Executive Committee, which

Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (the former party of Rosa Luxemburg, which represented her hard-line Marxist internationalism), fully supported the October Revolution and their members actively participated in it. For example, they formed the 1st Polish Revolutionary Regiment and in the summer of 1918 had begun the organization of the largest Polish revolutionary formation – the Western Rifle Division, embryo of the Polish Red Army[8].The Polish regiment was not only formed by Polish militants, because it has an internationalist character – Russians, Ukrainians, Koreans, Chinese, Latvians and Germans fought hand in hand with Poles in the division (see Wrzosek 1969; Miodowski 2011, 235). Staroń's prejudice against the idea of internationalism as a kind of aberration leads him to the bizarre thesis that Russians were so suspicious of Poles that they did not allow them to form a fully Polish division (Staroń 2018, 203; Miodowski 2011, 241–242). For him, internationalism only concealed Russians' hatred of the Poles, their Anti-Polonism. The hypothesis of Russian communist distrust towards Polish activists because of their inherent – even if repressed – patriotism plays an important role in the rightist narrative. We can see how Polish anti-communism is organically combined with Russophobia.

In 1917, the SDKPiL even gained official access to the Bolshevik Party. During the next year at least four thousand Polish communists got the Bolshevik party card (Toporowicz 1988, 61). The direct influence of socialist revolution from 1917 on the Polish radical left was the unification of those two parties into one Communist Workers' Party of Poland on 16 December 1918. It was the very first communist organization in the newly reborn Polish state, and its agenda focused on two main issues: supporting the Bolsheviks in the hopes of instigating workers' upheaval in Poland and, for the same cause, supporting the proletarian revolution in Germany. What is interesting is that the centrist, social democratic and patriotic Polish Socialist Party (the former party of Józef Pilsudski, also known as the Old Faction or Revolutionary Faction) initially showed moderate enthusiasm about the October Revolution (some of its members even fought in the Red Guard in those days; Najdus 1971, 94–95) because their activists presumed that the Bolsheviks could support Polish independence, according to their agenda on national self-determination (Toporowicz 1988, 62).

operated from abroad. Furthermore, they were somewhat closer to the Bolsheviks. In the Polish Communist Party, the SDKPiL tradition was predominant from the beginning. Nevertheless, the importance of these differences should not be exaggerated. They were in actual fact restrained and even obliterated by the real unity of the newly-founded party and the conviction of its members that the old divisions were a matter of the past. The party's ranks were further united by a sharp awareness of their common and unyielding opposition to the nationalist and reformist Poland, to the Poland of the landlords and petty nobility" (Deutscher 1958).

[8] However, the very idea of a Polish Red Army and ethnicity-based military revolutionary formations in general provoked controversy among Polish communists. For example, the "luxemburgists" – very influential in the milieu of Polish communists in Soviet Russia - were skeptical about organizing national regiments that only preserved the reactionary ethnic differences within the proletariat. Due to their opposition, as well as other factors, the project of establishment of Polish formations ultimately failed (Miodowski 2011, 213–230).

The most influential Polish Bolsheviks[9] from the revolutionary period were:

- Karl Radek[10], the charismatic agitator and publicist, polyglot and one of the main Bolshevik theoreticians from that period, who in 1917 became Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs (Trotsky's deputy);
- Feliks Kon, the old Polish socialist who was fighting in Kharkov during the upheaval, and became a member of the CC of The Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine;
- Stanisław Pestkowski, member of the CC of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, Stalin's deputy commissar (in the People's Commissar for Nationality Affairs) and temporary central bank governor;
- Józef Unszlicht, member of the Petrograd Military-Revolutionary Council, one of the organizers of the Red Army and Soviet power in Belorussia.

Unszlicht was a founding father of the Soviet secret police (Cheka and then GPU), along with two other famous ethnic Poles in revolutionary Russia, namely Felix Dzierżyński (director of Cheka) and Wiaczesław Mienżyński (its first deputy)[11]. Mienżyński, one of the most mysterious members of the Soviet nomenklatura, spoke twelve languages, played the piano well, and was called "my decadent neurotic" by Lenin.

Dzierżyński, "The Iron Felix", was born in 1877 near Minsk in the borderlands of Lithuania-Belorussia in a family of landowners of the Polish nobility. After losing his parents, he began studies for the Catholic priesthood. In the Wilno gymnasium, he converted to Marxism and was expelled two months before graduation. Thus he developed into a socialist agitator in SDKPiL and became one of its founders. Yet he ended up spending eleven years in tsarist prisons, in internal exile, and at hard labor in penal colonies, and he became consumptive.

[9] There were two most important institutions of Polish communists in the newly born Soviet state: the Commissary for Polish Affairs (one of sixteen national sections of Stalin's Commissary for Nationality Affairs) run by Julian Leszczyński-Leński (a member of the SDKiPL leadership) and the Polish Bureau of CC RCP(b), the so-called *Polbiuro*, constituted in 1919 with Julian Marchlewski as a chair.

[10] Almost none of the numerous historical works about Polish involvement in the Russian Revolution and the Soviet state in general published after 1945 mention Radek, because he was censored by the official narrative as a Trotskyist. The Communist Party of the USSR exonerated him in 1988.

[11] After the Bolshevik revolution, five Polish communists became members of the VTsIK: Dzierżyński, Jakow Dolecki, Bernard Zaks, Franciszek Grzelszczak and Ignacy Gintowt-Dziewałtowski. However, the CC of RCP(b) included Dzierżyński, Pestkowski and Bronisław Wesołowski (who was for a while chairman of the Revolutionary Tribunal) (for a detailed history of Polish Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia see: Najdus 1967). The fact that Polish communists occupied such important positions in the newly constituted Soviet power provides a strong argument against Staroń's suspicion of Bolsheviks' distrust of Poles.

> His eyes certainly looked as if they were bathed in tears of eternal sorrow, but his mouth smiled an indulgent kindness," observed the British sculptor Clare Sheridan, who in 1920 made a bust of him. Dzierżyński had a certain political vulnerability, having joined the Bolsheviks only in April 1917 and then opposed Lenin over Brest-Litovsk (1918) and workers' opposition (1921), but he won plaudits as the scourge of counterrevolutionaries and for living like a revolutionary ascetic, sleeping in his unheated office on an iron bed, subsisting on tea and crusts of bread. He reported to Lenin personally and once Lenin became incapacitated, got still closer to Stalin (Kotkin 2015, 459).

Although many current authors picture him as a Stalinist *avant la lettre* and the embodiment of communist evil, it is far from the truth. Polish journalist Sylwia Frołow in her well-balanced biography of Dzierżyński provides strong arguments against these simplified judgments (Frołow 2014), and her book is one of the few examples of non-anti-communist publications about Bolsheviks in Poland. It is worth mentioning that Frołow is a liberal journalist and her book was printed in the famous anti-communist and Catholic publishing house "Znak".

Interestingly, despite Staroń's anti-communism, he appreciates Dzierżyński's role in early Soviet Russia as the most powerful Bolshevik beside Lenin at that time, especially when citing the symptomatic thesis of another rightist publicist: "Only two Poles had a significant impact on the Twentieth Century. The first one might have been the priest Felix Dzierżyński and the second one was Karol Wojtyła – the future pope" (Staroń 2018, 63). In nationalistic discourse, emphasizing Polish ethnicity is an obsession. Even if Dzierżyński was a hardline internationalist who did not declare himself as a Pole, in the light of the genetic concept of naturally determined national identity his Polish origins were more important than his worldview. Dzierżyński serves also as evidence that Poles influenced world history, which expresses an inferiority complex of Polish nationalists. For Staroń, one's political identity (being an internationalist communist or a rightist patriot) is secondary to one's inherited ethnicity, which is at stake here. It means that the true antagonism is not between classes but between nations, in this context Russians versus Poles.

This is a perfect example of the ideology of Polonophobia, constitutive for right-wing historiography. According to this attitude, Polish spiritual and material integrity is in permanent danger because of foreign hostility – Russians, Germans, and Jews (the main nations accused of racial prejudice against Poles) are recognized as an extreme threat for Poland. Within the paranoid structure of this ideology, the Polish nation is the greatest victim in world history, surrounded by enemies, who want to discriminate against, suppress, or even exterminate Poles. So the anti-Semitism or Russophobia of Polish nationalists is reflected – in a purely ideological way – in their concept of the anti-Polonism of Jews or Russians: the antipathy toward the Other is justified and rationalized as a protection from the Other's alleged enmity towards Poles.

Following that argument, it indicates that Soviet Russia, from the very beginning, intended to destroy Poland as a country as well as Polish national-cultural heritage – using Polish communists to realize this aim. On the one hand the rightist nationalist looks for potential enemies of the fragile Polish nation, but on the other hand, they praise every historical achievement made by "great Poles".

This paradoxical logic leads Staroń to the almost perverse statement that the Polish traitors – an incarnation of evil and moral decline for the author – were the true heroes of the revolution and without their full commitment in the October days the Bolsheviks would even have lost their power. For example, when he writes about revolutionary combat in Petrograd and Moscow, he notes that Pestkowski and Juliusz Leszczyński organized the successful acquisition of Petrograd's Post Office (Staroń 2018, 69), Stanisław Budzyński and Stanisław Bobiński were the true heroes of the Moscow fights, and other Polish Bolsheviks led the assault on the Kremlin (Staroń 2018, 72–78). The story goes as follows: the revolution was made by Russians, but without Polish support – from Dzierżyński, Pestkowski, *et consortes* – it would have failed[12]. Between the lines we can read great regret that such disciplined and dedicated militias were fighting for world communism, not for the Polish independent bourgeois state.

2. Bolsheviks and Polish independence

The influence of the October Revolution on Poland mostly concerns the issue of Poland's independence. In 1913, Lenin had already written in "Theses on the National Question":

> From this point of view the following circumstance must be given special attention. There are two nations in Russia that are more civilized and more isolated by virtue of a number of historical and social conditions and that could most easily and most "naturally" put into effect their right to secession. They are the peoples of Finland and Poland (Lenin 1913).

Four watchwords had accompanied Red October in 1917: peace, land, and bread, but also national self-determination; the latter notion had been part and parcel of the Bolshevik program since 1903. It was not an ungrounded declaration, because on 8 November 1917 Lenin proposed and signed the famous "Decree on Peace", which outlined measures for Russia's withdrawal from the First World War without "payment of indemnities or annexations"[13]. This

[12] To present the whole complexity of this paranoid nationalist anti-communist logic we should state as follows: Russians organize revolution in order to destroy Poland (and other nations), and without Polish involvement the revolution would not succeed. From this perspective it became obvious why Staroń called the Polish revolutionaries *the nation-traitors*…

[13] It is worth mentioning that the first document during the Russian Revolution concerning the issue of Polish independence was a Petrograd Soviet proclamation "To the Polish People" from 27 March 1917, in which Poland

idea of just and democratic peace was received by all, not only revolutionary, democratic forces in Poland – the official announcement of Pilsudski's PPS about the peace treaty was similar to the Bolsheviks' decree (Jabłoński 1962, 66). It is well known in Poland that the internationalization of the issue of Polish independence – i.e. the alliance's recognition of a Polish independent and autonomous state as a condition for the peace in Europe – was a result of Woodrow Wilson's memorable "Fourteen Points" (the 13th concerned Poland) of January 1918, but hardly anyone admits that his speech was a direct response to Lenin's decree. Anti-communist historians try to depreciate this fact because their arguments are based on an oversimplified assumption that no one could treat what disingenuous Bolsheviks had said seriously[14].

In contrast to their prejudices, the new Russian government did not stop at empty promises, and on 16 November promulgated "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", which proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia and their right to self-determination, including secession and formation of a separate state. Certain historians treated this document as one of the main bases for the liberation of Central European states, including Poland. It was the fulfilment of Lenin's statement that "there will be no free Poland without free Russia" (Jabłoński 1962, 57). However, it must be noted that Poland was on the other side of the Eastern Front – not under Soviet jurisdiction – and, for that reason, the Bolsheviks' policy could affect it only symbolically. But there is no doubt that one of the consequences of the October Revolution was the full internationalization of Polish affairs. In this case, the Entente countries accepted the idea of the self-determination of the Polish nation partially owing to the Soviet standpoint (both Lloyd George and Wilson; Jabłoński 1962, 60–61). To quote Juliusz Górecki, a Polish right-wing journalist from that time, certainly not a Bolshevik supporter: "the Russian revolution was the first to decidedly and unreservedly recognize the right of the Polish nation to independence" (Jabłoński 1967, 47).

Nonetheless, maybe the most important aspect of the 1917 revolution for the future Polish state was the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk at the turn of 1917–1918. There was great hope at the beginning that the Soviet side would realize the concept of peace without annexations – which could guarantee independence for Poland – but the ultimate result of the negotiations came as a huge disappointment. The Bolsheviks' tactic was to drag out the peace talks for as long as possible and play for time in the hope that the peace campaign might spark a revolution in the West. With the Ukrainians detached from the Russians at the beginning of 1918, the Germans greatly strengthened their position at the Brest-Litovsk talks (Figes 1996, 519). Therefore, the Bolsheviks capitulated under the German conditions, which included the

received from Russian democratic forces the right to self-determination and full independence (Jabłoński 1962, 43–44).

[14] Thesis on disingenuous Bolsheviks as a rule, see: Maila 1994, 132.

acceptance of the annexation of Polish territory. Nevertheless, there was one decisive aftermath of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk for the Polish future – the Soviet government officially renounced its right to the Kingdom of Poland and the outcome was the cancellation of treaties that legitimized Polish partition on 29 August 1918. For Marxist historians of the Polish journey to independence, that event had a crucial impact on the formal and legal status of Polish statehood, because Soviet Russia was the first to officially delegitimize the idea of the partition of Poland, which somehow opened up the possibility of the existence of a free country. If in Brest Russia relinquished its annexation of Poland, then on 29 August it abolished the legal legitimacy of the very partition (Jabłoński 1967, 71)[15]. It should not surprise us that rightist historians ignore this fact, because in their narrative Bolsheviks only wanted to impose the revolution on Poles from above, so their affirmation of the Polish people's right to independence could not be taken at face value. It means that the propagandist slogan of national self-determination was a disguise for the real agenda of Soviet communists – reconstructing the old Russian Empire in the new Red clothes, to replace negligent tsarist bureaucracy with disciplined and loyal commissars (Zieliński 2013, 22–23).

How did Polish leftist parties react to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk? As an act of protest against this agreement, PPS – both its left and right factions – abandoned the Commissar of Polish Affairs, a Soviet institution within Stalin's Commissar of Nationalities that represented the interests of Poles in Russia (Zieliński 2013, 31). The only party that remained in it was SDKPiL, but their leadership – Bobiński, Leszczyński and Unszlicht – also strongly condemned the treaty, although for another reason than PPS. If the former saw in it the betrayal of the Polish right to self-determination, the latter agreed with the "Left Communists'" opposition against the peace, led by Nikolai Bukharin and Karl Radek (one of the SDKiPL leaders) (Najdus 1971, 70–73). They were sure that Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria were all on the verge of revolution, and wanted to continue war with a newly-raised revolutionary force while awaiting these upheavals. Ultimately the upheavals did not arrive, and after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk there was no real prospect of the revolution spreading to the West.

[15] Another symbolically significant act of Soviet Russia was an unprecedented decree proclaimed a few months after Red October, in which Sovnarkom committed to return to the Polish people all cultural heritage that was looted by the tsars. That decree provoked huge enthusiasm among some Polish communists; for instance, Stanisław Bobiński said: "When? Where? In what epoch has such a thing happened, that the government of a much stronger country not only returned independence to the weaker nation but also returned to it priceless works of art, which were appropriated during wartime?" (Bobińska 1966, 175).

3. Workers' Councils and revolutionary fervor in Poland

Although in 1918 the Red Army did not manage to rally revolution in the West, Polish people (mostly proletarians) organized from below their own Workers' Councils – representative organizations of Polish Soviet workers and peasants. The first council was established in October 1918 in Lublin, and after half a year in the former Kingdom of Poland more than one hundred of such Soviets had emerged (Malinowski 1967, 85; Jabłoński 1962, 181). Their structures and goals were directly inspired by Russian revolutionary councils and similar Soviet movements in Germany and Hungary, as an attempt to constitute dual power in the Polish territories. Therefore, councils were the platform that represented the interests of working people and protected them against oppression from the government. The main organizations behind the initiative were the Social Democracy and the Polish Socialist Party – Left, which soon – as mentioned above – merged to form the Communist Party of Poland. Other workers' organizations and parties competed for influence within the councils as well, including the Polish Socialist Party, the Bund in Poland (an anti-Zionist Jewish socialist movement), and the National Workers" Union (a democratic nationalist party, established after the revolution in 1905 by the right-wing National Democracy in order to increase its support amongst the working class). Due to significant disputes over the political and economic future of the newly independent Poland, the councils failed to create an executive committee – there were too many internal divisions in the weak workers' movement (especially related to the issue of "independence versus socialism"). Even the revolutionary left unified their forces too late, i.e. in December 1918, when the bourgeois state apparatus had already been solidified.

Nevertheless, over one hundred workers' councils operated in Poland in the years 1918–1919[16], assembling around a half million workers, peasants and craftsmen. The most numerous and radical councils were located *inter alia* in Lublin, Warsaw, Zamość and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie (Dąbrowa Basin – the most industrial region of the Polish lands, in which communists had the greatest support); some of them even set up their own military self-defense units, Red Guards, and People's Militia (with their political commissars exactly as in their Russian counterparts)[17]. Councils with a communist majority – especially the most influential one in Dąbrowa – attempted to organize the germ of the workers' power in Poland, the Polish Soviet Republic. Their agenda was to constitute a "proletarian dictatorship" that would

[16] Apart from the 1918–1919 period, workers' councils in Poland had also been set up in Congress Poland during the Revolution of 1905, in 1944–1947 in the aftermath of World War II (see: Kenney 1997), and in the Polish People's Republic during the Polish October of 1956 (see: Matejko 1963). Strike committees and councils appeared during the "Solidarność" strikes of 1980–1981 as well.

[17] Elections for the Workers' Councils which sprang up in 1918 revealed that the Communist Party had a level of support almost equal to that of the Polish Socialist Party – communists had a majority in Dąbrowa Council, and socialists led the Warsaw and Łódź Councils. The results of general the elections were as follows: for 2357 delegates, there were 869 representing PPS, 810 CWPP, and 251 Bund (Jabłoński 1962, 192).

expropriate capitalists and landowners (Jabłoński 1962, 184–185). This aim is connected with the episode of the Red Republic of Dąbrowa (Deutscher 1958). In the territories under council control they established progressive and pro-worker policies: an 8-hour workday, wage increases, and public works for the unemployed (Bicz 1934, 33). At the turn of 1918 and 1919 those units, council representatives, and trade unionists[18] organized the biggest strikes of that time, such as a general strike throughout the Dąbrowa coalfields on 8 November 1918 (Bicz 1934, 22), demonstrations by the unemployed, and demonstrations of solidarity with Soviet Russia (for example, a huge demonstration on the first anniversary of the October Revolution took place in Warsaw).

Meanwhile, the events across the eastern border inspired a curious social experiment – the ephemeral Republic of Tarnobrzeg in eastern Poland. The idea of the Republic emerged from mass demonstrations of peasants, which were happening almost on a daily basis in the fall of 1918. Former serfs even established their own farm councils, inspired by the urban workers[19]. Additionally, the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (of which Tarnobrzeg was part) incited political unrest. On 6 November, after a demonstration with some thirty thousand people, local peasants decided to take advantage of it and seize power. Its main organizers were two socialist activists – Tomasz Dąbal (who later became a member of the Communist Party) and Eugeniusz Okoń, a progressive Roman Catholic priest. As news of the Bolshevik Revolution came to Tarnobrzeg, the people decided to follow Communist ideas. They demanded liquidation of the capitalist government, socialization of forests and meadows, confiscation of church property and, above all, implementation of land reform, which would result in taking away land from rich owners and giving it to the poor peasantry. Also, the peasants, directed by Okoń and Dąbal, started to coordinate their local administration (in four local counties) as well as to organize a peasants' militia. Unfortunately, the Republic of Tarnobrzeg was pacified by units of the freshly created Polish Army at the beginning of 1919.

These examples show to what extent the idea of Polish Soviet power was powerful in those stormy years. What happened then to the Workers' Councils? They were dismantled around July 1919, following the withdrawal of the Polish Socialist Party (which in many cases had a council majority), and suppression by the Polish government, which saw the councils as a barrier to the formation of a bourgeois Polish state (Szczygielski and Tymieniecka 1960, 101). To understand this process, we should outline the broader context of the genesis of an independent Poland. On 7th November 1918 Polish reformist socialists established the Provisional Government of the Polish People's Republic in Lublin with Ignacy Daszyński as a

[18] This means that the first united socialist and communist federation of trade unions in Europe was established in Poland (Malinowski 1967, 97)

[19] A quite similar republic, but on a smaller scale, was created for six weeks in Pińczów (in central Poland), where peasant rebellion was led by Jan Lisowski (SDKPiL activist) and former Austrian officer Kalinka ("Kazuń").

prime minister. On the one hand, its agenda was progressive for that time (land reform, nationalization of industry, workers' control over the enterprises, free and secular education, and so on – the typical program of reforming capitalism), but on the other, this policy would be proposed only as a bill for the future parliament. The path to socialism was supposed to lead through parliamentary democracy. For this reason, Lublin's cabinet was subordinated to Piłsudski on 18 November, and a new government was constituted representing so-called national unity, and socialist Jędrzej Moraczewski became its chairman (with the support of the democratic alliance of PPS and the leftist peasants' party).

The new office was still the "people's" by name, but in fact, in its actions, it protected the interests of the Polish ruling classes and rescued Poland from the possible revolutionary scenario. Its reign brought about three major achievements: introducing an 8-hour workday, universal suffrage (including for women) and… suppression of the workers' and peasants' council movement (it disarmed Red Guards, brutally crushed strikes and smashed Tarnobrzeg's uprising). PPS, especially party elites, strongly supported this new government and actively helped to dismantle the Workers' Council – it was time for the long-awaited independent state, not for the socialist revolution[20]. As we know very well from the example of the post-Second-World-War period in Western Europe, social democracy was a vaccine against the communist threat. No wonder that "Our Tribune", the official organ of SDKPiL, compared Moraczewski's government to Kerensky's in Russia: "What differentiates Polish *kiereńszczyzna* from the Russian one is the fact that it was not begotten by revolution, but by the fear of reactionaries" (Jabłoński 1962, 200). As Jabłoński summarized:

> The statement that all the cabinets then [in 1918-1919 - BW] were about to prevent social revolution in Poland is unquestionable, as everybody, from communists to conservatives, agreed on it. But why did the social masses not understand this, the masses which were far from wishing for the power of the bourgeoisie? (Jabłoński 1962, 201).

In trying to answer this question, we should address the internal predicaments of the socialist revolution in Poland. The most obvious factor was the weakness of Polish proletarians caused by the catastrophic condition of industry after the First World War (production levels had

[20] Socialists were also divided on this matter – the strongest antagonism was between pro-state party leadership and more radical, sometimes even revolutionary, rank and file militants. To give an example of two radically opposed platforms within PPS: the party's left (led among others by Tadeusz Żarski) wanted to establish 'dictatorship of the proletariat' based on the unification of workers' councils and repressed all its enemies as counterrevolutionaries (Jabłoński 1962, 221–222; Szczygielski and Tymieniecka 1960, 77–78). But the left was the party minority then, and the voice of Mieczysław Niedziałkowski (socialist theoretician) is more representative of the party's position: "on 7th November 1918 communism in Poland was mortally wounded" (Niedziałkowski 1930, 12). The author praised PPS as the only political force which had a real agenda in countering revolution in Poland in 1918. To examine internal disputes between socialists about the workers' power see: Zaremba 1983, 316–353.

decreased about 90 percent compared with 1914) and the insufficient level of revolutionary class consciousness among workers (communist propaganda was mostly spreading in Dąbrowa coalfield and in some more developed parts of Congress Poland). Beside this objective condition, two other issues are of great importance. The Polish poor and working masses were disoriented because of the successful socialist agitation[21] (PPS promised land reform and nationalization of main industries) that convinced them of the advantage of people's government over the council model, and hence the preferability of an independent national state over a socialist international republic[22]. The confusion was due to the fact that, in the eyes of the majority of the masses, the counter-revolutionary power was regarded as a revolutionary power. We should also not underestimate the fear of possibly repeating the Bolshevik scenario, which could result in bloody civil war and foreign interventions. This leads us to the second issue: the inability of Polish communists to deploy a convincing alternative narrative. Their vision of instigating revolution could be reduced to the hope of immediate intervention by the Red Army accompanied by German proletarians on Polish land in order to protect the Soviet workers' dictatorship. That was not enough to win the trust of Polish people who were strongly attached to the romantic, patriotic idea of independence. In other words, communists lost the battle for hegemony – in the Gramscian sense of the term – over the Polish masses to reformist socialists, even if the latter betrayed the real interests of proletarians in favor of bourgeois interests. For Marxist historians, socialists were class traitors, just as communists were national traitors in the eyes of rightist scholars.

However, the period of councils had an important impact on the newly established Polish state. The anxiety of the socialist revolution forced the first Polish independent government to adopt a wide range of social policies (as mentioned before, shortening the workday, securing rights to strike, and implementing the whole package of liberal-democratic reforms), which had already been initiated by the activity of Workers' Councils. However, even that was too much for the Polish bourgeois elites, still holding the real power in the country. They used Pilsudski to induce Moraczewski to resign on 16th January 1919. Reformist illusions in Poland ended when the cabinet was taken over by the right-wing Ignacy Jan Paderewski (Polish nationalist composer)[23]. Both the chance of revolution and the moderate social democratic prospect of

[21] In Poland as a rural country whose population belonged predominantly to the peasant classes, the Catholic Church in the countryside had a great influence on the people. Its conservative and anti-Semitic propaganda was radically opposed to Bolshevism as a Jewish plot threatening western civilization. For relations between revolution and anti-Semitism in the Polish context see: Marzec 2016, Krzywiec 2017.

[22] We should not forget about the revolutionary legend of Pilsudski as the "savior of the Polish people, man of the moment," that was deeply rooted within Polish society at that time. He indeed was a savior, but a savior of the Polish ruling class from the revolutionary ferment.

[23] Against his post, Warsaw Workers' Council organized on 7th February 1919 a general strike that inspired other councils, like Lublin's. As a result, the new government was forced to proclaim partial amnesty for the imprisoned workers' activists (Szczygielski and Tymieniecka 1960, 52-56).

reforms disappeared. As a result, PPS had dug their own grave. Everything could change again in 1920, when the Red Army reached Bug, but that is another story.

Conclusion: Methodological anti-communism

In the right-wing narrative, we see a symptomatic contradiction in reference to the council movement in Poland and the revolutionary prospects in general. On the one hand, the council phenomenon and the bottom-up activity of the Polish masses in the period are almost unrecognizable; on the other, the danger of communist revolution is serious. We can analyze it well via Staroń's example. He argues that "Polish communism creates an exotic and marginal group of fanatics, but very flashy and clamorous" (Staroń 2018, 14) or in the same spirit he says:

> In 1918 nothing essential could compete with the idea of Polish independence. It was rejected only by the marginal group of Polish communists that was irrelevant to the aspirations of the majority of Polish society. Other political parties across the whole spectrum, including PPS, demanded in the first place rebuilding of the independent state. Everyone who was not insane – both politicians and common people - thought that socialist ideas were just utopia (Staroń 2018, 161–162).

This is a typical ideological strategy of diminishing and discrediting opponents through presenting their views as something against the normatively constructed concept of nature or common sense. Not to mention that on the eve of independence, the influence of the Polish Communist Party over the working classes in the main industrial centres was certainly not smaller than that of the PPS – it was probably larger (see Deutscher 1958). However, although Staroń ignores this fact (and the whole Workers' Council event), he actually claims that those curious and insignificant Polish communists were the real threat to bourgeois Poland. He even quotes documents by the Polish secret service from the beginning of 1919, in which we can read that revolution then had a great chance of success (Miodowski 2011, 263) – especially because of communist mutinies in the Polish army, which aimed at creating a Soviet of Soldiers' Delegates (Staroń 2018, 172). As an example, Staroń – following Miodowski – recalls the soldiers from General Haller's army, who in August 1919 solidarized and cooperated with striking miners from Dąbrowa, helping them to disarm gendarmes, but most of all the revolutionary uprising in Zamość regiment in December 1918 – revolutionaries seized the town and established a Workers' and Soldiers' Council (Staroń 2018, 178–183; Miodowski 2011, 258–262). We see clearly that for the author the only actors who could induce a revolutionary situation were soldiers or Soviet agents, not proletarians, and definitely not peasants – because the people, masses, rabble, and other marginal underprivileged parts of the society were not

recognized in this right-wing narrative as autonomous and conscious subjects who were able to act. Therefore, contemporary anti-communist historiography of the October Revolution – such as Staroń, Miodowski, or Zieliński – mainly focuses on the Polish soldiers and high-rank Bolsheviks, who were the real national traitors, often the outstanding and admirable figures fighting on the wrong side of the barricade. For them, history is written only by the great personalities, while the masses as such are just meaningless sacks of potatoes, even unworthy to be a part of the nation. And this is the ultimate mark of their anti-communism.

