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Conversations with a Polish Populist: Globalization, Class, and "Transition", Somewhat Closer on the Skin.

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Introduction

Signs of discontinuities at the end of an epoch in capitalist globalization are rapidly piling up during this spring of 2008 and yet, unsurprisingly, they fail to bring evidence that the basics are being transformed. Social scientists know that they fail to do so because the relationships and balances of power upon which social process within an epoch are based, Gramsci's historical bloc, are not shifting significantly, let alone transforming, at least not visibly yet. Stresses are building up dramatically and we are seeing unprecedented turbulence and surprise shifts in the landscapes of globalizing capitalism, but not yet discontinuous change. However, the shifts are notable.

Consider the supervisory board of the IMF coming together (april 08) in the aftermath of the third financial tsunami in a decade, set rolling by the US's "subprime crisis". Unlike in the two or three earlier cases, this financial crisis threatened the core of the Western banking system itself. The Chairman of the Committee overseeing the IMF urged the members to ignore for a moment the short-term disasters, the dramatic losses and the shaking financial system, and to put aside the carefully prepared complex quantitative equations on their desks that are the daily bread of the top management committee of global capitalism in normal times. Instead, he invited them to try to envision what it will mean for their work that we will soon be living in a world – just twenty years from now - of not just the 700 million Western consumers of the year 2000, but three or four billion global consumers, many of them citizens of cohesive big nations occupying large territories in Eurasia and running potentially strong states with non-western heritages such as China, India and Russia. They had to think of the resources – oil, rice, copper, wheat - that will be required to satisfy the needs and desires of these four billion consumers. And they were asked to think aloud about the political tensions that will come with their stepped-up competition for essential and inevitably scarce basic commodities, and to realize the sheer stresses this will provoke in the system earth and the incalculable consequences these might have – global warming, draughts, flooding – for societies. Instead of the optimistic vision of neoliberal globalization and trickle-down-plenty for all – the IMF gospel since 1989 - the high priest of the organization tells us with sincerity to expect from now on breakneck competition for markets and for the basics of life, structural inflation and high interest rates, accelerating sociopolitical stresses within nations, and deep rivalries between militarized national capitalisms in an environment of staggering ecological risks and existential threats. It sounded veritably like the definitive morning after, more

than any of the several previous morning-afters we have had since the mirage of the one-world took off.

Consider the FED (14 may 08), after twenty years of unashamedly sponsoring financial speculation and propping up the revenues of Wall Street dealers and bankers - according to its former President, Alan Greenspan, "for the good of everyone" - now deciding to start to try to "lean against the wind" and develop instruments to prevent or to deflate further speculative bubbles.

Look in a totally different direction and add the picture of Romanian strikers at foreign owned Rom-petrol and French car manufacturers in Romania (april 08) celebrating their just announced 20% pay rise as a "good lesson for politicians who have used the last decade to sell out Romanian workers to the benefit of global capitalists and the Romanian state class" (find literal quote in FT), a message now also taken over as official policy by, for example, the Polish government. Or look at the endemic peasant-worker protests in China and India against state-led expropriation of land for capitalist development.

Might all this mean that we're moving out off a period of globalization and financialization – now sometimes and confusingly called "Bretton Woods II" – and into a phase of more citizen and worker friendly arrangements? In other words are we moving out off global neoliberalism and into an "embedded liberalism" with all its connotations of renewed nation making, state making and citizenship rights? Not likely, in particular not the part that might be beneficial for workers and citizens more widely. For that to happen we know that at least two things are necessary: the long secular shift in the balance between profits (from capital) and incomes (from wages), since the late seventies increasingly skewed toward capital, should be drastically reversed in favor of workers; and the equally long decline in the effective taxation of capital as compared to labor must similarly be redressed. In short, the systematic decline of the social wage all through the post-wall period in all OECD countries must be turned around if we want to see the openings toward a new epoch, because that would signal the emergence of fundamentally different power relationships and the transformation of the transnationalizing historical bloc and its local departments. And even though oracles of the transnational class such as Larry Summers have, in the wake of all this and against their earlier deeds in power, recently started to argue that much of this must indeed be done in order to create an "ethical globalization" (May 08) which will allow majorities to profit from global growth rather than minorities, there are very few signs that state power in the capitalist world can extricate itself sufficiently from the mutually advantageous liaison with capitalist networks to actually do so. The capitalist state might have some 'relative autonomy', but it does not come with the capacities of a Baron Von Muenchhausen. It is too solidly beholden to its own transnationalization and its entanglements with the more immediately capitalist segment of the transnational class. The dual crisis of labor and popular sovereignty, undergirded by the unequal power balances between labor and capital, and between states and citizens, is therefore likely to continue as we know it.

My general argument, hence, is straightforward: worker-citizens in transnationalizing states will inevitably continue to feel the heat of the 1 billion new workers that have been added to the system since 1989, as well as the two billion that might be added in the next two decades, a condition probably rightly seen by no one less than Alan Greenspan as the basic determinant of this epoch. Globalist neoliberalism and financialization are responses to that basic fact. They may vary and be adapted to new circumstances, but the consequences of the tripling of the global proletariat, now more fragmented than ever over a wide collection of deeply disparate and differentially inserted nation-states, will remain with us for another while, *pace* Wallerstein's prognosis that the end is in sight.

State elites, consequently, will tend to find their popular legitimacy under pressure as they remain locked in a global regime that necessarily sets them up as competition states that compete with other states for mobile capital by offering their populations and territories up as readily exploitable factors for global industries. Sure, different locations, histories, and the proximity or distance of state elites to the sources of capital, will make a difference. But the general rule will be downward pressure on the legitimacy of state-elites, and continued exhaustion of the liberal and modernist ideologies of nation-state building and social engineering of both the left and the right variety.

As a consequence, as Paul Piccone was perhaps the first to have foreseen (1993), we are seeing the spread, generation and regeneration of hybrid populisms, that are mostly composed of ethno-national or religious symbolic sources eclectically combined with items of the classical Left. As Piccone wrote, on the example of France: *"...the French New Right seems to be onto something when it counterposes a universalizing New Class seeking to impose an abstract liberal agenda on everyone, and populists wanting to live their lives in their communities, with their particular cultures, institutions, religions etc.*." (1993: 21). He failed to highlight that the abstract liberalism of the new class of social engineers had by the early nineties become firmly wedded to the globalizing agenda of the capitalist competition state and was hence losing the legitimacy it once had. But he was right to point at the dialectics of local communal cultural particularity versus abstract liberal cosmopolitanism that would increasingly characterize the new era of the one-world.

The spreading populisms are not just overt Right wing ideological interventions in the daily elite business of doing politics. They are also, and ultimately more importantly, the vehicles by which wider disenfranchised populations make sense of the discontents of globalizing modernisms. Those that do not speak out loudly or vote openly for the radical Right, are often *soto voce* blaming liberal state-classes just as well for their complicity with the conspiracies against "the people". Unlocking the dialectics between popular resentment and the organized radical Right seems a relevant project that ethnographic methods can certainly help forward.

I will first discuss some recent general work supporting this argument and then descend into the anthropological complexities of the emergent populisms by looking in considerable detail at a group of Polish workers that I have followed through from the late nineties until today.

