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Nation-State Reframed: The Memory Struggle over the Genealogy of the Third Polish Republic (1997–1998)

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the memory struggle over the genealogy of the Third Polish Republic which took place in the Polish parliament in the late 1990s. This struggle ensued around the National Independence Day and was decisive in establishing the symbolic definition of Polish post-1989 statehood as anti-communist. The article demonstrates how post-Solidarity mnemonic “warriors,” who promoted an anti-communist definition of statehood aimed at full criminalization of postwar state socialism, overruled the alternative definition that was developed by post-communist “pluralists” and based on the partial approval of state socialism. Thus, the post-Solidarity “warriors” reframed nation-state by establishing their own definition of statehood as the only legitimate one.

Introduction

In this article, I argue that the post-1989 symbolic definition of Poland’s statehood was established in the course of a memory struggle waged in the Polish parliament from November 1997 to November 1998 between two main political camps—the post-Solidarity right and the post-communist left¹—over the official memory of the eightieth anniversary of the National Independence Day (November 11, 1918). It was a clash between two different styles of doing memory politics that supported mutually exclusive definitions of statehood. Each of them differently prioritized the symbolization of particular elements of the nation-state, thus promoting distinct interpretations of the national past understood as a teleological historical process whose final product was to be the post-1989 Polish state. The main political stake was the symbolic genealogy of the Third Republic of Poland.

This article combines a political-sociology approach to memory politics, inspired by the works of Bernhard and Kubik (2014) and Müller (2004), with insights from the works of moderately constructivist theorists of nationalism, Brubaker (1996) and Malešević (2006). The first two works offer a convincing alternative to the numerous researchers of memory—be they sociologists (Olick 1998), anthropologists (Verdery 2000), or historians (Assmann 2011)—who focus on analyzing its cultural dimension understood as a determinant of political processes. Unlike them, Bernhard and Kubik, as well as Müller, show that, although cultural factors do constrain the horizon of political possibilities, it is ultimately political action that shapes memory to the greatest extent. Following this path, I consider memory politics as a set of actions used by political actors to produce stories about the national past in order to legitimize their own power over the national community. Next, I advocate a top-down perspective

on memory politics, which puts the main emphasis on official memory, that is, an order of interpretation of the past that most intensely involves state institutions and/or political parties as the main actors exercising power over the state (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 8).

Brubaker and Malešević stand in opposition to the structuralist and essentialist theorists of nationalism,² thus making it possible to understand the very nature of political action—its processual and relational character. Following this path, I introduce a sharp distinction between memory as a category of practice and memory as a category of analysis in order to focus on the latter category³ and keep an appropriate research distance from the examined processes. Finally, I look at memory politics in a relational way by showing that any narrative about the national past can emerge and gain dominance only in the course of a political competition between its supporters and the proponents of (an) alternative narrative(s). This is what memory struggles are about: putting forward competitive symbols, meanings, and interpretations of the past as part of the pursuit of power.

This two-pillar research approach makes it possible not only to take a closer look at the crucial link between memory and national imaginary—which has already been widely observed by Connerton (1989), Gillis (1994), Olick (1998), and others—but, above all, to make a twofold contribution to the recently growing literature about memory conflicts in contemporary Europe.⁴ First, this article contributes to research on the post-1989 Polish politics by revealing how exactly the post-Solidarity camp managed to win the key memory struggle against the post-communists—to successfully reframe the nation-state according to their own narrative and establish it as the hegemonic one. Second, this article contributes to research on memory conflicts in Eastern Europe by showing the importance of the late 1990s as a crucial period for the

formation of mutual relations between different styles of doing memory politics, which would persist in later years.

Methodologically, the article is based on the problem-driven critical discourse analysis of a parliamentary political process that applies to the discussed struggle. This position is inspired by the works of Wodak et al. (2009) and Fairclough (2005), and by Michel Foucault's methodological reflections. Wodak and Fairclough are useful because they represent a dynamic, process-oriented understanding of discourse as "a form of social practice" (Wodak et al. 2009, 11). Unlike postmodernists, who tend to see discourse as an autonomous reality, these authors perceive discourse as a medium: "a sphere of articulation, reproduction and mutual struggle between institutional ideologies" (Wodak et al. 2009, 88–89; Fairclough 2005, 13). They realize that although political power gains legitimacy in discourse, it is organized in the material reality and arises there. This recognition leads the analysis herein toward analyzing discourse through the lens of the material forces that shape it, examining which political actors use which discourses as well as how exactly and for what purposes they do it.

The Foucauldian perspective is useful primarily because it exposes the crucial role of discursive events, that is, sites of exceptionally intense condensation of meaning structures and the complex nexus of dynamic power relations constituting these meanings. From Foucault's conviction that discourses "must be treated first of all as the sets of discursive events" (Foucault 1981, 69), one learns to analyze particular events as meaningful case studies. Foucault encourages the distinction between the crucial events—those that are carriers of fundamental, creative discourses and those that repeat, explain, and comment on what had been created elsewhere. As noted by Zubrzycki (2001), discursive events have this significant ability to "frame the discursive field on the nation." Moreover, Foucault's problem-oriented approach leads this analysis primarily toward the search for new, compelling interpretations of memory conflicts that could bring a refreshing quality to this research field. According to Howarth (2000, 206), such an approach does not require or even allow for the formulation of a fully coherent and immutable catalog of methodological rules on which to base a research project. The quality of such analyses depends on whether they are able to provide new interpretations of social phenomena and describe processes that had previously been invisible (Howarth 2005, 320).

However, in order to maintain high methodological discipline of the argument herein, three main dimensions of the analyzed discursive event were discerned (Fairclough 2005): semiosis, interdiscursivity, and hegemony. I paid particular attention to three types of relations within the analyzed discursive event: the relationship between meanings present in the analyzed documents and the broader cultural codes they evoke (semiosis); the relationship between different discursive genres, such as static commemorative resolutions and dynamic parliamentary debates (interdiscursivity); and, most importantly, the power relations between political actors (hegemony).

Furthermore, the analysis was conducted in a systematic way: it included all the relevant commemorative resolutions adopted, the drafts of the resolutions submitted, and the stenographic records of debates, all of which took place in the Sejm and Senate between November 1997 and November 1998. In

total, this covered eight resolutions and draft resolutions as well as eight parliamentary sittings of different statuses and lengths—parliamentary committee meetings, sittings of the Sejm/Senate, and a joint ceremonial sitting of both chambers of the parliament. Additionally, relevant contextual data from February 1989 (the reintroduction of the holiday into official memory) to November 1997 (the beginning of the analyzed struggle) was also considered and partly referred to in the "Background" section. The analysis involved systematic coding of the contents of all documents, distinguishing dominant themes and motifs and identifying relations between them, and working out the final interpretation of this memory struggle.

Importantly, parliamentary debates were central to this analysis, while resolutions and draft resolutions played a complementary role. This is because, in order to fully understand the specifics of the political struggle, its processual-relational dynamics in particular must be examined. The static final products of the struggle (in this case, resolutions) are important as anchors that help to delineate the exact chronology of the struggle and summarize its successive stages.

The article is divided into three sections. Following this introduction, in the second part, I provide the background by discussing the main trends in the Polish memory politics between 1989 and 1997. I also explain why the 1997–1998 memory struggle over Independence Day was crucial for reframing key aspects of the official memory. In the third section, I analyze this struggle by exploring its three-stage dynamics. It begins with the stage where two opposing narratives about Polish statehood were presented; through the stage where the post-communist narrative was dismantled and marginalized by the post-Solidarity camp; to the stage where the post-Solidarity camp confirmed their hegemony by completing a *longue durée* narrative. In the fourth section, I conclude my analysis by pointing out the reasons why the victory of the post-Solidarity camp in this very struggle was crucial not only for their long-lasting symbolic hegemony over the post-communists but also for the dynamics of the entire Polish official memory in the following years.