Against this background, we can see how these anti-communists reproduce typical conservative and reactionary discourse about the masses, which represses and diminishes the poorest strata of society – the rabble, paupers, the mob, etc. (Moll and Pospiszyl 2019). They are anxious about the rebellious crowd gathering on the street during the revolutionary events, which destabilizes and disorganizes the unjust social order – so the most effective defense mechanism for reducing the anxiety is to deny the real existence of the very source of fear, i.e. to deny even the existence of the people. For anti-communist historians, Polish society during the turbulent year of 1918 was fundamentally divided into two groups: marginal communists lunatics (intellectuals, soldiers, and party activists) and the majority of the "healthy" nation (all those who identified with national and independence ideology). But what about the workers, peasants, or urban paupers and unemployed organizing demonstrations and councils? What about those who, for the communists, were the actual subject of social change? The nationalistic discourse did not recognize them at all, because they conceive the nation as an organic whole, deprived of any internal antagonisms (including class antagonism), and those who do not fit into this imagining of the nation are excluded from the community as foreign bodies – fanatical Moscow agents as national traitors – or even not counted as a part of social landscape, like the rebellious masses. Therefore, anti-communism for Polish rightist historians means two things: hatred of the masses who elude nationalistic form, and fear of the possibility of radical change that those masses could provoke. In other words, the revolutionary people are not a fully human subject for the anti-communists. In this context the classic formulation by Jean-Paul Sartre comes to mind: "Every anti-communist is a dog" (Sartre 1961, 248–249).

To conclude, the independent Polish state was constituted by the alliance of the counterrevolutionary forces – from the right to the left – that crushed the possible 'dual power' scenario in Poland. And all the anti-communist hysteria in AD 2018 – the centenary of independence – and the fact that works such as Staroń's book are still being published, only confirms that in 1918 the specter of communism was something more than just a ghost haunting Europe from the East.

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TYTUŁ: Rewolucja październikowa w Polsce: Historia antykomunistycznego wyparcia

ABSTRAKT: Podstawowa teza niniejszego artykułu jest następująca: rewolucja październikowa miała istotny wpływ zarówno na odzyskanie przez Polskę niepodległości, jak i na kształt polskich walk klasowych. Jednak historia tego wpływu jest całkowicie wypierana albo nawet jawnie negowana we współczesnym hegemonicznym prawicowym dyskursie historycznym w Polsce. Setna rocznica rewolucji wywołała publicystyczną dyskusję, w ramach której wydarzenia te były przedstawiane jako „demoniczne źródło dwudziestowiecznego totalitaryzmu", zapoznając tym samym entuzjazm, jaki rewolucja wywołała wśród Polaków (zarówno jej uczestników, jak i pełnych nadziei obserwatorów). Nacjonalistyczna historiografia, idealizująca Polaków za wszelką cenę, stara się usilnie wymazać polskie zaangażowanie w „Czerwony Październik" albo zredukować je do rangi nieistotnego epizodu. W związku z tym tekst stanowi analizę dominującej narracji na temat rewolucji bolszewickiej w Polsce na przykładzie popularnonaukowej publikacji Mateusza Staronia *Zdrajcy: Polacy u boku Lenina*. Stawką tej analizy jest z jednej strony zbadanie strategii i sposobów antykomunistycznego „przepisywania" historii, podporządkowanej doraźnym celom ideologicznym, z drugiej zaś przedstawienie alternatywnej – wobec obowiązujących

antykomunistycznych klisz – narracji dotyczącej rewolucji październikowej w polskim kontekście, opierającej się na trzech zagadnieniach:

1. Polskiego uczestnictwa w październikowych wydarzeniach;
2. Wpływu rewolucji na odzyskanie niepodległości przez Polskę;
3. Polskich rad robotniczych jako bezpośredniej odpowiedzi na rewolucję rosyjską.

Cel niniejszego artykułu nie ogranicza się – w związku z powyższym – do przedstawienia alternatywy dla dominującego dyskursu, wykonania kolejnego ćwiczenia w zakresie politycznej i historycznej wyobraźni czy wyciągnięcia na światło dzienne wypartych aspektów polskiej historii. Idzie tu raczej o ukazanie logiki i struktury samej antykomunistycznej narracji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: rewolucja rosyjska, polska niepodległość, antykomunizm, dyskurs historyczny, ideologia prawicowa, rady robotnicze

ANTI-COMMUNISM IN THE TIME OF TRANSITION

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ROSES OR BREAD? ANTI-COMMUNIST NARRATION IN FEMINIST READINGS OF ANNA ŚWIRSZCZYŃSKA'S POETRY

KATARZYNA SZOPA

Abstract: The article discusses the question of feminist interpretations of the poetry of Anna Świrszczyńska, one of the most recognized Polish poets of international renown, whose works and activity are often associated with a strong feminist worldview. Many interpreters of Świrszczyńska's poetry did not focus enough on the origin of the poet's feminist attitude, claiming that it was rather exceptional and rare for the period of the Polish People's Republic. Contrary to the narration established by the interpreters of her poetry after 1989, I argue that Świrszczyńska's feminist sensitivity was not an isolated and individual phenomenon, as it emerged in a time of increased women's activity and the development of the socialist project for women's equality deployed in Poland after 1945. I believe that both the political activity of communist women and the grassroots actions taken by the working-class women in the socialist state became the main factors in shaping Świrszczyńska's feminist worldview. The Polish feminist narrative after 1989, however, due to its anti-communist approach to the problem of feminism in the Polish People's Republic, did not include the history of the Polish left-wing women's movement. This results from applying to the Polish history of women's movements 1) liberal notions of feminist agency; 2) Western feminist theories devoid of Marxist paradigm; and 3) a normative definition of feminism understood only in terms of anti-systemic activity. By taking into account Świrszczyńska's political and cultural activity, I emphasize the necessity of filling the gaps in the story of Polish women's movement. Such a strategy is inevitably connected with the necessity of remodelling the genealogy of Polish feminism, redefining the notion of agency, and feminism itself.

Keywords: socialism, emancipation, feminism, anti-communism, genealogy

Introduction

In the 1970s, Anna Świrszczyńska, regarded as one of the most notable Polish poets of the 20th century, published a volume entitled *Jestem baba* [*I Am Baba*][1] (1972). The publication is considered to be one of the most controversial poetry books of that time. In the context of traditional women's poetry, Świrszczyńska's writing – assigned to the so-called second avant-garde – was exceptional not only from the literary point of view, but also primarily in terms of its political inclinations. In her writing, the poet focused on social problems concerning the situation of women, in particular working-class women. Świrszczyńska undermined the traditional view not only on sex but also on the fixed social order whose borders were determined by class and sexual differences (the latter considered in terms of merely biological differences). The poet contests the limits which separate the private from the public sphere, reproductive from productive work, and female forms of activity from politics.

Świrszczyńska's writing gained popularity in the 1990s mostly among feminist theoreticians who either saw her as a precursor of *écriture féminine*, or used her poetry to create a post-transformation project of emancipation. The interpretation strategies chosen by them reveal the direction feminist discourses in Poland after 1989 have taken. They were all connected by a particular attitude towards the work of their predecessors – party members and communists who participated in deploying the socialist project for women's equality after 1945. The framework of these narrations was based on drawing a clear line separating the contemporary feminist movement from the history of Polish left-wing women's movements.

The aim of this paper is not to reconstruct the main narrative strategies which shaped Polish feminist discourses after 1989. Such work is carried out by researchers of communism, sociologists, and literary scholars, including Małgorzata Fidelis, Magdalena Grabowska, and Agnieszka Mrozik, to whom I refer numerous times. Neither do I intend to provide a deep interpretation of Świrszczyńska's poetry[2]. My goal is rather to follow the discourses in literary criticism which arose around Świrszczyńska's poetry after 1989. It could be observed that the main narrative framework of these discourses consists of two reading strategies: feminist and anti-communist. As a result, Świrszczyńska was read in agreement with the Western paradigm

[1] There is a difficulty with translating the word "baba" from English into Polish, as it is a term used mainly with a pejorative connotation. The primary meaning of the word is probably "grandmother" or "old woman", although it can also allude to "midwife", "sorceress", or "fortune teller". In Slavic folklore the word also relates to the figure of Baba Yaga (Yegi Baba, Baba Jaga, Baba Jędza), "possibly a pre-Slavic goddess of death and regenerations who, with time and changing socioeconomic conditions, was converted into a malevolent witch" (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba 2015, 7). In the common usage "baba" usually concerns an elderly, uneducated, ugly and dirty woman of rural areas. In this article I decide not to translate the word in order to emphasize the idiosyncratic expression of the title used by Świrszczyńska, and also its performative character.

[2] An in-depth discussion of Świrszczyńska's poetry is beyond the scope of this paper. I investigate this problem in depth in my article: Szopa, Katarzyna. 2018. "The Poet of Revolution. Anna Świrszczyńska and the Socialist Project of Women's Equality". *Śląskie Studia Polonistyczne* 2 (forthcoming).

of feminist theories and her poetry was entirely separated from the political and social context in which it had originally emerged. Now, since this construction of the genealogy of Polish women's movements is designed to exclude first of all the activity of communist women, and then also the rich history of self-assemblies of regular women of the Polish People's Republic, mainly peasants and workers in industrial plants, it requires, as I intend to show in my article, a thorough re-evaluation.

The Narration of Absence: Feminism and Communism

In an interview with Anna Świrszczyńska published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1964, Wiesław Szymański asked a question in response to the poet's words about the absence of women writers in the literary environment: "May it be concluded that you are a radical feminist?", to which she replied: „Yes, with full support from my husband, who agrees with me completely" (Świrszczyńska and Szymański 1964, 5). It is clear why, considering the reality of the early 1960s, Świrszczyńska strengthens her bold declaration with an anecdote about her husband's support. It was the post-thaw period, marked by the return of conservative narration which assumed women's natural affiliation to home and their maternal duties. That current was accompanied by the reactions of the government of those days, such as depriving women of their jobs or downgrading them, retracting the Polish Women's League and Women's Departments from workplaces, and directing women's activity at the so-called "tailoring and sewing workshops". The emancipation of women was to blame for the growing number of divorces (Grabowska 2018, 80), and the image of a 1950s working-class woman was presented as masculinized, ridiculed, and twisted (Fidelis 2015, 265), as an attack on Polish tradition and family values. By stressing that she was married, Świrszczyńska obviously tried to avoid the stereotype of a "masculine" feminist. However, it is not the approval of her husband which matters, but the poet's decision to make a public declaration that she considers herself to be a feminist.

However, Polish feminist critics who became interested in Świrszczyńska's poetry mostly after 1989 hardly ever decided to search for the sources of that surprising declaration. In their studies of Świrszczyńska's oeuvre, the researchers regarded her feminism as a precursory and exceptional phenomenon in times which were mostly considered as "non-feminist." For example, Małgorzata Baranowska, despite noticing a revolutionary project in Świrszczyńska's poetry and calling it the "avant-garde of women's role poetry or feminist poetry," still considered the revolution as "one-person" (Baranowska 1995, 263). Ewa Kraskowska acknowledged that the poet "wandered alone" in times when "feminism was an almost unknown phenomenon in Poland" (Kraskowska 2015, 33). Anna Legeżyńska saw in *Jestem baba* [*I Am Baba*] the "seed of Polish feminism (which is to break out in twenty-five

years!)" (Legeżyńska 1997, 184). Hanna Jaxa-Rożen repeated after Baranowska that *I Am Baba* is a "one-person revolution of the 70s" which "solitarily went ahead of its time" (Jaxa-Rożen 2011, 252). Świrszczyńska's monographer, Renata Stawowy, put it similarly by stating that the poet's feminism was "a self-generated and secluded phenomenon in the Polish People's Republic," and that the "threads connecting her views with the tradition of the Polish emancipation movements" were "feeble" (Stawowy 2004, 152). Another monographer of Świrszczyńska's poetry, Agnieszka Stapkiewicz, was a rare exception, as she attempted to determine the source of the poet's feminist awareness and eventually located it in the experience of the 1905 revolution in which Świrszczyńska's father took part. Almost all the researchers completely passed over the social and political events of the 1960s and 1970s in silence; these were the times when Świrszczyńska published those of her poetry books where she reveals her feminist world view.

Reading Świrszczyńska in the 1990s was limited to speculations about what women's literature or poetry should mean. The political significance of this poetry, which focused mostly on problems related to women's reproductive work, was erased entirely. Hence, the researchers wondered if Świrszczyńska could be classified as an *écriture féminine* poet (Borkowska 1995; Nasiłowska 2004), but they did not search for the actual roots of her feminist worldview. Following the Western methodology and feminist theories, the interpreters of Świrszczyńska's poetry focused on the bodily aspects of her poetry so much that the discourse on the body they created, in fact, turned out to be "dis-embodied". Consequently, Świrszczyńska's poetry became only a pretext to discuss universal experiences of "femininity", even though in her poetry the woman's body bears numerous marks of social, cultural, economic, and political situatedness, as it is mostly the body of an old working-class woman or a village-dweller from the times of Władysław Gomułka. Tearing Świrszczyńska's poetry away from the original context was accompanied by the application of Western feminist theories, which were also torn away from their political and social roots (see Delphy 1995)[3].

In her article entitled *Feministyczne rozrachunki z PRL-em* [*Feminist settling of accounts with The Polish People's Republic*], Agnieszka Gajewska summarizes this reading strategy. She notes that according to Świrszczyńska's readers "there was no feminism in the Polish People's Republic, neither in art nor in theory, nor as a movement. In order to become a feminist, one should read feminist literature [i.e. American – KS], and the second wave would have appeared in Poland in the 1960s if it had not been for the Polish People's Republic" (Gajewska 2010, 464). With this in mind, it could be observed that identity construction of Polish feminism after 1989 is characterized by at least three important questions. The first one refers to the way of

[3] French feminist theories, also known as *French Feminism* (see Delphy 1995), were applied in Poland in a form derived from the Anglo-American interpretations, and served as one of the main methodological frameworks of Polish feminist literary criticism in the 1990s.

constructing the genealogy of Polish feminism after 1989, the roots of which are most often dated back to the pre-war intellectual tradition, and which entirely disregards the grassroots mobilization of women, be they communists, workers, or peasants; the second problem reproduces Western historiography's role models, which show Polish feminism through the prism of three waves, and therefore completely ignores the specific socio-political context which characterized socialist countries; finally, it implies the definition of feminism imposed by the Western – mostly Anglo-American and liberal – feminist methodologies.

I believe that the application of such an interpretative framework to Świrszczyńska's poetry does not stem from researchers' bad intentions but from methodological practice of reproducing the narrative schemes which dominated feminist reflection after 1989. According to Ewa Majewska:

> Women and workers must then be erased from the narration about political breakthroughs in the Polish People's Republic, not as a result of the conscious bad intentions of researchers, but due to the habits in political analyses and scientific texts which preclude noticing the agency of the aforementioned groups (Majewska 2018, 74).

The crux of those forms of narration, as shown by Magdalena Grabowska, is anti-communism. In her book entitled *Zerwana genealogia: Działalność społeczna i polityczna kobiet po 1945 roku a współczesny polski ruch kobiecy* [*Broken Genealogy. Women's Social and Political Activity after 1945, and the Contemporary Women's Movement in Poland*] following the way of constructing feminist historiography in Poland after 1989, Grabowska distinguishes three types of narration: of absence, of convergence, and of anti-communism. The first one assumes that there is no such phenomenon as an Eastern European feminism; the second presents post-socialist women's movements as lagging behind the Western ones; the last shows communism as the phenomenon responsible for the absence of emancipation movements in Eastern Europe (Grabowska 2018, 19). Significantly, Agnieszka Mrozik also proves that the history repressed from the collective memory of Polish feminism is precisely the activity of communists from Stalinist times, namely of women in charge, actively co-creating the foundations of the post-war system. Not only does Polish feminism deny their activity as a valid part of its own movement, but, above all, it uses their history to build its own founding myths in order to legitimize the mainstream national-liberal narration (Mrozik 2012, 52; 2014; 2017a).

Thus, feminist "broken genealogy" concerns not just the phenomenon of dissociating the one feminist formation from the other, but above all, the phenomenon of dissociating feminism from communism. Such a narration results in the impossibility of reconciling the image of a communist with the image of a feminist or emancipationist (Grabowska 2018, 53). As Grabowska states:

> The effect of these processes is feminism which forgets its own genealogy, telling a story of the absence of egalitarian traditions in Poland, a story which is unconvincing from the point of view of feminist practice. The movement which relates itself to historical narrations of Western feminisms, the movement with the vision of itself (individual or collective identity), remains elitist and unconvincing in a great degree (Grabowska 2018, 173).

While I do not claim that the interpretative perspective of Świrszczyńska's poetry proposed by feminist literary scholars in the 1990s should be completely rejected, I emphasize the necessity of complementing the story by filling in gaps and contexts. Such a strategy is inevitably connected with the necessity of: 1) remodelling the genealogy of Polish feminism, 2) redefining the notion of agency, and 3) feminism itself.

1. Genealogies of Feminism or Genealogies of Feminists?

The origins of Polish feminism are usually dated back to the early 1980s when the events involving early Solidarity took place. Coincidentally, it is also a time when the book edited by Teresa Hołówka *Nikt nie rodzi się kobietą* [*One is Not Born a Woman*] (1982) that introduced feminist theories to Polish humanities was published. Gajewska asks, however: "Wasn't there anything before? Before the second samizdat emerged and revived the patriotic-romantic ethos, were feminist traditions absent and were the connections between educated women and emancipation movements of the interwar period entirely torn?" (Gajewska 2010, 467). In response to this question, Gajewska draws the reader's attention to the fact that the period between 1945 and 1982 is mostly ignored. She points at two dates essential for Polish feminism: April 27th, 1956 when abortion was legalized, and March 8th, 1968, the date of bloody suppression of student protests and anti-Semitic persecution.

However, one may ask if the Polish feminist tradition amounts merely to the anti-systemic fight of educated women from intellectual circles. Why do we need to limit women's activity in the Polish People's Republic only to the Polish Women's League and the Association of Rural Women? And finally, is the history of women in the Polish People's Republic, as suggested by Gajewska, a history of failure? As Małgorzata Fidelis argues in her book *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (2010 [2015]), definitely not. Fidelis reconstructs a different story of Polish feminism by placing the grassroots movement of women working in factories and industrial plants in its centre and by showing that women constituted numerous groups of active subjects which created the post-war society.

It is thus crucial to pose a question about the genealogy of Polish feminism. As Agnieszka Graff aptly notes, "the genealogy of feminism is not just the genealogy of feminists – feminism as a political community and cultural project seeks for wonderful, empowered women in the

past, not only feminists" (Graff 2014, 194). Despite that remark, Graff focuses her attention solely on women's organizations and not on the stories about self-assemblies of ordinary women, and thereby, she validates the normative definition of feminism: not only does she disregard the activity of party members and communists, but she also overlooks protests and strikes initiated by the working-class women in the history of Polish women's movements. She writes:

> I am interested in this matter as a fragment of Polish history, a fragment of women's history, but it does not convince me as an identity story of contemporary feminism, let alone of my own. These are not my roots. (…) Intellectually, emotionally, and biographically my roots arise from the firm opposition against the Polish People's Republic. I am not convinced at all by the idea that people who co-formed the regime, women of the Polish United Workers' Party, are my ancestors. They are not! (Graff 2014, 189–190)

Diminishing the role of Communists in the process of emancipating Polish women results from the history of their entanglement in building the machinery of the state during the Stalinist rule, which is commonly recognized as criminal. But the fact is that the Polish Women's League and the Association of Rural Women both date back to the period before the First World War, and simply continued their activity after 1945 by focusing on supporting women's employment and by organizing training to develop their skills (Nowak 2005). However, in the post-thaw period, the state propaganda was trying to erase the inconvenient memory of Stalinist times, along with the figure of the Jew and the emancipated female worker. Conservative sex politics, which deepened the traditional division of gender roles, became more popular (Gajewska 2010, 475). In consequence, the emancipatory actions of the Polish Women's League seemed to be limited, as the only thing they enabled women to do was to combine their unwaged work at home with their paid work.

Thus, the activity of the League after 1989 was regarded as "superficial" and "counterfeit," and the privileges which women had in the Polish People's Republic as imposed on them. Graff argues that "Polish women were mostly affected by the fact that there were nursery schools and pre-schools in the Polish People's Republic (…), but this is not feminism in action, nobody fought to achieve it – those were the elements of the welfare state, which that socialist patriarchate gave to women" (Graff 2014, 192).

Graff's view on the history of the communist activity of women is not rare. In comparison, Sławomira Walczewska summarizes the period of activity of the Polish Women's League as follows:

> The Polish Women's League was an institution created by the ruling communist party. Despite the conditions in which it came to life, despite the methods it applied and its concept of emancipation, it called itself a women's organization which represented their interests and was a forum for all Polish women. The effect of 45 years of its existence, still visible today, is women's political inaction, their inability to organize themselves and protect their collective interests (the anti-abortion act is a case in point) (Walczewska 1993).

Walczewska thus argues that the fact that the Polish Women's League was the only women's organization in the Polish People's Republic would prevent women from creating other groups and organizations. According to Walczewska, that, in turn, would result in breaking with the tradition of the pre-war women's movement, reducing all groups of women to an "undifferentiated mass," and identifying them with communist activists. "At the same time", she continues, "the achievements of the so-called »bourgeois« women's movement, which fought for women's rights in Europe even before communist parties emerged, were passed over" (Walczewska 1993). Significantly, Graff presents her view on feminist genealogy in a similar way:

> I believed that (…) feminism came from John Stuart Mill, whereas its variant, which draws from Engels and Rosa Luxemburg, seemed a form of aberration to me. Luckily for me, this story of mine is older, as Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill noticed the poorer situation of women a bit earlier than Engels did (Graff 2014, 190).

One might clearly notice in both statements several features of anti-communist political narrations. First of all, feminism is not considered a mass social movement but is limited to the activity of women from the privileged intellectual classes. Secondly, the researchers claim that feminism has a single common "beginning". Finally, they adopt the paternalistic perspective which is typical for post-transformation narrations and which assumes that women's agency in the Polish People's Republic was "superficial" and imposed by the communist authorities. By writing that it was the activity of the Polish Women's League that increased the level of political inaction of Polish women, which eventually resulted in accepting the anti-abortion act in 1993, Walczewska solidifies the stereotypes of the "inactivity" of generations of women raised in the Polish People's Republic and their inability to adapt to the new post-socialist reality. This division of social groups into the "active" and the "passive" side corresponds to the (ideological) division between the "new world" and "communist pathology". Monika Bobako describes that way of thinking as "racialization", which is based on essentialising, naturalising, and reifying the cultural features of a given social group in order to justify social inequalities (Bobako 2011).

Similarly, Mrozik also notices the division of women into "good" and "evil" according to the role model of heroism-martyrdom narration (Mrozik 2017). In such narrations, as Mrozik observes, good and heroic women who oppose the communist party are usually contrasted with malevolent women, mainly the party members, who collaborate with the authorities. This division is reflected in the way of thinking about the communist system and the post-transformation period. It also validates the return of two narrations in the 90s: the conservative, with the figure of the Polish Mother at its centre, and the misogynistic, "reflected in the refusal to acknowledge the autonomy and political agency of communists and pushing them to the area of women's biology, instincts, urges" (Mrozik 2014) with the image of communist women presented as "demonic" (Mrozik 2017b).

All things considered, it seems evident that the mainstream history of Polish women's movements is dominated by the Western narration of liberal feminism. The history of Polish feminism is regarded solely through the prism of "the narration of success", as the struggle of women who originate from intellectual circles and participate only in the resistance movements. Mrozik states that the inability to go beyond the frames of anti-communist discourse presents the history of women's movements in Poland as a story of exclusion:

> Weaving this pattern from values such as patriotism, the ethos of a community worker (especially locally) or women's ethics of care (mostly seen in the private, family area), The Congress of Women – calling itself the proponent of women's issues in Poland – actually made the script of traditional Polish women's activity valid, as well as a particular form of agency: of a unit or a small community, acting without any help from the state, against all odds. At the same time, it displaced other models of women's agency and their "being in the world" out of sight, as well as the concepts of women's subjectivity other than the one realized in the space between family, market, and nation (Mrozik 2014).

Such a narrative strategy not only ignores entirely the activity of communists and party members, but also fails to recognize the grassroots activity of ordinary women – i.e., peasants and factory workers – who organized strikes and forced the communist authorities to compromise dozens of times.

2. Feminist Methodologies: A Socialist Project of Women's Equality

Where would Świrszczyńska's (and her husband's!) feminist worldview come from if it is agreed that there was no feminism in the Polish People's Republic? My thesis is that, contrary to the narration proposed by the interpreters of her poetry after 1989, Świrszczyńska's feminist sensitivity was not an isolated and individual phenomenon since it occurred during increased

women's activity in the Polish People's Republic and in the context of turbulent social and cultural changes. I believe that the socialist project of women's equality deployed in Poland after 1945 became the main factor in shaping the poet's feminist worldview.

Jestem baba [*I am baba*] is divided into two parts: the first one is mainly focused on the daily reality of ordinary women and their place in the patriarchal society and family. Świrszczyńska in a very naturalistic fashion introduces into her poetry everyday problems such as physical and emotional violence against women in the traditional family, alcoholism, poverty, alienation of elderly women, etc. What I consider the most important aspect of her oeuvre is the manner in which she emphasizes the importance of reproductive labour, such as childbearing, and household labour: "born under a black star / we gave birth to the world" (*Pod czarną gwiazdą* [*Under a black star*]). In the second part entitled *Trzy poematy* [*Three Poetic Cycles*], Świrszczyńska changes her narration slightly by taking up two questions, feminine sexuality and love beyond the family relationship. Therefore, in *Jestem baba* [*I am Baba*] Świrszczyńska focuses our attention on two originally intertwined spheres that as such cannot be discussed separately: bodily and social, private and public, struggle for identity and politics.

Contrary to the first part, in which there is no female persona as a speaking subject, the second part introduces a self-aware woman as the subject of enunciation. It is no accident that Świrczyńska uses the poem entitled *Kobieta rozmawia ze swoim udem* [*A Woman Converses with her Thigh*] as the prologue to the second part and the poem *Kobieta mówi o swoim życiu* [*A Woman Talks about her Life*] as its epilogue. Such a strategy reminds us of Luce Irigaray's famous political project of "speaking-as-a-woman." According to Irigaray, in the culture that favours masculine values and subjectivity, women have no language of their own which, as such, would allow them to articulate themselves as political subjects. Thus, in the phallocratic model woman is not recognized as a speaking being, and she has no subjectivity of her own. Irigaray asks:

> What can be said about a feminine "other" than the one prescribed in, by, phallocratism? How can its language be recovered, or invented? How, for women, can the question of their sexual exploitation be articulated with the question of their social exploitation? What position can women take, today, with respect to politics? Should they intervene, or not, within, or against, institutions? How can they free themselves from their expropriation within patriarchal culture? What questions should they address to its discourse? To its theories? To its scientific disciplines? How can they "put" these questions so that they will not be once more "repressed", "censured"? But also, how can they already speak (as) women?

And she immediately gives an answer:

> By going back through the dominant discourse. By interrogating men's "mastery". By speaking to women. And among women (Irigaray 1985, 119).

To give an illustration of Irigaray's strategy, let's look at the case of Świrszczyńska's poetry, where she always goes back to the "dominant discourse" of masculine values by demystifying social, cultural, and economic conditions that are conductive to women's oppression. Her emancipatory project is rooted in the project of socialist equality, which pursued the fight for women's rights through politicization of reproductive work and the private sphere. Hence, this project associated equality of rights for women not only with economic equality, but also with the question of feminine identity. For Świrszczyńska, the body, which is subjected to an extensive commentary in the post-transformation period, actually always evokes the social body. As she wrote: "the body of the world should be there in poetry. Aggressively tangible, unique in its diversity, gasping in motion, chaotic in richness, soaking in authenticity. (…) The author must constantly look for direct contact with this life, its corporality" (Świrszczyńska 1973, 3). By relating simultaneously to the social and the individual body, she reconnects women's individual experience with cultural and political articulation.