Anthropologies of Fear, Crisis, and the Nation

In recent anthropology, both Gingrich and Banks (eds. 2005) and Appadurai (2006) highlight the importance of social insecurity, fear and anger in generating the popular receptiveness for ideologies of ethnic or religious neo-nationalism. Both also invoke the association of such receptiveness with the general conditions generated by neo-liberal globalizations. Their work resonates with Jonathan Friedman's general notion of double polarizations associated with globalization (2003): polarizations that pair widening social divides to spreading idioms of deep cultural difference in an era in which ruling elites and their allies are structurally invited to transform themselves into cosmopolitan classes and forsake the project of the nation as a community of fate. In the process, the erstwhile 'fordist' working classes are unmade, in representation as well as fact, into a new 'ethnic folk', while the lower tiers are turned, in representation and fact, into *classes dangereuxes.* The work of these very different authors colludes, then, in suggesting that any explanation of the surge of neo-nationalism (in Europe and beyond) must be placed against the combined background of what I would call the dual crisis of

popular sovereignty on the one hand, and of labor on the other; a dual crisis that certainly characterizes the millennium. They also suggest, though do not always work out, that spirals of nationalist paranoia, while structurally derived from the dual crisis, receive their precise historical dynamics, meanings and symbolisms from demonstrable configurations – confrontations, alliances, divisions - of class, within specific (though often 'hidden') local histories.

There seems substantial support outside anthropology for this general thesis. Comparativist historical sociologists such as Moore (1972), Mann (2000), Katznelson (2000) and Tilly (2004) have suggested that the class cleavage under democratic capitalism must be faced, articulated, and organized rather than repressed if liberalism wants to remain a vital force in the center of the democratic process. Now, the dual crisis signals, if anything, that over the last three decades it has become ever harder for liberals to do precisely that. On the European scale they will have of course far more trouble doing so in the post-socialist East, with dependent states, thoroughly comprador capitalisms, and at best some 30% of the wealth of Western Europe, than in the West of the continent, though Western state elites are deeply affected too. Nor is the story limited to Europe. For the Middle East and West Asia it has been argued that the repression of the nationalist Left has ultimately become the harbinger of religious fundamentalism (Ali 2002). Various studies have made plausible that neo-liberal globalization, by fragmenting labor and exerting downward pressure on social wages, by reducing popular sovereignty on behalf of the sovereignty of capital, and by circumscribing what Bourdieu (2000) has called "the left hand of the state" (social inclusion) while strengthening "the right hand" (finance, law and order), might well be systematically associated with a climate of deep popular uncertainty, feeding in a politics of fear, and resulting in defensive non-liberal popular responses in areas as diverse as Central and Western Africa, the US, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Kaukasus and East Asia (a.o. Frank 2005; Friedman (ed.) 2003; Gingrich and Banks 2005; Derlugian 2005; Turner 2003; Nonini 2003; Wievorka 2003; see my overview article, Kalb 2005 a).

These popular politics of fear should not be seen as being immediately oriented on, or caused directly by, global actors or accelerating flows of people, trade and information as such. This is the always slightly opaque level of abstraction moved by what Eric Wolf would have called "strategic power" (Wolf 1991). Rather, actual outcomes on local grounds are intermediated by various path dependent "critical junctions" that link global process via particular national arenas and local histories to emergent and situated events and narratives (Kalb 1997, 2000, 2005; Kalb and Tak 2005). Critical junctions link the level of structural power with the institutional fields of "tactical power" and everyday agential power (Wolf 1991) and it is in these dynamic linkages that the politics of fear and anger gets incubated.

In particular I would suggest that it is the disjunctures between everyday agential power, tactical state-based political environments (including political opportunity structures), and global structural power relationships that help generate the popular anxiety and paranoias. Such anxieties, in their turn, energize the nationalist populisms that are taking the place of the liberal modernisms gone awry. In a more narrowly political sense, populism, in our conjuncture, is the rejection of liberal elites and ideologies that fail to use the resources of the nation state to harness global process to local needs and desires, celebrate an elite cosmpolitanism, or worse, use it for outright local dispossession. But more broadly conceived, they are the moods and sensibilities of the disenfranchised who are facing the disjunctures between their everyday lives that seem to become ever more chaotic and uncontrollable, and the wider public power projects that are out off their reach and suspected of serving their ongoing dispossession.

While the headlines in the Western press tend to paint an orientalizing picture of the post-socialist East as a cauldron of majority ethnic nationalisms[1], there has in fact been very little anthropological work on the dynamics of neo-nationalisms in the East. This stands in contrast to political scientists or political sociologists, who have consistently discussed East European nationalisms from a distance, often in alarmist mode, since the early nineties (for example, Tismaneanu 1998). The newest wave of such work is less alarmist and much more analytical and has started to experiment with, and advocate, ethnographic methods (Ost 2005; Derlugian 2005), which do represent a great advance even though their actual ethnographic exercises will not always impress anthropologists.

Western media, of course, tend to treat majority nationalisms in the West differently. They see the recent conflicts within which nationalisms in the West are expressed as conflicts about immigration, spurred on by local far-right movements. In so doing they mystify the sources of nationalism in the West by shifting them onto actors deemed ultimately external to the core of the West itself, that is migrants and the fringe of the extreme right.[2] Such events and movements are figured as an aberration from a supposedly well-established norm of liberalism in the West, which appears to stand in contrast to the East, which *is* nationalist.

Against such self-gratifying occidentalizing imagery, it is my contention that Western and Eastern European popular nationalisms have broadly similar social roots and comparable spreads, and are occasioned by related processes of neo-liberal globalization and class restructuring, while their actual event-based dynamics, of course, derive from differently ordered and sequentialized political fields and get their symbolism from thoroughly different national histories, memories and amnesias.[3]

Recent anthropological work on neo-nationalism in the West (Gingrich and Banks, eds. 2005) has somewhat echoed the media emphasis on migrants and far right movements. It did little to expel the orientalizing and occidentalizing mystifications. Alternatively, it has focused (Holmes 2000) on conservative West European elites and their revived Catholic organicist ideologies. This does help to re-establish cultural essentialism into its rightful place within the Right flank of western European and continental Corporatism, but does little to explain its populist dynamics and contents outside the elite circles.

It is easy to dismiss folky populisms analytically. But they represent both a structural and a meaningful phenomenon and we should therefore better take them serious. As Peter Worsley has written long ago: they are *the eternal attempt of people to claim politics as something of theirs",* while they are seeking *"substantive justice*" and appealing *"to the involvement of people in the running of their own societies"* (Worsley, 1969: 248, 244, 245).
In what follows I want to plunge at once into the stories of a group of workers in the Polish city of Wroclaw to try to dig up the narrated realities that pushed skilled and semi-skilled industrial workers, arguably the largest population segment in East and Central Europe, to articulate an increasingly biting populist rejection of liberalizing elites. This is meant to be a micro archeology of growing workers' resentment in response to mis-recognized and mis-recognizing processes of dispossession, not just related to work but to their whole habitat.

[1] Michal Buchowski has demonstrated that east European elites have similar, and perhaps even more radical, orientalizing ideas about their subordinate compratiots (Buchowski, 2006)
[2] Peter Van der Veer is the exception to this rule. He sees Dutch populist mobilization against Islam as a consequence of the Dutch' very own incapacity to deal with religion, (Van der Veer, 2006).
[3] I am explicitly siding here with Michael Burawoy (2001) in his worldsystem and class based critique on Eyal, Szelenyi, Townsley (1998) and Stark and Bruszt (1998), though I remain slightly more sympathetic to the path-dependency approaches advocated by these authors than Burawoy is. I emphasize the critical junctions of global process and interlocking local developments (see Kalb, 2005). They are no alternatives for each other. See also Jan Drahokoupil's (CEU dissertation) in relation to the emergence of the competition state in CEE (forthcoming, 2008).