A Time of Fragile Balance: Polish Official Memory in the Early 1990s

The National Independence Day is the cornerstone of the contemporary Polish statehood, as it commemorates the proclamation of independence by Poland in 1918, which took place after 123 years of nonexistence on the world map. Interestingly, it was only after 1989 that this holiday took root in the official memory. Earlier, it had enjoyed the status of a state holiday only for two years (1937–1939) before World War II. Immediately after the war, the communist authorities replaced it with the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland (July 22), which was introduced to commemorate the anniversary of the 1944 Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN)⁵ and celebrate 1945–1989. The National Independence Day was restored as a public holiday in February 1989, shortly after the beginning of the Round Table Talks.⁶

Despite a growing research interest in the memory of Independence Day, researchers have remained focused on analyses of public opinion and media discourse (see e.g. Biskupski 2012; Grimstad 2012; Kwiatkowski 2018), leaving aside any reflection on the official memory.⁷ However, such reflection will be needed if we are to understand how this crucial holiday was politically equipped with interpretative pattern(s) that it had lacked.

The main reason why the first memory struggle over establishing such an interpretative pattern ensued only between November 1997 and November 1998, and not before, is due to the broader dynamics of the post-1989 Polish official memory. In 1998, the eightieth anniversary of regaining independence was the first major anniversary of this event to occur during a period of fierce memory struggles between advocates of two different styles of doing memory politics. Following Bernhard and Kubik (2014, 11–15), the two sides can be called mnemonic “pluralists” and mnemonic “warriors.” The post-communists of the SdRP/SLD (Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland/Democratic Left Alliance) were “pluralists” because they supported a consensus-based memory politics that assumed the peaceful coexistence of different interpretations of the national past and the search for common points between them, operationalized as a striving to achieve symbolic consensus. The “warriors” were the dispersed post-Solidarity right, that is, the right-wing parties later associated with the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) coalition⁸ and accompanied by the moderate-right parties associated with the Freedom Union (UW).⁹ The dominant trend in the post-Solidarity right, which was set by AWS, supported a conflict-based memory politics, defined by an uncompromising insistence on their own interpretation of the national past against the opposing visions. As for UW, although this party used more moderate rhetoric, it did not oppose the dominant trend but mostly followed it while occasionally correcting its most radical manifestations.

Significantly, this struggle over the interpretation of the Independence Day contributed to the opening of a new, openly conflictual stage in the official memory. It shattered the relative balance between these positions, which, in the period 1989–1997, followed a “thick line” policy¹⁰ outweighing the tension that existed between them. More specifically, this tension had already been present during the term of the so-called “Contract Sejm” (1989–1991).¹¹ At its core was a heated dispute over the interpretation of the martial law that was imposed by the communist authorities in 1981. In this dispute, the post-Solidarity right attacked martial law as an illegal, baseless decision made by the communist authorities only to destroy the pro-democratic “Solidarity” movement and fracture the pro-democratic sentiment in Polish society. For their part, the post-communists claimed that martial law had been a legitimate move taken in accordance with Polish *raison d'état*—a move that had saved Poland from Soviet military intervention. Importantly, this dispute laid the groundwork for the later struggle over the interpretation of the entire state-socialist period.

The significance of the tension between post-communist and post-Solidarity politicians temporarily diminished between 1991 and 1993 due to the political instability of the

subsequent post-Solidarity governments. However, it soon returned with great force during the first term of the post-communist coalition government of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Polish Peasant Party PSL (1993–1997). The double victory of the post-communists—in both the parliamentary elections (September 1993) and the presidential elections (November 1995)—came as a shock to the post-Solidarity side. Their members learned that their political advantage was much more fragile than they had expected. The main lesson they drew from this defeat was that the post-communists must be fought against in every sphere, including the symbolic one, in order to finally and permanently remove them from power. Thus, on the one hand, one can see a progressive radicalization in the commemorative activity of the right-wing post-Solidarity “warriors” during the 1993–1997 period. On the other hand, however, this activity was actively hampered and marginalized by the ruling post-communists, who played the “pluralist” card¹² for two basic reasons. First, they assumed that an open symbolic confrontation with their opponents could put them at a disadvantage. Second, they wanted to show that they had had nothing to do with the communist authorities and the repressive methods they had used in the past.

This tension exploded in 1997 during two crucial memory struggles: the widely discussed struggle around the preamble to the new Polish Constitution (see e.g. Brier 2009; Hałas 2004; Zubrzycki 2001) and the still under-researched struggle over the National Independence Day, which I will analyze below. While the first of these struggles took place several months before the parliamentary elections that brought a change of power in favor of the post-Solidarity camp, the latter one started quickly after this change. The specificity of the struggle around the preamble prompted scholars to expose its broad, extra-institutional background; to show the central role of nonparty intellectuals in redefining “Polishness”; and to reveal the political tension between different concepts of nationhood (ethnic versus civic). Moreover, the outcome of this struggle—the establishment of a fragile balance between two competing narratives in the preamble—provoked thinking about the dominant role of the principle of compromise in Polish politics.

My focus on the struggle over the National Independence Day makes it possible to uncover different, rarely discussed aspects of the conflict over the symbolic definition of the post-1989 Polish statehood. First, by discussing the specificity of this struggle, I expose the key role of institutional politics in shaping official memory, and the central role of professional politicians who interpret the past. Second, I demonstrate that the political tension between the post-communist “pluralists” and the post-Solidarity “warriors” was not driven by different perceptions of nationhood, but primarily by divergent understandings of the relationship between the concepts of “nation” and “state.” In doing so, I build on the findings of Brubaker (1992) and Kuzio (2002), who demonstrated the historical inseparability of the cultural (ethnic) and institutional (civic) aspects of every national identification, thus pointing to the importance of the relationship between those elements of the nation–state dyad. Finally, I discuss the outcome of this struggle, showing that, as a consequence, the

conflict-based memory politics gained a clear advantage over the compromise-based one for the first time in post-1989 Poland.

More specifically, this article reveals the dynamics of the struggle between two mutually exclusive definitions of statehood. On the one hand, the post-Solidarity “warriors” prioritized the symbolization of the nation over the state, developing the narrative of the Third Republic as a product of the Polish nation’s centuries-old fight for independence against foreign invaders. According to this narrative, the Polish nation won independence twice—in 1918 and in 1989—which made the Third Republic a direct heir of the interwar Second Republic. On the other hand, the post-communist “pluralists” prioritized the symbolization of the state over the nation, developing a narrative of the Third Republic as a product of the internal evolution of postwar state socialism. According to this narrative, Poland won independence in 1918 and in 1945, which made the Third Republic a direct heir to the Polish People’s Republic (PRL). This article reveals that the post-Solidarity “warriors” won this struggle by using conflict-based memory politics to radically discredit the post-communist narrative. They dismantled its cornerstones, took over its important symbols, and imposed their own narrative as the only legitimate interpretation of the national past.

The Struggle: From Pluralist Dispute to Monist Hegemony

The beginning and the end of this conflict is marked by two commemorative resolutions about the Independence Day that were adopted by the parliament in November 1997¹³ and November 1998.¹⁴ While the former resolution was adopted by the votes of the post-Solidarity “warriors” with the unanimous opposition of the post-communist “pluralists,” the latter one was passed by acclamation of the entire parliament. If one looks merely at the overtones of these two documents and the results of the parliamentary votes, one might think that the two political camps eventually found a common symbolic ground despite initial disputes and disagreements. However, a closer analysis of the dynamics of the whole discursive event shows the opposite. The final acclamation was not the result of a mutual understanding, but a testament to the achievement of symbolic hegemony by the post-Solidarity “warriors” as well as an expression of surrender by the post-communist “pluralists.” Below I show exactly how this happened.