What is more, Świrszczyńska introduces into her poetry voices of various women: old, poor, mad, raped, and beaten. She "speaks to other women" and "among women", as highlighted in Irigaray's work. A good example of this strategy could be the poem *Siostry z dna* [*Sisters from the Bottom*]:

I have friends in the park,
Old beggar women, crazies.
In their eyes are rings,
which dropped
out precious stones.
We tell each other about our lives
From down below, from the human bottom.
Sisters from the bottom.
We speak fluently in the language of suffering.
We touch each other's hands.
This helps us.
Leaving, I kiss them on the cheek
Delicate as water[4].

[4] Translated by Laura Miller-Purrenhage (Miller-Purrenhage 2014, 75).

By stressing the importance of physical contact, such as a touch or kiss, Świrszczyńska above all restores relationships and kinships with other women and overcomes the alienation which is a condition of women in the patriarchal society. To put it another way, "speaking-as-a-woman" already implies speaking collectively with other women. Thus, her poetry is not just a realization of the needs of an individual, but more importantly, an expression of collective struggle and women's engagement in shaping the new order, which would bring together the questions of equality and social justice in the period immediately after the war.

Another key point to remember is that the emancipatory project, for which women as party members, ordinary workers, and communist activists fought after 1945, seemed to be innovative with respect to the situation of women living in the Western countries (Grabowska 2018, 240). It turns out that women from socialist countries benefited from a larger spectrum of rights in the 50s, before the famous publication entitled *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1963)[5] was released. These advantages included the right to abortion, maternity leave, equal wages, free education, health care and perinatal care (Grabowska 2018, 267). According to the reports of the UN and the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation) published in the 60s and the 70s, it can also be concluded that "the equality of women was more developed in socialist countries" (Grabowska 2018, 267).

These circumstances influenced the shaping of Świrszczyńska's feminist worldview. She was actively engaged in actions aimed at the improvement of the social and political situation of women in Poland. *Jestem baba* [*I Am Baba*] is her answer to the problems of growing domestic violence and alcoholism[6]. These problems were neglected by the authorities in the 1960s and 1970s and seen by them as a result of Stalinist emancipatory politics, which ended in the crisis of family values (Grabowska 2018, 145). Women activists of that period, to a large extent, focused their work on organizing help for aggrieved women. According to Grabowska, their activity brought the phenomenon of violence against women to public attention (for example, through discussion on the question of alimony) and forced the state institutions to act for those women – most of whom were factory workers and women from rural areas – and children who became victims of domestic violence. It does not therefore come as a surprise that Świrszczyńska is an exemplary figure of those times, for she, like no other Polish poet, made

[5] However, it is good to recall the words written by Silvia Federici: "Although rarely recognized, the first signals of women's refusal to function as unpaid workers in the home did not come from Betty Friedan's bestseller *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), but from the struggles of »welfare mothers«, that is women receiving Aid for Dependent Children, in the mid 1960s". The Welfare Mothers Movement was not formed by white middle class women, but primarily by black women, „asserting the economic value of women's reproductive work and declaring »welfare« a women's right" (Federici 2012, 43, 98).

[6] According to Ewa Kraskowska, Świrszczyńska belonged to the Anti-Alcohol Committee and was a supporter of complete abstinence (Kraskowska 2015, 34).

social problems such as alcoholism, infidelity, violence, and exclusion the theme of her poems and exposed the fallacy of separating the private sphere from the public, the aesthetic from the political, the literary from the social.

These findings are crucial for the understanding of the context in which Świrszczyńska wrote *Jestem baba* [*I am Baba*]. It is evident, as I argue, that Świrszczyńska's poetry was shaped in the course of the collective practices of women's organizations in the Polish People's Republic. One example of her active engagement in such work practices was her comment published in *Trybuna Ludu* [*People's Tribune*] in 1963. The comment concerned Valentina Tereshkova who as the first woman in space was the pilot of "Vostok – 6" spaceship. The situation seems to be all the more unprecedented since Tereshkova also played a major role in creating the international women's movement by participating in the World Congress of Women held in Helsinki in 1969, where she presented her report entitled "Women and work" (Grabowska 2018, 236). In the report, she put forward the main assumptions and strategies for action of the international women's movement and emphasized the necessity of connecting the notion of equality with the analysis of women's economic situation (Grabowska 2018, 237). She also placed the notions connected with women's reproductive work at the centre of her considerations. As a summary of actions taken by women from East European countries, her ideas "formed the foundation for later narrations concerning the equality of the sexes" (Grabowska 2018, 245).

Hence, the solidified division into Western liberal feminism (as a movement which provided us with methodological tools) and Eastern socialist feminism (as a movement which did not influence the formation of gender studies) is not justified here either. On the contrary, "feminist discussions" were conducted throughout the entire period of the Polish People's Republic, and Świrszczyńska was an active participant in them. The character of those discussions may have differed from those which were carried out by the feminist studies in accordance with their Western paradigm due to differences in social and political context, yet the fashion of formulating problems was identical to the dilemmas solved by the Western researchers. Nevertheless, it is baffling that the contemporary Polish researchers assumed that there was no feminist discourse in the socialist countries at all. Their approach only confirms the hegemonic presence of Western theories in Polish feminist reflection. What is more, their disparagement of the left-wing project of rebuilding social ties based on the equality of the sexes was obviously accompanied by the rejection of the Marxist tradition and the implementation of Western feminist methodologies and narrations concerning the history of feminism and its definition. As a result, this dominant approach prevented the generations of contemporary women from telling the story of Polish feminism in a different way, that is, with regard to its geographical, political, economical, and social specificity.

Having said that, I do not simply claim that we should now reject Western methodologies and simply create our own. It is rather a question of changing the methodological habits and of questioning the manner in which the knowledge in feminist theories is produced. Throughout this process, it is important to choose a strategy which does not eliminate questions about our relationship with particular feminist traditions or the form of the assumed narrative framework. Polish historiographies shaped after 1989 by the national-liberal current have not explored that past enough. And "expelling communists from the historical narration of the women's movement," as Grabowska explains, results in "a constant search for the sources of its legitimization, somehow beyond its own history and experience" (Grabowska 2018, 286).

3. Definitions: Feminist Agency

As Clare Hemmings rightly noted, "the desire to be an appropriate feminist subject of politics that underwrites most feminist theory has considerable historiographic power in Western feminist storytelling" (Hemmings 2011, 105). Similarly, anti-communist narration accepted by feminist researchers after 1989 was based on one definition of feminism and women's agency. According to the commonly accepted definition, the "actual" women's agency occurs when it applies to "real power" achieved at the central level, that is, in the area of the state and institutional structures. However, actions taken at the local level – and in particular grassroots actions taken by ordinary women through which women organize themselves collectively and initiate changes – are usually ignored (Grabowska 2018, 155)

Despite that, when we carefully explore the history of women's rebellion and protests, it is easy to spot that women revolt most fiercely in situations in which their status is reduced to reproductive functions. Thus, as Silvia Federici notes, hearth and home – related to women's reproductive work – is one of the most difficult and, at the same time, most effective areas of resistance (Federici 2012). As we can learn from Grabowska and Fidelis, it is no wonder that the communist authorities feared strikes initiated by women the most. It is thus impossible to agree with the thesis that women's political activity after 1945 was "superficial" and imposed by communist authorities. One of Grabowska's interlocutors says: "**We enforced** the formation of nursery schools and pre-schools alongside the workplaces. (…) **We enforced** the formation of shops alongside the workplaces so that women could resupply there" (Grabowska 2018, 139). The action of those women, as well as "the activity of communists does not fit into the existing definitions of feminist agency" (Grabowska 2018, 235).

How should we therefore define feminism? At which moment and where should we localize its origins? Should we agree with the framework of Western narrations that this inaugural status belongs to the first wave of feminism, or should we assume that "there is no

»beginning« of feminism in the sense that there is no beginning to defiance in women"? (Rowbotham 2014, 16). Sheila Rowbotham suggests that before feminism became a mass social movement there had been actions taken by women that led to the rise of feminism. In other words, "there is a beginning of feminist possibility – even before it is conceived as such. Female resistance has taken several historical shapes" (Rowbotham 2014, 16–17). Therefore, in response to the question "where could an alternative conception of women's potentiality take root?" (Rowbotham 2014, 20) she answers without hesitation – in women's defiance. Even if, in those days, women were not able to politicize their claims and lead to radical transformations with regard to the system of power, their activity over time (Rowbotham begins her narration with the Middle Ages) caused revolutionary riots and led to social changes. Those women questioned their place in the world imposed by men and they sought alternative forms of social existence. "Their history is still almost unknown. They have been regarded as static unchanging factors, as part of the background, as completely passive. They were not in fact submissive" (Rowbotham 2014, 33).

Ewa Majewska calls this form of action a "weak resistance" (Majewska 2018) and Grabowska regards it as a "reactive agency" (Grabowska 2018). Both thinkers propose an alternative to the liberal idea of agency. In the case of communists' actions, the liberal definition ignores the context, the position in time and space, and furthermore, does not fully reflect the complexity of the actions taken and roles played. Grabowska argues that it is very common that women's activity in the Polish People's Republic does not acquire the traits of feminist agency, as it is not characterized by anti-systemic actions or actions taken against the authorities of that time. On the contrary, women co-created those structures, but caused their internal transformations. Thus, "reactive agency" has a strategic meaning on the level of social practice: it is not a gesture of opposition by certain groups or units against the dominating systems of power, but rather actions taken within the structure of the dominant system which eventually result in a social change.

There are numerous examples of such internal dissents in the history of women's movements. For instance, Rowbotham enumerates heretic cults in which women fulfilled their needs, be it emotional or intellectual ones, which they could not fulfil anywhere else. Religious cults slowly morphed into women's collectives which allowed them to spend life out of the institution of marriage (Rowbotham 2014, 21). Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when some germs of feminist awareness could be observed among women from the privileged social classes, it was, in fact, unnamed women from the lowest social classes who took actions such as riots over lack of food, protests against the increasing prices in Normandy in 1789, public announcement of the complaint list with demands concerning the right to education and access to medical supplies, and pamphlets and petitions concerning divorce and prostitution (Rowbotham 2014, 37):

> Collectively their protest is registered in the eighteenth-century food riot, the traditional manner in which the poor tried to reassert a pre-capitalist moral economy which placed need before profit, and the old community against the new state. The close connection of women to consumption meant that they were figured prominently in these riots (Rowbotham 2014, 33).

Silvia Federici gives the example of women's self-assemblies in Chile and Peru in the 1980s, when, as a part of the collectivization of reproductive work, they formed "common kitchens" (*ola communes*) in order to cope with the times of increasing crisis and inflation (Federici 2012, 143). Finally, one of Grabowska's interlocutors recalls a similar example of embroidering tray cloths and tablecloths for sale, initiated by activists from the Polish Women's League in the difficult 80s, which helped some women earn means to survive even for an entire month (Grabowska 2018, 151–152). "Such mobilization and mutual help sometimes morphed into income-generating activity that helped some women to survive the painful time of transformation to capitalism after 1989" (Grabowska 2016, 133).

Thus, is it acceptable to nullify those stories or treat them only as anecdotal "fragments of women's history" (Graff 2014, 189) disconnected from the contemporary women's movements? Feminist thinkers show that it was the resistance and dissent, fight and engagement of women over time which laid foundations of the emancipatory movements in the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Women's activity in the Polish People's Republic, which is diminished and commonly perceived as tailoring and sewing courses, should be regarded similarly. It led to substantive changes in the field of family politics, marriage law, and social relations. That activity was ousted and disassembled by Polish liberal feminism after 1989 even though it formed the basics for the post-transformation women's movements.

Conclusions: "Roses and Bread"

The poetry volume *Jestem baba* [*I Am Baba*] prompts an attempt to redefine the narrative norms which defined Polish feminism in the post-transformation period. In my opinion, the common view on women's alleged passivity in the Polish People's Republic, along with the conviction that the working class can only join forces in factories and workplaces, should be reformulated. Consequently, it could lead to the discovery of a new form of women's agency, which begins from the inside.

Thus, contemporary feminist narrations must be transformed by placing the "baba" – a beggar, a housewife, a sex worker, a peasant, a factory worker, a protesting mother of a disabled child, a caretaker of children and elder people, a refugee, an immigrant – in their centre. Feminism, according to Sheila Rowbotham, should form a more inclusive program of political fight which does not divide women into those who fight the war of roses and those who fight

for bread. She writes that "the woman must of necessity fight for bread and roses, because the material aspect of her exploitation is integrally related to her own consciousness of what she is" (Rowbotham 2014, 114). Świrszczyńska was read by feminist critics in the context of the war of roses, from the perspective of identity politics. The time has come to read her work from the perspective of the fight for bread as well. Świrszczyńska herself would never separate the one domain from the other. She confirms this postulate in her poem *Dwie baby* [*Two babas*]: "we immerse in ecstasy / in our babahood // like two spoons / immerse / in a bowl of hot grits" (Świrszczyńska 1975, 35).

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TYTUŁ: Chleba czy róż? Antykomunistyczna narracja w feministycznych odczytaniach Anny Świrszczyńskiej

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy artykuł stanowi analizę feministycznych interpretacji poezji Anny Świrszczyńskiej, jednej z najbardziej rozpoznawalnych poetek w Polsce, której twórczość charakteryzuje wyraźnie feministyczna wrażliwość. Wiele interpretatorek i interpretatorów poezji Świrszczyńskiej nie dociekało, skąd wziął się ów światopogląd poetki, twierdząc raczej, że jak na czasy PRL-u był on zjawiskiem wyjątkowym i rzadkim. W przeciwieństwie do narracji ustanowionej po 1989 roku przez interpretatorki tej poezji, uważam, że feministyczny światopogląd Świrszczyńskiej nie był zjawiskiem indywidualnym i odosobnionym, ponieważ wyłonił się w kontekście wzmożonej aktywności kobiet i w czasie wdrażania socjalistycznego projektu równości kobiet po 1945 roku. Uważam, że zarówno polityczna działalność

komunistek, jak i oddolne akcje przeprowadzane przez kobiety z klasy robotniczej miały znaczący wpływ na światopogląd poetki. Jednakże kształtująca się po 1989 roku feministyczna narracja zdominowana była przez antykomunistyczny paradygmat i nie uwzględniła w historii polskiego feminizmu lewicowych ruchów kobiecych. Skutkowało to aplikowaniem do historii polskich ruchów kobiecych: 1) liberalnego ujęcia feministycznej sprawczości; 2) zachodnich teorii feministycznych pozbawionych paradygmatu teorii marksistowskich; 3) normatywnej definicji feminizmu ograniczonej wyłącznie do działalności opozycyjnej. Przyglądając się poetyckiej aktywności Świrszczyńskiej, staram się podkreślić konieczność uzupełnienia luk w historii polskich ruchów kobiecych. Strategia ta wiąże się nieodłącznie z koniecznością przemyślenia genealogii polskiego feminizmu oraz redefinicji pojęcia feministycznej sprawczości.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: socjalizm, emancypacja, feminizm, antykomunizm, genealogia

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COMMUNISM AS A GENERAL CRIME: APPLYING HEGEMONY ANALYSIS TO ANTI-COMMUNIST DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

MICHALINA GOLINCZAK

Abstract: With the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe, anti-communism has gained new momentum. In Poland, it has become a hegemonic discourse that manifests itself in (and reproduces itself through) legislation, public history, politics, and education, as well as pop culture. However, the discursive dominance of anti-communism has hardly been researched systematically. In this article, I aim to apply hegemony analysis – as developed by Martin Nonhoff and based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of discourse – to anti-communism in contemporary Poland. I give an overview of the methodology, discuss concrete analytical tools and their possible application and argue that, as a result of an antagonistic division of discursive space, communism becomes a "general crime", an obstacle that prevents Polish society from finding "ultimate reconciliation with itself" and reaching its (mythical) fullness.

Keywords: anti-communism, discourse, hegemony (analysis), Laclau, Mouffe, Nonhoff

With the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe, as well as the narrative of the "end of history" and the superiority of capitalism and liberal democracy, anti-communism has gained new momentum (Žižek 2009; Kapmann, Müller, and Stojaković 2017, 11). Enzo Traverso even speaks of "a new wave of anti-communism: a 'militant', fighting anti-communism, all the more paradoxical inasmuch as its enemy had ceased to exist" (2016). In Poland, as in some other post-socialist states (cf. Holubec and Mrozik 2018),[1] it has become one of the key political discourses (Żukowski 2009; Saryusz-Wolska, Stach, and Stoll 2016; Janicka 2016) and may even be perceived as a discursive foundation of the Third Republic (Walicki 2013, 199–201).[2] All socially relevant forces, including most of the left, share the anti-communist consensus (Mrozik 2014). Polish anti-communism takes different, sometimes contradictory, forms: from opposition to Marxism and classical theorists of communism, to an over-simplified critique of the People's Republic of Poland,[3] to a general rejection of leftist or even liberal ideas (cf. Mrozik 2015). It manifests itself in legislation, public history, education, and everyday political life, as well as in pop culture. Although its scale is so remarkable, its hegemony so uncontested, and its manifestations so diverse, the current discursive dominance of anti-communism has not yet been researched systematically.[4]

One of the reasons might be that anti-communism is a relatively young research area. As historian Bernd Faulenbach claims, its significant historisation began only after the downfall of the socialist European states around 1989 (Faulenbach 2017). There are studies that focus primarily on specific historical periods in different countries. For example, in Germany, the role of anti-communism in Nazi ideology and during the Adenauer era has been relatively well explored (Körner 2003; Korte 2009; Creuzberger and Hoffmann 2014). The same can be said of the so-called "Red Scare" and the McCarthy era in the US (Murray 1964; Fried 1997; Heale 1990, 1998; Ceplair 2011; Storrs 2013). But the existing research is limited in time, mainly

[1] Holubec and Mrozik claim that "[t]he principal cause of this rise of anti-communism appears to be the failure of the dominant transformations narratives – such as the 'catch up with the West' and the 'building of democracy' – and the disappointment of Eastern European societies, especially Polish, Hungarian or Romanian, with their elites perceived as reincarnations of communism" (Holubec and Mrozik 2018, 14).

[2] According to Walicki, the Third Republic of Poland was born as "an ideological project of radical right-wing anti-communism" (Walicki 2013, 200). He points out that Lech Wałęsa did not receive the presidential insignia on December 22, 1990, from outgoing president Wojciech Jaruzelski, who had not been invited to the ceremony, but from Ryszard Kaczorowski, the president of the London-based government-in-exile. The term "Third Republic" (Trzecia Rzeczpospolita), describing Poland after the political-economic changes of 1989–1990, is not an official one, but it appears in the preamble of the 1997 constitution.

[3] That is, a critique that is not aimed at criticising some aspects of the People's Republic of Poland but in fact is a condemnation of communism (socialism) *en bloc*.

[4] This does not mean that some particular aspects have not been studied. For example, the antisemitic topos of "Jewish Communism" ("żydokomuna") has been researched quite thoroughly, see: Gerrits 1995; Blatman 1997; Pufelska 2007; Zawadzka 2009, 2012, 2016; Starnawski 2012; Śpiewak 2012; Forecki 2017.

focusing on the period between the beginning of the 20th century and the end of the Cold War. Therefore, present-day anti-communism, not only in Poland, has not been adequately studied.[5]

One of the difficulties in research on this topic involves terminological matters and the fact that the term "anti-communism" has been intensely politically disputed; even regarding its definition "opinions in the political-scientific discussions (…) differ considerably", as Faulenbach notes (Faulenbach 2011, 1). In this paper, I use a broad definition of anti-communism that allows me to take into account the multitude of its manifestations in contemporary Poland. In practice, this means that my work is not based on a certain definition of "communism" but rather explores how the term is used in political discourses (cf. OSKiLnK 2013).

This article proposes to apply hegemony analysis to anti-communist discourse in Poland. After giving an overview of the methodology as developed by Martin Nonhoff, I proceed to discuss concrete theoretical tools and their possible application, using various examples from the period after 1989. These are not selected systematically but rather aim to show the broad scope of anti-communism. It should be emphasised that this paper has an introductory purpose and does not claim to give a full overview of either Nonhoff's approach or Laclau and Mouffe's discourse and hegemony theory. It introduces only those aspects and concepts that are relevant for the analysis of the hegemony of anti-communism and aims at starting a debate, rather than giving definitive answers. Therefore, some aspects that are fundamental to hegemony theory, such as the relationship between discourse and subject, are not discussed in this article.

Hegemony analysis as political discourse analysis

The hegemony analysis applied in this article is a method used for the analysis of political discourses, developed by political scientist and professor of political theory at the University of Bremen Martin Nonhoff (2006). His approach is based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of discourse as introduced in their collective work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2014 [1985]) as well as its further development by Laclau (Nonhoff 2006, 18). Nonhoff aims to close a "methodology gap" by making their theory more

[5] In the Polish context, anti-communism among right-wing parties and political groups during the period 1989–2000 has been analysed in detail by Artur Lipiński (2005). I would also like to point out the work of the Centre for Cultural and Literary Studies of Communism at the Institute of Literary Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences, founded 2011, and its book series "Communism. Ideas – Discourses – Practices" ("Komunizm. Idee – Dyskursy – Praktyki"), which – going against the dominant narratives about communism – is unique in the Polish academic landscape. One can also observe a rising interest in anti-communism in journalistic texts: see, for example, two issues of the quarterly *Bez Dogmatu* (79/2009 and 116/2018) with a series of articles on anti-communism in Poland after 1989; Wielgosz 2017; Herer 2017.

suitable for empirical analysis (Nonhoff 2008, 300; 2019, 64).[6] He uses it to analyse the discourse of the "social market economy" in Germany during the 1940s and 1950s. However, in doing so, he is less concerned with the specifics of how and why the hegemony of the "social market economy" has been established but instead focuses on the more general question of "how hegemony is being exercised, in which structures and mechanisms it is grounded, and which factors are characteristic of its success" (Nonhoff 2006, 10).

Nonhoff's hegemony analysis focuses on political discourses, understood as discourses in which a (specific) universal is being disputed in a conflictual manner (Nonhoff 2006, 19). Its approach – following Laclau and Mouffe – does not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices and perceives discourse as prior to the distinction between linguistic and extra-linguistic, since it includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. As Laclau and Mouffe emphasise: "[B]y discourse we do not mean a combination of speech and writing, but rather that speech and writing are themselves but internal components of discursive totalities" (Laclau and Mouffe 1987, 82). They define discourse as "the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 91), i.e. from the practice of differentiation between elements and, as a result, the production of meaning and its partial and temporary fixation through privileged discursive points. Following Saussurean linguistics (Saussure 1959), a term like "communism" gains its meaning only in the process of differentiating it from, and in relation to, other terms, such as "capitalism", "social democracy", and so on (cf. Torfing 1999, 87). Meaning is not fixed permanently and – to anticipate the subsequent reflections on hegemony – "[t]o contend that there exists such a given meaning must be considered a hegemonic move in itself" (Nonhoff 2005, 13).

Hegemony is the second key notion that Nonhoff adopts from Laclau and Mouffe. The authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, in turn, refer to Antonio Gramsci, who distinguishes between domination on the one hand and "intellectual and moral leadership" on the other (Gramsci 1999, 212). To him, rather than open coercion, hegemony is based on a kind of political agreement and consensus. However, this does not mean that it is purely consensual (cf. Opratko 2012, 63), since Gramsci perceives it as a "combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent" (Gramsci 1999, 248).

Laclau and Mouffe understand hegemony as a process or a relation "by which a certain particular content overflows its own particularity and becomes the incarnation of the absent

[6] There are several analyses inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's theory and the so-called Essex School, e.g. of populism and nationalism, environmental movements, political identities, European integration and security policy. See: Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis 2000; Howarth and Torfing 2005.

fullness of society" (Laclau 1995, 89) or "the name of an utterly incommensurable universality" (Laclau 2006, 648). The former illustrates this point as follows:

> Let us suppose a situation of generalized social disorder: in such a situation "order" becomes the name of an absent fullness, and if that fullness is constitutively unachievable it cannot have any content of its own, any form of self-representation. "Order" becomes thus autonomous vis-à-vis any particular order as far as it is the name of an absent fullness that no concrete social order can achieve (…). That fullness is present, however, as that which is absent and needs as a result to be represented in some way. Now, its means of representation will be constitutively inadequate, for they can only be particular contents which assume, in certain circumstances, a function or representation of the impossible universality of the community (Laclau 1995, 89).

In their definition of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe draw on (Lacan's) psychoanalysis and the experience of lack.[7] They explain what, from the psychoanalytical point of view, is "the moment of the mythical fullness for which we search in vain: the restoration of the mother/child unity (…) [is], in political terms, the fully reconciled society" (Laclau 2005a, 119). This (purely mythical) social fullness is to be achieved only through hegemony (ibid.):

> [V]arious political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function (Laclau 1996, 44).

In a similar sense, Simon Critchley speaks of "hegemonization" as "actions that attempt to fix the meaning of social relations" (Critchley 2004, 113). Following Gramsci, Laclau, and Mouffe, Nonhoff defines hegemony not as the predominance of particular individuals or groups but as "the predominance of a certain constellation of socially shared meaning" (Nonhoff 2006, 11). In other words, hegemony is about generating social naturalness, universal validity, or normality (Nonhoff 2006, 40).

[7] Lacan's psychoanalysis plays an important role in hegemony and discourse theory, but further elaboration on it would exceed the scope of this paper. Laclau's empty signifier would, for example, correspond to Lacan's master signifier, the impossibility of society – to the impossibility of the sexual relation, and so on (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004). The hegemonic logic is, as Laclau claims, identical to the logic of the *objet petit a* (Laclau 2005a, 115–116).

Hegemonic demands and discursive relations

Nonhoff starts his analysis of hegemony by looking at the smallest part of discourse, which, following Laclau, he calls "demand" (Laclau 2005a, 73). He identifies three types of hegemonic demands (Nonhoff 2006, 119), all of which can be retraced in anti-communist discourse. Firstly, there are *cumulative demands*, which substantiate a particular aspect of the universal and can always be complemented by additional cumulative demands (ibid.). For example, changing street names in order to "overcome" the communist past is a very specific demand, which can easily be supplemented by additional demands, such as banning communist symbols or tearing down monuments. Secondly, there are *subsuming demands*, which claim that if they are met, then so too will other hegemonic demands (ibid.). For example, a demand to defend the "Polish nation" against the "onslaught of cultural Marxism" also implies that a successful defence would save Christianity and "traditional family values" from the disintegrating influences of "gender ideology", etc. In this case, a nationalist anti-communist demand goes hand in hand with religious and patriarchal ones. Thirdly, there are *encompassing demands*, the fulfilment of which constitutes a sufficient condition for the rectification of the lack of the universal (ibid.). An example would be the famous sentence of Poland's first post-communist prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1989): "We draw a thick line under the past", implying that communism is over once and for all, and society can finally return to normality.

According to Nonhoff, the struggle for hegemony can be divided into three different but overlapping steps (Nonhoff 2006, 140–141). The first step contains *hegemonic articulations,* attempting to expand their influence in the field of competing discourses. In the second step, these articulations constitute a *hegemonic project*, which can be described as political discourse with a pivotal promise striving towards hegemony. Finally, in the third step, we can speak of an established *hegemony*; if "a demand [is] in fact across a longer period of time [it will] be disseminated as the common will of the politico-societal forces" (Nonhoff 2005). However, it should be mentioned that the establishment of this "common will" does not mean that there are no deviating opinions. Hegemony is about predominance, not total domination, and can therefore never be total. Its reach in terms of content, space, and time is always limited (Nonhoff 2006, 147).

Hegemony analysis focuses on relations between discursive elements; Nonhoff distinguishes five types of these (Nonhoff 2006, 86–88). *Difference* ("*x* is different from *y*") is the basic relation between all discursive elements and can be retraced in all other discursive relations. In a relation of *equivalence* ("*x* is different from *y*, but in relation to *a* both go hand in hand"), two elements are articulated as different from each other but equivalent with regard to a third one. An example of this relation would be a typical argument stemming from the theory

of totalitarianism, as present in Polish legislation after 1989.[8] It runs as follows: Communism may differ from fascism, but both are totalitarian systems that are responsible for the death of millions of people. Moving on, the relation of *contrariness* ("*x* is different from *y*, and in relation to *a* it is blocked by *y*") explicitly articulates the impossibility of a connection between two elements and sets them in opposition to each other (but not in every regard). The common claim in neoliberal discourse comes to mind, which contrasts the alleged mentality of a "homo sovieticus" with an "entrepreneurial spirit" and states that the former is incompatible with the free market (cf. Żukowski 2012; Buchowski 2013). Even stronger is the relation of *super-difference* ("*x* is different from *y*, and it has nothing at all to do with *y*"), which separates "discursive arenas" and emphasises the difference between two discursive elements by articulating that they are not only different from each other, but that there is no connection between them whatsoever, not even in a negative sense. A characteristic example of this relation is found in the infamous quote by ex-Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski:

> The previous government implemented a left-wing concept as if the world had to move using a Marxist model in only one direction: towards a mixture of cultures and races, a world of cyclists and vegetarians, who only use renewable energy sources and combat all forms of religion. This has nothing in common with traditional Polish values (Waszczykowski 2016).