Between 1997 and 2007 I have followed a group of workers, organized around Solidarnosc unions, in a "white goods" factory and some other local factories in Wroclaw. These workers had built the local Solidarnosc units against communist repression in the late seventies/early eighties, sustained their underground self-organization throughout the period of military rule and into the creeping transition processes from 1985 onwards, laid strong *de-facto* as well as *de-jure* claims to "their" factories, and actively tried to secure these claims as well as their factories throughout Balcerowicz's crises of liberalization, stabilization and privatization. I will argue that these crises were meant to lead to outright dispossession of assets into, again, o paradox, state hands - legitimized, paradoxically, by regained sovereignty and parliamentary democratization. My aim is to probe the lived inside of processes largely understood and fetishized from the comfortable outside as a successful democratic transition.[4]

In what comes I remain aware that dispossession in Poland has been rather extreme. I do not see it as an exceptional case, however, but rather as one that must be conceptualized on a continuum with other cases that encompass Europe as a whole.

"History repeats itself", conversations with a Polish Populist

The best lead into working class experience and its contentious signification that I can give is listening in to conversations with Krysztof Zadrozny, a vocational teacher, born in Wroclaw in 1953, a worker activist who in the end never exchanged his job on the conveyor belts of the local Polar factory for a paid career in unionism, politics or a foreman position. He had been the leader of the anti-martial law strike and factory occupation in December 1981, was interned by Jaruzelski in 1982, began editing and publishing an underground factory journal in 83-88 called "Our Home", was interned again and then dismissed from further industrial work in Wroclaw on disciplinary charges for resurrecting Solidarnosc in 1988, became a temporary high-altitude chimney sweeper, and later a youth basketball trainer, an organizer of 'home-church' holiday camps with other lay-Catholics, and is the older brother of an important local and national Solidarnosc forewoman. Above everything else he is a persistent fighter for "living in truth" and for demanding "normality" in Poland. He is a father of three children, the oldest born while he was interned, who are all studying pedagogy related subjects. Like many workers we interviewed he nowadays still lives in the small apartment he got in the late seventies not far from the factory complex. In an environment where more than 50% of people had not more than primary education, he stood out for the trust he had gained among hundreds or even thousands of workers and inhabitants of the Polar neigborhood. As a vocational teacher and production line worker, he was *the* intermediator between working class sensibilities and politics on the one hand and the more highly educated actors in the institutional fields, including his sister, on the other.

When we first met him in the small and sober union office in the Polar administration building in 1998, part of the Polar shares were just about to be sold to a French industrial group. The EU, which had insisted on the full liberalization of imports into Poland while still maintaining specific tariffs against Polish exports until the early 2000's, loomed large in his internal conversations and exchanges with friends. Fifteen hundred redundancies (at a labor force of 4500 in 1997) had recently been announced. An investigation by MacKinsey had shown that Polar used more labor than comparable white goods firms in the west. "The EU is a huge Soviet Union", Zadrozny stated with self-conscious

[4] There are of course also excellent general studies "from a distance", such as recently Stuart Shields, "From socialist Solidarity to Neo-populist neoliberalization? The paradoxes of Poland's post-communist transition", (Shields 2007).

exaggeration. “There has been so much talk about self-governments, locality etc, and what they finally do is creating a huge monopoly”.

Monopoly, in the language of the anti-communist resistance stood for social and material waste, unaccountability, misinformation, and insidious corruption. Self-government or self-management, in contrast, referred to “normality” and “living in truth”. These were the ultimate symbols for which Polish workers had sustained their fight with the party state, arguably more so than the idea of “civil society” or even just “pluralism”, which remained rather tactical and intellectual concepts. Normality and living in truth were the complex popular symbols that had ultimately energized the workers’ mobilization. They remained magnets of signification and desire all through the nineties and 2000’s, now increasingly targeted against the liberal state and its transnational allies.

We met him again in the same small office ten years later, in April 2007. He is still working on the conveyor belt of what is now Polar-Whirlpool. “History repeats itself”, he exclaimed. “Our naivety and kind-heartedness have been exploited. In all these years after 1989 we were told that we are nothing; that the West has come to take it all over; that the Poles happen to have their national vices. And in this way the ground was prepared for people to accept the status quo. But in my opinion, what was missing in 1989 was a spirit of resistance against abnormality. Also in Solidarity and the church. See for example this recent issue of women working in supermarkets not being allowed to go to the toilet and therefore wearing pampers! Where was Solidarity? Where was the church? They should have reacted sharply. Then other things could not have taken place either. And here, I think, quite intentionally, the enterprises and Polar too, were broken into pieces. They were left to fight for themselves. And in that way solidarity was broken.

“We were told that this is how it has to be, that there is this transition, and that we should be happy that we have work at all. Well, labor is a great value but our dignity and our incomes are important too. I think we should at least revisit the process of privatization, even in Polar, whether it was real privatization or, as people say, mere theft.

“My sister, when the privatization was pending in 1998, had to travel to a dinner with Prime Minister Buzek, talk at night, lots of alcohol, to convince him to get the social package done. Absurd! He was meant to be our own Solidarnosc prime minister! But in the ministry there was an undersecretary who dealt with our case, he was a person of the Proszkow mafia (secret services). Such things must be investigated, show the truth. It would be odd that those who bought the enterprises for almost nothing would be doing it for the people?

“We cannot undo what was done. Still it would be psychologically important to find out whether this company was sold for less than its real value. Then it could become easier to enforce something now, like better wages. A question of honor. I myself never believed that this was how it had to be, that Poles are such that they cannot do this or that…..it was a big mistake to say that Poles were worthless”

Some words are immediately in order to help contextualize and disentangle these superficially straightforward but in fact thickly layered local stories. Privatization, counter-intuitively, was something that workers in Poland had fiercely believed in, in any case from the moment that the term was first circulated in public in 1989 to about 1992 (see also Kalb, 2008; Ost, 2005). In their view, though, it came initially with a totally different connotation than used in the West or used by the Polish liberal elite. It was not about selling a public asset to a private investor but rather the other way around. For Polish workers in the late eighties it initially signified a transfer of firms – which, we must recall, under communism were the anchor of total community life, including health care, holidays, housing, kindergartens, loans etc. - out off the hands of the communists, seen as a private

and external force encroaching illegitimately on the nation and scheming to appropriate its properties, and into those of the workers, seen as the factual national public.

The late eighties and early nineties in Poland and Wroclaw, was a period in which the early twentieth century idea of workers' self-management, indeed *workers' self-government*, was very much in the air; more precisely, it was materially real and very close to being a daily lived experience. Few analysts of post-socialism have analyzed this sufficiently, so it requires a further excursion. Without it we cannot understand local popular experience.[5]

Under martial law, remarkably enough, a crucial demand of the program accepted by the Solidarnosc General Assembly in September 1981, workers' self-management, was implemented as one of the first civil acts of the military regime (Poznanski, 1996). It is often assumed that it was precisely this claim that figured as one of those radicalizations of the Polish rebellion that convinced Moscow and the Polish generals that armed intervention was becoming increasingly inevitable in order to defend the position of the nomenklatura. But now that Solidarnosc had been outlawed the military regime felt that new institutions for self-management at the factory level would pacify the population, sever the links between workers and intelligentsia, and create some legitimacy for the regime. On top of that, it could help to solve at one stroke a couple of endemic problems of socialist accumulation.