The “Breakaway State” versus the “Continuity State”

The struggle began with a draft resolution on the seventy-ninth anniversary of independence¹⁵ that was submitted in November 1997 by members of parliament (MPs) from the AWS. Two months earlier they had won the parliamentary elections and taken power after four years of rule by post-communists. The confrontational draft—the contents of which were fully consistent with the text of the adopted resolution—polarized the positions of the two camps during the second Sejm sitting of the third term.¹⁶ The discussion around the resolution merged with a heated debate on the vote of confidence for the newly appointed government of

Jerzy Buzek (AWS). That sitting became the arena of a struggle between two visions of the state: the right-wing vision of what I call a “breakaway state” and the post-communist vision of what I term a “continuity state.”

The “breakaway state” was articulated in speeches delivered in revolutionary rhetoric by two most important right-wing MPs: Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek and AWS leader Marian Krzaklewski. Both politicians announced the construction of a new Polish state on the foundation of collective morality as perceived through the lens of an anti-communist attitude and Christian values. The “breakaway state” was to be formed in two steps—full symbolic discrediting of the state-socialist period, and collective moral renewal. In response to this, four prominent post-communist MPs of the SLD—Leszek Miller, Danuta Waniek, Andrzej Urbańczyk, and Józef Oleksy—articulated a competing vision of the “continuity state.” This vision was based on a moderate defense of state socialism and the articulation of an alternative foundation of Polish statehood based on the rule of law instead of morality and on humanism instead of Christianity.

On the one hand, the post-Solidarity “warriors” presented Poland’s state socialism as the antithesis of a good, proper, and desirable social order. They embedded this negative image in a three-stage argument used to justify the need for a “final break with the bad, communist past.”¹⁷ First, they argued that communism was introduced illegally, having been installed directly by a foreign superpower (the Soviet Union) against the will of the Polish nation and by means of electoral frauds. This interpretation dominates in the research material, although there was one attempt to deepen it made by Stefan Niesiołowski (AWS). Niesiołowski claimed that installing *communism* in Poland was a straightforward consequence of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, as the root of lawlessness.¹⁸ Second, the post-Solidarity MPs argued that communism was a monolithic, non-evolving system, thus claiming that it should be perceived as functioning illegally from its very beginning to the very end. This argument was based on the interpretation of all generations of Polish postwar communist politicians as traitors to the nation, that is, as Soviet political agents. Third, they argued that communism had had disastrous consequences for all aspects of social reality. They claimed that it not only caused economic collapse in Poland,¹⁹ it also brutally marginalized the patriotic aspirations of Polish nation²⁰ and, above all, inverted the moral order in such a way that “abnormality was presented as normality.”²¹

On the other hand, the moderate defense of state socialism developed by the post-communist “pluralists” focused on a two-tier attempt at challenging the thesis of the criminal nature of the system as a whole. First, they counteracted the monolithic vision of the system by applying a strategy of nuancing the postwar period. According to this view, the forty-five years of socialism were a complex and internally diverse time that cannot be reduced to one discrediting label. The main turning point, they proposed, was the 1956 Polish October, which marked the end of Stalinist era in Poland.²² This turning point divided the whole period 1945–1989 into a relatively short time of Stalinist totalitarianism (1945–1956) and a much longer time of a diverse authoritarian rule (1956–1989): “The Polish reality since 1956 in no way fits into even

the most contentious definitions of communism or totalitarianism.”²³

Second, the post-communists defended each of these two periods in a distinct way. As for the years 1945–1956, they kept silent on the issue of murders and political repressions, focusing instead on the key modernization achievements of the Stalinist era. However, they didn’t attribute these achievements to the actions of the totalitarian system, but rather to the grassroots collective effort of millions of Poles who wanted to rebuild their country after the war. This was the defending-biographies tactic (Chwedoruk 2007), characteristic of SLD also in later years: “We treat with respect and appreciation all those people who built the country after the war damage, developed the Recovered Territories, carried out agricultural reform, created millions of jobs for the inhabitants of overpopulated villages, eliminated illiteracy, carried out a real educational revolution.”²⁴ In turn, the years 1956–1989 were interpreted as the gradual evolution of the authoritarian system from Stalinism toward democracy. The post-communist “pluralists” strongly suggested that the democratization process was primarily about the internal evolution of the system. More specifically, the reformist, pro-democratic wing in the ranks of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) had gradually gained an advantage over the dogmatists. At the same time, the role of the anti-communist opposition was considered as secondary.

There was a then-current political objective behind the “breakaway state.” The post-Solidarity “warriors” sought to delegitimize and marginalize the post-communist camp on the political scene by equating post-communists with communists, and the 1993–1997 period of post-communist governance with state socialism. Both AWS and UW presented an essentially common political line in criticizing the 1993–1997 period with the same arguments they had used to discredit the pre-1989 communist rule. While Krzaklewski (AWS) presented those years as a return to an era of economic inefficiency, total political hegemony of the mono-party, and the rule of lawlessness,²⁵ Tadeusz Syryjczyk (UW) argued that the post-communists had returned to using the same authoritarian methods that the communists used. By equating the communists with the post-communists, the ruling coalition held the latter accountable for all the faults of state socialism. They claimed the post-communists had not transformed into a democratic political party and thus must not be considered a legitimate political force in post-1989 Poland. Therefore, according to the “breakaway state,” the democratic transformation in Poland was essentially flawed in that it allowed the existence of the post-communist camp on the political scene.

The post-communist “pluralists” opposed this allegation by countering the “breakaway” idea with the “continuity state” vision of gradual, evolutionary post-1989 transformation of Poland from authoritarianism to liberal democracy. According to them, the “breakaway” idea was based on an erroneous assessment of the foregoing dynamics of the democratic transformation in Poland. They saw the Round Table Agreement²⁶ as the symbolic moment that set out the general direction of the transformation that was then implemented step by step by successive ruling coalitions, regardless of their political provenance. In this perspective, the 1993–1997 post-

communist government was not a renewal of communism but a continuation of the transitional trend developed by all the previous post-1989 governments. This rationale stood behind SLD MPs’ defense of the 1993–1997 period, which they presented as a time that brought the significant development of democracy in Poland²⁷ and the final dismantling of pre-1989 authoritarian state structures: “If today you speak of the remnants of totalitarian structures, then you speak of a non-existent world.”²⁸ Moreover, in light of this defense, the 1989 Round Table Agreement was not the very beginning of the democratization process, but merely a stopover on the long road to democracy that started already in 1945. In this manner, the post-communists established a symbolic continuity between the years 1945, 1989, and 1997 as crucial for the “continuity state.”

As for the “breakaway state’s” announcement of a collective moral renewal, both Buzek (AWS) and Krzaklewski (AWS) emphasized the fundamental importance of the Christian worldview as the basis of Polish social and public life. Buzek (AWS) referred to “truth, goodness, and love”²⁹ as values constitutive of this worldview and growing out of Christian civilization, which he described as the main bond between European and Polish culture. He then put forward the notion of a strong family at the center of the Polish national community and made its strength dependent on the ability to maintain and strengthen those values: “Only a nation strengthened by the set of recognized and respected cultural values can meet the challenges of a modern civilization.”³⁰ He also stated that the purpose of the existence of a strong family, and thus of a strong nation, is to defend its own freedom.

Krzaklewski’s (AWS) speech radicalized these themes. Using a quasi-religious language reminiscent of a biblical sermon, he equated the supporters and politicians of the post-Solidarity camp with the biblical Chosen People and their leaders. In this manner, he could interpret the recent election victory as a gift from heaven that should be used for making great social change in Poland: “The Lord gave strength to his people! We are again together in the Solidarity camp. Together we are undertaking the effort of great repair of Poland.”³¹ As for the Polish nation, Krzaklewski (AWS) not only stressed the deep rooting of three key moral values in the national community, but, above all, he described these values in a warrior-like manner. He considered these values a weapon to be used in fighting the national enemy. In this way, he defined the symbolic space as a space of conflict between two mutually exclusive visions of the state: the post-Solidarity one and the post-communist one.

