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The Commemorations of the 30th Anniversary
of the Fall of Communism in Poland – a
Fractured Memory Regime
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Abstract

The dissertation examines the 2019 commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the fall of state socialism in Poland, seeking answers to how and why different political actors commemorated the events in the way they did. The commemorations are studied through Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik's theory of the politics of memory (2014), according to which political actors adopt different mnemonic actor roles (abnegator, pluralist, warrior, prospective) that in turn determine the memory regime of a commemorative event (unified, pillarised, fractured). The data consists of 29 speeches and texts drawn from thirteen events clustered around the Roundtable Talks and the beginning of June. The speeches are analysed with qualitative content analysis primarily from video recordings. The dissertation updates Bernhard and Kubik's analysis of the same topic from ten years ago.

In 2019, the memory regime pertaining to the events of 1989 remained fractured, with the governing Law and Justice party (PiS) celebrating separately from the opposition. PiS initially attempted to abnegate the commemorations of the Roundtable Talks and the first semi-free elections of 4 June 1989 by not organising major state-endorsed celebrations. In the end, the opposition organised an 11-day celebration in Gdańsk together with local governments, whereas PiS opted for small-scale celebrations in the form of a special sitting of the Senate. Both sides featured mnemonic warriors who rallied around three major narratives. The opposition presented itself as the inheritor of the Solidarity movement and accused PiS of trying to negate this legacy. PiS presented itself as the inheritor of Pope John Paul II and focused on commemorating the 40th anniversary of his first pilgrimage to Poland, presenting this as the beginning of the Solidarity movement. Second, PiS emphasised the dissolution of the first democratically elected government of Jan Olszewski on 4 June 1992 and associated the opposition with the 'post-communist' system this allegedly created. Notable mnemonic pluralists included former president Aleksander Kwaśniewski and current president Andrzej Duda (PiS).

A comparison with the commemorations of 2009 suggests that being in the opposition prompted the old governing party Civic Platform (PO) to adopt a mnemonic warrior position – a notable change from their earlier pluralist and abnegator stance. In addition, the opposition used the commemorations to kickstart their campaign to the autumn parliamentary elections. Both sides used memory layering – the combining of different memory regimes – as a central strategy. The divided commemorations give no reason to believe that the polarisation of Polish society is going to diminish. On the other hand, the political usefulness of mnemonic conflict about 1989 seems to be receding, with the ideological battle between a liberal and conservative vision of Poland being fought on other fronts.

Key words: Poland, memory politics, 1989 Roundtable, memory regime, mnemonic actor

Introduction

Thirty-one years ago, on 4 June 1989, Poland regained its independence after more than 40 years of communist rule. Lech Wałęsa, leader of the 10-million strong Solidarity movement and laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize, set off a domino effect that sparked revolutions all around the Eastern Bloc and brought down the Berlin wall. The impulsive and romantic Poles managed to set aside their differences and negotiated a bloodless revolution around a round table. In the semi-free elections that followed, the communists suffered a crushing defeat and relinquished power to Solidarity. The ensuing Mazowiecki government set Poland on a path towards democracy, a market economy and membership in Western institutions, a success story continuing to this day.

The above narrative is what many Polish politicians – adherents of the white legend of the Roundtable – would like the outside world to think about the Polish transformation. In Poland, assessments of the process are divided on different sides of the political spectrum. The harshest critics see the Roundtable as a national treason and the beginning of ‘post-communism’ – a system where former communist functionaries continue to pull the strings behind the scenes together with corrupt Solidarity elites. Due to such varying assessments, no uniform way of commemorating the events of 1989 has been established to this day.

My dissertation examines the divided commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the 1989 events in Poland. The inspiration for my work came from a book by Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik titled *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*¹ in which the authors compared the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism² in seventeen Central and East European countries. Among the case studies was Poland, a country which the authors saw as torn by mnemonic conflict. In 2009, the governing Civic Platform party (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) led by Donald Tusk was pitted against the Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) of Jarosław Kaczyński in a dispute over the commemoration of the Roundtable and the 4 June elections. In 2019, the tables had turned, with PiS holding an absolute majority in the Polish parliament as well as the presidency. This warranted a new study of the Polish commemorations using Bernhard and Kubik’s framework.

¹ Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, eds., *Twenty Years After Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

² I will follow Bernhard and Kubik’s terminology in using the words ‘communism’ and ‘state socialism’ interchangeably, aware of the fact that Poland never reached a state of communism in the Marxist sense of the word. Bernhard and Kubik refer to state socialism when laying out their theoretical framework but still speak of the fall of communism when referring to the events of 1989 (2014: 20–24).

As I began exploring my topic, I expected to be comparing different commemorations dedicated to the ‘fall of communism’ in Poland. I quickly realised that the topic was much more complex. First of all, there was disagreement over whether 4 June 1989 should even be seen as the day when “communism ended in Poland”, as famously expressed by actress Joanna Szczepkowska in 1989³. According to many, the elections were merely one among many steps on Poland’s long road to democracy. Second, the Roundtable and 4 June were not the only events commemorated around the beginning of June. For PiS, the commemorations were intimately tied with the legacy of Pope John Paul II as well as the dissolution of the first democratically elected government of Jan Olszewski on 4 June 1992. Finally, the commemorations could not be separated from present-day politics, with the European Parliament elections and the upcoming parliamentary elections leaving a decisive mark on them.