First, by making firms responsible for their own finances it was hoped that they would be forced to become more financially responsible and entrepreneurial. Second, they hoped to prevent or at least deflect to the level of the firm and the locality eventual new waves of collective wage claims by workers. In this way they hoped to take away one of the systemic impediments to socialist accumulation: the inability of the state to control wages, profits, and investment, and indeed the inability to forestall state-focused working class collective action. Workers would now preside over their own wage funds as part of limited budgets with 'hard constraints' in Kornai's (1980) sense. And since they had considerable control over the overall budget, they would now have to weigh their own wages in relation to productive investments and the extensive social funds. They were expected to become responsible caretakers of and investors in their own social reproduction. It was meant to be the end of the socialist patriarchal state and its uncontainable contradictions (see Poznanski 1996; Ekiert and Kubik 1997); and in retrospect this is indeed what happened, though not in the form anticipated by Jaruzelski or Moscow. It became the end of the socialist state *tout court* rather than of patriarchy, because the state would ultimately lose control over "people's property" – after which the new neo-liberal patriarchy emerged to get it all back, as we will see.

Communist technocrats had hoped that the newly launched regime-friendly unions (under the name of OPZZ) would be able to control the self-management institutions now that Solidarnosc had been outlawed. But at those sites where Solidarnosc had been strong and had gone underground, as for example in Polar and several other factories in Wroclaw, OPZZ proved only capable of organizing some sections of the white-collar workers. The new worker councils got very rapidly colonized by cohesive and democratic worker collectives that now used formally legal ways to wrestle de-facto

[5] There is surprisingly little research on workers' self management/self-government, both in Poland (although I cannot claim to know all sources) and in international publications. The best reference is probably Poznanski 1996. I have never seen thick local research into the actual dynamics of it. In general local historical research on the last decades of socialism and into postsocialism is just reaching the publishing phase, see for example the insightful CEU dissertation of Eszter Bartha, "Alienating Labor: Workers on the Road from Socialism to Capitalism in East Germany and Hungary, 1968-1989", 2007. I claim that in the Polish case these local dynamics often ultimately led to a form of legitimate control and effective claims over property by worker collectivities. Much of what follows builds on more than sixty oral history interviews that I did with Herman Tak, Ewa Ignaczac and Kacper Poblocki between 1997 and 2007 in Wroclaw. We also went through the personal archive of studies, regulations and press clippings of the early eighties to early nineties of one key player in Polar workers' self management, Zbigniew Kostecki. My great gratitude to all involved.

control over productive property from the state. Zadrozny and his colleagues had been deeply involved in this fight for working class and national repossession *vis-à-vis* the Moscow backed military communists; in fact Krysztof had been *the* key actor, and in the process had gained the trust of hundreds or even thousands of workers at Polar[6]. In the course of the late eighties, they had succeeded in pushing back the power of the nomenklatura over the Polar factory and its social assets; they had subsequently prevented nomenklatura-privatization and asset-stripping; and by 1989 were starting to actually chose and nominate their own directors. In other core factories in Wroclaw, such as the computer maker Elwro or the train-maker Pafawag, the same was happening. Tens of thousands of workers in this city alone felt substantially in control of factory and community assets. The personnel director of Polar in 1998, in explaining the moral and factual difficulty of firing more than 1000 workers, stressed repeatedly to us that there was still an overwhelming sense of factory ownership among workers at Polar.

The notion of 'privatization', of course, came from a totally different corner. It was for the first time introduced in public speech by liberal economists from Gdansk, in particular Leszek Balcerowicz, in 1988-89. They had been invited into the core team of political liberals around Geremek and Michnik to help educate them in economic matters to which the latter had given less than serious thought though they had become skeptical about leftist ideas of workers' self-management since 1985 (Ost 1990). But in the given context of an economy that was de-facto managed, legally co-owned, and morally claimed by victorious worker collectives while the other formal co-owner, the illegitimate and Soviet backed communist state, was believed to be finally collapsing, the idea of privatization was perceived by workers to signify something like the endgame of their struggles over people's property. Privatization was in first instance popularly understood as the final realization of the original Solidarnosc demands of 1981 that had triggered military rule. It was something like the crowning ritual of the workers' rebellion.

It is important to emphasize that worker self-management was not only a blue-collar affair and not exclusively a blue-collar connotation to the idea of privatization. Self-management involved many university educated people as well, in particular in more high-end factories such as the computer-maker Elwro in Wroclaw but elsewhere too. In the first two parliaments after 1989 there was a faction that sprang from self-management institutions and that defended the idea of worker cooperatives as one of the desirable paths of privatizing the economy. From the self-managed factories sprang a nation-wide movement of well-trained cadres already in 1988 that pushed for an outcome of the Roundtable talks and for subsequent financial and economic regulations that were conducive to worker-managed democratic cooperatives.[7] But these 'organic' actors quickly discovered that the liberal intellectuals at the Round Table, with by now very weak ties with constituencies on the ground, as correctly anticipated by the Generals, had very little patience with the idea of letting workers' power get consolidated (Ost 1990). The only broadly respected initial sympathizer was the former Trotskist Jacek Kuron (Kuron was also the initiator of KOR in 1976, the committee that started to give legal support to interned workers. It was the vehicle by which the Polish intelligentsia finally linked up with workers protest after several unsynchronized and failed waves of action, 1968, 1971, 1976. See Kubik 1995, and Ekiert and Kubik 1997.), but he rapidly became isolated. Meanwhile the crucial

[6] In fact, one other person was of similar influence at Polar/Wroclaw as Zadrozny. His name is Andrzej Kowalski. He is mentioned by Patrick Kenny (2005) and was one of our informants too. The differences between the two are interesting. Zadrozny's parents came from villages in the East, and remained religious throughout. Krysztof had a teacher's diploma. He represented revolutionary Polish nationalist Catholicism. Kowalski's parents came from Gdansk and were largely secular. He only had primary school and represented the more left-wing version. Workers' Catholicism as an ethical source of rebellion has probably been underestimated in the "labor conflicts" in socialist Poland.

[7] This is based on interviews with Andrzej Piszel and Zbigniew Kostecki, two key actors, as well as Kostecki's private archive of newspaper clippings and other writings on worker self-management from the early eighties to early nineties.

economic and fiscal chunks of liberal-state making were comfortably delegated to Balcerowicz and his Washington Consensus interlocutors in the West, who were working in silence on their shock-therapy program. One of my informants from Wroclaw, Andrzej Piszel, a computer scientist, was a member of the self-management group in parliament after '89. He is now a successful entrepreneur with few political illusions left and recalls vividly how the core group around Geremek, whom he admired, would regularly silence him with whistling and other less-than-civilized methods when he made the case for policies that would help consolidate the worker-managed sector of the economy. He still believes that a great and feasible socio-economic option was thus intentionally killed off for political reasons that he feels bad to ponder about.

At the same time, shock-therapy, with its full liberalization of the market at one stroke and its focus on consolidating the state budget whatever the costs, was punishing all productive enterprises so heavily that sheer survival of factories, including their community functions, became in first instance more crucial for activists to care about than the skewed discussion about the legal form. While the new regime gently postponed the public debate about the particular legal paths of privatization, it engineered a beating of the national economy that left most firms in such disarray that by the end of 1991 they were on their knees and started begging for loans and help with the state. In this way the new liberal state gradually wrestled de facto ownership claims away from worker collectives and into the state-led banks and the state treasury. In the same process it destroyed worker solidarity and fragmented the movements for self-management and cooperatives. By 1993, with Poland again witnessing massive worker protests against shock therapy and poverty (Ekiert and Kubik 1997), the cooperative option had all but vanished from the political debates and privatization came ever more to connote bringing a firm under the wings of the State Treasury and onward to the Warsaw stock exchange in order to find desperately needed new sources of capital abroad.