The post-communists’ pluralist counterargument stated that the proposal to build the state on the foundation of Christian morality contradicted its universalist and democratic rhetoric. They interpreted this proposal as burdened with particularism and authoritarianism and aimed at establishing the domination of one worldview while assuming the destruction of alternative value systems. This line of reasoning was summed up by Miller (SLD): “the victors wanted to take everything [and] the coalition was dominated by the mentality of the conquerors.”³² It was shared by Waniek (SLD), who accused the ruling coalition of presenting the same ideological dogmatism that the communists used to present before 1989.³³

When Miller (SLD) identified the rule of law as an alternative foundation of statehood that fit the “continuity state” perspective, he did so based on the conviction that law is the embodiment of the idea of impartiality, owing to which the state can become the guardian of a diversity of worldviews: “A state in which the law is not entangled in the service of any worldview, any party or religious norm.”³⁴ He thus proposed a vision of the secular state, which was next based on the broadly understood idea of humanism by Waniek (SLD). More to the point, Waniek (SLD) first recognized the source of such humanism in two achievements of Europe’s ancient history, namely philosophy and law. Next, she complemented these with “the culture of many nations and religions, Slavicism, Orthodoxy, Judaism, and reformist trends in Christianity.”³⁵ By placing the religious value systems within the humanistic idea, she intended to show the historical superiority of the post-communist symbolic definition of statehood, suggesting its inherent pluralism and democratic character.

Importantly, at this stage each of the clashing concepts of statehood referred to a different cultural code deeply rooted in the Polish national imaginary. On the one hand, the right-wing “warriors” evoked the romantic-insurrectionist paradigm of interpreting the national past. They did so through references to Christianity and to the Chosen People. More specifically, they identified the post-Solidarity camp with the unjustly persecuted Polish nation, which is destined to return in glory by means of revolutionary actions, and labeled post-communists as its archenemies, as invaders. On the other hand, the post-communist “pluralists” used the positivist paradigm; that is, they identified their own camp with the builders of the Polish statehood and discredited their opponents as irresponsible demolishers. They did so while putting emphasis on the idea of historical continuity and persistent, organic work for the benefit of Poland.

To sum up, the first stage of the struggle for a symbolic definition of the statehood brought about the polarization of the main political camps around two mutually exclusive visions of the state—the right-wing “breakaway state” and the post-communist “continuity state.” On a deeper level, this struggle over the interpretation of the state-socialist period and the symbolic foundations of the Polish state was a struggle between different visions of the nation–state dyad. On the one hand, the warrior-style “breakaway state” split the dyad in a way that presented the postwar Polish nation as a collective, autonomous carrier of a cultural tradition that stood against the institutions of the postwar Polish state. While they endowed the nation with causative power, they considered the state as a static object and a stake in a historical struggle between the forces of good (i.e. generations of Poles) and evil (i.e. generations of communist invaders). In such a perspective the nation and the state were understood as two separate entities that can be set in a hierarchy in which the nation owns the state and not the other way round. On the other hand, the pluralist “continuity state” attempted to keep the nation–state dyad together not only by presenting both elements as dynamic objects, but also by proving that the postwar state institutions worked essentially for the benefit of the Polish nation and that the gradual internal democratization of state socialism was in line with national aspirations. In such a perspective, the internal

hierarchy within the nation–state dyad cannot be clearly determined; that is, the nation owns the state to the same extent as the other way round.

The full convergence of the content of the draft resolution of November 1997 with the adopted 1997 resolution would suggest that the “breakaway state” quickly secured full victory. However, it was passed only owing to the unanimous vote of the post-Solidarity camp, with the unanimous opposition of the post-communists, who voted against it, thus remaining faithful to their own definition. In other words, in November 1997 the warrior-style “breakaway state” gained a symbolic advantage. However, it did not achieve full hegemony—which is to say, monopoly over defining the Polish statehood—because the “continuity state” vision continued to be politically supported by the post-communist pluralists.

Establishing the “Alternative Continuity State”

The post-Solidarity “warriors” owe their full victory to the reframing of the “breakaway state” into what I call the “alternative continuity state.” More to the point, the “alternative continuity state” was about a shift in optics by the post-Solidarity camp from a revolutionary optics, in which the Third Polish Republic appeared as the result of a sharp break with the communist past, to an evolutionary optics, according to which a democratic Poland emerged gradually, as part of a long-term, all-national confrontation with the communist system.

The post-Solidarity warriors did this reframing during the debate on two draft resolutions regarding condemnation of communism³⁶ at the fifteenth Sejm sitting of the third term,³⁷ held in early April 1998. Although this time the post-communist “pluralists” partially refused to participate in the struggle by ostentatiously walking out of the Sejm room at the beginning of the sitting, they left Waniek (SLD) inside to make an extensive statement on behalf of the whole camp. Therefore, at this stage mostly Stefan Niesiołowski (AWS) and Marian Krzaklewski (AWS) developed the “alternative continuity state” based on the criticism of the “continuity state,” defended by Waniek (SLD). This move, again, was made in two steps. The first one included radicalization of two grand theses introduced at the previous stage—about the criminal nature of communism and about the direct continuity between communists and post-communists. The second step was to counter the post-communist thesis about the internal evolution of the authoritarian state toward democracy with an alternative thesis about long-term all-national resistance against totalitarian communism, resulting in winning democracy.

As for the first thesis of the first step, the post-Solidarity “warriors” attempted a symbolic removal of the state-socialist period (1945–1989) from Polish history. This attempt is well-evidenced, for example, by statements of Krzaklewski (AWS) such as “Let’s distinguish Poland from the PRL,”³⁸ or Olszewski’s (AWS) description of the postwar period as “years of enslavement, non-existence of free Poland on the world map.”³⁹ The advanced argument about illegal origins and the monolithic character of the system supported this direction. Developing the illegality component, the right-wing

MPs enriched the narrative about the installation of communism with references to mass terror as the communists' main tool for seizing and consolidating power. Although they differed in their beliefs about the extent of this terror—some spoke of tens of thousands of Stalinist victims, while others argued that Stalinism claimed more victims than World War II—they shared a conviction that communism was illegal in that it was contrary to human nature. This was most strikingly articulated by Jarosław Kaczyński (independent), who argued that “the core of the ideology of communism was the concept of genocide.”⁴⁰ Moreover, the post-Solidarity MPs linked the illegality issue with the ill will of Polish communists. They rejected Waniek’s (SLD) thesis that the introduction of communism in Poland was an unavoidable consequence of the international Yalta Agreement by stating that, from among the many possible political ways, the communists consciously chose “the path of conflict and violence.”⁴¹ Comparing this perspective with statements equating Polish communists with Soviet agents,⁴² it should be noted that the post-Solidarity “warriors” built the image of a communist on contradictory assertions, at the same time presenting them as inert puppets of Moscow and as causal actors with great influence on the course of events.

Developing the monolithism component, the “warriors” discredited the October 1956 turning point and denied numerous socioeconomic achievements of state socialism. In an effort to displace this turning point, they equated state socialism with totalitarianism by outlining convergences between the Stalinist period and the martial law period (1981–1983) and exposing these two time spans as representative of the entire postwar period, while passing over in silence two other decades that have been much more difficult to discredit, namely the 1960s and 1970s. Not only did this rationale stand behind statements made by Krzaklewski (AWS) (“the system of totalitarian communism could have lasted only thanks to crimes”)⁴³ and others, but it also paved the way for the extreme interpretation of the state-socialist period as Soviet captivity.⁴⁴ Regarding the achievements of socialism, the right-wing MPs extrapolated the decade of the 1980s, that is, a time associated also with a deep economic recession and a crisis of public services, for the entire socialist period. This move allowed them to make a claim about the general inefficiency of communism from the very beginning and to discredit the system as impossible to reform and doomed to collapse.⁴⁵

Finally, the crowning argument for the criminalization of communism was its equation with fascism, which showed the specific dualism of the post-Solidarity camp’s memory politics. In the foreground, communism and fascism were indeed equated, which can be considered as an early attempt to implement in Poland a broader, pan-European historical narrative of two totalitarianisms.⁴⁶ At the same time, a strongly right-wing message was proposed in the background, in which communism appeared to be the only enemy. In other words, the post-Solidarity camp presented themselves simultaneously as moderate symmetrists and radical anti-communists, expressing the radical attitude indirectly. Nevertheless, the first position was undoubtedly dominant.⁴⁷