Finally, in a relation of *representation* ("*x* stands for *y*"), one element embodies a second one:

> When we hear Gazeta Wyborcza, we think of Trybuna Ludu. When we hear PO, we think of PZPR. And when we see a high-ranking representative of the government, the first thing that comes to our mind is "Down with Communism!" (Winnicki 2012).[9]

Nonhoff's five discursive relations might be expanded by a sixth: identification ("*x* is identical to *y* with regard to *a*"). This relation is similar to equivalence but with a different emphasis. While in the relation of equivalence, two elements are different in general but equivalent with regard to a third one, in the relation of identification, two elements are perceived as basically

[8] According to article 13 of the Poland's constitution of 1997, "[p]olitical parties and other organizations whose programmes are based upon totalitarian methods and the modes of activity of nazism, fascism and communism, as well as those whose programmes or activities sanction racial or national hatred, the application of violence for the purpose of obtaining power or to influence the State policy, or provide for the secrecy of their own structure or membership, shall be prohibited".

[9] *Gazeta Wyborcza* is a Polish liberal newspaper; *Trybuna Ludu* was from 1948 to 1990 the official newspaper of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR); PO/Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) is a liberal-conservative political party in Poland. Robert Winnicki, a far-right politician, means here the Second Cabinet of Donald Tusk – a coalition government of the PO and the agrarian, conservative Polish People's Party (PSL).

the same and different only in marginal aspects. The following quote by right-wing politician Janusz Korwin-Mikke may serve as an example.

> We surely have to deal with a new form of communism, only in a new disguise. As Coco Chanel used to say: "New and old are the same, only wrapped differently". This holds true for the Law and Justice party as well. They are communists in a new wrapper with a cross on top of it (Korwin-Mikke 2018).

The discursive relations described above can function as modes of arranging discursive elements into coherent strategemes, which in turn constitute a hegemonic strategy.

Hegemonic strategy and its core strategemes

Every hegemonic strategy is composed of a number of hegemonic strategemes. Nonhoff identifies nine such strategemes, three of which he calls "core strategemes" because they are sufficient to grasp a hegemonic strategy (Nonhoff 2006, 212–221).[10] Although they are always intertwined in practice, their separate examination can be useful for analytical purposes. After a more detailed examination of these core strategemes, I proceed to discuss the question of how to apply the hegemony analysis as developed by Nonhoff to anti-communist discourse.

(I) Articulation of equivalences between different demands made with regard to the universal

In the logic of equivalence, different demands are articulated as equivalent, so that a variety of groups and individuals can perceive them as their own. The exemplary structure of such a demand runs as follows: "Your demand is actually the same as ours, so if our demand is fulfilled, so will yours be" (Nonhoff 2006, 214). This articulation of equivalences between different demands leads to the formation of chains of equivalence: "v, w, x, y, and z are all different from each other but equivalent with regard to a" (Nonhoff 2006, 87). Such a chain of equivalence forms itself in opposition to a "constitutive outside".[11] This means that the

[10] For additional strategemes identified by Nonhoff, which aim to expand the range of hegemony, see Nonhoff 2006, 211–221.

[11] Laclau defines a "constitutive outside" as "an 'outside' which blocks the identity of the 'inside' (and is, nonetheless, the prerequisite for its constitution at the same time)" (Laclau 1990, 17). As Torfing argues, "the constitutive outside of a discourse A, which is discursively constructed by the expansion of a chain of equivalence, is neither B nor non-A, but anti-A" (Torfing 1999, 125).

equivalent demands are not united by "something positive (…) but something negative: their opposition to a common enemy" (Laclau 1996, 40–41).

(II) Antagonistic division of discursive space

In the logic of difference, all demands that do not correspond to the central hegemonic demand are also discursively knotted together in a chain of equivalence. The construction of such an opposing chain is an important part of every hegemonic practice. In the end, since "[a]ntagonism[12] does not admit *tertium quid*" (Laclau 2014 [1985], 115), we reach two antagonistic camps or opposing blocks of demands. These are made up of "the elements of lack, lethargy, and resistance on the one hand (…) and the demand to overcome these negative forces on the other (…)" (Nonhoff 2005). One's own essential demand is contrasted with an antagonistic one, which is perceived and represented as the "core of all evil" (Nonhoff 2006, 220). However, these chains of equivalence are never set permanently, since there is a constant struggle for the creation of differences and new chains of equivalence.

(III) Representation

Hegemonies are centred on a specific discursive element that is supposed to represent the universal (Nonhoff 2008, 308). Since the universal, for example the common good or an equivalent notion (freedom, wealth), cannot directly actualise itself in a discourse, it needs a "symbolic embodiment" (ibid.). Laclau calls this central demand in which all particular demands are represented an "empty signifier" (Laclau 1996, 34–46).[13] As he suggests, "[t]he presence of empty signifiers (…) is the very condition of hegemony" (43). He states that

> representation is only possible if a particular demand, without entirely abandoning its own particularity, starts also functioning as a signifier representing the chain as a totality

[12] The term antagonism is understood by Laclau and Mouffe (2014 [1985]) differently than in the Marxist tradition (Nonhoff 2014, 31). It is neither a "real opposition" (A–non A) nor a "logical contradiction" (A–B), since these are objective relations and the objects (real or conceptual) have full identities: "But in the case of antagonism, we are confronted with a different situation: the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution. (…) [A]ntagonisms are not *internal* but *external* to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 111–112, emphasis in original). However, this conception of antagonism (A–anti-A), as formulated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, has evolved in their later work, especially in Laclau's *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (1990). For the development of the understanding of antagonism by Laclau and Mouffe see: Torfing 1999, 120–131 and Nonhoff 2017.

[13] To emphasise the process of one element becoming the incarnation of the universal, Nonhoff suggests speaking of "emptied" rather than "empty signifiers" (2006, 132).

> (in the same way as gold, without ceasing to be a particular commodity, transforms its own materiality into the universal representation of value). This process by which a particular demand comes to represent an equivalential chain incommensurable with it is, of course, what we have called hegemony (Laclau 2005b, 39).

One of his favourite examples of an empty signifier is the Polish trade union Solidarność, whose symbols "[a]t some point (…) became the symbols of the absent fullness of society" (Laclau 2005a, 226):

> The demands of Solidarnosc, for instance, started by being the demands of a particular working class group in Gdansk, but as they were formulated in an oppressed society, where many social demands were frustrated, they became the signifiers of the popular camp in a new dichotomic discourse (Laclau 2005b, 39).

It is important to note that such an understanding of Solidarność is only possible from today's dominant perspective and is a result of a struggle for its hegemonisation. During the 1980s, the meaning of the movement was still not determined and potentially open to other interpretations. In this sense, Solidarność retroactively became a signifier of the fight against communism only after 1989.[14]

Communism as a signifier of exclusion

How can we transfer concepts from hegemony and discourse theory to the analysis of anti-communist discourse in contemporary Poland? As a result of the antagonistic division of discursive space, it is possible to discern two chains of equivalence. On one side there is everything that contributes to the overcoming of communism ("everything which resolves the lack of the universal"), and on the other there is everything that renders the overcoming of communism impossible ("everything which prevents the successful removal of the lack") (Nonhoff 2006, 216). As Laclau and Mouffe argue, in each discourse one specific logic – either the logic of equivalence or the logic of difference – predominates, which affects the division of discursive space: "[T]he logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 117). When the former preponderates, the discursive space is divided into two clearly opposed camps ("friend" vs. "enemy"), while in the latter such dichotomisation is not

[14] The mainstream interpretation of Solidarność is challenged by, for example, Jan Sowa, for whom at least the so-called first Solidarność from 1980 was not an anti-communist movement but, on the contrary, "an event *par excellence* communist" (Sowa 2015, 177).

possible, since constructing "an enemy" is much more difficult (cf. Norval 2000, 221).[15] Anti-communism is thus an example of a discourse where the logic of equivalence is predominant. As the Razem example shows (see below), it is not possible to take a middle ground – it is necessary to position oneself as anti-communist to be taken seriously in public discourse. Any ambiguous stance is immediately identified as the communist "enemy".

This antagonistic division of discursive space takes on different forms. In mainstream narratives regarding the People's Republic of Poland, the division runs between the "Polish nation" (or society) and the "communist regime". Both are perceived as monolithic blocks: the united, heroic, Catholic nation on the one side and an external enemy, oppression from outside, the embodiment of evil on the other (cf. Żukowski 2009, 5; Chmielewska 2012, 18–20). As a result of this narrative, the history of the People's Republic of Poland is presented only as a curio, a short disturbance of the natural development of Polish society (Chmielewska 2012, 31). For the period after 1989, this division has been replaced by the antagonism between a post-Solidarność and a post-communist camp, which functioned in a very similar way and lasted until 2015, when not a single left-wing party (including the post-socialist Democratic Left Alliance) was elected to parliament. Since then, the main parties within the (former) post-Solidarność camp have accused each other of being communist.[16]

Nevertheless, the central promise of these – seemingly opposing – anti-communist discourses stays the same: Polish society will not reach harmony or fullness unless communism, "the core of all evil", is overcome. Communism, as a "general crime", is an obstacle that prevents Polish society "from coinciding with itself, from reaching its own fullness" (Laclau 2000, 142).[17] The promise to overcome communism takes on different forms, depending on

[15] To illustrate this point, Glynos and Howarth refer to struggles of national liberation against colonial occupants. Here, both logics are operative: The logic of equivalence frames this struggle as one of oppressed colonial subjects vs. oppressive colonial regime (thus levelling the class, gender, and other differences among the oppressed), while the logic of difference "draws on other discourses in an attempt to break down these chains of equivalence" (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 144–145), applying a "divide and rule" strategy. The two logics are not "mutually exclusive": They interact with each other and neither can dominate completely (cf. also Torfing 1999, 125–128; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 12).

[16] To give one of many examples: On December 27, 2017, then Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczak announced that communism in Poland had ended just one week previously (when President Duda had signed a new law on the Supreme Court and the National Council of the Judiciary). The leader of the oppositional Civic Platform Grzegorz Schetyna commented on Twitter: "Communism is coming back to Poland and will not end until Law and Justice has fallen into political non-existence" (Schetyna 2017).

[17] The phrase "general crime" refers to Karl Marx, who describes the hegemonic operation in which a particular class becomes a representative of the whole society. In order to succeed, "all the defects of society must conversely be concentrated in another class, a particular estate must be the general stumbling-block, the incorporation of the general limitation, a particular social sphere must be looked upon as the *notorious crime* of the whole of society, so that liberation from that sphere appears as general self-liberation. For one estate to be *par excellence* the estate of liberation, another estate must conversely be the obvious estate of oppression" (Marx 2010 [1843], 185, emphasis in original). Cf. Laclau 2000.

who articulates it. It can mean the elimination of some imaginary residue of the People's Republic of Poland, the struggle against alleged new forms of communism (such as "cultural Marxism", "gender ideology", or the European Union) or, last but not least, opposition to the current government of the Law and Justice party. Since these demands can never be completely fulfilled, the hegemony of anti-communism can perpetuate itself:

> [T]he hegemonic operation is only possible insofar as it never succeeds in achieving what it attempts (…). For if such a total suture was possible, it would mean that the universal would have found its own undisputed body, and no hegemonic variation would any longer be possible (Laclau 2000, 142).

Can communism function as an empty signifier in this hegemony? Nonhoff would say no. In his view, an empty signifier has to be "positively" loaded in order to "render the universal symbolically accessible" (2006, 129). However, other scholars, such as Philipp Sarasin (2001), Philip Bedall (2014), and Yannis Stavrakakis distinguish between "positive" and "negative" empty signifiers.[18] As the latter states:

> The signifier of exclusion (…) is also an empty signifier, but one that represents the opposite of the point de capiton:[19] pure negativity, what has to be negated and excluded in order for reality to signify its limits. Reagan's characterisation of the USSR as the evil empire is a good case in point. Here again a particular signifier is "emptied" from its concrete content in order to represent a negative universal (…) (Stavrakakis 1999, 80–81).

Communism, as a "negative" empty signifier, provides the over-arching frame for a multitude of "positive" empty signifiers, which do not share any positive common content and may range from liberal democracy to the Catholic Polish nation.

[18] Laclau also takes into consideration the possibility of a negative empty signifier. He states that "[t]he moment of the antagonistic clash, which cannot be directly represented, can however be signified – positivised, if you want – through the production of an empty signifier (or two, rather; one at each side of the antagonistic frontier)" (Laclau 2006, 108).

[19] Lacan's category of "point de capiton" is in Laclau and Mouffe's terminology called a "nodal point": "Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, *nodal points*" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 99, emphasis in original). For similarities and differences between a nodal point and an empty signifier see: Howarth 2004, 268–269; Laclau 2004, 322.

Anti-communist fantasy and its dual character

Anti-communism, similar to other political discourses, aims "to eliminate anxiety and loss, to defeat dislocation, in order to achieve a state of fullness (…)" (Stavrakakis 1999, 82). However, it does not only promise "a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle [here: communism, M.G.] is overcome", but it also "foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves insurmountable" (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 147). Stavrakakis calls these two dimensions of (hegemonic) discourse the "dual character of fantasy", its "beatific and (…) horrific dimension" (1999, 52).[20] Both aspects "are inseparable and mutually constitutive" (Glynos 2001, 88). It is against this background that one should read the following statement of MP Krystyna Pawłowicz of the ruling Law and Justice party:

> Only now, 27 years after 1989, is a true revolution against communism and the People's Republic of Poland taking place. It is a battle over life and death. (…) The Law and Justice party faces a historic task. In order to ensure the survival of the country, it must win this battle (Pawłowicz 2016).

The battle against communism is also waged by a major part of the Polish left. For them, as Agnieszka Mrozik notes:

> [T]he communist project and the people connected to it – especially after the Second World War – [are] the proverbial ball and chain or an unpleasant surprise, meaning a kind of burden, disgrace, trouble (…). It is like an unpleasant smell that one cannot get rid of, like dirt that sticks like a leech despite repeated attempts at disinfection (Mrozik 2014).

These attempts at "disinfection" are symptomatic of the way the Polish left deals with the communist legacy. For example, the standard reaction of the social democratic party Razem to "accusations" of being communist is to create a relation of super-difference. When a journalist asked Marcelina Zawisza whether she was a communist, she answered:

> No. If someone has difficulties distinguishing between communism and social democracy, they did not pay attention in social sciences at school. The solutions that

[20] Glynos defines fantasy as "a framing device that subjects use to 'protect' themselves from the anxiety associated with the idea that there is no ultimate guarantee or law underlying and guiding our social existence" (Glynos 2011, 70).

> we propose do not stem from communism but have their roots in Western Europe (Zawisza 2017).

The same argumentative structure can be observed in the following statement by the party's most prominent figure, Adrian Zandberg:

> You must have seriously defective vision to see in us fans of Jaruzelski. (…) It is enough to look at the election programme of Razem to notice that our proposals follow the example of Northern Europe (Zandberg 2016).

It is telling that both Zawisza and Zandberg deny any connection between social democracy and communism. Communism here is identified with the political leader of the People's Republic of Poland and implicitly with the East. In this narrative, Polish society, including the left, must overcome this burden of Eastern communism in order to become part of Western or Northern Europe. In this line of argumentation, we can also identify Stavrakakis' "dual character of fantasy": The Western welfare state being the beatific promise, while its horrific dimension is the threat of Poland becoming a second version of "Putin's Russia".[21]

Using a strategy that denies any connections to communism as a political legitimisation and to prevent any kind of penalisation (see ft. 8), Razem reproduces anti-communism and consolidates its hegemony. The party's strategy can be understood as an attempt to defend its "membership in the Polish national and social community" (OSKiLnK [Żukowski], 228). As Tomasz Żukowski puts it:

> Debates about peoples' connection to communism aroused and still arouse so many emotions because what is at stake is symbolic power. To stigmatise someone as a communist means depriving them of the right to participate in public life (Żukowski 2009, 4).

In this sense, anti-communism can be perceived as a typical discourse of exclusion, and it is worthwhile to see it in conjunction with other discourses, such as (Catholic) nationalism and antisemitism. For Elżbieta Janicka, an ethnic-religious and an anti-communist doxa are the social-cultural frame in contemporary Poland; "[b]oth paradigms overlap and both are potentially – if not structurally – built on antisemitism" (Janicka 2016). Anti-communist

[21] These two scenarios – beatific and horrific – are put in a nutshell by Maciej Konieczny, a member of the board of the Razem party: "The question is: Do we want to live in a well-functioning European country or in Putin's Russia?" (Konieczny 2015).

discourse, at least its right-wing variant, works similar to the fascist one in which "the presupposed organic unity of society is perturbed by the intrusion of a foreign body" (Žižek 2008, 261). In such discourses "the (class) antagonism inherent in the social structure" (ibid.) is externalised, the imaginary harmony is disturbed by an external intruder. This "intruder from outside" often takes the form of a (Jewish) communist. Żukowski describes him as follows:

> [A communist] has a thousand faces and turns up in the least expected place. He is a ghost from the past and a still dangerous, hidden enemy; a foreign occupier and a frustrated, familiar "homo sovieticus", not pleased with free Poland. He feels great in the new reality, makes "connections" and drums up corruption in the highest circles of business and politics, and – at the same time – organises demanding strikes and does not give a damn about market reforms. On the one hand, he sucks blood from the Polish people as the enfranchised nomenklatura, and on the other – damages the economy with preposterous, extreme leftist ideas. (…) He is an antisemite from March '68 but also an anti-Polish Jew. (...) His only useful characteristic – he is permanently foreign (Żukowski 2009, 4).

Jason Glynos and David Howarth argue that where the logic of equivalence predominates, "fantasmatic logics may take the form of a narrative in which an *internal* obstacle (or "enemy within") is deemed responsible for the blockage of identity, while promising a fullness or harmony to come" (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 150, emphasis in original). On the other hand, within the logic of difference an external enemy or obstacle is deemed to be a threat to an already existing fullness and harmony. However, things are not as simple in this case because in anti-communist discourse, both narratives are merged together: The communist as an "enemy within" is often externalised – marked as a Jew, a western cultural Marxist, a Russian Bolshevik, etc. – and thereby declared a threat to the anti-communist Polish nation.

Conclusion

In this article, I have selectively applied hegemony analysis to anti-communist discourse in contemporary Poland. The whole analytical praxis, as developed by Martin Nonhoff, is composed of six steps: 1. preparatory work; 2. selection/design of the discourse corpus; 3. structure of the analysis; 4. analysis of single texts and their context; 5. analysis beyond the single text/on the discourse level; 6. checking the validity of the strategemes (Nonhoff 2008, 316–318; Nonhoff 2019, 84–99).

Nevertheless, even without the whole process of analysis, it is possible to recognise the benefits, challenges, and limitations regarding the application of this methodology to anti-communist discourse. One important advantage is that it forces us to limit the research

question, which – in the case of such a complex issue as anti-communism – is necessary. Hegemony analysis focuses on the functioning of hegemony (with hegemony understood as the function of discourse) (Nonhoff 2008, 300). It is not suited for the reconstruction of the conditions and the genesis of anti-communism or for the exploration of the motivations of anti-communists and their goals,[22] and it does not ask why its hegemony is so successful or what its functions are. It is rather aimed at finding typical mechanisms and structures of anti-communist discourse.

Another methodological benefit of this approach is that – widening the scope of discourse analysis – it enables us to focus not only on texts but also on political actions, social interventions, institutions, law-making processes, or events, since "every social configuration is *meaningful*" (Laclau and Mouffe 1987, 82, emphasis in original), and "[a]s long as every non-linguistic action is meaningful, it is also discursive" (85).[23] Finally, hegemony analysis allows us to perceive anti-communism as a hegemony, meaning as a widely shared consensus, thus enabling us to focus our research not only on the "usual suspects" (i.e. conservative and right-wing anti-communists) but also on how the discourse is internalised and reproduced by leftist groups.

Moreover, Nonhoff's detailed description of the analytical procedure provides a clear structure that helps to operationalise Laclau and Mouffe's theory. Of course, this application cannot be simply mechanical. One should "avoid the twin pitfalls of empiricism and theoreticism", as Howarth and Stavrakakis warn:

> [I]nstead of applying a pre-existing theory on to a set of empirical objects, discourse theorists seek to articulate their concepts in each particular enactment of concrete research. The condition for this conception of conducting research is that the concepts and logics of the theoretical framework must be sufficiently "open" and flexible enough to be adopted, deformed and transformed in the process of application (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 5).

Like every methodological approach, hegemony analysis has its limitations. Due to the strong focus on the functioning of hegemony, other important research questions are necessarily disregarded. It is, for example, debatable whether one can sufficiently grasp continuities and

[22] As Ole Wæver notes, discourse analysis "does not try to get to the thoughts or motives of the actors, their hidden intentions or secret plans. (…) What is often presented as a weakness of discourse analysis – 'how do you find out if they really *mean* it?', 'what if it is only rhetoric?' – can be turned into a methodological strength, as soon as one is scrupulous about sticking to discourse as discourse" (Wæver 2005, 33, emphasis in original).

[23] However, according to Nonhoff, this does not hold for physical violence that marks the limit of discourse (Nonhoff 2006, 11). This assumption appears questionable, since it is not clear in what regard acts of violence differ from other non-linguistic discursive actions.

abrupt changes in the history of anti-communism using hegemony analysis, even though it perceives hegemony not as something static but as a continuous process. The same can be said about the reasons for the rise of anti-communism, its socio-economic conditions, and its functions. Moreover, hegemony analysis might not be the best approach for a comparison of different kinds of anti-communism (e.g. social democratic, liberal, and fascist), which are all understood as parts of one all-encompassing hegemony.

Nevertheless, the sound theoretical framework of hegemony analysis can serve as a good introductory step for researching anti-communism in contemporary Poland. In return, hegemony analysis, as a problem-driven approach, can also benefit from its application to this specific discourse, so that, in a best-case scenario, both anti-communism research and hegemony analysis learn from each other. As Jacob Torfing puts it: "The challenge is to go beyond illustrative analysis and conduct discourse analysis in order to produce new, unexpected insights and sharpen the theoretical categories and arguments" (Torfing 2000, 26).

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TYTUŁ: Komunizm jako powszechne przestępstwo: przyczynek do analizy hegemonii dyskursu antykomunistycznego we współczesnej Polsce

ABSTRAKT: Załamanie się systemu socjalistycznego w Europie Wschodniej wiązało się z rozkwitem antykomunizmu, który w Polsce stał się jednym z dominujących dyskursów politycznych. Jest on ugruntowany w ustawodawstwie, oddziałuje na nauki społeczne i edukację, przenika kulturę popularną i pamięć zbiorową oraz wpływa na bieżące działania polityczne. Mimo to wciąż brakuje systematycznych analiz jego hegemonii. W niniejszym artykule podejmuję próbę zastosowania metodologii wypracowanej przez Martina Nonhoffa w oparciu o teorię dyskursu Ernesta Laclaua i Chantal Mouffe do dyskursu antykomunistycznego we współczesnej Polsce. Argumentuję, że w efekcie antagonistycznego podziału przestrzeni dyskursywnej komunizm staje się „powszechnym przestępstwem", przeszkodą, która uniemożliwia polskiemu społeczeństwu pojednanie się z samym sobą i osiągnięcie (mitycznej) pełni.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: antykomunizm, dyskurs, hegemonia, Laclau, Mouffe, Nonhoff

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ERASURE OF THE COMMON: FROM POLISH ANTI-COMMUNISM TO UNIVERSAL ANTI-CAPITALISM

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Abstract: The subject of the article is the recent rise in significance of anti-communist discourses on the example of Polish anti-communism. The aim of the article is twofold. Firstly, to test the limits of usefulness of the theory of hegemony in the critique of anti-communism. I claim that it remains operative as an analytic tool to track practical uses of anti-communism in political rivalry, but it is unable to conceptualize more systemic and non-apparent operations of anti-communist logics in the machinery of contemporary capitalism. I propose an alternative interpretation of anti-communism, drawing mostly on post-operaist Marxism of the common and acknowledging its theoretical assumptions with recent research on the Polish popular classes and their bottom-up social practices. Secondly, I present a hypothesis, according to which proper understanding of the particular example of Polish anti-communism could be helpful to understand the functioning of universal anti-communism as a reaction to the struggles to institute the common.

Keywords: anti-communism, the common, anti-capitalism, hegemony, Polish politics

In November 2018, the President of the European Council and former Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk, gave a significant speech. Speaking on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Polish independence in the aftermath of the First World War, Tusk demonstrated an amazing display of anti-communism. His speech can be read as a clear evidence that morbid, late anti-communism is not the specialty of the current right-wing populist Polish government, but it functions also as a main feature of the ideology advocated by the mainstream opposition. According to Tusk, the modern history of the country is dominated by a never-ending struggle between two extreme poles, a good one and a bad one – freedom versus enslavement, democracy against authoritarianism or even totalitarianism, Western modernity and enlightenment versus Eastern backwardness and obscurantism. This well-known ideological, Eurocentric, and post-colonial binary discourse, in which Poland and other so-called "Eastern European" or "Central-Eastern European" countries are in a waiting room to become "truly European" – that means, "Western European" (Grzymski 2016, 118–130) – was strengthened in Tusk's speech with the Polish messianic tradition of Poland as antemurale of Christianity, Europe or democracy, according to which the historical mission of Poland is understood as defending the borders of European civilization against its Others: barbarians, nomads, infidels and other enemies (Tazbir 2004). As a consequent proponent of anti-communist discourse, Tusk decided to fill the role of Polish and European opponent with communists. According to the right-wing vision of modern Polish and European history, it is the returning spectre of communism that stood in Poland's way to "normality" and in Europe's way to unity (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010, 8). Tusk presented his understanding of the case in clear terms:

> Józef Pilsudski, when he defeated the Bolsheviks [in the Polish-Soviet war, 1919–1921, in which Poland withstood the Red Army's march to the West and when he de facto defended Western community, the community of freedom – he not only defended the independence of our homeland against the barbarians of the East (I am not talking only about geography at the moment) – then his situation was slightly worse than ours. When Lech Walesa defeated the Bolsheviks in some symbolic sense [in peaceful transition from really existing socialism to free-market liberalism, in which the worker Walesa acted as a leader to the oppositional trade union "Solidarity"], then his situation was much harsher than ours. So, if they could defeat the Bolsheviks, then why could you not defeat the modern Bolsheviks? (Durman 2018).

Even if later Tusk denied – in one of his tweets – that by "modern Bolsheviks", he had in mind the ruling party, Law and Justice (Durman 2018), his political side didn't miss the opportunity to utilize his words for political purposes (Olech 2018). Anyway, besides the controversy concerning "real meaning" of Tusk's words, it is that indeterminacy, which is included in uses

of the term "communism" in Polish public debate, which is the most interesting. The fact that almost everyone and everything in contemporary Poland could be named "communist", stands as a distinctive feature of Polish anti-communist discourse. Even the more popular anti-leftist label, which is distinctive to that country and structurally similar to articulations of anti-communism, is "lewactwo" (in English: "leftism") – a term which is mobilized by right-wing politicians and their supporters to connect and condemn everything which is regarded in some way as progressive, egalitarian or socialist: from the Red flag, progressive taxes, and public health care to cycle paths, political correctness, and vegetarian food (Drozda 2015).

Articulation of that discourse on the part of current opposition to the Law and Justice government is evident. The authoritarian tendencies of the ruling party, which cause protests by oppositional parties and by the European Union, were named by Tusk's allies as similar to political practices from the socialist era. In a populist way, centre-right liberals tried to build connections between the limitations of the independence of judicial power, public media, the banking sector, or exchange of cadres in governmental institutions, and the country's past. Thanks to that, they can suggest that the current electoral successes of Law and Justice and the social acceptance for reforms conducted by Kaczynski and his allies should not be explained by the failure of Tusk's former government and of the neoliberalist mode of transition. For them, it is the quasi-metaphysical, Manichean struggle between progress and communist obstacles to it that is haunting Poland today. Ironically, it is Law and Justice's government, with its paranoid anti-communism, that acts as "new communists" – this is also the label which the journal *Politico* decided to use on its cover devoted to Kaczynski's and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's policies (Bayer 2018). We could enumerate many more attempts to expose Kaczynski as a "new communist". Prominent politicians and commentators try to convince Polish citizens that Kaczyński "proposes communism as in Venezuela" and his PhD thesis contained quotes from Lenin and Marx (Kowalska 2013), that he co-operated with the former regime's security service or that his party is nothing more than a bunch of "communists and thieves" (Koć 2018). Substantive justifications of the uses of anti-communism against the populist right are almost non-existent. Social policies, the propagandist role of public television, or electoral strategy concentrated on representation of poorer citizens from small towns and villages – all this is presented as proof of Law and Justice's communist orientation.