If 1985-1989, thus, had seen the repossession of productive assets by worker-citizens from the communist state, 1989-1995 saw the dispossession of worker collectives by a liberal state that was shrewdly re-centralizing the nation's assets under a now independent Treasury in globalizing mode. One of the crucial legal details was that firms whose ownership had been transferred to the Treasury were immediately lifted out off the self-management legal regime and lost the right to a workers' council and its nomination of the director. State appropriation had thus become legally secured against still prevailing and concrete popular claims that workers were actual owner-occupiers of their factories. By the time we started our interviews, in 1997, workers in Polar and elsewhere had begun to face their legal defeat and to see that their power had been taken away while they had been forced to focus on sheer survival.

"Real privatization", in Zadrozny's words, signified in its purest form, a worker cooperative, and in a somewhat diluted and compromised form at least a privatization that was beneficial for the plant and its workers, in which control from below had been exchanged for growth, investment, and better wages.[8] "Theft", of course, is a populist motive *par excellence*. But it rather realistically connotes, as we can now see, the dispossession of assets from worker constituencies and their subsequent transfer into the hands of the state and the global market by legal and financial means beyond the control of its moral owners. It also describes the consequent material deprivation of communities of workers – not just communities but actual sodalities with acknowledged fighting histories in a national rebellion - as

[8] My oral research generated extensive insight into the politics of privatization of Polar workers, who basically tried to avoid a branch investor taking over the firm after Siemens had killed off the large local Pafawag firm and Elwro, the computer maker, had been destroyed too. They also tried to secure as many shares as possible for themselves as a group (not individualized shares), which ultimately left them with 15%. The state got the rest after it floated Polar on the Warsaw stock exchange and sold 35% to Brandt, the French investor that went bankrupt in the early 2000's. I have no space here to go into this.

the actual proceeds of privatization disappear into the hands of state bureaucrats and international bidders.

Zadrozny's little tirade about Poles who were told that they had their vices and hence should not want to trust their own sources of agency, takes aim at the wider public culture of neoliberal dispossession in Poland after 1989. It refers to the nasty public rhetorics spawned by the liberal elite and it's following of media and academic pundits after the discovery of the yawning state debt. None of the liberals had the guts to cancel the debt as the debt of an illegitimate regime (as Naomi Klein importantly points out, 2007).[9] But while shock therapy was shaking out the nation, intellectuals and media people, desperately picturing themselves as "middle class", began to depict workers and peasants as gross liabilities for a Poland now openly exposed to world capitalist competition. Workers and peasants were systematically associated in the media with alcoholism and laziness, labor unions were openly decried as dysfunctional for the new civil Poland.[10] In fact, the whole concept of "civil society" was regularly turned against them. Even an honorable person such as Adam Michnik, at a commemoration in 1999 of the epoch making events of 1989 in the *Kaiserliche Hofburg* in Vienna, which I attended[11], kept openly devaluing Polish industry by talking about "ex-socialist workers who were merely producing busts of Lenin". In the same elite ceremonial event, Leszek Balcerowicz was still almost religiously proud to have unleashed market enforced creative destruction in order to punish Polish workers for "the crowding out of conscience" that had supposedly happened to them under the state-led economy (Kalb, 2002; further examples see Buchowski 2006). While they celebrated their peaceful victory over communism and the Evil Empire in lusty Vienna, there were no audible dissidents to the silencing of the workers' fight - and plight - among the ex-dissident new Polish elite at this particular banquet, as it will surely have been at other banquets.

This was the context that Michal Buchowski has recently described with the notion of "internal orientalization" (2006; also Kideckel 2001, 2002), which *"blames workers and peasants for their own degraded circumstances and for society's difficulties…"* (Buchowski, 2006: 467). It refers to a public climate in which "*Workers have proven to be "civilizationally incompetent" (Sztompka 1993), show a "general lack of discipline and diligence" (Sztompka 1996) and obstruct the efforts of those who are accomplished and the progress of whole societies in the region…." (ibid, 469).* By regularly invoking the *Homo Sovieticus syndrome* liberal intellectuals displaced workers out off the bounds of Europe and into a timeless Asia. At the same moment they passionately claimed a place for themselves in the new European pantheon, invoking their conscientious and peaceful advocacy for liberal civil society against the communist Goliath and their successful liberalization and privatization of "the economy".

Krysztof Zadrozny shows himself basically speechless about this inflicted symbolic violence. As a tenacious fighter for justice he keeps reiterating however that he has always refused to believe that

[9] The debt in the end got substantially reduced in two waves in the early and mid nineties. Western creditors, mostly sovereign creditors coming together in the Paris Club of Creditor Nations, had kept up the pressure of the debt in 1989-1992, and had waited till the new regime had fully implemented the emerging Washington Consensus agenda of liberalization, stabilization and privatization. When the communists were voted back into power in 1993, the West panicked and they decided they had to cut the debt in order to keep Poland, and with it perhaps the whole of Eastern Europe, in the Western camp and to prevent it slip out off control. Poland was the first nation to be so kindly so served by the "international community". After 2000 some more, in particular African nations, followed under strict guidance of the World Bank.

[10] According to Jerzy Scacki, a respected grandfather of Polish sociology, in a talk at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna in 1997, which I attended. Several discussants tried to convince him that labor unions are a crucial part of civil society but he refused to accept that because they demonstrated "communist style claiming behavior".

[11] I served as program director of the Soco program at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and was as such part of the celebration "Ten Years After". SOCO was a support program for social policy research in mainly the Visegrad countries paid by the Ford Foundation and the Austrian Federal Chancellery. Soco was one of the western reponses to the surprise election of the post communists in 1993 in Poland.

"poles were worthless". But he clearly recognizes how important this public attack, the withdrawal of recognition, has been in breaking resistance and disqualifying collective action in working class communities. Internal orientalization served as one of the style figures of a process of cultural dispossession that accompanied, deepened and smoothened the material process of dispossession simultaneously taking place. It was one of the cultural mechanisms that helped produce the figure of a Polish ethnic folk against a cosmopolitanizing elite, as Jonathan Friedman would have anticipated.

In this short excerpt Zadrozny makes another important observation that merits further decoding: "enterprises were broken into pieces and left to fight for themselves" and he blames among others Solidarnosc and the church for this. He also mentions it in one breath with "poles having their vices" and the related "absence of a spirit of resistance". In fact he addresses the whole liberal complex of dispossession here at once. Again let us not forget that when he is talking of "enterprises" he in fact talks about whole living communities with all the necessary supportive social services. In a more narrow sense he refers to the self-management movement and protect the firms against the attacks by the neoliberal state. He correctly registers the fragmentation of working class power around 1990 and its failures in the face of the emerging liberal state-making project, but he ignores the way in which this was intentionally and successfully inscribed by the communist generals when they introduced worker-self management.

The growing control by worker constituencies over factories was clearly not anticipated by the regime, which underestimated the cohesiveness of working class communities and overestimated its own legitimacy, but the displacement of the point of struggle from the national center down to the single local firm was shrewdly intended. The conditions that allowed worker groups to repossess assets from the communist state were the same conditions that subsequently disallowed them to fight against dispossession by the liberal state. This was scripted from the very start. Above all, self-management in the context of military repression would sever the alliance between localized polish workers and the national intelligentsia. Remember that it had precisely been this alliance that had made the 1980 national rebellion possible in the first place (see Kubik 1995, Ost 1990 a.o.). Cut off from its civil base in working class communities the intelligentsia, now put in control of the state by a dying communist regime, and now more solidly liberal, indeed neo-liberal, than ever before, did exactly what the communist generals had scripted for it: turning against the local working class owner-occupiers and destroying their cohesion, power and emergent alliances, and safe the assets for the state, of which they would now become the main beneficiaries/owner-occupiers. Zadrozny will understandably not picture this. It would be a devastating insight for him. That is why he must sense conspiracy or at least perverse complicity. Before we go into that let us first discuss one last aspect of how resistance had been undermined by the institutionalization of self-management itself, an aspect that helps embed Krysztof's disappointments.