As for the second thesis of the first step—that is, stressing the direct continuity between communists and post-communists—the post-Solidarity “warriors” rejected Waniek’s (SLD) interpretation, according to which the SLD party could not be held responsible for the decisions made by the PZPR due to two moments of political discontinuity after 1945. Waniek (SLD) held that the contemporary post-communists were not responsible for the Stalinist crimes, because they had not been involved in Stalinism personally and the guilt cannot be inherited. This claim of discontinuity was discredited by the right-wing argument about the monolithic character of communism, which, by abolishing the turning point of October 1956, at the same time abolished the generational distinctions within the PZPR. This argument was enriched by Niesiołowski’s (AWS) extensive interpretation of SLD’s political genealogy, according to which the party was considered a direct heir of the PZPR and a child of the Bolshevik party in the USSR.⁴⁸

Second, Waniek (SLD) stated that the post-communist “pluralists” could not be responsible for the crimes of late PZPR, because they came from its pro-democratic wing for whom “the choice made in 1989 is final and irreversible.”⁴⁹ Here the post-Solidarity “warriors” combined questioning the pro-democratic declarations of the SLD with attempts to show that in post-1989 Poland there was still an imbalance of power, inherited from the previous period, from which the post-communists continued to derive economic and political benefits. While the former tactic was used unanimously by the representatives of both coalition parties, the latter one was used by right-wing radicals originating from the Christian National Union (ZChN)—for example, Stanisław Wądołowski (AWS) and Antoni Macierewicz (independent)—who claimed all those benefits should be immediately taken away by the ruling coalition.⁵⁰

The second step taken by the post-Solidarity camp involved developing the narrative about long-term all-national resistance against communism. Here, Krzaklewski (AWS) presented the symbolic backbone of the “alternative continuity state” that was rooted in the anti-communist milieu from before 1989. It consisted of the chronological sequence of events forming a comprehensive, anti-communist interpretation of the postwar period. Its cornerstones were the largest mass social protests suppressed by the communists with violence, from the June 1956 workers’ protests, through the March 1968 protests of students and intelligentsia, the December 1970 and June 1976 workers’ protests, the August 1980 emergence of the “Solidarity” movement, to the repressions introduced by the PZPR as part of martial law.⁵¹ The introduction of this sequence translated into a warrior-style framing of the basic postwar conflict as a constant clash between the whole Polish nation and the communist authorities. Krzaklewski (AWS) attributed the uninterrupted pursuit of freedom and democracy to the nation, and the radical pursuit of domination, with a constant desire to bring a Soviet invasion into Poland, to the communists.

The beginning and end of this time sequence seem particularly interesting. As for the beginning, the post-Solidarity narrative omitted the Stalinist period, which created a peculiar symbolic vacuum between the memory of the Polish nation’s armed resistance to the military occupation in World War II

(1939–1945) and the memory of peaceful social resistance against communism. It was particularly the AWS's MPs originating from the Center Agreement (PC) who, later during this sitting, tried to fill in this vacuum by praising the activities of the National Armed Forces (NSZ) and the "Freedom and Independence" Association (WiN). These were the two main right-wing underground military organizations that fought against communists from the war's end in 1945 until the mid-1950s. Although in the later years this thread was developed and established as part of the mainstream Polish official memory under the "cursed soldiers" slogan, in April 1998 it was still controversial even for the majority of post-Solidarity MPs, who shared the belief that both organizations lacked political realism and used unacceptable, exceptionally brutal, methods.

As for the end of this time sequence, the most interesting matter is how post-Solidarity "warriors" framed the 1989 breakthrough in Poland in such a way as not to recognize any merit of the communist authorities or contemporary post-communists for building democracy. They did it by passing over the 1989 Round Table Agreement in silence and speaking of the year 1989 in general terms, which created another symbolic vacuum, also tackled by the PC–AWS MPs. Specifically, MP Sobierajski (AWS) countered Waniek's (SLD) statement that contemporary Poles have a widely positive view of the state-socialist period by recalling the political defeat of the communists in the elections of June 4, 1989. By pointing to this event, he indirectly introduced an alternative symbolic starting point of democratic transformation in Poland, one that passed on full merits for democratization to the post-Solidarity MPs as the only legitimate representatives of the Polish nation.⁵² This perspective was also developed in the right-wing memory politics in later years.

Moreover, the post-Solidarity "warriors" supplemented the "alternative continuity" narrative with numerous characters and groups they considered national heroes. They can be lined up in an order that reflects the aforementioned sequence of cornerstone events. At its beginning, there should be placed heroes of the armed resistance from late World War II and early Stalinism, both the uncontroversial ones such as Witold Pilecki⁵³ or the youth from the Grey Ranks,⁵⁴ and those more contested, such as some of the "cursed soldiers." Subsequently, the period of peaceful resistance should be opened by the heroes of the 1956 June protests, namely the workers of the Cegielski factory,⁵⁵ and closed by the miners from the "Wujek" mine who were shot at the beginning of the 1981 martial law.⁵⁶ Unsurprisingly, the members of the Solidarity movement and the Catholic Church were considered the central national heroes.

Importantly, the success of the "alternative continuity state" depended less on strengthening the insurgent aspect of the romantic paradigm by the post-Solidarity "warriors" and more on their ability to go beyond this paradigm and successfully incorporate the positivist paradigm into their own narrative. More to the point, UW MPs, especially Jacek Kuroń (UW), dismantled the dichotomy according to which the post-Solidarity camp was compared to a group of irresponsible romantic dreamers focused on mythologizing social spurts and detached from sociopolitical reality, unlike the post-

communist positivist realists.⁵⁷ The UW MPs cut the links between the post-communists and positivism by stating that all the achievements of the postwar period were due to the daily work of millions of Poles "within the totalitarian system imposed on Poland."⁵⁸ In this manner, all the merits were symbolically taken away from the communist politicians and attributed to the Polish nation instead. Thus, the "alternative continuity" narrative was complemented by a second type of a national hero: alongside the symbol of the romanticist-insurgent there appeared the symbol of a Pole-positivist, that is, the citizen who performed persistent, arduous, everyday work for the good of his/her enslaved homeland. According to Kuroń (UW), it was above all to the credit of the Pole-positivist that "these years resulted in a considerable spiritual and material achievement."⁵⁹ In this way, the post-Solidarity "warriors" dismantled the last cornerstone of the post-communist narrative.

It is worth noting that during the April debate the post-Solidarity camp did not resolve their internal dispute over the nature of the settlement with communism. This was a dispute between the moderate supporters of the "soft," purely symbolic, and the "hard" settlement, the latter of which assumed introducing legal solutions for "the replacement of the structures and institutions remaining after the communist era with new, more effective ones."⁶⁰ That is why the full criminalization of communism was sealed by a resolution of the Polish Senate adopted two weeks later.⁶¹ This resolution symbolically restored the legal continuity between interwar Poland and post-1989 Poland, thus invalidating the entire legal system of the postwar Polish state. The resolution claimed explicitly that "the state established on the Polish soil as a result of World War II and operating between 1944 and 1989 [was] a non-democratic state with a totalitarian system of power [...] deprived of sovereignty and not implementing the principle of the supremacy of the Nation,"⁶² and recognized the pre-war April 1935 Constitution of Poland as the only valid constitution of Poland during the entire state-socialist period. It was a significant act of closure in terms of discrediting this period.