If we turn our attention to Kaczynski's vision of barriers to political normality, to sovereign and patriotic national community, we find the same enemy as in Tusk's imagination: communism. The same Law and Justice reforms, which Tusk associates with the Red Spectre, are justified by Kaczynski as a necessity to get rid of communist heritage, which still – 30 years after the collapse of really existing socialism – does not allow the Polish country to become what it is meant to be. The violation of the Constitution was justified, because – in Kaczynski's words – "we could boldly call it a post-communist Constitution. It contains itself many

elements that petrified the former social system and that system was nothing else than post-communism in the pure sense of the term" (Kłoszewski 2017). The same need of renewal is advocated by Law and Justice in the personnel of institutions: exchange of judicial, journalist or academic cadres appears to be necessary, if we want to get rid of former communists, its allies, its defenders (like Donald Tusk and his colleagues) or its children – in a real or symbolic sense.

Anti-communism without communists

In both cases the functional role anti-communism plays is obvious for a Marxist-inspired analysis such as this one: it is a symptom of lack of anti-capitalism and a useful obstacle to anti-capitalism at the same time. Although former functionaries of the regime lost power and disappeared from the political scene due to electoral losses and to simple time lapse, and although there is no left-wing party in the current Polish parliament, anti-communism keeps its vitality as a feature of common-sense hegemonic discourse in the Gramscian sense (Thomas 2009, 160).

The phenomenon of Central-Eastern European "late anti-communism" or "communism without really existing communists" was noted by many scholars (Herer 2017; Walicki 2005; Žižek 2009). Anti-communist narrative on the region's past delivered one of the most important components for construction of new national identities and helped to legitimize pro-Western, pro-liberal-democratic and pro-capitalist policies. If for the Western part of Europe it was a common victory over fascism that gave it collective memories and visions for the united future, then for the Eastern part of the continent it was the struggle with communism and emancipation from Russian dependence that played a significant role in constructing national identity in the region and bringing reservations about "Europeness" (Judt 2011, 45–82). That's why the Othering and self-Othering of Eastern Europe is both temporal and spatial: coming to the East is not only like coming to another – worse – world, but also like coming to the past, and that means – coming to the communist past (Prozorov 2011). The contamination of anti-communism and orientalism makes of the region's past and memories a spectre of the dead, which hangs over the living.

Still, in my article I would not limit myself in interpreting anti-communism only as a Eastern European specialty or as a topic for historians of the Cold War era, who still dominate studies on anti-communism (Ceplair 2011; Woods 2004; van Dongen, Roulin and Scott-Smith 2014). Although anti-communism in countries like Poland and Hungary is the most spectacular, I claim – following Jodi Dean (2019) – that it is not an issue that can be contained to some historical epoch or in a geographical area. On the contrary: in global capitalism anti-communism plays a more hidden and at the same time fundamental, systemic role for the

reproduction of capitalist social relations. If I place my focus on Poland it is not to discover some national or regional particularity. On the contrary: I treat that particularity as a forceful exposition of the ideology of contemporary capitalism, as one of its symptoms, which can help us to re-think perspectives for much-needed new anti-anti-communist political universalism. If the real targets of anti-communism are not communists or radical Leftists, if it operates as a discourse of exclusion of nearly all political forces, where's the point in its constant reproduction?

Anti-communism as anti-anti-capitalism

I can agree with the interpretation that in contemporary Poland – where both sides of the Parliament shout at themselves "Off with the commune" and where the former persecutor of the socialist regime is a main proponent of the decommunisation of the juries, a Law and Justice deputy – the word "communism" has become an empty signifier, in the meaning which Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe ascribed to the term in their theory of hegemony (Golinczak 2019). It is true that "communism" became drained of meaning, that it ceased to mean anything substantial and that it is right now an abstract, empty term to signify almost everything (Laclau, 2007, 36–46). It is also correct to claim – drawing on Laclau and Mouffe further still – that even if anti-communism is suffering from lack of meaning, that quality is what makes it really useful: as an empty signifier anti-communism delivers a symbolic frame for collective meaning, for articulation of political divisions, and it functions as a adjourned promise of "fulfillment of society" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 111–113). That fulfillment is only postponed because there is some kind of remnant, some stubborn obstacle, an Other, which is regarded as the cause of social antagonism. For oppositional center-right politicians it would be the new authoritarian communism of Kaczynski as a continuation of the country's communist past, and for ruling right-wing populists like Kaczynski it would be the sin of neglecting decommunisation after 1989 that makes anti-communist policies necessary today.

But even if the discourse analysis inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's philosophy remains operative in understanding the reproduction of anti-communist discourses in Poland – and I think it does – I claim that it is nevertheless insufficient to explain its necessity and also its truly universal, functional role for capitalist accumulation. In what follows I utilize the theory of hegemony, but I try to go further than this. Drawing on Slavoj Žižek's (2000) critique of Laclau and Mouffe I ask about deeper, material conditions, which had to be fulfilled for the play of signifiers in which anti-communism could be filled out as a structural empty signifier for political discourse. I test a hypothesis that it was the expulsion of collective anti-capitalist practices that structured Polish post-communist discourse in an anti-communist fashion. Following Žižek (2000, 92) and contrary to Laclau and Mouffe, I differentiate two kinds of

voids in discourse reality. The first one: a void that constitutes a system of social meaning as such. The second one is Lefort's empty place of power (Lefort 1988, 225), around which many discourses (including many anti-communist discourses) concentrate. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony is limited only to the second void. Žižek's postulate – which I share with him – is to open analysis to deeper, material transformations, which in the case of Poland are easy to track. It was the restoration of capitalism in its neoliberal version, launching the processes of "continuous primitive accumulation" of capital (De Angelis 2001), possible thanks to the vast scope of public, socialist goods, that made anti-communism so useful to legitimize the transition (Klein 2007, 171–282; Rae 2008: 6). But the extreme and marginal example of Poland (and other post-socialist countries) could help us at the same time understand the workings of a universal mechanism: anti-communism – sometimes evident and proud (as in the Eastern Europe), but mostly hidden and systemic – is first and foremost anti-anti-capitalism. This is because anti-communism – as we may clearly see in contemporary Poland – functions as a pacifier for leftist critique of capitalism and at the same time it delivers a competitive answer in trying to identify the cause of social antagonism. If anti-Semitism was (and still is) "the socialism of fools" – as German socialist August Bebel famously observed – today anti-communism plays the role of "the anti-capitalism of fools". Instead of criticizing capitalism – in the context of its wide-ranging restoration in society – anti-communism redirects attention to the communist past, internal and external conspiracies, or multiple "new communisms", which threaten Poland's survival and development.

In what follows I try to justify – based on examples of contemporary anti-communist discourses in Poland – two theses. First: the success of anti-communism in post-socialist countries was possible not only due to convincing rhetorical demonization of the socialist era, but also – and mainly – thanks to the constant eradication of articulations of the common. Erasure of the common – what I call all processes of suppression, undermining and concealment of bottom-up practices of solidarity and co-operation – interestingly connects socialist bureaucracy to the new political elites, and depends on rejection of popular demands and attempts at self-organization. The image of enslaved society, which is promoted by the Right. can be maintained only if we substitute collective subjectivity with universal subjection. Second thesis: the analyzed mechanism is of actual importance not only for the post-socialist countries of Central-Eastern Europe. Its universal reach is most apparent in case of furious anti-communist political leaders in other world regions: from Donald Trump and the Tea Party's America to Bolsonaro's Brazil and Duterte's Philippines (Wielgosz 2019). But I treat all these far-right crusades against communism as a tragicomic disclosure of contemporary capitalist logic: if today's accumulation of capital depends on continuous enclosures of the common (from privatization and restriction in access, through plunder and financialization of goods, to subsumption of collective labor and crushing the resistance) (Mezzadra and Neilson

2017), which Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson call "extractivism", then anti-communism – understood as erasure of the common – is much needed by capital as its ideological vehicle.

In conclusion I try to convince the reader that the strategies of cutting itself off from communism tested by the Polish Left are not only ineffective, but even counter-effective. By trying to avoid communist connotations, the Left only strengthens anti-communist hegemonic discourse. But it is also unproductive to simply try to regain communist symbols, phrases, or patrons without understanding that what we need to reclaim to defeat anti-communist today is not necessarily a sickle and hammer on the Red Flag or monuments of Vladimir Lenin – it is the common. In the final part of the article I bring some attention to recent research on the history of really existing socialism in Poland, conducted by engaged left-wing scholars. I claim that their re-interpretations of modern history, in which bottom-up struggles for the common take a fundamental place, help us to re-orientate the collective perception of socialism. It is in their discoveries of the commons under socialism that we can find an inspiration for articulation of the common today, in Poland and everywhere else.

Poland: from post-communist neoliberal compromise to decommunization

The socio-political context, in which it is impossible to locate sources of anti-communist discourses in the Polish public sphere after 1989, is marked by a neoliberal model of transition. As many critics of Polish neoliberalism convincingly showed, political elites decided to choose a shock-therapy course for reforming the country after the end of socialism (Hardy 2009; Kowalik 2012). That course generated high social costs and anger from a wide range of groups, who had previously expected that the government originating from the former massive pro-workers social movement "Solidarity" would provide policies focused on the social needs of the majority of society.

This anger, related to policies of privatization of public enterprises, a dramatic increase in structural unemployment, commercialization of social services, marginalization of trade unions or alienation of former leaders of civic and workers' opposition from its social base, brought electoral consequences only four years after the first partly free and fair parliamentary elections, in which "Solidarity" noted stunning success and took responsibility for governing the country. The rapid come-back of former communists to power by 1993 did not mean an end to neoliberal policies. Post-communists were less dogmatic in implementing free-market reforms, but they were not prepared to change the course of transformation (Shields 2012, 367–368). Firstly, this was because post-communism had to legitimize itself as a political force, which was now pro-democratic and ready to reform the country. Every attempt to slow down the neoliberal course would be judged as a betrayal to historical compromise on starting the transition and as a proof of ever-lasting communist danger. The second reason for post-

communist's readiness to continue policies which were deepening inequalities and worsening the working-class situation was more prosaic. It was in the post-communist elite's own material interest to convert all types of capitals (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) derived from the former system to new patterns of legitimacy of high social position. Neoliberal policies gave them a huge opportunity to appropriate economic capital, to utilize contacts, management competences or knowledge of foreign languages – the majority of society didn't have such opportunities (Staniszkis 1991, 47).

If the dominant political division between post-communists and post-Solidarity couldn't contribute to restraining neoliberalism, there arose a possibility to intercept social discontent in a new direction – that chance was utilized by the right-wing, anti-communist side of the opposition. In those circumstances, in which neoliberalism functioned as an unquestionable dogma and with post-communists in power, it was easier to blame the communist past for failures of implemented policies (Holubec and Mrozik 2018, 13–14). Social anger could be articulated by right-wing parties, which blamed former communist politicians, juries, cultural elites, or entrepreneurs for the unsuccessful road to a politically and economically fair system. We have to admit that right-wing politicians were often correct when claiming that the model of transition, which communist rulers negotiated with leaders of opposition in the latest years of socialism, enabled former members of the communist party to play parasitical roles in society. The peaceful process of transition, which was celebrated as a great success by former communists and by leaders of the opposition – and which was praised by foreign commentators – was regarded by right-wing circles as a betrayal. At the beginning of the 1990s they demanded launching the program of the so-called "decommunisation" (Millard 2010, 20): to judge those functionaries of the socialist regime who were guilty of repressions, and to prevent former communists from maintaining their power. Policies of decommunisation were abandoned by the first democratic governments because conditions of political transition in Poland were based on a mutual obligation that the communist party would have allowed opposition to take part in political process, but the people of the former regime could in return participate in politics as well.

The discursive role anti-communism played in the 90s allowed it to criticize reforms and to canalize social discontent and desperation, but at the same time it sustained the image of capitalism-to-come as the American dream. As political scientist David Ost (2005) showed in his book *Defeat of Solidarity*, the famous Polish trade union "Solidarity", which was the main oppositional force in the final years of socialism and which, during that time, was the proponent of democratic, participatory socialism, betrayed workers by supporting neoliberal reforms. "Solidarity" continued to organize the workers and to call strikes when Polish industry was privatized or liquidated and when unemployment rose from an almost non-existent level in socialism to 20 percent in the year of 2000. But what "Solidarity" demanded during the

transition was not democratic socialism anymore, but "true capitalism". By "true capitalism" or "normal capitalism" they meant the Western model of well-being, which was not understood as a welfare state, as post-war compromise between classes, but as a truly free market economy, in which everyone has identical opportunities to lead successful life. And as the main barrier to reach "true capitalism" "Solidarity" recognized communism – the fact that the legacy of socialism was still haunting the new political reality. The structural function discourse on "normal capitalism" played was truly phantasmatic and the heritage of communism was in that context regarded as a relict that stood in the way of modernity, well-being, the West, Europe etc. – to all those values and properties that were supposed to be embodied in the post-communist capitalist project.

What's worse, this kind of "worker-driven anti-communism" was not limited to the fight with the persistent political, economic or cultural importance of post-communist elites. Ost showed that the fact that the Left was associated simply with former communists, and that everything which was leftist – from communism and socialism to working-class and public ownership – was now despised as totalitarian, brought from abroad, and strange to Polish culture, bound trade unionist anti-communism to the political Right and the Catholic Church. That kind of anti-communist paranoia had terrible consequences for the perspectives of any type of left-wing politics in Poland. When Polish society suffered from neoliberal reforms, social anger was directed not against capitalism, but against communism and other external threats which were regarded as a danger to "normal capitalism". As Polish left-wing journalist Przemysław Wielgosz (2017) rightly pointed out, in Poland discourse of anti-communism is a basic structural feature of all discourses of exclusion. Anti-communism plays a role structurally similar to the traditional uses of anti-Semitism: it refers to the phantasm of "the Other", which has to be stopped at all costs. No wonder then that one of the most popular right-wing anti-communist constructs is "Żydokomuna" (in English: Jew-Communist). Ironically drawn from communist nationalist propaganda, the conspiracy theory of "Żydokomuna" indicates that communism is basically an ideology of modern, secularized Jews, who are natural-born enemies to Polish essentialist identity (Gerrits 2009; Gross 2007, 192–244). But structural connections between anti-communism and other discourses of exclusion go even further. Proponents of anti-communism in Poland believe that feminism or "ideology of gender" is also a "communism in disguise" or it is a manifestation of "cultural Marxism" (Czerniak 2013). The same arguments work with LGBT rights, ecology ("Green is the new Red") religious tolerance, or openness to refugees. As we have learned lately from public television, when the two hundredth anniversary of Karl Marx's birthday was celebrated abroad, according to right-wing journalists Marx was responsible even for Nazism and the Holocaust (Leszczyński 2018). As former Foreign Minister in Law and Justice's government Witold Waszczykowski elaborated in an interview with German daily newspaper *Bild*:

> We just want to heal our country of certain diseases. The previous government applied a left-wing concept. As if the world, according to the Marxist model, must move in only one direction, towards a mixture of cultures and a world of cyclists and vegetarians, which stands only for renewable energy and combating all forms of religion. This has nothing in common with traditional Polish values (Cienski 2017).

It is hard to find a better manifestation of right-wing all-encompassing anti-communism, which mixes together nearly all possible progressive discourses.

Anti-communism as empty signifier

Anti-communist demonization has an even wider scope than just left-wing ideologies. Regularly Polish liberals and centre-right parties, which are the main proponents of neoliberal capitalism, are being attacked by the Right as communist enemies of the country, because in the past they were opposing decommunisation and now they are slightly more open to feminism or immigration than the ruling Right. Liberals, in their turn, repay the Right with the same argument: Kaczyński and his colleagues are the real authoritarian communists, who are rebuilding the former regime in Poland. Accusations of communism remain mutual and they contribute to two dominant forms of anti-communism: the first is liberal-modern and the second is conservative-nationalist. For liberals it is the Eastern aberration of socialism, treated as anti-modern backwardness, which effectively blocks passage to European modernization. For the national Right socialism was counter to Polish identity and culture and that's why it had to be installed from abroad. In both versions of anti-communism, there is some kind of blockage, some phantasmatic abnormal Other (the past, the stranger, the Jew, the East), which can legitimize really existing capitalism as "untrue capitalism" or "corrupted capitalism". If we get rid of that blockage – the story goes on – we could finally reach "normal capitalism", which will be fully compatible with modernity (for liberals) or with the Polish tradition of hard work, family values and national community (for conservatives).

As for the Left, the situation isn't much better. The post-communist party, which is a direct successor of the former regime, was always ready to defend its people and their positions in society against "decommunisation", but as a Third Way social democracy their neoliberal policies created a demand for right-wing anticommunism. However, the main problem with the post-communist fight with anti-communism is that it defends people of the former regime who may be perceived by society as authoritarian, conservative, anti-workerist or subordinate to the Soviet Union. Post-communist narration brings confirmation to hegemonic anti-communist interpretation of contemporary Polish history, even if it is sympathetic to the injustices ordinary beneficiaries of socialism (lower-ranking officials, teachers, soldiers, workers from privatized factories) suffered after the year of 1989.

As for the new Left, which has its roots in the opposition to the socialist regime or in new social movements, their usual attitude to the socialist era is ambivalent. Even if they appreciate social security or modernizing efforts of that era, they highlight notorious violations of human rights and pacification of the working class' protests. They are not very fond of post-communists, but generally they're not supporting decommunisation. The non-post-communist Left constructs its identity on the tradition of democratic intelligentsia oppositional to the socialist regime, in workers' movements like "Solidarity" and – before the Second World War – on patriotic socialist parties which had an unfavorable attitude to the Soviet Union and the communist movement. But the main problem with the strategy of the new Left is that in actively and hysterically avoiding any associations with communism it contributes to the success of right-wing hegemony. Its anti-communism is not straightforward – it is more hidden and subtle, but nevertheless it has performative efficiency for the reproduction of communism as evil force and constant threat to Polish democracy and identity. When the Left is being attacked by the Right as "communist", it reacts with a mixture of indignation and abashment. For example, when politicians of the main party of the new Left – Partia Razem – were described by its opponents as "communists", they decided to go to court and to demand apologies for defamation (Szczęśniak 2017). We need to stress that these gestures of capitulation and self-restraint are made in the conditions of total right-wing hegemony, built on anti-communist consensus, which is actively shared by all sides of the public debate. Despite this the Left decides to play with defensive tactics – which we could label as "left-wing anti-communism" – and it is brought to the corner by its opponent. It is a totally opposite strategy to the right-wing one. Right-wing politicians employ a consequent offensive strategy of establishing their own ideas, symbols or heroes, even the most controversial and inappropriate ones.

That strategy works largely because of anti-communism. For example, the right-wing idea of the socialist era as a totalitarian one, during which the whole society was enslaved by inhuman ideology, brought to the country from the East, with the betrayal of the Western allies and with the help of internal traitors, helped the Right to establish a real cult of the so-called "cursed soldiers". The fact that communist rulers indeed repressed soldiers of the anti-fascist resistance after the Second World War was used by the Right to worship far-right, and in part openly anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi, anti-communist soldiers as well. The cult of "cursed soldiers", which quickly spread among Polish youth, mainly young men, was developed not by Kaczyński's ruling Right, but by the former president of the country, Bronisław Komorowski, who came from centre-right party Civic Platform. The ideological content of the cult of "cursed soldiers" is not only anti-communist and nationalist. It is connected to other cultural wars waged by the Right, starting with the "war with gender", conducted mainly by the Catholic Church and conservative politicians, or with the campaign "stop the islamization of Europe"

(Bobako 2017, 22–23), whose proponents feel just like the real heirs of the cursed soldiers: the cursed soldiers fought with the communist plague from the East, and now there is a plague of Islamic despotism and terrorism, supported once again by external powers in Brussels and Berlin and by internal enemies of the nation, lefties and liberals (Pielużek 2016, 84).

The extreme and recent form of anti-communist policies, implemented by Law and Justice's government, includes massive, systemic erasure of the traces of the communist past in public places. The right-wing government conducted a process of re-naming streets, squares, or public institutions and literally destroying monuments and memorial plaques connected with communist figures, symbols or ideas (Niemitz 2016). In that case it can be convincingly shown that the real target of anti-communism is not communists, which are almost non-existent in Poland, especially as organized formation. During that governmental action the Polish public sphere lost the memorial of Rosa Luxemburg located at her family home in the city of Zamość, and the monuments of the Soviet Red Army, which freed Poland from Nazi occupation. Other victims of decommunization included Polish socialist patriots, participants of the international brigades in the Civil War in Spain, or people of culture who simply lived and worked during the socialist era (e.g. famous economist Oskar Lange). Decommunisation is not limited to reorganizing the past – we could mention a precedent, which was a visit of police to the Marxist scientific conference in Pobierowo (Luxmoore 2018). Through these acts of deprivation of collective memories and practices, the Right gained huge space to promote its own discursive hegemony.

The dynamics of anti-communist discourse in Poland can be successfully analysed by Laclau and Mouffe's theory. Their conviction that in a post-communist world, where conflicts on redistribution of wealth become secondary, it will be the populist right that becomes the new force of antagonism, finds strong confirmation in Polish politics (Mouffe 2005, 64–72). The theory of hegemony has a potential to explain how anti-communism could play a role of empty signifier, which shaped political common sense and patterns of exclusion. By supporting anti-communist narratives, all political forces helped right-wing populists to promote a story of universal corruption of Polish society, which needs wide-ranging renewal. Anti-communist narratives allow them to delegitimize a political opponent, to reject his claim to participate in political life. That's why it would be reasonable not only for the Left, but for all political sides wanting to create conditions for democratic debate, to tame the anti-communist offensive of the Right by taking a stance Clifford Geertz (1984) labeled as "anti-anti-communist". That point is interestingly elaborated by Wielgosz, who explains the limits of Polish democracy by its anti-communist shadow:

> [A]nti-communism does not need the crime of communism and does not protest against its perversions. It is not the state terror, secret police, surveillance, persecution, torture or censorship that deter anti-communists. In fact, they make up their own

> political program. Their number one enemy is the emancipatory promise of communism, its utopian potential, radical social criticism, in a word, everything that is best in the communist project. The hatred of democracy, women's rights, economic equality, recognition of minority rights, internationalism, multiculturalism and subordinate political subjectivity is the quintessence of anti-communist attitude. And this is how anti-communism reigned in Poland after 1989. It was on the anti-communist consensus that "Polish democracy" was built, which was, from the beginning, deformed, shifted to the Right, steeped in nationalism, and on the other hand, deprived of its emancipatory, popular foundation and social content. In fact, it was democratic only formally (Wielgosz 2017).

Wielgosz's observation is consistent with the more general assumption made by Marcel Liebman and Ralph Miliband (1984), that throughout history anti-communism was used by forces of tyranny and reaction – not democracy and freedom.

How empty is an empty signifier? How discursive is anti-communism?

The theory of hegemony has undeniable merits. It allows us to understand the logic of exclusions generated by anti-communism discourses in the realm of parliamentary democracy. But is it equally useful as a theory of legitimization of capitalist social relations, of capitalist restoration – as in the case of Poland? I have serious doubts. With Laclau and Mouffe we could indeed analyze anti-communist defamation of the Left and political opponents as such in the circumstances of neoliberal order, which are beneficial for right-wing populists and their anti-communist ideology. But we remain helpless in trying to explain the structural connection between anti-communism and prohibition of anti-capitalism. In fact we could reasonably criticize the post-Marxist theory of hegemony for legitimizing capitalism as a neutral, almost natural context for politics.

I've already admitted that in my reservations to Laclau and Mouffe's theory I follow Žižek's critique. The Slovenian philosopher rightly pointed out that the authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* are unable to present any positive conceptualizations of capitalism. Capital is for them a force of social heterogenization, which creates drive for new social identities and movements and new lines of political antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe remain critical of the capitalist tendency to produce inequalities and social exclusion – that's why they remained advocates for left-wing policies – but they refuse to think about non-capitalist alternatives and social struggles, which could be predestined to move beyond capital. Žižek claims that Laclau and Mouffe's arguments may stand only if we are ready to deprive capitalist contradictions of their role as fundamental basis of society. And Laclau was ready to take that deciding theoretical step to justify his theses. The Argentinian philosopher regarded Žižek's insistence to treat logic

of capital as the Lacanian Real – a dimension that makes every social order unstable and unfinished – as a vulgar Marxist residue (Laclau 2000a, 201–204).

I sympathize with Žižek's attempt to demonstrate that an empty signifier is never empty as such, that it conceals another level of deep reality. But at the same time I rate Žižek's own proposition to theorize that deeper level as inadequate. Laclau rightly replied to Žižek that 1) capitalism cannot be the Real, because it is possible to represent it in Symbolic order (Laclau 2000b, 291); 2) Žižek cannot define capital/the Real as a positive entity and thus he cannot propose transformation to post-capitalism (Laclau 2000a, 206). If we get to that impasse, we should ask: what if it is not capitalism that it is unrepresentable, unspoken, incomprehensible? What if – for Laclau and Mouffe, and also for Žižek – it is their inability to deliver any prospects of communism, that makes their theories secretly and incautiously anti-communist?

To avoid the risk of naturalizing capitalism, we need to define anew the status of communism in relation to capitalism. If communism had to be some kind of void, which troubles capital and which endangers its existence, it could not be defined as suppression of capitalism, as a result of its internal tendencies (e.g. development of productive forces).

Negative conceptualization of communism – as Lacanian Real, as unsuccessful remnant of symbolization – gives us no indications what communism may look like. Žižek's reading says to us only that capital will experience deep ruptures and crises in the future, but is such an observation such revolutionary as it seems to be? Is it not simple confirmation of capitalist self-knowledge and – even more – one of its main virtues, as regarded by its advocates? The fact that capitalism is identical with crisis give us no hope for its suppression – rather it communicates to us that after every recession a new phase of economic boom will come.

Also, Jacques Derrida's (1994) well-known spectral theorization of communism – regarded as a promise and demand for justice, which is inherent to capital – gives us no possibilities to unleash communism from capitalist command. Derridean spectres of communism cannot materialize themselves, even if they are impossible for capitalist powers to exorcise. Deconstructive communism is necessary as a capitalist ghost, but aporetic as an alternative social order.

To define anti-communism not as a particular feature of politics in post-socialist countries and not only as a discursive phenomenon, but as a structural feature of capitalism, I propose a post-operaist reconceptualization of communism as the common. Following Hardt and Negri (2009, 181–182) I treat the common as the affirmative drive of beings to cooperate, to be together, to love, to desire, to create, which capital needs to eradicate to stop any serious attempt to move beyond its horizon. If we follow theoreticians of the common, we would realize that capital constantly feeds on the common, which is always in excess, always beyond every form of capitalist valorization, always in priority as an active force for collaboration before it is subjugated, smashed, organized by the capitalist mode of production.

Erasure of the Common: in search of a new conceptualization of anti-communism

From the perspective of continuous enclosures of the common, anti-communism appears to be not some strange aberration, which is present only in countries with a socialist past or with strong leftist traditions, but a persistent effort to contain all possibilities of autonomization of collective production. By concentrating our attention on anti-communist spectacle conducted by far-right leaders, we are unable to grasp that baseline character of anti-communism, understood here as anti-anti-capitalism. But is it really the case in a country with weak progressive political forces – such as Poland – that we can speak of excessive articulations of the common? Where to seek them?

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009, 107) proposed to conceptualize the common beyond the private and the public, beyond capitalism and socialism. From their point of view, private and public goods alike are entangled with the regime of property. The authors of *Commonwealth* regard them as corrupted forms of the common (Hardt and Negri 2009, 159–164). If that is really the case, we are free to distance ourselves from the outmoded dispute between really existing socialism and really existing capitalism or from the whole problem of transition from the public to the private regime of property, and instead of it devote our attention to the joint struggle, in which capitalism and socialism hand in hand try to marginalize their common enemy, which is the common. Communism – or, to avoid misunderstanding, commonism (Dockx and Gielen 2018) – is alien both to the regime of private property, in which the common suffers from privatization, commercialization and capitalist competition, and to the regime of state-owned forces of production and hierarchical rule of the party. If we agree on the above conceptualization of communism/commonism, socialism and capitalism, it will become evident that anti-communism, understood as erasure of the common, lies in the interest of capitalism and socialism alike, and that it was the inability of socialist regimes to deal with this accumulation of being which caused the collapse of the Soviet Bloc (Negri 2008).