While self-management got consolidated there was a predictable shift in leading personalities. And this shift contributed significantly to the lack of mobilization and popular energy after 1989. While Zadrozny, the vocational teacher, was the recognized and honorable fighter for living in truth with an enormous trust among his co-workers, the technicalities of self-managing a mid-tech firm with around ten thousand workers inevitably brought people to the fore with a different habitus. In that shift, Zadrozny rightly felt that some other people were better qualified than he was. His sister, Malgorzata Calinska, a strong woman and a bookkeeper in the accounting department, was brought in and successfully used the symbol of kinship to ask for a transfer of trust from her brother to her, which she has received and retained until at least 2008. She is still a democratically chosen paid union representative in Polar (and a national political backbench figure in the Right wing coalition). Zbigniew Kostecki, working at the overseeing department of quality control and with an MA in economics at hand, was asked to lead the workers' council and later became the Chairman of Polar's

supervisory board and a director of a large local firm. The Wroclaw-wide club of leaders in self-management, emerging in the later eighties to answer the need for more coordination among self-management activists, was chaired by Andrzej Piszel. He had a managerial position in the computer firm Elwro and a university degree in computer science and later became a national MP and a successful entrepreneur. In short, we see a transfer of leadership from a deeply political vocational teacher aspiring to live in truth, someone with great credit among his fellow workers at the assembly line, to more technically and higher schooled personnel, who then turned their experiences into significant and non-local careers based on their expertise. But these were not the people who could or would mobilize working class communities into a fight with a regime still ostensibly seen as their own democratic achievement and hailed by the wider world as an example of successful peaceful transition. Certainly in the case of the latter two, their retrospective view of worker self-management tended to see it as an intermediate technical solution for the problems of a centrally-led economy on its way to full marketization rather than a popular claim for justice, as it was for Zadrozny and his co-workers.

Let us continue with Zadrozny's narrative at the precise point at which we broke off:

"Now it is all coming out, that it was prepared by the Secret Services (see also Los and Zybertowicz, 2000, DK). But this knowledge should have been there before. I was saying this but nobody listened. When people raised critical voices they were set apart as lunatics. I still work in production and I was always chided, first for Walesa's betrayal, then for the corruption of AWS. And it was me who had to excuse for their failures while those high up did not have to excuse themselves at all. They were uninterested. I am surprised that all these smart people find lustration unimportant"

He continues to explain that because the real processes were never investigated, including the choice for who would be at the Round Table and all that came after, accusations can always come up and the press will immediately turn them into a spectacle, which then destroys reputations and politics but never leads to more insight. In this vision, widely shared among my informants, the secret services become the actual agencies behind the scene that control all sorts of private knowledge. When groups organize politically and become an obstacle for inside-networks, Zadrozny argues, they can always break them apart by releasing bits of information about people, or suggesting whatever concoctions. "And then finally all the scandals are supposed to discredit lustration itself because, as you can see, everyone has done it".

Many people have been compromised under communism because they were concerned about their career, Zadrozny explains. "But you do not necessarily need to have a career. Just live in truth!". And he continues with a story about his own illegal company journal in the eighties, *Our Home*: "We actually cleared things up. We investigated. But now there is a lot of lies. And the press has been given away while we are passive onlookers. This is just outrageous, giving away the press and the banks (90% foreign owned). There is a good chance that the banks started steering privatization for their own ends when they at once shortened the pay back periods in the early nineties. For us at Polar it became at once impossible to pay. I was not against Solidarnosc entering politics. But Solidarnosc entered politics without doing politics. I have always thought that politics should be everywhere. Different people, not just liberals, should have been at the Round Table, people less eager to strike a deal".

Since 1998 he has started to identify with the far right party of the League of Polish Families, which he sees as not yet morally compromised, and he became a big supporter of the Kaczynskis. He was utterly disappointed about the weakness of Solidarnosc and its right wing party AWS in 1997-1998. This was first of all disappointment about the actual paths and outcomes of privatization. Solidarnosc

nor AWS were willing to do politics and take privatization out of its neoliberal orbit. Polar was first x-rayed against Western standards by MacKinsey. Then, after 30% of its jobs were axed, it was pushed into the hands of a French investor that was reluctant to commit real investments or even sign a 'social package'. It was in particular the refusal to do the latter that hurt the old unionists at Polar. It made at once clear to them that they had lost all institutional clout and had come at the full mercy of market forces.

But ultimately it was about far more than that, just like factories and self-management used to be about far more than just production for the market. It was about community, "Our Home", and about value at large. From here Zadrozny moves therefore into a long story of decline, of neighborhoods, of safety, of sports, of youth, of criminality. He strongly believes that the ex-communist security forces benefited from street crime, hooliganism, and fear and let it happily pass. In his neighborhood, homeowners' associations were asked to pay extra contributions to the police if they wanted to have better security. And they all paid, including his own association. Fear makes people weak and makes them long for the beautiful past of communism, he claims, a nostalgia that he is contemptuous of. He sometimes serves as a court-juror and remarks that the courts were heavily under-funded all the while, not being able to deal with the pressures on society at all. Zadrozny, the vocational teacher and basket ball trainer, deplores the demoralization of working class youth in the blocs and slips finally into a glorification of Pilsudski, the inter-war Polish populist dictator with socialist leanings, and compares him favorably with the current regime. And from here he gets enticed to jump to excess: "If we were to put the middle ranking communists in prison (as supposedly Pilsudski would have done), then the margin of error would have been negligible. The vast majority was corrupted. They are simply unfit for patriots".

Fighting Amnesia with the Kaczynskis

Zadrozny therefore cheered up during the creation of the Kaczinsky's right wing populist government in 2005. The Kaczsinsky brothers, dubbed by the Economist as Europe's "Terrible Twins", brought a resurgent right to power with precisely the election themes that were close to Zadrozny's heart. In fact, they finally lifted the anger and concerns of Zadrozny's class and generation out off the local communities and onto the level of the nation state. They combined nationalist and protective economic policies, conservative family and gender policies, zero-tolerance and anti-crime positions, with vitriolic anti EU reflexes and authoritarian lustration fantasies. Their policy visions culminated in an assertive anti-German stance within the EU, mobilizations against the emergent European Constitutional Treaty that would corrupt Polish sovereignty, and anti-liberal diatribes focused on an eventual "Equality Parade" in Warsaw, supported by European multi-culturalists. Most spectacularly, their law and order vision was not conveniently restricted to the petty street crime of the youth from the blocs but extended all the way upwards to expose the middle and top level corruption that people like Zadrozny had been singling out for years.

Populists everywhere must fight official and imposed amnesia. The historical and cultural narratives of the new liberal regimes cannot but hide the actual cultural and material dispossession that has been going on, not unlike Bourdieu's well received dictum of "turning necessity into virtue". The Kaczynski government did precisely that, and it therefore invited the contempt of liberals in Poland and elsewhere. The Kaczynskis engineered two excellent occasions for fighting amnesia. The first was based in the attack on the secret services and their collaborators and in a symbolic sense concerned the imposed historical amnesia of the "thick line"; the second concerned the amnesia about poverty and

social rights and was instantiated in struggles around the "Equality Parade" in Warsaw. Both had very strong working class connotations and resonance.