The "alternative continuity state" perspective was presented in an integrated form in the "Resolution of the Polish Sejm on the Condemnation of Communist Totalitarianism,"⁶³ adopted in June 1998 by the votes of the post-Solidarity MPs, again with the unanimous opposition of the post-communists. First, the resolution replaced the earlier "breakaway idea" with a narrative about continuous, democratic, all-national resistance against communism culminating in the emergence of the Solidarity movement and resulting in the overthrow of totalitarianism in 1989. This replacement sanctioned the full marginalization of the post-communist defense of the socialist period. It also meant that the post-Solidarity "warriors" achieved their main symbolic goal set, that is, the complete discrediting of the post-communist narrative. Second, the resolution did not include right-wing criticism of the post-1989 democratic transformation. It abstained from equating post-communists with communists, mostly due to the actions of moderate-right UW MPs. This move meant that the post-Solidarity "warriors" actually abandoned their main political goal of delegitimizing post-communists as a democratic political force. Thus, the

position of the post-communist “pluralists” changed dramatically between November 1997 and June 1998. The post-communists had entered this memory struggle as a politically minor but symbolically equal partner of the post-Solidarity warriors. However, at the end of the day, the post-communists remained on the battlefield as subordinate to their post-Solidarity opponents in both respects. They kept nothing more than the possibility of further participation in the political process, but without being able to shape it.

At a deeper level, the victory of the post-Solidarity “warriors” consisted in their turning away from the idea behind the “breakaway state” of symbolically splitting the nation–state dyad toward its reintegration within the “alternative continuity state” in a way that definitely took over the state component from the post-communists’ hands. More specifically, post-Solidarity MPs assumed that the institutional aspect of statehood was less important than the ideological and cultural one and attributed the latter aspect solely to the anti-communist-oriented Polish nation. In other words, while the state institutions had been appropriated by a foreign force, the very idea of statehood was to survive in the nation for the whole 1945–1989 period. Thus, the post-Solidarity camp managed to keep the nation–state dyad together within their own perspective, which allowed them to gain monopoly with regard to the symbolic defining of Polish statehood. In fact, the “alternative continuity state” repeated the pattern known from Polish memory politics regarding the 1795–1918 period of partitioned Poland, a time when the nation fought for state independence against foreign invaders. In this sense, the June 1998 Resolution legitimized such a historical narrative for twentieth-century national history, in which Poland regained its independence twice: in 1918 and in 1989. This is precisely how the nation-state was reframed.

Completing the *Longue Durée* Narrative

The post-Solidarity “warriors” full monopoly over defining Polish statehood was sealed at the short yet festive joint Sejm and Senate meeting of November 10, 1998.⁶⁴ This was when the two representatives of the right-wing “warriors” holding the highest parliamentary positions—the Marshal of the Sejm, Maciej Płażyński (AWS), and the Marshal of the Senate, Alicja Grzeškowiak (AWS)—provided a homogenous, complex, *longue durée* narrative about the Polish nation’s continuous struggle against the series of invaders who captured state institutions in the period 1795–1989. In this narrative, two moments of Poland’s regaining independence were considered crucial: the first one in 1918 and the second one in 1989. In this manner, contemporary Poland was made a direct heir of the Second Polish Republic. This narrative was not entirely new, as it grew out of the anti-communist milieu from before 1989 just like the backbone of the “alternative continuity state.” Here, however, it was officially articulated in an integrated form for the first time. This articulation was possible precisely due to the symbolic takeover of the state component from the post-communists at the previous stage.

Following this takeover, the post-Solidarity camp was now able to move the issues of morality, anti-communism, and Christianity to the background of their definition of statehood

and make the foundation the democratic rule of law. Starting from there, Płażyński (AWS) and Grzeškowiak (AWS) presented the genealogy of Polish statehood through the lens of subsequent democratic institutions created by the nation during the partitions. Their narrative was based on the strong opposition between two political traditions, built on the conviction they were mutually exclusive due to an opposite attitude to the key issue of state sovereignty.⁶⁵ On the one hand, they claimed to support the tradition of a continuous national striving for independence, with the Second Polish Republic as its most important fruit and the Third Polish Republic as its culmination point. On the other hand, they depicted an “alien” tradition of subjugation to external, foreign powers, with the People’s Republic of Poland as its most recent manifestation. While the first tradition was characterized by a symbolic continuity through time, the second one was depicted as accidental, consisting of episodes that disrupted that continuity. Płażyński (AWS) stressed the need to clearly distinguish them in order not to “blur the boundaries between freedom and slavery.”⁶⁶ In this way, the People’s Republic of Poland was emphatically framed as a historical aberration.

The majority of the sitting was devoted to the exposition of this first tradition, with the nation–state dyad placed at the center of the narrative. Both components of the dyad were presented as inseparable by reference to their common origin, stating that the Polish nation had been constituted as a self-aware collective entity at the end of the eighteenth century, in the course of two events that preceded the period of partitioned Poland. The first was the adoption of the Constitution of May 3, 1791, by the Great Sejm, presented as a moment when acquiring political subjectivity by the Polish nation was combined with the democratic rule of law. The second event, the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794, was presented as the starting point of the long-term striving for independence.⁶⁷

This move was supplemented with the extensive characterization of the Polish nation as a cultural being made by Grzeškowiak (AWS). She used the classical organicist metaphor, according to which each nation is a human-like entity, in order to attribute human qualities and metaphysical traits to the Polish nation. Thus, on the one hand, the Polish nation was said to have an unwavering awareness (of the necessity of regaining independence), hope (that it was possible), and perseverance (to fight for it). On the other hand, it was said to be endowed with two qualities of a superhuman being—immortality and eternity. Grzeškowiak (AWS) used the first feature to present the struggle for independence in terms of an inevitable historical necessity, and the second one to equate the past independence insurgents with the contemporary post-Solidarity MPs.⁶⁸

The tradition of a continuous striving for independence was equated with the tradition of the democratic rule of law and presented through the lens of selected national assemblies from the period of partitioned Poland. They were interpreted as successive historical embodiments of the collective will of the nation, materializing in order to maintain the course toward independence and democracy: “It was a common belief that the reborn Poland must be a democratic state, a homeland for all.”⁶⁹ Importantly, the post-Solidarity MPs tied this narrative about the continuity

of institutional democracy—which led from the Great Sejm and the 1791 Constitution to the Legislative Sejm of the Second Polish Republic and the 1919 Small Constitution—mostly to the insurrectionary trend. More accurately, they first appreciated the insurrectionary trend by symbolically strengthening the chronological sequence of three key national uprisings as the backbone of this tradition: the November 1830 one, the 1946 Cracow one, and the January 1863 one. Next, they appreciated the legislative authorities—products of the uprisings (Sejms)—more than the executive authorities that led the uprisings (governments). Thus, they strengthened the idea of a democratic and legal leadership over the idea of a narrow, war-style one.

An important step to complement the *longue durée* narrative was to establish a symbolic continuity between the aforementioned state institutions operating on the territory of a divided Poland and the ones operating in exile. This was also done by Alicja Grześkowiak (AWS), who pointed to a particular political decision of the Sejm from the time of the November 1830 Uprising, one that equated these two types of state institutions.⁷⁰ Thus, a ground was provided for an extension of the institutional continuity into the 1945–1989 period. This move made it possible to supplement the previous story of the Polish nation preserving the idea of statehood under communism with the hitherto missing institutional aspect of statehood. This aspect was the recognition of the Polish postwar government-in-exile as the only legal Polish authority in the 1945–1989 period, which was symbolically confirmed by two things. One was Płażyński's (AWS) recall of the event of December 1990, when Ryszard Kaczorowski, the last president of the Polish government-in-exile, handed over the presidential insignia (taken from the country during World War II) to Lech Wałęsa, the first president of the Third Republic. Płażyński (AWS) considered that event a key symbol of contemporary Polish statehood: “the culmination of Poles regaining their own state.”⁷¹ The second thing was the physical presence of Kaczorowski, who was invited as the guest of the sitting. This recognition completed the direct symbolic continuity between the Second and Third Polish Republics, excluding the People's Republic.