If pure theoretical argument for such a change of perspective remains unconvincing – and I think so – then there appears a necessity to ground it in empirical research. Fortunately, in the last years many researchers have been trying to regain forgotten or marginalized experiences of the collective struggles and agency of the popular classes in Poland. It is their researches I would like to evoke in order to justify my thesis that the basic form of anti-communism in Poland concerns erasure of the common and that the anti-communist spectacle of the Right, which became the dominant, hegemonic narrative, is only the most visible trace of fundamentally ousted commonist history from below. The real Red threat for the Polish model of neoliberal capitalism lies not in some former bureaucrats or monuments of Red Army's soldiers, but in collective practices of solidarity and mutual support.

Coming to research projects, in which I find support for my elaboration, it is impossible to skip Michał Siermiński's book *Dekada przełomu*, in which the author showed how between the years of 1968 and 1980 the most important intellectuals of the left-wing opposition abandoned ideals of participatory socialism, which were present in the program for "Self-governing commonwealth" from October 1981. But despite these ideals, intellectuals tried to establish their conservative ideological guardianship in relation to workers. Siermiński (2016) claims that in the final years of really existing socialism the former radical intelligentsia took over leadership of the opposition, concluded an agreement with the regime and started anti-workers neoliberal reforms. The proletarian common was caught, transformed and finally corrupted by oppositional "anti-politics". The paternalistic attitude to Polish workers – treated by intellectuals as "subalterns", who cannot speak for themselves and who have to be represented by external actors – expropriated the working class from their legitimize influence on politics during the transition era. The most self-evident form of erasure of the common was the engagement of intellectuals in convincing the workers of the need to cease to continue strikes in workplaces. The so-called "wild, uncoordinated strikers" were regarded by intellectuals as a sign of workers' irrationality, immaturity and irresponsibility. And the symbolic displacement of the proletarian character of "Solidarity" came after 1989, when history of the movement was rewritten in nationalist ("movement for national independence"), liberal ("movement for civic society, freedom and human rights"), Catholic ("movement for religious renewal") and anti-communist terms ("movement against totalitarian ideology and regime"). Symbolic erasure of the common was functional for implementing neoliberalism, because it helped to marginalize the proletarian tradition of resistance in the era of transition. The most explicit elaboration on workers' passivity and inability to govern themselves was present in Józef Tischner's writings. A priest and philosopher, who was a spiritual ally for "Solidarity" and theorist of "ethics of Solidarity", he proposed an influential anti-communist and anti-workerist narration on the Polish common man, in which he was called "homo sovieticus": a self-reliant, enslaved and unmannerly type of subjectivity, who needed to be educated by the new social reality (Tischner 1992, 141–145). If a worker was a "homo sovieticus", it was the role of elites to restrain him and show him a path to freedom and well-being.

Sociologist Wiktor Marzec in his book *Rebelia i reakcja* directed our attention to the fact that this kind of patronizing relationship between the intelligentsia and the popular classes was a constant structural feature of the Polish public sphere from the beginning of the twentieth century. Marzec (2016) convincingly showed that we should search for the genesis of this elitist public sphere in the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, which also covered workers from the Polish part of the Tzardom. Workers' rebellion and perspective on communism caused fear in Polish intellectuals, who started to see their role as political representative and educator of the proletariat. In conclusion to his book Marzec proposed a hypothesis that the strongly

hierarchical shape of the early modern Polish public sphere survived through Polish history. The author brought our attention to the phenomenon of structural similarity between the elitist attitude to workers during the socialist era and in the transformation to capitalism. From his point of view, Polish anti-communism and efforts towards erasure of the common are as old as capitalist modernity itself.

Other authors showed that despite these efforts, we could find many manifestations of the plebeian commons in modern Polish history. Jan Sowa – in his part (2015) – provocatively described the "Solidarity" movement in the terms of Alain Badiou's philosophy as a communist event (Majmurek, Mikurda and Sowa 2011) and as an ambitious attempt to institute "the common" as theorized by Hardt and Negri. Sowa claimed that despite its seemingly anti-communist language, symbolism, and alliances (the Catholic Church, right-wing politicians, capitalist countries), the internal structure and logic of daily functioning of "Solidarity" in the years 1980–1981 (before its pacification by martial law) could be regarded as an impressive effort to realize the regime's promises in full shape. The massive, cross-sectoral character of the independent trade union "Solidarity" gave it possibilities for real socialization of the means of production and communication and of the national workforce. Sowa repeated a thesis formulated famously by a leading oppositionist, historian Karol Modzelewski, that without the pacification of "Solidarity" in the early 1980s, neoliberal reforms in the 1990s would be simply impossible, because the workers' movement would stop them in their tracks.

It was due to ideological displacement that the workerist character of the "Solidarity" movement became marginal and "Solidarity" started to be regarded as a collective subject of anti-communist politics – in religious-nationalist or civic-liberal versions. Feminist philosopher Ewa Majewska described that process in terms of passing from an inclusive and bottom-up "proletarian public sphere" (as developed by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge) to an exclusive and top-down "liberal public sphere" (as conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas). In her book *Kontrpubliczności ludowe i feministyczne*, Majewska (2018) also adopted Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of "the subaltern" and Nancy Fraser's "subaltern counterpublics" to enrich our understanding of political desubjectification of workers with feminist and post-colonialist theoretical perspectives. According to Majewska, many counter-audiences of the subalterns – from women, who actively participated in "Solidarity", to workers, who were much more independent and self-aware than the intelligentsia were ready to admit – in dominant discourse became expropriated from their collective past and present agency, because their political presence became seen as non-legitimate, atypical or even apolitical. Women and workers are regarded as subalterns, because in the liberal male bourgeois public sphere their modes of presence appear immature and demanding of special care, attention and – as a consequence – proper representation. Contrary to fatalist narration on successful pacification of subalterns, Majewska tried to present recent political protests of women and their male allies against

repressive abortion laws as a constant reproduction of "weak" and "unheroic" resistance, which is typical of subalterns' marginal subjectivity and agency.

Some researches on popular subjectivity let us discover that articulations of the common were possible not only in the most open, but brief period of intensive struggles, described as the "carnival of Solidarity". They were happening even in the darkest times of Stalinism. Thanks to the book by Padraic Kenney (1997) on relations between Polish workers and communists directly after the Second World War, separate researches conducted by Małgorzata Fidelis (2014) and Magdalena Grabowska (2018) on the role of Polish women in socialist regime, or the monograph by Agata Zysiak (2016) on the emancipatory promise of socialist university, we can see that even during the Stalinist era in Poland, the popular classes had the potential to articulate their own collective will and to use the emancipatory promises of the system to their own advantages. Kenney proved that even in the final months of the Second World War and in the first five years after its end, Polish workers were able to present their collective power to their self-proclaimed ideological representatives from the Communist party. Their ability to organize and strike – strengthened by collective knowledge gained in anti-fascist resistance – gave them possibilities to fight for their rights. Kenney's theses forcefully questioned classist narration on the Polish worker as "homo sovieticus", whose subjectivity works like an additional part to the machine. Polish workers, since the very beginning of the socialist regime, were ready and able to take the production process into collective control and to institute the common in factories. The merit of Kenney's argument lies also in his insistence on the continuation of the tradition of resistance and co-operation between the inter-war and post-war eras. It was in cities with continuous industrial and proletarian character – such as Łódź – that the common caused real trouble for the self-proclaimed workers' representatives of the socialist state.

The same can be said of female post-war workers, who were subjected to research by Fidelis. If, according to Kenney, workers were in some sense more communist than the communist party, we could say that according to Fidelis, female workers were more left-wing feminist than the mode of female emancipation advocated by the regime. They tried to gain resources and to strengthen their social status, which was offered to them by reforms, but at the same time they were aware of many gender injustices and inequalities that were retained in socialism. Grabowska – in her part – completed this image of challenges to post-war women's emancipation by examining the role female communists played in the party and women's organizations. Grabowska rejected the anti-communist cliché of forced participation of women in socialism. She brought many empirical arguments to prove that women in massive numbers joined the party, the League of Women and generally worked for the regime because they wanted to and because they conceived of it as an opportunity for emancipation. At the same time, they were critical of many elements of the new reality, which were opposed to official

ideology, e.g. gender wage inequalities, underestimation of reproductive labor, or sexist prejudices, and they intervened whenever there was a possibility of bringing progressive changes. Revisionist feminist scholars point out that in erasing the tradition of radical leftist feminism, contemporary mainstream liberal feminism – intentionally or not – supports anti-communist hegemony in Poland (Mrozik 2014; Szopa 2019).

Similarly, even in not completely successful projects like emancipation through higher education in post-war years, researched by Zysiak, we could still see tensions between many political actors, who tried to utilize the regime's ideological discourse and implemented reforms for their own benefits. As in factories and in households, new possibilities under socialism brought radical hopes to some factions at socialist universities. Promises of redistribution of knowledge, of generational advancement of civilization, and of tearing down the wall between abstract academic science and the concrete life-worlds of the popular classes, inspired progressive professors and unprivileged students alike. And as in factories and in households, their dreams and projects were withheld by the socialist state, which had its own interests in the realm of education.

By bringing all these articulations together – in workplaces, in households, in universities, between classes, professions, and men and women – it is reasonable to treat them jointly as manifestations of the common, because – according to theorists of commoning – it exceeds existing division between productive, unproductive and reproductive labor, between work and free time or between the working class and other unprivileged classes and groups (e.g. domestic laborers, students, peasants or lumpenproletariat). The realm of the common is not closed in any institution, space or trade – it overlaps with living labor as such. The common is a set of practices, which has potential to transform the whole life-worlds of commoners. We discover such impetus in the mentioned examples – from visions of university, which are present in the daily life of cities and factories, through efforts to relieve women from working double shifts (at home and at work) by collective forms of reproduction of households and childcare, to the unionization of the whole national labour force by "Solidarity". Together these attempts make up a commonist alternative beyond public/private dualism.

New research on the Polish popular classes' agency, mentioned above, reveals practices for instituting the common and policies of repression and control, which were tamed by the socialist state. But in criticizing the authoritarian tendencies of real socialism, we need to acknowledge at the same time multiple conditions for organizing the commons, of diverse character: institutional, infrastructural, or even symbolic and ideological. Promises of equality and emancipation of workers and women were far from being pure propaganda – they were embedded in reality. Public housing, social protections, state-sponsored vacations, and investments in culture and the reproductive sphere created a social fabric in which the common might blossom. Anti-communist offensives were not directed only at the insurgent commons,

but also on their material background, which was mainly of socialist origin. Even if the socialist commons were corrupted by the state and ruling Party, we need to notice that practices for the common were indebted to them. If we fail to notice that connection, we are at risk of re-falling into some version of left-wing anti-communism.

It is due to the erasure of the common and to the destruction of the socialist background for the common, to the overlooking of plebeian tensions with the regime and to acceptance of the image of the socialist era as "totalitarian", that the Right could impose anti-communist hegemony in such an effective way. What's more, despite its fierce anti-communist rhetoric, the right-wing project of traditional, paternalistic society is more ready to accept the positive side of post-socialist resources and sentiments than neoliberal, free-market narration, which was dominant during phase of transition. We could describe recent Law and Justice social policies as corrupted forms of the common – as understood by Hardt and Negri (2009, 159–164). Three corrupted forms of the common, which the authors of *Commonwealth* depicted – nation, corporation and family – are central to Law and Justice's project of a sovereign state, corporate national capital and corporate Church structures, traditional family values and gender roles. The Right needs to erase the anti-capitalist character of commoning practices, but at the same time – unlike liberals – it tries to intercept and modulate them, contributing to their subjugation and corruption.

Disengagement of the common from its corrupted modifications and tackling other discourses of exclusions, which are part of the right-wing hegemony (sexism, racism, xenophobia, bigotry, anti-Semitism, anthropocentrism) seems to be impossible without contesting anti-communism, which contains in its ideological message condemnation of anti-hierarchic self-organization, internationalism, and anti-essentialism. These values are crucial to autonomization of the common from its limited forms and to dismantling the hegemony of the Right.

How Polish is Polish anti-communism?

Besides a particular Polish interest in contesting anti-communism, I claim that due to its spectacular character the Polish example provides us with a reformulation of the problem of contemporary forms of anti-communism in universal terms. It would be unwise to ignore Polish or Hungarian examples of extreme anti-communism as marginal ones, being a product of highly exceptional historical conditions. My point would be different: what is happening in Central Europe right now is a consequent manifestation of a global tendency to discredit not only the whole communist tradition, but – as Marxist historian Enzo Traverso (2016, 5–12) observed – to retreat from any prospects of progressive, egalitarian politics, which are now seen as "totalitarian" ones. Maybe the trajectories of the global reproduction of capitalism were

reversed and we live in a strange time, during which – as Jan Sowa (2018, 278–279) recently pointed out – the centres of capital do not signal to the peripheries their own future anymore, but it is now the role of peripheries experiencing far-right hegemonies to foretell the future to the centres? In that sense, the recent phenomena of anti-communist leaders could be read not as a particular case of this or that country, but as a manifestation of a tendency according to which the whole world becomes post-communist or anti-communist. A Croatian political scientist, Boris Buden, proposed in his book on the era of political transition in Central Europe that maybe this region predicts what will happen to the world after the collapse not only of the Soviet Bloc, but the communist idea as such. Buden (2012) showed – based on examples drawn from the former Yugoslavia – that it would be far-right nationalistic and religious anti-communism that would fill in the gap created by the defeat of the idea of progress. His prophecies proved to be correct.

Contrary to its self-image, capitalism never was and it never will be a system advocating freedom and emancipation. The ideological promise of capitalism – that one day the whole world entangled in accumulation of capital and market exchange will be functioning like the privileged "developed" countries of the rich North – turned out to be a deceptive mirage. In order to reproduce itself on an extensive scale capital desperately needs to subjugate living labor, to divide workers and to enclose resources from their access and command. It can conduct these tasks in some regulated and consensual way only if there is accordingly strong resistance to unrestrained accumulation. It is on the peripheries that capital has always tested the limits of consent and endurance of humans and eco-systems. And where capital reigns with pure force and domination, there is a widespread need to defeat all signs of the common. Countries that experienced transitions from socialism to neoliberal capitalism – as well as former Third World states, which became victims of neocolonial practices and structural adjustment programs – uncover to us the true nature of accumulation in late crisis-driven capitalism. If there is some kind of homogenization or convergence at the horizon, it is not a world from advertising folders, but the universalization of practices already tested on the margins of the system. Structural anti-communism is on the rise and its far-right excesses will be more and more present. If there is some lesson to take from the extreme Polish case study of anti-communism, it is the following:

1) capital needs anti-communism to erase the possibility of autonomization of the common;
2) the global rise of the populist Right is possible due to subjugation and corruption of the common, which is fuelled by anti-communism and other widespread discourses of exclusion;
3) it is the common that we need to institute to defeat anti-communism.

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TYTUŁ: Wymazywanie tego, co wspólne: od polskiego antykomunizmu do uniwersalnego antykapitalizmu

ABSTRAKT: Przedmiotem artykułu jest obecny przyrost znaczenia dyskursów antykomunistycznych na przykładzie polskiego antykomunizmu. Cel artykułu jest dwojaki. Po pierwsze, by zweryfikować użyteczności teorii hegemonii dla krytyki antykomunizmu. Twierdzę, że teoria ta pozostaje przydatna jako narzędzie analityczne pozwalające rozpoznać praktyczne zastosowania antykomunizmu w rywalizacji politycznej, ale okazuje się niezdolna do konceptualizacji bardziej systemowych i nieoczywistych przejawów logiki antykomunistycznej w maszynerii współczesnego kapitalizmu. Dlatego proponuję alternatywną propozycję interpretacji zjawiska antykomunizmu – opartą głównie na postoperaistycznym marksizmie dobra wspólnego oraz na lekcjach teoretycznych, jakie wypływają z najnowszych badań nad ludowymi, oddolnymi praktykami społecznymi w Polsce. Po drugie, przedstawia hipotezę, wedle której właściwe zrozumienie partykularnego przykładu polskiego antykomunizmu może okazać się pomocne w rozpoznaniu funkcjonowania

uniwersalnego antykomunizmu, rozumianego jako reakcja na walki mające na celu instytucję tego, co wspólne.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: antykomunizm, dobro wspólne, antykapitalizm, hegemonia, polska polityka

REVIEW ESSAYS

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REPORT FROM BEYOND THE EVENT HORIZON

JOANNA BEDNAREK

Abstract: This is a review essay discussing Magdalena Grabowska's book: *Zerwana genealogia: Działalność społeczna i polityczna kobiet po 1945 roku a współczesny polski ruch kobiecy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2018).

Keywords: feminism, Polish People's Republic, Women's League

Despite thirty years having passed since the fall of the Polish People's Republic, we are still far from perceiving these times just as past. It would even seem that the farther we are from this moment in history, the denser the web of phantasms enveloping the facts, and sometimes (as in the case of conservative historical policy) the phantasms overtake the facts themselves more and more. The distortion of the history of the people, whether activists or "normal people", who co-created the previous regime, adapted to it, or rebelled against it, by the right, the hegemonic force in Poland nowadays, is undeniably a cause for concern; also concerning is that the "progressive" movements are not necessarily invested in creating counter-hegemony. Moreover, this is not caused by a lack of thorough historical analysis – there was plenty of it, for example, in the "W krainie PRL" published by Wydawnictwo Trio – but by a lack of representation of their message in the public imagination. For feminist-activists or female literature researchers, PRL (the Polish abbreviation for the Polish People's Republic) remains "a legacy of the void" (Araszkiewicz 2014), "a black hole", "a freezer", "a rift", (Grabowska 2018, 51, 62). To sum up, we know everything about these times because there is not much to know – those were the times of martyrdom, of nothing of note; hence it is not worth it to take an interest in these times.

This is clearly untrue – in the 1960s and 1970s there were writers such as Jadwiga Żylińska (Marzec 2014; see also: Iwasiów and Galant 2011) or Barbara Czałczyńska (Bednarek 2015), artists like Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Natalia LL, or Ewa Partum (Majewska 2017; Toniak 2015), who represented, or rather pioneered, the feminist perspective in Poland. The abovementioned approach, however, allows them to be dismissed as exceptions, anomalies, unable to challenge a vision of PRL as a realm beyond the event horizon, of which nothing can be said, or, to be exact, where you have no access, and from which you can't return to give a description. Unlike a cosmological black hole, the black hole of PRL is conditioned by human cultural constructs; furthermore, it is an arbitrary and artificial phenomenon, curtailing our ability to understand the recent past that shaped us.

Fortunately, young researchers show us how to look into the black hole; besides the aforementioned series of books (e.g. Sadowska 2010; Wóycicka 2009; Nowakowska and Wóycicka 2010; Borodziej and Kochanowski 2010) in the past few years there have been books on the female role in socialist modernisation (Fidelis 2010), on the discourse on sexuality in PRL (Kościańska 2015) or the figures of female communists, and the prejudices and phantasms associated with them (Mrozik 2013, 2016; Zawadzka 2016; Forecki 2017; Bukalska 2016). We have also seen an analysis of referring to PRL as a black hole, characteristic of the Polish feminist movement's narration (Mrozik 2014; Zawadzka 2017). This mechanism of representation is perceived as a symptom of the conservatism of the movement, and it is a capitulation to right-wing historical policy, as well as its attachment to an older, post-transitional liberal tendency of demonising communism.

The book by Magdalena Grabowska is not only a recent development of this tendency, but also represents a new quality in the debate on PRL's significance for our times and the genealogy of Polish feminism. It is an account of the lives of a few women, who were members of female communist organisations, based on a few dozen in-depth interviews, and on an analysis of materials from Archiwum Akt Nowych (New Acts Archive). The author herself stresses that her work represents a "revisionist" approach to communist history; while the hegemonic approach, both in post-communist and Western countries, assumes the conceptualisation of "the periods before and after communism as opposing and separate state, political and institutional systems", the revisionist approach "offers an analysis focused on highlighting connections and relations between various conceptualisations of gender equality, and on practices of action in the name of equality extant during the communist period and during the transition" (Grabowska 2018, 15). This approach manifests in two ways.

Firstly, the dominant approach assumed that women, unless they were activists, i.e. unless they were on the "oppressor's" side, were devoid of agency; they had to be victims or passive objects of historical changes. The interviews conducted by Grabowska and analysis of archival materials show us a different picture. We get to know, for example, the various motives of people who decided to join the Women's League, like willingness to pursue a career, to achieve positive outcomes for women, or faith in the advantages of the socialist modernisation project (Grabowska 2018, 124–136). "We have pressed for the organisation of nurseries and kindergartens within factories. For factory canteens. It has been a huge blessing for women since there have been problems with supplies" (Grabowska 2018, 138).

We also get to familiarize ourselves with the controversies during the assemblies of the Women's Department of PPR (Polish Worker's Party) and PZPR (Polish United Worker's Party) during the years 1946–1952, during the times when it would seem that the realisation of a gender equality project in post-war Poland would come about because of ideological communists, and it still was not settled what form should it take (Grabowska 2008, 191–202); we become acquainted with a subsequent period of "practical activism", when the Women's League and Household Institute gave up on the reconstruction of gender relations and introduced a pragmatic strategy of making life easier for women working "double shifts". Members of these organisations surely operated under the conditions dictated by an authoritarian regime – however, denying their agency, perceiving them as victims of manipulation or as cynical because of this, would be a mistake. This perception of women's actions in communist states is frequently caused by a particular vision of agency as genuine autonomy, an action unconditioned by society, politics or history. This is, as Grabowska argues, not only ideologically motivated – it stems from the liberal vision of an individual as independent from the society in which they live – but also simply untrue, since it makes impossible an examination of real women's choices and the forces that affected these choices.

Even in "democratic" countries, women remain under the pressure of manifold formal and informal requirements such as the necessity of doing waged and unwaged work or negotiating with "the beauty myth" (Wolf 2014). Using a notion of agency as webbed in concrete social conditions enables the sketching of a map of freedom and servitude particular to each context.

Secondly, the overview of the changes taking place in PRL's gender policy provided above shows that communism did not impose emancipation on Polish women, for which they and the whole society were not ready. Although PRL brought professional activation of women, changes in "the sexual contract" (Pateman 2014), i.e. an unwritten agreement defining gender roles and relations between men and women in a given society, went only so far as was necessary from the standpoint of post-war modernisation. After a few years of Stalinism, when the policy of encouraging women to perform "male" professions was implemented, and activists in women's organisations were thinking about the women issue in the largest possible categories, perceiving their activity as a broad emancipation project connected with the politicization of the female masses and propagating communism among them, the movement shifted towards de-politicization (Grabowska 2018, 78–79, see Fidelis 2010, 18–21). This shift was caused by the reluctance towards this policy of both ordinary women and the activists of the League of Women, who focused instead on social activity. Already in the 1950s, the years of Stalinism were considered an aberration - many of the anti-Communist clichés we use today, like the figure of women tractor drivers, we inherited from PRL.

Already at the end of the 1940s and early 1950s, the tendency towards depoliticisation was evident in the Polish women's movement. Activists essential for the development of the women's movement lost their positions, and the communist leaders were pushed, among others as part of the anti-Semitic campaign initiated in the Stalinist period, to less prominent party and institutional positions (Grabowska 2018, 79, see 18).

It turns out that the lines of continuity and rupture occur in other places than anti-communist dogma has accustomed us to think they were; many images and attitudes that are antipathetic to communism, which is today our phantasmatic baggage, arose in the period of the People's Republic of Poland. The era of real socialism was also not a monolith: organisations, institutions and individuals had their own goals and were subject to multiple pressures, which led to tensions, conflicts, and political changes (Kenney 2015).

The aim of Grabowska's work, however, is not only to challenge stereotypes and show the transformation of the equality narrative within the PRL (Grabowska 2018, 18) but also, perhaps above all, to intervene in the identity narratives of Polish feminism. This movement associated its origins with the opposition of the 1980s, Solidarity, and political transformation (Kondratowicz 2013; Penn 2014; Graff 2003), and also identified itself in relation to the categories or periodisation developed within the Western feminist movement. As Grabowska

writes, the horizon of the debate on the women's movement in Poland is determined by three narratives:

> [T]he narrative of lack, conceptualising East European feminism as non-existent, a convergent narrative representing women's movements in post-socialism as delayed in comparison with the West and, the narrative bringing them together, (...) anti-communist narrative, which portrays communism as responsible for the non-existence and/or delays of emancipation movements in Poland (Grabowska 2018, 19).

Feminism defined itself in opposition to communism as a figure of absence and delay, and at the same time as an imitative movement towards the West, and more specifically the United States; it was, as Grabowska points out, somewhat inevitable – after the transformation, the feminist movement had to win for itself a place on the political scene defined by the hegemony of enthusiastic liberalism and the offensive of conservatism. In hindsight, however, this approach was an ideal recipe for self-colonisation - Polish feminism set itself in the position of an inferior sister of Western feminism, recreating the stereotypical approach of Central and Eastern Europe as a "half-orient" (Grabowska 2018, 41) which must learn about emancipation from Westerners, and also deny part of its history – "the local legacy of emancipation" (Grabowska 2018, 26). "Escape of feminism from 'ideology' was supposed to be a strategy of survival, its by-product was to erase from the history of the women's movement that part of it that has common roots with communism, and often also with socialism" (Grabowska 2018, 45).

Thus, Grabowska's work is an attempt at both decolonisation and genealogy. Its empirical dimension, i.e. interviews and analysis of archival materials, is shaped by bold theoretical assumptions: the author's aim is to write, in the words of Foucault, the "history of the present" (Grabowska 2018, 22), showing what forces, explicit and implicit, recognized and unrecognized, created the Polish women's movement. It is about showing the border of a feminist archive, the boundary of "what can be said in the context of the narrative about the history of the women's movement in Poland" (Grabowska 2018, 173). The story of the activities of ideological communists such as Edwarda Orlowska, Eugenia Pragierowa and Żanna Kormanowa, with all the accompanying ambivalence, as well as the activities of the "second generation" pragmatic activists of the Women's League, not only fills the gap in knowledge, but also reorganizes the story of Polish feminism, supplementing it with the repressed communist presence and showing that we have a local tradition of emancipation – although it is marked by ambivalence, complicated, and does not fit into the pattern of struggle between good and evil. Thanks to this, it becomes possible to decolonise the narrative about feminism in Eastern Europe (Grabowska 2018, 55).

Why is it so important? As Grabowska argues, the domination of the narrative of lack, backwardness and anti-communism has resulted in:

> Feminism, which forgets about its genealogies, telling an unconvincing story, from the point of view of feminist practice, the history of emancipation and women's awareness, about the lack of equality tradition in Poland. A movement that joins historical narratives of Western feminisms, a movement whose vision of one's own (individual or collective) identity is largely elitist and unconvincing (Grabowska 2018, 173).

These are strong words – but, I think, not too strong. Anticommunism, although it was an unavoidable part of the feminist strategy in the 1990s, hurt the movement very much, imposing a liberal curse on it: insensitivity to class issues and more generally systemic mechanisms of oppression. Today, when the horizon of our thinking and action is no longer defined by transformation, it is worth fixing it. Feminism in general, not only socialist feminism, needs communism and communists.

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TYTUŁ: Raport zza horyzontu zdarzeń

ABSTRAKT: Prezentowany tekst to esej recenzyjny na temat książki Magdaleny Grabowskiej, Zerwana genealogia: Działalność społeczna i polityczna kobiet po 1945 roku a współczesny polski ruch kobiecy (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, 2018).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: feminizm, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, Liga Kobiet

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HOW COMMUNISTS WANTED TO REMEMBER COMMUNISM

AGATA ZYSIAK

Abstract: This is a review essay discussing an edited volume titled Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism (eds. Agnieszka Mrozik and Stanislav Holubec, Routledge 2018).

Keywords: memory politics, communism, state-socialism, review essay

Starting a book about East Central Europe and communism with a quote from George Orwell seems to be evergreen, but also introduces a certain way of thinking about the period and raises certain questions: shall we get yet another totalitarian argument about powerful propaganda and omnipotent ideology arranging the memory and past of captive nations? Will it offer anything new in a vast spectrum of memory studies on and in Eastern Europe? The field of memory politics is difficult because so much has already been written, and as with this volume, a large part of the literature on memory policies are edited volumes that gather together localized historical case studies. Since the 1990s, the topics of memory and historical policies in East Central Europe have become an intensely covered topic to such an extent that they might become the region's specialization (just to mention a few from last 5 years: Dobre and Ghita 2017; Wulf 2016; Törnquist Plewa 2016; Sindbæk Andersen and Törnquist Plewa 2016; Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2016; Mitroiu 2015; Bernhard and Kubik 2014; Ochman 2013; Mink and Neumayer 2013). In Poland, both academic interests fuelled a rise in this thematic area as well as institutional shifts, like the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance in 1998 or later debates about the Fourth Polish Republic (a symbolic political project, an alternative to the "post-communist" Third Republic) or recent events like an attempt to introduce the Holocaust Law (criminalization of making accusations that the Polish nation was responsible or complicit in Nazi crimes). Therefore, it is not easy to still say something new and revealing in this field – especially in an edited volume like the one discussed here.