The Kaczynski regime was above all meant to be the end of the "thick-line" that liberals like Michnik and Geremek had defended all through the nineties. The thick-line, in Polish parlance, refers to the no-blame/no-punishment policy in relation to past behavior, agreed in the Round Table pact between the 'chosen' democrats and the communists and generals. None of my working class informants in Wroclaw ever said a good word about the policy of the thick-line. Without exception they favored lustration and punishment. The Kaczynski government translated these popular and populist feelings into the creation of a very well endowed anti-corruption watchdog that would among others work on a register of some 700.000 Polish individuals that were suspected of collaboration with the communist secret services. Very tellingly, the most prominent potential traitor in the eyes of the Kaczynski government was Bronislaw Geremek himself, by now a widely respected former minister of foreign affairs, a professor of history, a member of the European Parliament and an active participant in liberal-conservative European think tanks. Geremek was accompanied by hundreds of thousands of academics, judges, administrators, engineers and business people. All were summoned to submit declarations that they were not guilty, an intentional inversion of the liberal procedures for establishing innocence and guilt. Suspicion was sufficient for an accusation, and proof had to be shown to refute a suspicion. The full Western press joined *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Adam Michnik's liberal daily, in a sustained public outcry against the demeaning picture of Geremek, for some *the* icon of dissident incorruptibility, pushed into submission by a populist government in Warsaw and desperately pleading innocent before a hardly friendly committee of populists, judging him under the eyes of a less than civil media public.

But of course, as Buchowski (2006) would appreciate, it was both the material history as well as the public culture of working class dispossession that worked behind Geremek's top position on the corruption list. In fact, the post 1989 Polish elite finally faced the return of the repressed: it would be punished for its own willing and nationally imposed amnesia of the workers' fight as well as the workers' plight, and for that to happen its 'pacted' and therefore quasi-constitutionally imposed amnesia had to be inverted by a lustration that was not just about communists but primarily about them. And this was all posed as the Polish ethnic nation taking revenge on those of its members who had sold it out. There was an ominous underlying message to the Polish liberal elite in this: it uttered, not yet fully explicitly, that it might not be you but we who are "the people". Krysztof Zadrozny agreed wholeheartedly.

Consider in this context the symbolism of the "Equality Parade", which used to b called 'the Gay Parade'. This international parade was intentionally scheduled to happen in post-socialist Warsaw in order to challenge mayor Lech Kaczynski's "anti-multiculturalism". Mayor Kaczynski had forbidden the parade in 2004 and 2005, spiced up with some politically incorrect anti-gay rhetoric. A youth organization associated with the League of Polish Families and founded by Jaroslaw Kaczynski's ideologue *cum* education minister Giertich had beaten up some local parade participants in the years before. West European political classes from the multiculti Left had intervened and had officially warned Warsaw about spreading "intolerance". That pressure helped to secure the event for 2006 and 2007, which now included the participation of high-level Western politicians, mostly from the German Greens, under the banner of promoting human rights in Poland. The League of Polish Families, however, was allowed to schedule a counter manifestation at the same time. Krysztof Zadrozny participated in it. He was annoyed by the multi-cultural and human rights imagery sponsored by the EU. "Why is the EU making so much fuzz about that parade", he asked? "Nobody in Brussels says a word if polish workers starve on low wages, have to work like dogs, and get exploited".

For him, apparently, the Equality Parade was a travesty, which served, again, another important amnesia. He wished to recall that the equality in the title of this parade used to include a concern with social rights, and not just multicultural gay rights. And he therefore hinted at Western Europe's forgetfulness about its own history. Many of my informants in Wroclaw would have concurred. Of course there is a clash of class going on around multiculti-events such as gay parades. From the point of view of post-socialist industrial workers who had first lost control over their factories and communities, had barely saved their skins in the collapse of their industries, and had been confined to a life of hard work and material stagnation in a wider public environment that openly fetishized consumption, they appeared as rituals extolling the pleasure of licentious free-choice consumerism. It was a festival of never ending free circulation, as it were, but not just a circulation of objects but of objectified intimate relations. Their lives taught other lessons. One of those lessons was the importance of solidarity within intimate relationships of families and among workers, not free circulation[12]. Another was that the liberal promise of mass consumption had simply been false and that the opportunities of a world of endless circulation and unlimited pleasure had been very unfairly distributed. The Equality Parade for them was not just an indecent public act, as it was for the Polish Catholic church. It was, rather, an indecent public myth that served to silence the Polish popular reality of scarcity, toil and confinement for many; a reality that received much less public attention and respect, including by the EU, they felt, than that futile parade. Hence it was again an issue of public amnesia. A festival used as a signifier to hide an uncomfortable reality. And the Polish ethnic nation got again positioned against the promiscuous cosmopolitans who were pictured as literally willing to sell themselves out to everybody.

History is still repeating itself

Throughout our conversations Zadrozny several times pointed out that "history repeats itself". Polish people have lost their sovereignty and dignity repeatedly throughout history, and he firmly doubts whether there is really an end to this national victimization in this era of liberal capitalist globalization. "The power is still the same", he argues. "There is big disillusionment. Also I am disillusioned. We thought that if some Western companies come in, there will be good order and justice and that all these things so typical of socialism would be over. Like petty fighting for pay rises, all that petty bargaining. We thought it would be wisely and humanely ordered".

In 2005 Polar was taken over by Whirlpool. Wroclaw will become the main European production and development location of this American oligopolist in the white-goods sector. Substantial investments are finally being made in new production lines, machinery and buildings. Nevertheless, Zadrozny is often addressed by fellow workers about the stepped up productivity norms and the petty despotism on the shopfloor. "It is just abnormal", he says, invoking the symbolic heritage of the workers' fight for "normality". "Certain things from communism, such as the singular focus on productivity, on work, and not on the human being, are still persisting. This is an American firm but it is a beggars' firm. The West should imply quality. They all complain about socialism, but these masters nowadays seem just hell-bent to churn out these 500 items – everything has become so tense and tight. Compared with socialism, our current piecework norms are much harder. And the style of being a master derives directly from socialism. The worst aspects of communism are retained and are combined with the worst things from the West".

[12] Malgorzata Calinska, Zadrozny's sister and leader of the Solidarnosc local at Polar, regularly referred to the factory, the workers and Solidarnosc together as "my family".

Real wages on the shopfloor have hardly risen since 1997, when we started research. They are still just over 300 euros. Average wages of course do rise, but median wages hardly do, and all the personal information that we got from interviews with workers, including with union representatives, personnel directors and local researchers indicate that production-line wages have completely stagnated. In fact, for Zadrozny's generation, there has been life-long stagnation. Against that, there is a 700% rise in productivity per worker in the Polar-Whirlpool factory as a whole since Whirlpool took over. To make this possible, new investments in machines, supplies and logistics have certainly played their role. But very tellingly there has been a notable hierarchization of relations on the shopfloor, with a roughly doubled number of masters and overseers, who now earn 50-100% higher wages than line-workers, imposing capitalist discipline over the shopfloor. Workers with long experience cannot remember that work has ever been so stressful. They note that young people find it very hard to bear it and often leave the factory after a few weeks. Zadrozny, the teacher and sports trainer, often helps them to control their bodies, energy and concentration, but even the best need three full weeks to learn to cope with the pressures and need months to get used to it.