Finally, the post-Solidarity MPs confirmed their monopoly over the two greatest cultural traditions—romanticism and positivism—by evoking its most significant representatives from among Polish nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers. Unsurprisingly, the romantic tradition was discussed much more extensively, which corresponded with making the insurrectionary trend the backbone of their narrative. Particularly noteworthy are the direct references to the works of the three major “national bards”: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński. First, Płażyński and Grześkowiak quoted their works to support the legitimacy of the cornerstones of their narrative. For example, the thesis that regaining independence was the overriding goal of the Polish nation was illustrated by the following quotation from Mickiewicz's *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (The Books and the Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation)⁷²: “Do not bother with what the government in Poland will be like, it is enough for you to know that it will be better than all the other ones you know about.”⁷³

Second, those references confirmed the primary attachment of the post-Solidarity narrative to Polish messianism. This local variety of romanticism focused on promoting the idea of Poland as the Christ of the Nations, who was innocently crucified by the partitioners but would return in glory to save Europe. In this way, the post-Solidarity narrative of the *longue durée* found a significant place for Christian values in the sphere of national culture. Likewise, Mickiewicz's comparison of the Polish Sejm to the biblical Noah's Ark, and Krasiński's idea of the deification of Poland, were also invoked during the sitting.

To conclude, at this short joint Sejm and Senate sitting, the post-Solidarity “warriors” sealed their victory over the post-communist “pluralists.” First, they completed the “alternative continuity state” by supplementing it with the institutional aspect of the state component of the nation–state dyad. Next, they inscribed the “alternative continuity state” into a *longue durée* narrative about the period 1795–1989, in which the Polish nation managed to maintain the continuous unity of the nation–state dyad despite the invaders. This narrative was at the same time self-sufficient, in the sense that it provided a full historiosophical explanation of the national past, and made a black-and-white distinction between an unambiguously good nation (with its representatives) and bad occupiers (with their collaborators). Thus, not only did it not need any symbolic alternative, but it also provided an opportunity to easily delegitimize any potential counter-narrative by labeling it as serving the interests of the foreign forces.

This is exactly how the post-Solidarity “warriors” won the 1997–1998 memory struggle over the genealogy of the Third Polish Republic. They managed to reframe the nation-state in a way that fully outlawed the post-communist narrative and made it impossible to incorporate some of its elements into the *longue durée* narrative. From this point of view, we should read the fact that the post-communists raised no objections to the adoption of the November 1998 resolution on the eightieth anniversary of independence,⁷⁴ primarily as an expression of surrender. Those who are fully defeated have no possibility to raise legitimate objections against the dominant symbolic order; therefore, they must submit to it, be it reluctantly or not.

Concluding Remarks

The analysis conducted in this article shows the merits of an approach to research on memory politics that explores the crucial role of conflict as the primary driving force behind it. The dynamics of the parliamentary memory struggle as presented here reveals three main features. First, official memory in a democratic state may be a space of fierce political clashes whose main stake is to establish one particular vision of the national past as legitimate through a full discrediting of alternative visions. Second, such clashes can even revolve around the most fundamental issues for the national memory, for example, the question of the symbolic definition of statehood. Third, the victory in a memory struggle emerges as a result of a complex relational process where the key role is played by the ability of mnemonic actors to politically shape the relations of domination and subordination both at the level of institutional power (resulting from the possession of a certain number of seats in parliament) and at the level of symbolic power

(resulting from interpretative actions aimed at discrediting the competing interpretations of the past).

As my inquiry has shown, the victory of the post-Solidarity “warriors” over the post-communist “pluralists” in the 1997–1998 struggle over the genealogy of the Third Polish Republic was significant for two fundamental reasons. First, this victory established the first, and immediately very clear, advantage of the conflict-based style of doing memory politics over the consensus-based one after 1989. In the course of the struggle, the post-Solidarity “warriors” passed all commemorative resolutions—except for the last one—exclusively by votes of their own MPs and despite the open, heated dissent of their “pluralist” opponents. Moreover, all the resolutions contained content preferred solely by the “warriors.” The only minor content concessions to the post-communists came from internal arrangements between the right-wing and moderate-right factions of the post-Solidarity camp.

Second, this victory brought to the fore the post-Solidarity, anti-communist definition of Polish statehood based on the full criminalization of postwar state socialism in Poland, and marginalized the post-communist one based on partial approval of that system. In the course of the struggle, the anti-communist definition was developed, integrated into a coherent and self-sufficient national narrative, and established as dominant, while the post-communist one was successfully dismantled and symbolically annulled. This dominant definition took the form of the story of Poland regaining its independence twice—in 1918 and 1989—owing to a continuous national resistance against foreign invaders, namely the imperial partitioners (1918) and the communist authorities (1989). In this manner, the nation-state was reframed exclusively according to the post-Solidarity definition of statehood.

In other words, by achieving full victory over the post-communists, the post-Solidarity “warriors” gained, for the first time in post-1989 Poland, symbolic hegemony over the definition of Poland’s statehood in the official memory. Thus they completed what Pierre Bourdieu (1989) called “the production and imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world.” Speaking in Bourdieusian terms, this dominance was so successful not only because the “warriors” consistently backed up their own definition of statehood with the power of their parliamentary majority, but mostly because this definition relied on a self-sufficient narrative that made it seem like the only possible definition. As a result of this struggle, the hitherto pluralist dispute between alternative visions of Polish statehood has been replaced by a monist dispute between advocates of different varieties of one and the same vision.

Importantly, this shift from pluralism to monism was sealed only several years later, in the aftermath of the 2005 parliamentary elections. It was then that the division of the political scene into post-communist “pluralists” and post-Solidarity “warriors” gave way to a new division between two post-Solidarity proponents of conflict-based memory politics: the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) and the moderate-right Civic Platform (PO). The growing, monist antagonism between these two, with Law and Justice as its driving force, became evident already during the PiS party’s 2005–2007 mnemonic offensive (see Nijakowski 2008, 190–263); later it radicalized twice, first in 2010 after the Smolensk air disaster and again in

2015 after PiS won the parliamentary elections. The preconditions for those later developments lie precisely in the 1997–1998 memory struggle over the genealogy of the Third Polish Republic.

Notes

1. The post-Solidarity right included right-wing and moderate-right political organizations that originated from the anti-communist opposition, largely from the Solidarity movement. Between 1997 and 2001, two main parties dominated: the stronger, radical Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) coalition and the weaker, moderate party, the Freedom Union (UW). The post-communist left included primarily the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), a coalition of center-left parties, the core of which was the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP), the party originating from the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) that held power before 1989.
2. These theorists assume an essentially stable and homogenous nature of national communities. See e.g. Smith (1999).
3. For more on this distinction, see Brubaker (2004, 7–18).
4. For a detailed review of this literature, see Malinova (2021).
5. The full name was Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego. It was officially proclaimed on July 22, 1944, and was considered by the pre-1989 official memory as the beginning of the Polish statehood.
6. *Ustawa z dnia 15 lutego 1989 r. o ustanowieniu Narodowego Święta Niepodległości* (MP 1989, no. 6, item 34)
7. For a notable exception, see Secler (2018).
8. The AWS coalition was founded in June 1996. Three coalition partners were particularly active in the pre-1996 memory politics: the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), the Center Agreement (PC), and the Christian National Union (ZChN). The oldest one was KPN, founded in 1979 and supporting the interwar tradition of Sanacja and the late Józef Piłsudski. The other two, founded in 1989–1990, originated from the Solidarity movement. Importantly, the PC was built around Jarosław Kaczyński, later the leader of the Law and Justice (PiS).
9. The UW was formed in April 1994 by the merger of two parties: the Democratic Union (UD) and the Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD).
10. “Thick line” was a political slogan used by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first noncommunist prime minister of Poland, in his 1989 parliamentary address. Contrary to his intentions, this slogan was later commonly considered as a manifesto of reluctance toward historical settlements with the communists, and an acceptance of the consensual functioning of the post-Solidarity and post-communist camps in Polish politics.
11. While the former trend is represented e.g. by the 1990 resolution on the Katyń massacre, the latter one includes e.g. the 1991 draft resolution on the martial law, which has never been adopted. See: *Uchwała Sejmu RP z 22 marca 1990 r. w sprawie Katynia* (MP 1990, no. 11, item 80); *Projekt uchwały w sprawie złożenia hołdu ofiarom morderstw i represji stanu wojennego* (print no. 1137 of October 3, 1991).
12. While the former trend is represented e.g. by the 1994 draft resolution on the Nazi and Soviet invasion of Poland, the latter one includes e.g. the 1994 resolution on the Warsaw Uprising or the 1996 resolution on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. See: *Uchwała Sejmu RP z 6 lipca 1994 w sprawie uczczenia 50. rocznicy Powstania Warszawskiego* (MP 1994, no. 41, item 342); *Oświadczenie Sejmu RP z 12 kwietnia 1996*. (MP 1996, no. 27, item 280); *Poselski projekt oświadczenia Sejmu RP z okazji 55. rocznicy agresji hitlerowskich Niemiec i komunistycznej Rosji na Polskę 1 i 17 września 1939 r.* (print no. 585 of August 30, 1994);
13. *Uchwała Sejmu RP z 11 listopada 1997 r. z okazji Święta 11 Listopada* (MP 1997, no. 2, item 793). Since the referenced documents can only be traced by applying their full legal terminology in the Polish language, the author has chosen not to translate the official names. Italics are used instead. All of