The book is the result of the conference, "Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism", organized in 2015 in Prague by the Association for Leftist Theory SOK; Association for European Dialog (a member of the Transfrom! network) and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. It gathers contributions from over half of the conference participants: eleven articles from mostly young researchers divided into an introduction and three sections. I mention the age, because it is much more difficult to publish an edited volume with mostly PhD students or early PhDs as contributors. The volume offers a perspective on the communist movement and memory policies of both Eastern and Western European communists. The editors define their scope of interest as the following: "communism was and is remembered by various political organizations, politicians and other social actors who call themselves "communist(s). (…) In this volume, we hope to compensate this lack (of communist memory – AZ)". (p. 2). A truly interesting choice was to include communists from Western Europe along with experiences from the so-called Soviet Bloc. The volume's focus is not on how communism itself was remembered, but on the reconstruction of historical memory and narratives characteristic for the movement itself – in the West, during particular periods of state-socialism and after their collapse.

Actually, a reader might be slightly misled by the publisher's description, which presents the book as a coherent story of how the communist movement and its historical identity

developed. The chronology of the volume seems to proceed consistently, starting with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; the recreation the movement's "victorious milestones" like the October Revolution or the Great Patriotic War; the Stalinist period; reinterpretations of 1956 and repressed events like Katyń and the Prague Spring which led to a crisis of state socialism in the late 1980s and finally ending with the reformulation or rejection of communist self-identity. In actuality, the book does not offer coherence so much as a random assortment of cases and themes. The most interesting decision was to include Western communists but they actually appear only in the book's first section, titled "Memory of the Left in Post-Socialist Europe" and focused on the self-identity of the contemporary Left. The second section focuses on memorial landscapes through examining case studies. The third and final section, titled "Communist Politics of Memory Before 1989", concentrates on state-socialism's internal practises of memory politics revealing its pluralism, conflicts and changes over time.

The introduction, written by the volume's editors, Agnieszka Mrozik, assistant professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, and Stanislav Holubec, associate professor at the University of České Budějovice and University of Hradec Králové, offers the story of the rise and development of what can be called "communist memory". It is actually a serious attempt to find coherence in the presented material, but many themes will appear only here. Therefore, one should read it less as a shortcut for navigating through the volume, and rather as a manifesto and historical reconstruction of communist memory politics. The introduction provides background for the other contributions, which focus more profoundly on later periods.

The origins of communist memory were being reconstructed from the 19th century with Engels's attempts to protect Marx's heritage and the first commemorative decisions within the communist movement (like May Day celebrations planned to displace religious festivities in the 1890s and the introduction of the International Women's Day in the 1900s). After 1917, communist historical narratives were mainly produced by Bolsheviks and included events such as the removal of tsarists monuments, new celebrations and commemorations related to recent events and biographical information on leaders' lives (p. 4). Later developments during both the interwar period and the Second World War were still presented mainly from the Russian perspective, while the rest of Eastern Europe received more attention only later, when the People's Republics were established. I especially appreciate the inclusion of Western communist parties. The authors point out that after the war, the recent martyrology of the anti-Nazi resistance rather than traditions of interwar strikes became central for memory of the communist movement in the West. Mrozik and Holubec argue that the end of Stalinism in the 1950s began a deeper split between the East and West. Communist parties outside the Soviet Bloc started to develop their own historical narratives, often critical of the Soviet Union. At the same time, de-Stalinization opened more space for local variants of historical narratives in

the Eastern Bloc, including dangerous flirtations with nationalism and antisemitism. The overview of topics mentioned here is satisfactorily broad and rich: from the cult of cosmonauts and the realisation of modernization's dream in dams and canals to Third World relations and anti-colonial struggles. The authors point out that Soviet history was represented a in non-linear manner, without rupture events or conflicts, but as "a cyclic structure of constantly repeating non-events heading towards the horizon of communism" (p. 11). At the same time, the volume's contributions well prove that the story is much more multi-layered, diverse and pluralistic, full for conflicts, shifts and reinterpretations.

The introduction also offers some revisionist postulates like the recognition of achievements of Soviet modernization and a generous interpretation of the system's collapse (pp. 13–14). All in all, it can be viewed as the volume's manifesto since there are no other summaries, conclusions or separate introductions to the book's specific sections. The history of memory politics offered here is therefore the most coherent overall and ordered part of the volume, as the rest of the chapters provide rather disparate, if not isolated contributions, with their own theoretical and methodological choices, not necessarily comparable scopes of interest and diverse selection of materials and time periods. In order to address the broad and diverse range of the book and do justice to all its contributors, I will very briefly discuss all eleven chapters.

The first section is the most contemporary one and it alone deals with "non-Soviet" contexts. It examines the post-1989 memory of communism and the self-identity of the Left in the former West. The scope of interests seems wide and the span of its timeline is from the 19th century to recent events like financial crisis and Syriza's 2015 negotiations with the troika of the European Commission. Csilla Kiss's paper "Of the Past Let Us Make a Clean Slate. The Lack of a Left-Wing Narrative and the Failure of the Hungarian Left" deals with the recent situation in Hungary, which along with Poland, is a favourite example for liberals to show that communism is to blame for populism and anti-democratic sentiments. The paper claims that the Hungarian Socialist Party's lack of a coherent politics of history "is unable to give a leftist response to the political right's approach to national history" (p. 24). It mainly reconstructs right-wing political history and Hungarian history as an objective set of events (a common approach in this volume) to conclude that "amnesia and forced compensation exhibited by the 'ashamed' left, which denies that the period had any progressive features, caused internalization of the guilt attributed to them by the right" (p. 30).

A comparative component is offered by the second paper titled "Communist Successors and Narratives of the Past: Party Factions in the German PDS and the Russian CPRF, 1990–2005", co-authored by Thorsten Holzhauser and Antony Kalashnikov. Focusing on two very different national cases, the article traces memory discourses to examine factors that shaped the identity and defined the strategy of successor parties in Germany and Russia. The authors

mediate between the internalist (forces within a party) and externalist (institutional and sociopolitical contexts) explanations (p. 41). Despite many differences, "the Russian and German successor parties were able to capitalize on nostalgic feelings among those unconvinced by anti-communist elite discourses" (p. 59) at the same time serving anti-Western sentiments among their voters. While in Russia, the strategy was to defend the communist successorship against challenges from other parties and implement a "national liberation" program, in Germany it was to downplay PDS's monopolistic status as the communist-successor party. The authors ultimately appear to favour underlying internalist explanations over externalist ones for the party's political choices.

The last article from this section deals with responses of the radical left after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Walter Baier, in "The Memory and Identity of the Western European Left in the Light of European Integration", looks at how the Party of the European Left dealt with its historical precedents, the communist movement and Soviet system's final collapse. The assumption here is that the radical left can be treated as a "communist spectrum", although the term as such is no longer in use (pp. 78–79). It mainly provides a brief history and intellectual background of the radical left in Europe and its relation to the Eastern Bloc. The main theme is how Eurocommunism arose as a concept and led to the creation of a common leftist European group. Its attitude towards the Eastern Bloc might be summarised in a predictable manner: that the western Left distanced itself from Stalinism and any non-democratic practices. What is interesting is that we definitely get a first hand account, as Baier was to some extent a participant of the processes he describes. For over a decade, he was the national chairman of the Communist Party of Austria, a fact which is also discussed in the last section of the volume (p. 274). He was also the political coordinator of the transform!europe, which supported both the publication of the volume being discussed and the initial conference behind it.

The second section shifts the focus to socialist and post-socialist memorial landscapes by examining case studies from the former Soviet Bloc, mainly in a comparative perspective. Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik offers insight into the fate of Soviet monuments in Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, which are defined as objects and places commemorating Soviet soldiers, heroes and leaders of the socialist regimes or expressions of brotherhood with the USRR. While she treats these objects as monumental propaganda, she also acknowledges that this was typical for establishing any new political system. De-Sovietization meant purification of public space; it was "a symbol of moral renewal and the negation of the previous regime and a symbol of a struggle against corruption and collaboration" (p. 101). Kuczyńska-Zonik reconstructs the typical scenario when monuments were demolished or removed and replaced by statues commemorating national aspects of history. However, differences among the examined countries reveal that Polish municipalities have had to remove all symbols of state socialism, while in Lithuania, the law was less restrictive and fuelled the rise of socialist tourism. She

concludes that in all the examined contexts we are "gradually witnessing a changing approach to recognition as a social historical heritage and a new appreciation of the monuments as a part of art history".

Another contribution of Stanislav Holubec also offers a comparative approach. The paper titled "Lenin, Marx and Local Heroes. Socialist and Post-Socialist Memorial Landscapes in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia" starts with a historical introduction and careful comparative section, which together trace Nazi monuments, and take up the majority of the paper. Holubec argues that his selected cases have much in common with each other and contrast with other communist dictatorships. High industrialization, strong working-class parties, evangelic religion, indigenous traditions of communism in East Germany and Czechoslovakia contrast with the very rigid regimes, revolutionary transitions and changes of boards of the other countries (pp. 122–123). We get an insight into the memory cultures of two cities comparable in size, history, position in their national economies and importance in their cultural landscapes: Jena and Hradec Kralove. These detailed case studies lead to broader conclusions: "Czechoslovakia was not only a harder line country than Poland or Hungary but matched the GDR in this respect. The degree of street renaming and destruction of memorials after 1989 indicates that the public and authorities of the former GDR were comparatively moderate in dealing with the defeated communism. On the other hand, in its anti-communism, the Czech Republic equalled Poland, with Slovakia standing somewhere in the middle" (p. 136).

The last paper from this section sets its focus solely on Russia. Ekaterina V. Klimenko's "The Politics of Oblivion Repression, Collective Memory and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Russia" demonstrates the communist past as seen more positively in Russian public opinion than in most Eastern European societies. She examines the evolution of the strategies of conceptualization of past repression employed by both the state and civil society in the post-Soviet period and how it was exploited in the process of nation-building and constituting national identity (p. 142). She shows how the public interest in USSR history during the period of perestroika and early 1990s arose, and how taking responsibility for the memory of repression was the strategy of conceptualizing it. The development of a "grand narrative" meant building a great nation and was based on neglecting the local and ignoring the global: "It disregards 'small' stories of 'little people' and is at the same time focused on Russia's 'special historical path'" (p. 157). This grand narrative focused on the heroic rather than the tragic events in the past. Actually, both Russian civil society and government moved from commemoration of the repression to a more or less successful attempt to forget it.

The longest and most diverse third section concentrates on the narratives of the communist parties in power. All five papers deal with state-socialism's own past. We get an insight into the memory wars inside the People's Republic in Jakub Szumski's "What Happened in 1980? Memory Forging and the Official Story of Martial Law in the Polish United Workers'

Party" and Agnieszka Mrozik's "We Must Reconstruct Our Own Past. 1960s Polish Communist Women's Memoirs—Constructing the (Gender) History of the Polish Left". Szumski's research focuses on a moment of political crisis during the "Solidarity Revolution" and the introduction of martial law. A power shift in the ruling communist party was considered as the time when a new leader created the official vision of what happened. The author offers a literature review and very detailed description of party realities to underscore that "a shift towards basic values and themes, touched upon national and universal mythology and thus was very effective" (p. 185). This claim puts a clash of historical narratives at the centre of a tumultuous moment, which leads to the conclusion that "emotion and lack of reason originating in disappointment with the former leadership and discontent with the political and economic crisis led to unsupervised social and political activity" (pp. 184–185).

Mrozik's contribution touches upon a very interesting gender theme, absent from previous sections. In particular, she deals with women's autobiographies published in 1960s, after de-Stalinization. During the Gierek era, representations of communist women's experiences served to purify the idea of communism and to return it to its roots. Stories of female communists, engaged and active before the war, who often took important positions precisely during the Stalinization period served as a critical intervention into contemporary reality and a tool of communist identity revival. However, the women themselves were marginalized by the political change their memoirs served to legitimize and were even stereotyped as "aunts of the revolution". Their stories were creating a common history and constructing the Polish workers' movement and leftist traditions. As one of the women stated: "What I would fear most for Poland is instilling passivity and indifference in the minds of the youth toward matters of collective life, toward social afflictions" (p. 195). The theme as such draws readers' attention to the crucial issue of the role of gender with the memory police.

A repeating theme in the contributions was the communist romance with nationalism, especially in the later decades. The Romanian case discussed by Monica Ciobanu is probably the most extreme example of this. She focuses on Gheorghiu-Dej's political project and its legitimation both before and after Ceauşescu's rule. In Mrozik's paper, this story deals with one of the oldest generations of communists who managed to put communist ideals into practice by building a state. A large part of Mrozik's paper is dedicated to an overview of the 1989 revolution and its political aftermath, followed by a re-examination of the history of Gheorghiu-Dej's rule from 1948 to 1965 in the context of the post-1989 politics of memory. The latter is seen as a struggle to construct a national version of socialism and link its identity to a national narrative both before and after 1989. Ciobanu explains the post-1989 instability and volatility of public opinion by the dominant narratives of trauma, national suffering and victimization. However, she adds: "the present international political context dominated by growing Euroscepticism and the rise of extreme right-wing populist movements, which stand

in sharp and ominous contrast to the enthusiasm and commitment to the liberal democratic project of the first years after 1989 (…) is likely to generate a more sympathetic feeling for the communist past among a significant section of the population" (p. 238). The cases of Hungary and Poland definitely do not support this argument, which might suggest an interesting comparative study.

Darina Volf's chapter "Constructing New Friends and Enemies. Rewriting Czechoslovak History After the Communist Takeover" also deals with the post-1948 period, but not from the post-1989 perspective. She examines public discourse on the "imperialist" role of the US in the pre-war period and in the 1940s. With the enforced establishment of the communist interpretation of Czechoslovak history after 1948, not only did historical images of the US and the Soviet Union change but important events in Czechoslovak history related to both superpowers were also reinterpreted. The limitations of the past narratives were revealed by the tempo with which banned historical images re-emerged after the Prague Spring. Volf concludes that all in all, it proved impossible to erase all positive memories of the US role in Czechoslovak history.

The last, closing chapter of the whole volume sets its focus on Russia in in the 1920s. Oksana Klymenko reconstructs how memoirs from the October Revolution served to legitimize Bolshevik power. She traces efforts to present it as an uprising and later as a revolution, and not as a coup. She sees it as a "memory project" establishing certain frameworks for remembering, which involved the gathering of memoirs from revolutionary participants: from famous activists and members of the Communist Party to workers and poor peasants. We can see here some similarities with the diary movement in Poland[1] and the women's stories examined by Mrozik. In the Russian case, the attempt was implemented by the Committee on the History of the October Revolution. Klymenko disagrees that we can see those early attempts as creating an empire of memory, but she argues that it did establish a model for future campaigns to propagate the desired manner of seeing and writing history.

On the one hand, I appreciate setting our focus on communist memory policies in the region and Western Europe. On the other, I lack the enthusiasm of another book reviewer, Kathlyn Ghodsee, who underlined the "desire to challenge the totalitarian thesis about twentieth-century state socialism in Eastern Europe" and "critical nuancing of the recent past, undertaken by young scholars in the region" (Ghodsee 2018). Yes, authors assure the reader, that they treat communism as any other modern political movement and include modernization attempts, anti-colonialism and inclusive (or even emancipatory) moments of the communist movement, but a basic assumption about the role of official policies is often simplified into a

[1] The diary movement or the so-called the Polish method developed by Florian Znaniecki and Ludwik Krzywicki in 1920s, public competitions for people' memoirs gained popularity especially in postwar Poland.

"we-they" division. Despite Orwell's aforementioned quote, which obviously does not need to automatically indicate a totalitarian approach, the introduction begins with the blunt statement that citizens perceived the official vision of history as "one big lie" (p. 2). The bare choice to focus on communist memory politics instead of terror or repression does not seem revisionist. Furthermore, periodization, for example, is not questioned but reproduced as is the assumption that official discourse was propaganda. The question of propaganda seems especially interesting when we think about a possible comparison with contemporary right-wing or liberal policies. To what extent we see memory politics as a universal tool for any attempts to hegemonize discourse or does it truly depend on a political background of the possible hegemon? If we agree that every system of governance has its official version of history, then what remains different for Eastern Europe?

The volume's construction follows a standard scheme for memory studies: reconstructing a certain subject's policies in a selected period of time or examining how the memory of some event was constructed. All in all, it offers a set of localised, even narrow, historical case studies. Because of the detailed historical accounts, particular contributions may seem hermetic for a wider audience. Many also present historical background as somehow objective and separate from the historical politics, while obviously that is not a case. The narrative is detailed on the level of specific cases, but fragmented overall. To make my criticism less sever, let's keep in mind that we are talking about a historical work, reach in data and details. And to some extent, this is inevitable in any edited volume, but more work could have been done to negotiate a common meaning with the authors and to summarize the collected contributions (There is no summary, just a list of contributors.) A more critical voice that reviewed the initial conference behind the volume, resonates with my own doubts more strongly than Ghodsee's enthusiasm (Horeni 2016). I do not mind the rather openly leftist profile of the book's origin, to which Horeni pointed. But I do agree that it should be stated more clearly. Transform!europe is a network of organizations active in the field of political education and critical scientific analysis, and is the recognised political foundation corresponding to the Party of the European Left. Furthermore, much of Horani's criticism, articulated just after the conference, was not overcome during collaboration on the edited volume. I also agree with her other crucial point regarding the very limited coherence between papers and the lack of a common theoretical or methodological frame. All contributions, although dealing with similar issues, refer to different theoretical concepts like Keith Wilson's "memory forging" or the "heritagization" proposed by Kevin Wals, and even the usage of the words "communism", "socialism", "state-socialism" or even "left" does not seem to be negotiated or somehow standardized among the authors.

My very last remark does not address this particular book, but the wider publishing strategies set. For example, according to the new list of publishing houses issued by the Polish

Ministry of Higher Education, the authors' decision to publish with Routledge is actually a good strategy for how to produce knowledge effectively – and gather points for Ministry's evaluation. However, while observing prestige hierarchies in the US where commercial publishing houses are not very respected and knowing the problematic role of corporations like Reed-Elsevier or Taylor & Francis (like the Cost of Knowledge movement), I see a worrying trend of both: pushing edited volumes as a form, and younger authors as contributors towards commercial presses. This is problematic and needs to be both underlined and repeated. We have a commercial publishing press offering the volume for a price of 115 pounds, which is an amount of money devastating not only for any faculty member's private budget but also for those of libraries in the region. For example, this is almost 550 Polish zlotys – 15 percent of a median salary in Poland (3511 PLN) and 14,3 percent of a PhD's statutory earnings (Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego 2016). This is by no means a criticism of the editors or contributors, but of the publishing system, academic evaluation and its structural determinants.

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AUTOR: Agata Zysiak

TYTUŁ: Jak komuniści chcieli, aby pamiętano komunizm

ABSTRAKT: Prezentowany tekst to esej recenzyjny na temat książki *Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism* (pod redakcją Agnieszki Mrozik i Stanislava Holubeca, Routledge 2018).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: polityka pamięci, komunizm, państwowy socjalizm, esej recenzyjny

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ANTI-COMMUNISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RENEWAL OF COMMUNISM[1]

TYMOTEUSZ KOCHAN

The primary area of exclusion that anti-communism generates is located in social education. It is the actively anti-communist upbringing offered by the contemporary education system that translates into later anti-communist hegemony – first cultural, then political.

The exclusion results here from the total domination of extreme right-wing politics, which is intertwined with the pseudo-neutrality of the markets. Workers do not receive any choice, because the only universal socialization approved by the ideological apparatus of the state is precisely this anti-communist one. Such a system of universal education effectively creates a man faithful to capitalist values and opposing everything related to communism. Media and institutions unfavourable to communism kill every potential worker's desire for change, while the selection procedures present in education divide people by their class origin and economic status, and do not favour the formation of elites with a different worldview than pro-system and anti-communist.

Every type of capitalism thrives on the mystification of class relations and the misrepresentation of truths regarding the power relations within the economy. Polish capitalism is still extraordinarily uncertain and continually struggles with the experience of real socialism, which in some aspects still allows us to believe in the existence of any systemic alternative. The uncertainty of the prevailing order translates into the aggression and strength

[1] The title comes from the editors.

of the means used by the state apparatus. The fight against communism is carried out with the use of significant financial resources and by stigmatising everyone who expresses any interest in the matter of non-capitalist reality. Hence the powerful and aggressive cult of anti-communist heroes and the anti-communist version of politics of history, hence entrepreneurship lessons at schools instead of labour law, and hence child-raising in the spirit of nationalist militias. Hence the constant pressure of the conservative and profoundly anti-class vision of society, which also requires religious sauce, elevating to the rank of sainthood the idea of the great national community that includes national bourgeoisie and representatives of at least the national sphere of finances.

This excludes the world of work and labour as a class subjectivity while simultaneously forging an entirely new man who actively fights against the enemy system, and who cannot see himself beyond the world of private property and the imaginary it implies.

The essential driving force of the anti-communist ideology, therefore, remains above all the bourgeois ideology embedded deeply into social consciousness, without which the system's expropriation of 90 percent of society would never be able to arise and function. What has long been seen as common sense in Marxist philosophy is that the individualist and free-market ideology in its spectrum of influence is not limited to the capitalist class itself, but primarily serves to disintegrate the workers' sense of class solidarity and identity, without which communist thinking and the communist project itself becomes completely impossible. This exclusion of workers is above all their active alienation from an independent class politics, which in certain imperialist conditions, however, does not necessarily bring them only failures. This does not change the fact that workers themselves mostly do not believe today that they are workers belonging to a particular class, because the sense of belonging to the working class is a cause of shame, a symptom of defeat and being a "loser", waste of the capitalist rat race.

The ruling classes of late capitalism are perfectly aware of the fact that they participate in class struggle, and they also know that the best way to safeguard their rule is to undermine faith in all alternatives, especially now, in the era of the coming capitalist economic crisis and the climate disaster caused by the mode of capitalist production.

The dominated classes, on the other hand, live by their newly acquired faith in a chance, as well as by a comical belief in fairy tales about national community and society, which will eventually grow up to become one big loving family. Living with such a capital-sponsored imagination is being a spontaneous servant of the system, an eternally individualised human capital, and being convinced of participation in a continuous progression towards the achievement of private property.

This eternal and never-fulfilled struggle for wealth is also naturally related to existence in semi-peripheral capitalism, where the chances of acquiring even small resources to liberate

oneself from the ubiquitous exploitation of capital are still such an active illusion that they constitute an actual object of worship and a distinctive landmark for the popular identity.

This exceptionally enticing but completely impossible opportunity for acquiring capital produces a first anti-class and then anti-communist identity. At the same time, such identity implies a reluctance to fraternise with representatives of any class, especially with other representatives of the working class who are already mainly seen as active market competitors. Class in itself today alienates workers from the very possibility of use of the fruits of capital. Thinking about a world without owners (read – the noble "employers") or even being a member of a trade union becomes in this situation a harmful and deeply self-destructive act.

Another ally of anti-communism is a resurgent narrative about the national and ethnic community, which is nothing but the prolongation of cultural racism resulting from the competition between nations and regions of the world. This narrative makes anti-communism as a worldview more powerful, and strengthens the forms of identity based on national, ethnic and territorial unity. It does so because communism itself is a real threat, both to all visions of national communities and their supremacy, and to the claims of global capital for the right to be the only "internationalism", acting above the structures of individual nations and being the main beneficiary of the death of the communist project.

The exclusion from class follows precisely as the result of being interpellated into the national community.

The crucial question to be answered is whether the communist project would, at the moment, improve the consumption share of the contemporary Western proletarian, because it is this aggressive consumer consciousness that is currently the most painfully cognitively exclusive factor. In the utopia of eternal welfare based on the conditions of Western domination, the utopia of eternal economic growth and the reign of mass consumer culture, anti-communism is the only reasonable option and obligation. Being excluded from the communist project and mobilised to fight against it is a disaster for a citizen of peripheral and semi-peripheral capitalism. It is also a disaster for the future of all humankind. Yet even for the worker from the very heart of the Empire, it is still a conscious decision, the importance of which should not be underestimated.

As for the effective fight against anti-communism, it is not yet possible. Certainly not as long as it is merely a "fight against anti-communism".

Being a defender of the communist cause, which by the ideological apparatus of the capitalist state has already been thoroughly and very effectively assigned to Stalinism, hunger in Ukraine and lumpen-anti-socialist aesthetics derived from Netflix's "1983" series, is doomed to failure. The decisive voice will always belong here to the cultural means of reproduction, which are still owned by the capitalist elites, who, regardless of whether they are liberal or nationalist, will always be jointly anti-communist.

This leads to a simple conclusion that the progressive forces advocating for a positive vision of communism of any type, either in Poland or in Europe and the rest of the world, do not have the tools and means to regain the communist project while fighting on conditions that have already been arranged by the global hegemony of capital. The recovery of communism is not possible in the same sense that it is impossible to regain the charm of peasant revolts or the savour of Bolshevism.

In order to become truly recovered, communism must first be rejected in its past form and then renewed, especially through a spread in mass consciousness.

To a certain extent, we have already made this step, but still, new forms of resistance have not been transformed into an effective movement, especially in the wealthiest part of the world. Communism has yet to be called a new movement when it will become real communism.

On the active side, it is primarily about rejecting all historical fetishes and longings for the 19th and 20th century aesthetics. The communist movement of the past has never been a struggle for history and concepts for themselves. True communism is a movement that strives for the positive abolition of the present state of affairs, based on the principles that were only generally marked out by the Marxist tradition. Communism will be wholly defeated as long as its defenders are activists and theoreticians too attached to the old colours, symbols and ideas, deprived of the ability to adapt constantly.

Movement requires constant changes, and the fight against anti-communism only makes sense when it is combined with a fight for a realistic, new, universal project which has at a particular moment both the political load of a certain mass and a real chance for success. Communism, understood as the abolition of classes and the socialised mode of production, can also be realised in many ways, and as a political project, it is primarily owned by the global proletariat and its communal interests.

Therefore, if the new, real communism cannot be either the former communism or merely a victory over anti-communist politics of history, then the focus should primarily be on developing a vision of what the modern and innovative communism could be. Such a project is already palpable, and it is becoming clear that the new communism will be primarily a challenge of humanity's survival in the face of climate-change-driven extermination, as well as in the face of a great regressing into imperialist nationalisms and the ever-increasing threat of war. Anti-anti-communism of the present day is a new project for and by the workers, and activism is a struggle for collective survival, which we will not achieve without getting rid of the disease, which is global, destructive capitalism.

The real challenge is to initiate the actions of the working class itself, which at the moment, due to the prevailing ideologies, is still mostly indifferent to the fate of communism (because it does not see in it the real representation of its interests), and to the fate of humanity, located on a lethal collision course with the greed of global capital.

Tymoteusz Kochan (1990) – Marxist philosopher and sociologist, cultural critic and columnist. PhD candidate at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Szczecin. The editor of the peer-reviewed journal of philosophy "Nowa Krytyka", leader of the "Marxist Critique Group" and the editor-in-chief of the Marxist website "Socjalizm Teraz". Member of the organising committee of the interdisciplinary academic conference organised by the journal "Nowa Krytyka" and the University of Szczecin on the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx and devoted to his philosophical oeuvre. The conference was illegally interrupted by the police intervention at the conference university's venue.

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POLISH DEADLOCK: BETWEEN LIBERAL AND RIGHT-WING ANTI-COMMUNISM[1]

JAKUB MAJMUREK

Let me narrow down the scope of the answer for the questions posed by the editors of "Theoretical Practice" to a specific place and time: Poland after 1989. In Poland after 1989, we had essentially two forms of anti-communism: a liberal and a right-wing one. The first dominated the 1990s; the second came into force after 2015. Each of these two anti-communisms was aiming its anti-communist bludgeon at different targets.