He is genuinely concerned. "Young people have been cheated. They studied hard but still can't get decent jobs here. It is a rat race. Young people and their potentials have been exploited. I think there is gross disappointment. On the one hand there were great promises, but in fact very little has been delivered. There is this shallowness of life and the old role models are falling apart. There is less patriotism. So it is easy for people just to leave, to migrate. They are not held back by anything. They even make kids abroad, but not here. And they do not appreciate the unions that we built. But we could have gone so much further. If only we didn't have to bother about certain things (I expect he refers to the still threatening presence of the Soviet Union in 1988-89), we could have turned it all upside down, formed a government of our own, a parliament earlier. All these anti-labor regulations would not have been so advanced and the employers that were coming in would have been coming on different terms. And that, ultimately, is the great loss. People were willing. There was zest. We could have been building a new society. And I think that this is what the Poles expected. It was just like after the war. There was this re-building atmosphere and people had the will to switch to another system and to other habits too. But I guess it didn't work out too well. Wild capitalism emerged. It was all great on the surface but on the inside it was not the human relations that we craved for".

Conclusion

In a stimulating recent study, the political scientist David Ost (2005) has argued that right wing ideologues such as the Kaczynskis have cunningly imposed a willful "illiberal" hegemony over post socialist workers in Poland (and perhaps elsewhere). They did so in order to catch the worker vote while trying to avoid confrontations with capital. Reactionary culture and the politics of symbols, he implies, was substituted for anti-capitalist mobilization and organized bargaining. I am proposing an alternative explanation of Polish outcomes. My alternative explanation is less "ideas based" (Ost's words) in the mode of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and more relational in the Gramscian sense in that it looks at the trajectory of worker sodalities and their dramatically declining power, prestige and opportunities in post socialist Poland, and the volatile articulations of their emergent 'common sense' with political process and its public signifiers.

Ost has been very right in putting his finger on the politics of the Polish liberal intelligentsia after 1989 as a major factor, but he has been largely wrong in suggesting that the upcoming right-wing elite of the Kaczynskis and their circles had manipulated industrial workers into a paranoid illiberal politics

that distracted from their "real" class interests. Against reductive and prescriptive notions of class and interest from the liberal cookbook, I am making an anthropological case for analyzing the complex critical junctions that describe the global and local historical configurations of structural power and personal becoming "in class ways" in Poland (and elsewhere). I point to the displacement in the course of time of material struggles onto public symbolic confrontations after the material fights over communal property had been lost, the accompanying cultural dispossession was continuing, and the material and cultural resources needed to take up new fights in a now liberal and globalized context had dissipated.

The Kaczynskis are an organic product of popular Polish resentment, and not a cunning political exploitation of it, let alone a form of domination over it. Recent Polish history, moreover, is far from unique in its performance of ethnic folk fights pictured against liberal cosmopolitanism substituting for old-style modernist languages of class conflict. Ost should have analyzed the collapsing legitimacy of liberal state elites under globalization in Poland as elsewhere, rather than the hegemonic cunning of nationalist ideologues, and he should have pursued his ethnographic inkling more consistently. In fact, by emphasizing the intentional political framing-work of Right wing ideologists, this sort of analysis ultimately lends more popular legitimacy to the competition state and the neoliberal globalizations of which it is a part than the dispossessed themselves would do. While Ost bears tribute to a sympathetic liberal Left, he in fact helps to legitimize the structural processes of disenfrachisement by ignoring them. As Zadrozny's history shows, the *tristesse* is about much more than just the lacking mobilization for wage-bargaining.

The Kaczynski interlude, however, has also suggested something else. Post-1989 politics in East Central Europe has of course always been more a politics of resentment than a politics of endorsement. Electoral participation has consistently been low, hovering mostly around the fifty percent, and few governments anywhere in Central and Eastern Europe have won two elections in a row. Post-communist transition under conditions of neo-liberal globalization and the dual crisis of labor and sovereignty was never truly electorally approved. The extrication from the Soviet embrace and the farewell to the local communist party machines was unanimously celebrated, but not the substance of what came after. The Kaczynskis got into power because their voters, at best some 15% of the electorate, were the only ones motivated to go to the polls at all in 2005; the others largely stayed home. And even though many of my informants in the Wroclaw electrical industries felt a certain discursive proximity to them, only a minority was actually willing to give the Kaczynskis their votes. My informants always whispered, and sometimes screamed, political cynicism of all sorts, rather than a positive belief in the virtues of any Warsaw government, including that of the Kaczynskis. Only a few, such as Zadrozny, really embraced the Kaczynski campaign of virtue, fear and suspicion. In October 2007 the Right wing government was voted out again and the remnants of the liberal Freedom Union were voted in. Participation in the polls was higher than ever since 1989, an enormous 51 percent. While the Kaczynskis had a higher absolute following than in 2005, electoral mobilization among educated youth in the bigger cities had changed the fragile equation at once.

Something else had changed too in the conditions of working class reproduction in Polish bigger cities, including Wroclaw. The accession of Poland to the EU in 2004 had finally delivered three things that Poles since 1989 had been intensely longing for: 1) the possibility of large-scale labor emigration to the West; 2) a massively accelerating flow of industrial investments by transnational enterprises to the East; and 3) big transfers from the regional and agricultural funds. Poland was the biggest recipient and originator of these flows, while Central and Eastern Europe as a whole was being turned into the premier mass production base for West European corporations. After 2004, these three processes together began to finally dent Polish unemployment, the highest in Europe, significantly (official unemployment in 2003 was still close to 20%, in 2007 it was circa 13%).

The declining reserve army of labor and the accelerated incorporation into global capitalism seem to be leading to increasingly despotic regimes of labor in manufacturing. Because of mass emigration, labor shortages emerged for the first time since 1989. And Western capital, now finally pouring in substantial investments in fix capital, began to exert unprecedented levels of productivity from workers in the face of surging East Asian competition. While my interviewees in the late nineties would complain about scheming communists and a public life corrupted by liberals, in this new European and global context they began to tell stories of increasing old style exploitation by (Western) capital. Significantly, a wider shift in political identifications seemed underway that will help to reframe Polish resentment in the coming years. "We are workers, after all", said an only slightly embarrassed informant in April 2007, who had in the late nineties insisted that he had always been a sort of entrepreneur. It was the first time since I started research in 1997 that this word, "worker", with old style socialist connotations, was used as self-ascription in an interview. While uttering this sentence, the man, in his fifties, kept a searching eye on my interviewer, deeply unsure of, but somehow also eager for, his approval.

The question for locations like Poland is whether the ongoing integration of 2 billion more workers and consumers into the world system in the next 20 years will turn him and his colleagues into middle class consumers or fix them in their newly discovered place as "workers". The politics of resentment will very probably remain blurred between nationalist rejections of liberal cosmopolitanism that keeps selling out the nation, and bouts of workerist emphasis on the class struggle, as Polish manufacturing locations will feel the heat of Asian reserve armies of labor and their exploitation by their own hardly democratic competition states.

In this paper I have studied the particular Polish path to popular nationalist paranoia. I have argued that in order to analyze the currently often screaming headlines of nation and nationalism we should not just study nationalist parties and elites but rather bring a relational approach to trajectories and configurations of class in order to penetrate the lived subtexts of social and existential insecurity, and its attendant fears and angers. I have shown how analyzing "class struggle without class" a la Edward Thompson, in particular when wedded to Eric Wolf's strategies of analyzing power, can suggest useful strategies for understanding the current post-socialist/post-welfarist conjuncture of a double global crisis of labor and popular sovereignty, a crisis that forms the necessary background for understanding local popular resentments and paranoia's anywhere.

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