- the referenced documents can be found in the Archive of the Polish Sejm: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/page.xsp/archiwum> (accessed July 3, 2022). Moreover, as the transcripts of the sittings of the Parliament's third term (1997–2001) are available only as online transcripts, references to specific statements do not include document pages, but links. All the links have been accessed July 20, 2022.
14. *Uchwała Sejmu i Senatu RP z 10 listopada 1998 r. w osiemdziesiątą rocznicę odzyskania niepodległości* (MP 1998, no. 41, item 555).
 15. *Projekt Uchwały Sejmu RP z okazji Święta 11 Listopada* (print no. 23 of November 6, 1997).
 16. See: *Drugie Posiedzenie Sejmu RP III kadencji w dniu 10 listopada 1997*: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/972b05fdf8e356dfc1257490004b6c10?OpenDocument>.
 17. Ibid., MP Buzek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/729F7293>.
 18. Ibid., MP Niesiołowski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/4CAED056>.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid., MP Piłka: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/7138374F>.
 21. Ibid., MP Jackowski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/2D4275D1>.
 22. October 1956 brought a change in the internal policy of PZPR, resulting from grassroots social and intra-party movements aimed at destalinization and democratization of the system. On this wave, Władysław Gomułka came to power as the first secretary of the Central Committee.
 23. *Drugie Posiedzenie...*, MP Urbańczyk: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/35249650>.
 24. Ibid., MP Sierakowska: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/6AB3EF97>.
 25. Ibid., MP Krzaklewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/12026A9B>.
 26. A political agreement signed on April 4, 1989, between the communist government and the anti-communist opposition, which started the process of democratization in Poland. It concluded several months of negotiations initiated by the communist government in response to the wave of social protests in 1988.
 27. Ibid., MP Miller: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/44DF74D1>.
 28. Ibid., MP Urbańczyk: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/35249650>.
 29. Ibid., MP Buzek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/729F7293>.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Ibid., MP Krzaklewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/12026A9B>.
 32. Ibid., MP Miller: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/44DF74D1>.
 33. Ibid., MP Waniek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/2EA9B115>.
 34. Ibid., MP Miller: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/44DF74D1>.
 35. Ibid., MP Waniek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/2EA9B115>.
 36. Both drafts, submitted in February 1998, one by the AWS and another by the UW, were very similar. See: *Projekt Uchwały Sejmu RP o przestępczym charakterze systemu komunistycznego* (print no. 192 of February 4, 1998) and *Projekt Uchwały Sejmu RP w sprawie potępienia systemu totalitarnego* (print no. 206 of February 19, 1998).
 37. *Piętnaste Posiedzenie Sejmu RP III Kadencji w dniach 1–3 kwietnia 1998*: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/e199e75f57cfda0fc1257491003e4511?OpenDocument>. Although the legislative process of this resolution was prolonged until June 1998, the memory struggle took place only at the April sitting. The post-communists refused to participate in the subsequent stages.
 38. Ibid., MP Krzaklewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/7D51E2D7>. Krzaklewski deliberately used the abbreviation “PRL” instead of the full name of the state in order to demonstrate his aversion to it.
 39. Ibid., MP Olszewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/7BF40A10>.
 40. Ibid., MP Kaczyński: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/0BA58614>.
 41. Ibid., MP Lityński: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/741B4C0E>.
 42. Ibid., MP Niesiołowski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/318CC5D4>.
 43. Ibid., MP Krzaklewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/7D51E2D7>; MP Kaczyński: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/0BA58614>.
 44. Ibid., MP Macierewicz: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/137E4416>.
 45. Ibid., MP Niesiołowski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/318CC5D4>.
 46. “Pan-European,” i.e. promoted by the major institutions of the European Union as the official historical narrative of a united Europe since the early 1990s. See: Ghodsee (2014), Neumayer (2018).
 47. For a more detailed reflection on the putative equivalence between Nazism and communism, see: Korycki (2019).
 48. *Drugie Posiedzenie...*, MP Niesiołowski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/318CC5D4>.
 49. Ibid., MP Waniek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/413E41D8>.
 50. *Piętnaste Posiedzenie...*, MP Macierewicz: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/137E4416>.
 51. This sequence of events became the basis of the dominant narrative about Poland's postwar history, which spread after the “memory boom” in 2004 and was defined as the “Polish road to freedom and democracy.” It later appeared in both radical and moderate versions.
 52. *Piętnaste Posiedzenie...*, MP Sobierajski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/4F91E515>.
 53. Pilecki was an officer of the Polish Homeland Army and one of the leaders of the resistance during World War II. After the end of the war in 1945 he organized an intelligence network loyal to the Polish government-in-exile. Pilecki was arrested in 1947 and sentenced to death in a show trial.
 54. “The Grey Ranks” was the underground paramilitary Polish Scouting Association during World War II.
 55. The workers of the Cegielski Metal Industries in Poznań, who took to the streets demanding pay compensation after most of them had lost bonus pay due to the government activities. This is how the 1956 June protests started.
 56. Nine miners from the Wujek Coal Mine in Katowice who were shot by the Polish police (ZOMO) during a strike-breaking action led by the communist government on December 16, 1981.
 57. *Piętnaste Posiedzenie...*, MP Waniek: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/413E41D8>.
 58. Ibid., MP Kuroń: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/396583D6>.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Ibid., MP Krzaklewski: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/7D51E2D7>.
 61. *Uchwała Senatu RP z 16 kwietnia 1998 r. o ciągłości prawnej między II a III Rzeczpospolitą Polską* (MP 1998, no. 12, item 200).
 62. Ibid.
 63. *Uchwała Sejmu RP z 18 czerwca 1998 w sprawie potępienia totalitaryzmu komunistycznego* (MP 1998, no. 20, item 287).
 64. See: *Wspólne posiedzenie Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej dla uczczenia osiemdziesiątej rocznicy odzyskania niepodległości*: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/ac357cdca4e7e91bc125749d0048a50e?OpenDocument>.

65. Ibid., MP Płażyński: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/ac357cdca4e7e91bc125749d0048a50e?OpenDocument>.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., MP Grześkowiak: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/77F9A653>.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., MP Płażyński: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/118b9e577f3fceeac125746d0030d0fa/ac357cdca4e7e91bc125749d0048a50e?OpenDocument>.
72. This was a poetic political manifesto written shortly after the fall of the 1830 November Uprising.
73. Ibid., MP Grześkowiak: <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata3.nsf/main/77F9A653>.
74. *Uchwała Sejmu i Senatu RP z 10 listopada 1998 r. w osiemdziesiątą rocznicę odzyskania niepodległości* (MP 1998, no. 41, item 555).

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