The basic figure of liberal anti-communism was *homo sovieticus* – the enslaved subjectivity created by the communist regime, always ready to choose a full belly over freedom, security above personal dignity. The representatives of the liberal elites labelled as such all the subjectivities (both individual and collective), that stood in the way of the transformation that they designed. *Homo sovieticus* was supposed to be incapable of becoming a citizen of liberal democracy as a subject rationally operating within the new market conditions. The label and accompanying discursive practices were supposed to stigmatize these groups that were losing (at least in the short-term) in consequence of the changes that happened during the 1990s (employees of shut-down factories, strong trade unions of the public sector, employees of PGR[2], etc.), taking away the public legitimacy of the demands they made.

1 The title comes from the editors.

2 PGR (pol. *Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne*) – State-owned Agricultural Enterprise, a form of collectivized agricultural enterprise operating in Poland during the real socialist period (until 1993).

Liberal anti-communism looked at the People's Republic of Poland as a world set on its head, where the "natural" socio-economic rights (with the market economy and private ownership at its forefront) were reversed. Poland after 1989 – proponents of this type of anti-communism argued – had to be put back on its feet, without looking at the relics of the former system. The paradox of this discourse lay in the fact that with the aim to establish conditions in Poland that were "normal as in the West", it attacked those institutions which in post-war Western Europe constituted the backbone of what we call the "golden age of capitalism": strong trade unions, the coexistence of public and private property, and a social security network. Also in Western Europe, these institutions have been in the heat of political attack since the mid-1980s – Polish liberal anti-communism in the 1990s can be seen as a local form of the global attack on a post-war, state-controlled form of capitalism highly focused within the borders of the nation-state.

Right-wing anticommunism also perceives communism as "a world set on its head", but it is not limiting this claim to the sphere of economics and property relations only. Communism is seen here as a period of foreign occupation and national enslavement, something that Poles were forced into from outside – one cannot imagine a statue of an honest Polish communist on such ground.

Speaking of what happened in Poland after 1944, this discourse often uses the figure of "war of races" – as Michel Foucault understands it in his analysis of journalism from the period of the English Revolution. Columnists on the side of Parliament presented the following narrative: the conquest by the Normans destroyed the Anglo-Saxon political institutions and imposed on England a foreign, monarchical system. Parliament, fighting for power with the king, liberated the Anglo-Saxons from the centuries of the Norman yoke. In conservative-national anti-communism, the place of Norman conquest is located during the years of 1944–1945. The Communists, like the Norman knights in 11th century England, enslaved the Poles. The so-called "cursed soldiers", an anti-communist, radical nationalist underground, fought against them, but they lost. The struggle of the "third generation of the Home Army with the third generation of Security Office (UB)" is still going on.

This discourse not only aims to completely remove the legitimacy of the PRL, but also that of the Third Polish Republic. The purpose of this anti-communism is to completely change the elite structure, giving space for those focused on the current right. The assumption is that for the present, the elites are still false elites attached to the Soviet past and connections. The Third Polish Republic seemingly removed the communists from power, but only to preserve their actual rule. How this tactic of delegitimisation operates can be seen at its best on the occasion of disputes over judicial reform that have been going on in recent years. Especially symptomatic was the monologue of Michał Rachoń, one of the leading Polish public TV journalists from 2017: "Communist courts and security services murdered tens of thousands

of Polish heroes who fought against the occupant. (...) The same people in 1989 suddenly began to call themselves 'independent judges' and became the guards of the Round Table Agreement. (...) Their children were promoted in the structures of the lawless system for 30 years of the Third Polish Republic".

Right-wing anti-communism goes along with the discourses of cultural wars: the war against "gender ideology", the dictates of political correctness, the Islamization of Europe. Right-wing anti-communism in contemporary liberal consensus in the West (marital equality, rights of trans people, rights of non-white people) sees the manifestation of the dictatorship of "Leftism" and its main ideological tool, "cultural Marxism" as an evil twin of the Polish communist dictatorship, and in some respects a much more dangerous one. On this plane, the goals of right-wing anti-communism go even further: it is about defending the conservative Polish status quo, blocking cultural change, and delegitimising all symbols associated, however remotely, with discourses and emancipation practices. This is often connected with the rehabilitation, or at least the relativisation of fascism, such as generals like Pinochet or Franco – "the defender of Europe against communism".

Right-wing anticommunism has no single figure that gathers its discourses, like *homo sovieticus*. The closest to this is probably the figure of "Major Bauman" – as the right-wing press calls an outstanding sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman. "Major Bauman" brings together the narrative of the "war of races", and the Soviet conquest, the figure of the elite of the Third Polish Republic and the modern Western left, and as such is the ideal object of attacks for right-wing anti-communism.

How to oppose anti-communisms in contemporary Poland? Liberal anti-communism today is, in my opinion, in decline, even if its copies sometimes haunt us in the language of the liberal opposition – for example, stigmatising the beneficiaries of the 500+ social program. However, I believe that although the practices of stigmatisation of economically weaker groups will not disappear, anti-communism will play a decreasing role here. These groups need better self-organisation and representation, regardless of the dispute over communism.

How to disarm the right-wing anti-communism that has become dominant today? What is needed is a politics of remembrance that would take the two following forms — first, the decriminalisation of communism. The stakes should be the presentation of communism not as a foreign idea, attacking Poland almost from the cosmos, but as one of the many ideological choices that individuals made in the history of the twentieth century. Even if today it seems completely wrong, it at least deserves understanding. Secondly, it is necessary to fight back against the lies in the history of the PRL. It was the Polish People's Republic that created Polish society as we know it today. The narrative about "Soviet occupation" and the unbreakable disagrees with the memory of most of the Polish families. Although it is difficult to deny Stalin's terror and impossible to defend it, the PRL is a series of other experiences: migration from the

countryside to the cities, agricultural reform, class advances, industrialisation, literacy. The dependent and authoritarian state realised the postulates of the people's or workers' movement.

If Poland of the 21st century is to create a reasonable politics for itself, it cannot be based on a false awareness of what are the origins of the present state of their country and its people. We are not from the "cursed soldiers", but from the PRL movement from the countryside to the cities, schools built to celebrate the one-thousandth anniversary, and the expansion of the intelligentsia, which took place during the rule of that system. The more such a memory becomes hegemonic, the less space for all the anti-communisms sketched above.

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ANTI-COMMUNISM: IT'S HIGH TIME TO DIAGNOSE AND COUNTERACT

AGNIESZKA MROZIK

1. What exclusion areas/mechanisms support anti-communist discourses?

Anti-communism is as old as communism, maybe even older. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx writes about the "spectre of communism", which "haunts Europe" and against which "all powers of old Europe" have united: "Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies". The communist party had not yet been created, the program had not crystallised yet, there were not yet people who would have identified themselves with the ideas of communism. Nevertheless, representatives of the old feudal and the new capitalist worlds had already protested against them. And they opposed them fiercely, using all available tools, both legal (prison sentences, fines) and extra-legal (assaults on members of left-wing organisations, destruction and arson of their premises, social ostracism).

This is not the place to dwell on the history of anti-communism. It suffices to say that it is long and bloody. In the 20th century alone, it was marked by: murders both of activists (Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were killed in January 1919 in Berlin by Freikorps militants) and of whole communities – these attacks bear a resemblance to genocide (more than half a million leftist activists, mainly communists, were murdered in Indonesia between 1965–1966 on the command of the right-wing general Suharto), the banning of political parties (the Communist Workers' Party of Poland was banned in early 1919; there were paragraphs in the

legislation of the Second Republic of Poland on the basis of which communist activities were punished with imprisonment as acts of treason, by loss of employment), and by social stigma (from June 1934 Bereza Kartuska prison functioned as a "place of isolation" for activists deemed as dangerous for the state, many of whom were leftist and especially communists), interrogations, trials, prison, and death sentences (a "red scare" broke out in the United States in 1917–1920 and 1947–1957; in the latter case it was called "McCarthyism", from the name of the initiator, Senator Joseph McCarthy; one of the peak moments of this campaign was the murder of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg in 1953, involved in the US Communist Party, accused of spying for the USSR). If we mention the Norwegian right-wing extremist Andreas Breivik and his attacks in July 2011 in Oslo and on the island of Utoya, in which almost 80 people were killed, mainly members of the Norwegian Labour Party youth, it will turn out that anti-communism now adds more paragraphs to its grim history.

To answer the question about what fuels anti-communism today – in Poland and Europe, especially in our central European context – I will name three interconnected phenomena.

First is **the prevalence of a totalitarian paradigm**, in which Nazism and Communism are equated as the most atrocious ideas and systems in human history (because communism, defined by Marx as a classless society with common means of production, has never been realised anywhere in the world, in further parts I will be putting this concept into inverted commas as an example of discursive practice). Significantly, while in the Western debate the more precise term "Stalinism" is used – in 2008, on the 70th anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the European Parliament established 23 August as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism – hardly anyone in Poland is paying attention to niceties: "communism", or simply the left, is perceived as totalitarian here. A homogenizing sequence of associations (the left is communism, communism is totalitarianism, ergo the left is totalitarian) and the ahistorical character of the concepts used (no matter if we talk about the USSR in the 1930s under Stalin, Maoist China from the period of the Cultural Revolution, or Poland under Gierek, "communism" is murderous all the same) not only serves the denigration of the Polish People's Republic, expelling this period from Polish history, but also – or perhaps primarily – the deprecation of Marxism, leftist programs, and any hopes and beliefs in Marxism and leftist activity as a remedy for capitalist exploitation, social inequality, fascist violence on a racist and anti-Semitic basis, as well as homophobic and misogynist violence. The totalitarian paradigm not only equates fascism and socialism (in Poland and the countries of the former Eastern bloc stubbornly called "communism" and pressed into the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, which should additionally emphasize its foreignness), but in fact recognizes the latter as worse, more sinister (the *Black Book of Communism* (1997) is of help here as it estimates the number of victims of "communism" at around 100 million; however, it is critically commented on by researchers on the subject, including historian Enzo

Traverso in the book *L'histoire comme champ de bataille* (2011)). Thus, anti-communism not only delegitimises the left, including communists, and depreciates the contribution of the left to the breakdown of fascism in 1945, but also contributes to the rehabilitation of the latter, as we can see in recent cases in Europe and other places.

Different shades of the totalitarian paradigm can be found in scientific research (for example, Timothy Snyder's book *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* is deeply immersed in it (2010)), but also in institutional forms of commemorating the "victims of two totalitarianisms" (for example, in Budapest's Terror Háza Museum, funded in 2002 by Prime Minister Orbán, only a few rooms focus on the activity of Arrow Cross (Hungarian fascists), while the vast majority commemorates the suffering of the Hungarians under Communist rule and their heroic revolution in 1956). Significantly, in many Central and Eastern European countries, anti-communism was also internalized by left-wing parties that had been going through the public expulsion process for years: repenting and apologizing for the "sins of their ideological predecessors", cutting themselves off from their own history, and often using a totalitarian argument in order to discredit their opponents on the left (!) side of the political scene (the example of the Hungarian left was well described by Csilla Kiss in the book *Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism* (2018), edited by myself and Stanislav Holubec).

Second is **the prevalence of the national paradigm**, which places the nation as the centre of the identity of modern states, parties, and political, social and cultural organisations. In right-wing circles, nationalism as a "catchy idea" of mobilisation is contrasted with "communist" internationalism, whose contemporary embodiment is to be found in the European Union. An important role in such a conceptualised nationalism is played by the figure of "Żydokomuna" (Judeo-Communism), grounded in the belief that "communism" was (and still is) an instrument in the hands of Jews, calculated for the destruction of the nation states. Hence the penchant of many right-wing politicians, activists and researchers to trace Jews among the communists and the communists among Jews, as well as the tendency to weigh fascist crimes against anti-Semitic "communist" crimes (the functioning of the "Żydokomuna" figure in Poland was analysed by Anna Zawadzka in the text *Żydokomuna: A Sketch for the Sociological Analysis of Historical Sources* (2010)).

After 1989, in Central and Eastern Europe, nationalism is celebrated as a liberational idea connected to the independence movement: a reaction to "communist enslavement", but also to an allegedly "communist" attempt to denationalise local societies, cutting them off from local cultural traditions. In Poland, this kind of thinking has a broad messianic – with a key ethos of suffering, sacrifice, heroism and bravery – and Russophobic foundation: the Soviet Union, and in fact Russia, is the incarnation of "communist evil", weakened in the Warsaw battle of 1920 and finally defeated in 1989. Aleida Assmann, a researcher of forms of cultural memory, points out that in the contemporary race of various communities for the title of "the

greatest sacrifice" and "the greatest hero", the Central European nations clearly aspire to be placed in the forefront – precisely because of the suffering experienced in the period of "communism", but also because of their heroic resistance to "foreign domination". Thus, anti-communism is a strong drive for nationalism, as shown by the examples of not only bottom-up but also public commemorations of victims of "communism" and heroes of the anti-communist underground (e.g. celebration of Polish "cursed soldiers", the Ukrainian Bandera faction, Croatian Ustasche, and Serbian Chetniks).

The national paradigm, however, takes possession not only of the right but of the centre and the left as well. Its hegemony manifests itself in narrowing the horizon of the actors of social, cultural and political life to the affairs of the nation, the inability to go beyond the narrowly understood national interests and to see that the world has always been a system of co-dependency: capital/exploitation/inequality as well as work/solidarity/fighting for the interests of oppressed groups. Putting national interests over a broader, universal imperative of action for the human rights to life, dignity, and equality can be considered as one of the causes of the crisis of the European left as an intellectual and political formation (as in the first decades of the twentieth century, which Eric Hobsbawm described in his book *Nation and Nationalism since 1780* (1990)). The nation displaces the class as an analytical category, but also as a category that organises social consciousness and imagination. We could observe this in Poland in 2018, which was utterly absorbed in celebrating the 100th anniversary of independence. Leftist, feminist and even LGBT circles joined the anniversary celebrations, bidding for patriotism and general love of the homeland while legitimising their position as the only valid one: accordingly, leftist, feminist, etc. Revolutionary slogans from a century ago – equality of all people regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, unification of the proletarians of all countries in a joint struggle against the alliance of capital, nation-state and church – have been either silenced or recalled only inasmuch as they did not conflict with the supreme idea of freedom of the nation. In a word, we are saying yes to Ignacy Daszyński, whose monument was unveiled in Warsaw on November 11, 2018 and united SLD and Razem, and to Rosa Luxemburg (not to mention Wanda Wasilewska) – no.

Third is **the museumisation of communism**, based on the perception of the communist movement and, more broadly, Marxism as a relic of a bygone era, a museum exhibit, not a living idea capable of gripping the masses (this was a point of the recently published book *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (2016) by Enzo Traverso). Newly built "museums and parks of communism" (Prague, Budapest, Druskininkai, Kozłówka) alternately demonize "communism" as a criminal idea and practice and ridicule its grotesqueness – just as the extensive "histories of communism" written by researchers present it as a short and closed stage in the history of mankind, not as a still unrealized and, more importantly, contemporary thought and vision corresponding to the challenges of the present:

deepening class inequalities, exploitation of the world of work through the world of capital, racial, ethnic, gender or sexual violence, environmental degradation, and restrictions on the movement of people (with the simultaneous free movement of goods and services). I would ascribe the "museumisation of communism" to a wider phenomenon, which can be described as the crisis of the Enlightenment project. It is characterized by the abandonment of egalitarianism, emancipation, rational thinking, and collective action in favour of hierarchy, difference, irrationalism and individualism, and, above all, by a departure from utopia, understood as a vision of a better future and from attempts to realize it – abandoning it in order to celebrate the current free-market democracy as "the best of all possible worlds" or to look back at the past and look for incentive to act in it. The "crisis of the Enlightenment project" understood in this way is also visible in central and eastern European left-wing circles: intellectuals, and often politicians and activists, abandon the critical diagnosis of reality and the development of a strategy to change it in favour of never-ending historical disputes, nostalgia for the past, and sophisticated analysis, which conceptual overload often does not match the problems and challenges of the modern world.

2. How to successfully fight against anti-communism?

Although it is undoubtedly safer to diagnose reality – in this case, to point out the causes and analyse the manifestations of anti-communism – I would like to attempt to outline three levels of struggle against it. At each of these levels of critical activity, deconstructing anti-communist figures and discursive strategies and practices of action should be accompanied by the effort to build counter-narratives. Not, however, to create myths or escape into nostalgia, but to break down the monolith of the dominant discourse and show other variants of thinking and possibilities of action.

First of all, in **the scientific field**, critical analysis of anti-communist clichés is crucial, revealing the power struggle and interests that hide behind the disavowal of socialism as an idea and political project. Also crucial is a reminder of the complex history of the revolutionary movement, un-forgetting its various actors: peasants, workers, progressive intelligentsia, women. The memory of the achievements and failures of the revolutionary movement should not lose sight of the historical context: the initial situation, and changes under the influence of external and internal factors. It should also take into account the flows of thoughts, ideas, people and practices, action within borders, and crossing the boundaries of nation states. However, history should not be "a teacher of life", "a lesson for the future", but rather "the memory of the future", as Traverso writes in *Left-Wing Melancholia*, i.e. the memory of what still demands realisation. It is worth noting that this type of research is already conducted in many

centres around the world, including Poland. The most interesting of these attempts are clearly the interdisciplinary ones – it is difficult to think about the paradigm change while staying within the limits of only one discipline.

Secondly, in **the artistic and literary field**, it is necessary to indicate that literature, art, film, and the media can still be emancipation tools and that they are extremely desirable in this role (despite repeated bleak diagnoses about the crisis of media and readership). However, it should not be limited only to the registration of reality – exploitation, inequality, and general resignation and impotence due to being stuck in neoliberalism and nationalism – but should create an alternative. What is needed is involved literature, art and media, responding to the problems of the world, critical of the dominant message, with a broad concept of social, linguistic and emotional changes. In a word – what is needed is a new utopia, and hope that it is possible to realise it. This kind of literature, art, film and media, however, also requires involved critics and bold theories, because, as the classic used to say: "Without a revolutionary theory there cannot be a revolutionary movement".

Thirdly, in **the political field**, we require a proper diagnosis of reality and adequate tools for its change. It is worth recalling that the communist project is still valid, that it is a "catchy idea" of mobilisation – still unrealised and, most importantly, responding to the pressing problems of modern times: exploitation, environmental degradation, the rise of nationalism and all kinds of fundamentalisms. The global crisis of 2008 and the emergence of grassroots socio-political movements – primarily the Spanish Podemos and the American Occupy Wall Street, but also the rise of Greek Syriza or the relatively good result of socialist Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party primaries before the presidential election in the US in 2016 – show that the progressive radicalization of reactionary forces requires decisive answers, formulated not in isolation, but in the broad cooperation of progressive forces – leftist and radically leftist. Are we ready for the next International?

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FROM THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CONSENSUS TO ANTI-COMMUNISM

PRZEMYSŁAW WIELGOSZ

Anti-communism is one of the pillars of the right-wing ideological hegemony during the second decade of the 21st century. The Brazilian president, Bolsonaro, fights communism in his country, the US president, Trump, and the Madrid journal *El Pais* fight communism in Venezuela (as well as in their own countries), and the Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, exposes the communist methods of the ruling party, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, while the pro-government media in Poland trace the communist genealogies of *Wyborcza's* editors. Anti-communism blooms in Hungary, in Russia, in Turkey, and in the Philippines. But Poland remains a very good example of the nature, ideological function, and political meaning of today's anti-communism. The analysis of the local form taken by this phenomenon allows us to reconstruct the most important mechanisms of exclusion that support the anti-communist discourses and to answer the question of whether and how to fight against anti-communism.

After 1989 communism in Poland became an universal stigma, allowing the exclusion of some ideas and voices from the political arena and the public debate. During the period of transformation, the neo-liberal fundamentalists brandished it, pacifying the critical voices and discrediting various forms of resistance against the social outcome of the capitalist restoration – mass pauperization, unemployment, uncertainty and privatization. Today their inheritors have become victims of the similar operation conducted by the national-conservative right, which smells communism in any action taken by the (neo)liberal opposition. The neo-liberal anti-communism differs from the national-conservative one in terms of rhetoric and the level of honesty. Nevertheless, it plays basically the same roles. Both camps are connected through

the practice of limiting various forms of popular subjectivity and democratic control of the authority under the pretext of the alleged political immaturity, lack of competence and patriotism, or ethno-cultural foreignness of part of the society. In the 1990s worker demands were dismissed by identifying them with the figure of a *homo sovieticus*; in the year 2019 the demands of the rule of law, of women's reproductive rights, or of migrant rights are dismissed as crypto-communist creations of euro-leftism.

The real content of the anti-communism is best illustrated by the meaning ascribed to this word by its anti-communist trackers. Depending on whether the communist scarecrow is employed by the neo-liberal or national-conservative right, we will find it to denote either social rights or sexual minority rights – most often both, but in slightly different proportions. What is the conclusion? Well, in the conditions of rightist cultural hegemony and a brutal restoration of class power the exorcised spectre of communism becomes a sack capable of fitting all grassroots and popular, democratic revindications.

This explains neatly why in a Poland governed by the authoritarian right, the efficient defense of democracy is so difficult and the language of freedom and equality does not sound as loudly and aggressively as its opposite. That the far right is determining the tone of the debate in our country is based on the solid grounds of an unspoken anti-communist consensus. During one of many protests against the attack on the judiciary system by the anti-communist PiS in summer 2017, one could hear voices denouncing the socialist dictatorship (Balcerowicz) and the necessity of completing privatization (Celiński). The nickname of a Bolshevik or a communist is one of the greatest insults that can be given by the Polish liberal opposition to the governing Polish authoritarian right that flirts with the fascists.

Even a broken clock shows the correct time twice per day. Adam Michnik, the chief editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, quite reasonably noticed that Polish opposition in the 1970s and 1980s included those who fought against communism because they were in favour of democracy, and those who were in favour of democracy because they were against communism. For a quarter of a century, the latter have been dominating our public life. Under PiS rule they dropped the democratic corset, as it constrained their true nature. That anti-communism blooms 25 years after the agony of the People's Republic of Poland must seem to be a paradox, but it is by no means surprising. The further from the fall of a system that pleaded for the communist ideals, the more anti-communism is poisoning minds. The syndrome of anti-communism without communists reflects the phenomenon of anti-Semitism without Jews. The similarity is not accidental, because in both cases the real issue is not the struggle against a real opponent but rather a phantasmatic practice. Anti-Semitism and anti-communism are reduced to the managing of fear and frustrations by the means of channeling them into a hatred towards an enemy, created to resemble the radically "other". The most perfect name of that "other", linking neatly two parts of its imagined identity, was the notion of a Jewish-

Communist, formed during the inter-war period. Today the role attributed by this construction to Jews is played by Muslims and the Jewish-communism itself is substituted by Islamist-Leftism. The content and the political function indeed stay unchanged.

It is worthwhile to mention some essential differences between anti-Semitism and anti-communism. What is located at the foundation of fascisms is not anti-Semitism but anti-communism, their dear father, as much historically as logically. The anti-communist hatred preceded the creation of the first communist regime. The bourgeois right was consistently anti-communist and formed itself as such long before it discovered the charms of anti-Semitism. Anti-communist visions of conspiracies, as well as pogroms inspired by them, were born as far back as the 18th century, at the time of the French Revolution – during the terror of the bourgeois Jacobins and the counter-revolutionary Thermidorian Coup their victims were radical proponents of political and economic equality, unacceptable to the forming bourgeois society.

It should also be remembered and repeated indefinitely that in the 20th century terror had the white face of anti-communism. That was the case of the future Nazis drowning the German Revolution in blood (its explosion and success cost the life of few people, its suppression a few thousand murdered by the counter-revolutionaries), as well as the Hungarian and Finnish (also here the peaceful character of the revolution is contrasted with the streams of blood shed by the counter-revolution). Even in Russia it was the civil war enforced by the Whites and powers supporting them that provoked the organized red terror.

In its very essence, anti-communism needs the communist crime and does not protest against its deformations. The state terror, secret police, invigilation and persecutions or tortures and censorship are what deter the anti-communists. In fact, they are elements of their own political program. Their enemy number one is the emancipatory promise of communism, its utopian potential and radical social criticism, in sum everything that is great in the communist project. Hatred towards democracy, towards women's rights and economic equality, towards acknowledgment of the rights of minority internationalism and multi-culturalism, and towards the political subjectivity of the suppressed is what constitutes the essence of the anti-communist position. This is exactly the anti-communism that we see today in Brazil under Bolsonaro. This was the anti-communism that dominated the post-1989 Poland. The "real democracy" has been built on the anti-communist consensus, causing it to be distorted, soaked with nationalism and tilted towards the right from the very beginning as much as it was deprived of its emancipatory, popular spine and social content. In fact it was democracy only formally.

The necessity of cutting oneself from communism (not the historical one, but indeed the utopian one) pacified the left very efficiently, forcing it to look legitimate in the eyes of its political opponents. Today the same thing happens with the liberals, stigmatized by the mark

of "communist", who thorough such figures as Grzegorz Schetyna are trying to intercept xenophobic language used by PiS in order to earn the name of a trustworthy opposition. The logic of the accusations of communism is nevertheless insensitive towards such efforts. The more you try to prove your anti-communism, the more you prove that there is something suspect about it. Within the frames of the anti-communist consensus there is no place for any progressive ideas. Mere openness, criticism, non-conformism and anti-authoritarianism lose their civil rights. This provides a perfect machine for their exclusion, delegitimization, and eventually criminalization.

For that reason, there is no such thing as a left-wing anti-communism, and the anti-communist liberals will always end up in the proximity of the far right. It is enough to look at the evolution of people such as Jaroslaw Gowin or Leszek Balcerowicz to see that this is how things are. Anti-communism has its own color – it is always brown. The political intentions of anti-communism can be seen properly in the continuous equation between communism and fascism. This gesture, deprived of any historical ground, has only one function. It is a rehabilitation of fascism. Comparing communism with fascism discredits communism, while comparing fascism with communism rehabilitates fascism. From here there is only one step to the normalization of fascism in the name of a national anti-communist consensus. In Poland this normalization happened during the first turn of PiS rule when Roman Dmowski received a monument in Warsaw and gained a place among the heroes of the independence. Today this process is filled with ideas of delegalizing the Polish Communist Party while simultaneously tolerating the fascist thugs from ONR and MW.

Anti-communism seen as a barrier for entering the public scene became the best guarantee of rightist hegemony. Left-wing formations that allowed themselves to be dragged into this trap (i.e. they decided to prove that they have nothing to do with communism) will never be able to prove the obvious. Thus the first step that should be taken to question the logic of the anti-communist battle is ceasing the practice of self-denouncing communism. This is crucial for at least two reasons. First, since no leftist can avoid rightist imputations of being communist, there is no purpose in losing time and energy to defend against them. Secondly, communism, just like liberalism, socialism, conservatism, or the popular movement, has various incarnations. Just as the liberal tradition cannot be reduced to neo-liberalism, communism cannot be identified with Stalinism. Whether we want it or not, the communist tradition – antiauthoritarian (and thus anti-Stalinist), radically democratic, internationalist, and anti-capitalistic – is part of the tradition that constitutes the left, and cutting oneself off from it too often leads to opportunism towards the rules imposed by the system based on the monopoly of private ownership and class power. The left, if it wants to oppose these rules to any degree, must not be anti-communist. It should thus protest each time when someone is equating communism (also Stalinism) and fascism, when the accusation of communism is

enough to relegate some views or persons from the public debate. What is more, it should reclaim the anti-authoritarian, democratic, and internationalist seed of communism, separating it from the Stalinist chaff. This by no means encourages whitening or glorification. Quite contrary, if communism can be still useful for something, and as we can see it obviously can, it is rather as a movement that abolishes the present state of things than as an eternal return of the same. There can never be enough recalling that the earliest and the greatest critiques of the systems that grew from the October revolution were created by consistent communists – from Rosa Luxemburg, Victor Serge, and Anton Pannekoek to Cornelius Castoriadis, Milovan Dzilas, or even Karol Modzelewski and Jacek Kuroń.

Our goal should be not establishing the communist church, but consistent opposition to anti-communism and merciless undermining of the logic it imposes on the public debate in Poland. Essentially, today this is a task synonymous with the defense of democracy. But, as the practice confirms, in the Polish conditions, or more broadly, the Central European conditions, it may be accomplished only by a consistent leftist force that would not be scared to defile the bourgeois sanctities and not surrender to the destructive force of the accusation of being a communist. As long as such an accusation allows people to discredit democratic propositions such as women's rights, the revindication of democracy as such will be futile. The condition of changing this situation is not resignation from women's rights in the name of broadening the electoral base in an allegedly conservative society (as Polish liberals do) but the contrary, neutralization of the defamatory content of the communist imputation.

Breaking with anti-communism is at least as important for liberating the political imagination in Poland as the defeat of anti-Semitism is. As long as the anti-communist consensus is hovering over the Polish political scene, the right will enjoy a structural advantage because any political dispute will take place on its terrain, in its language, and according to the rules imposed by it.

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