My research question reads as follows: How did different Polish political actors commemorate the events of 1989 in 2019 and why? Answering the question ‘why’ requires taking into account both the historical context of the commemorations and the present political divide in Poland. In many cases, the mnemonic strategies of the actors could be linked to the larger ideological battle waged between a liberal and conservative vision of Poland having its roots already in the positivist and romanticist split of the Polish partitions⁴. As the basis of my analysis I adopted Bernhard and Kubik’s theory of the politics of memory, according to which political actors acting within a set of structural and cultural constraints adopt different mnemonic actor roles, which in turn creates different memory regimes (detailed in the next chapter). Where relevant, I compared the commemorations of 2019 to the events of ten years ago, as in many cases the mnemonic actors were the same people, and changes in their behaviour provided further evidence for why they chose to commemorate in the way they did.

My dissertation complements the literature on politics of memory by updating Bernhard and Kubik’s analysis of the Polish case. It tests whether the ideal types of mnemonic actors posited by the authors are applicable in a different temporal and political context. It also tests whether the independent variables identified by Bernhard and Kubik in 2009 suffice to explain the commemorations of 2019, or whether additional explanations should be sought. To my knowledge, my dissertation is the first application of Bernhard and Kubik’s theory to the Polish commemorations of 2019. The theory has been applied to other areas of Polish memory politics, with some recent examples including Mateusz

³ TVPolandAntena, ‘PRL 4 Czerwca 1989 Skończył Się w Polsce Komunizm. Joanna Szczepkowska’, Youtube, accessed 9 July 2020, 1:29–1:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkuYYu8PL_I.

⁴ Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, ‘The Politics and Culture of Memory Regimes: A Comparative Analysis’, in *Twenty Years After Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 287.

Mazzini and David Ost⁵. The politics of history as it appeared during the 2019 commemorations has also been studied by Krystyna Trembicka, but not through Bernhard and Kubik's framework⁶.

Most importantly, my research provides valuable information about how the memory of 1989 is being used by Polish political actors for political gains at a time when Polish society is more divided than ever. According to Bernhard and Kubik, a fractured memory regime such as the one in Poland has the potential to damage democracy due to the polarisation it creates⁷. In 2020, Poland still lacks a coherent foundational narrative for its democracy that would be accepted by the whole of society. The patterns I detect during the commemorations provide hints about where this process might be headed and what narratives the competing political forces are offering. With Poland about to become the fifth largest Member State of the European Union following the departure of the UK, the need to understand the mnemonic disputes affecting its democracy is greater than ever.

My dissertation is structured as follows: I will begin by situating my research in the field of memory studies, defining my understanding of collective memory and presenting the framework of Bernhard and Kubik. After this, I will provide an overview of the historical and political context of the 2019 commemorations, explaining the origins of the competing narratives about 1989. As a part of this chapter, I will also present an overview of Bernhard and Kubik's analysis of the 2009 celebrations. From there, I will move on to analysing the 2019 commemorations using Bernhard and Kubik's mnemonic actor roles. In the final chapter of my dissertation, I will present my conclusion of how and why different political actors commemorated the events of 1989 in the way they did.

⁵ Mateusz Mazzini, 'A Three-Dimensional Model of Enlarging the Mnemonic Conflict: The Case of Poland Under Second Law and Justice Government', *Słowo* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 45–67; David Ost, "'Down with 1989!': The Peculiar Right-Wing Backlash against 1968 in Poland", *East European Politics and Societies* 33, no. 4 (1 November 2019): 843–60.

⁶ Krystyna Trembicka, 'Okrągły Stół w Polsce: 30 lat sporów o znaczenie i skutki', *Przegląd Sejmowy*, no. 5 (2019): 103–19.

⁷ Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', in *Twenty Years After Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 30.

1. Memory and Commemoration

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical background and key concepts of my analysis of the 30th anniversary of the events of 1989 in Poland. As I am studying commemorations, my research is based in the field of memory studies. I will begin by discussing the relationship between individual and collective memory on one hand, and between collective memory and history on the other. From there, I will move on to defining commemorations, followed by a discussion about the role of narratives in collective memory. Finally, I will discuss the concepts of memory regime and mnemonic actor which constitute my most important analytic tools.

1.1. Defining Collective Memory

The idea that memory could have a collective dimension was first introduced by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s. Halbwachs argued that individual memory could not function without interaction with others; it was reliant on social frames.⁸ Halbwachs's ideas were forgotten for decades, until in the late 1980s they were revitalised by Pierre Nora in his studies of *lieux de mémoire* ('sites of memory')⁹. Since the fall of communism and the subsequent liberation of public debate in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), academic interest in collective memory has increased greatly.

It is generally agreed that memory is on one hand a quality of the individual, containing aspects such as autobiographical experiences (episodic memory) and acquired knowledge (semantic memory). On the other hand, individual memory requires social contacts to function.¹⁰ However, when it comes to the concept of collective memory, the very existence of the phenomenon is contested. In public debate, collective memory is an often-used concept: it is common to refer to major (often tragic) events that have affected a nation as a part of their collective memory. However, in academia, no single definition for the term has been agreed on. Perhaps the greatest disagreement concerns whether shared depictions of the past – no matter how profound for identity – can be called 'memory' at all. Hiro Saito sums up these criticisms well by arguing that "what the sociological concept of collective memory is meant to capture is the misrecognition of second-hand knowledge as living memory by virtue of identifications on the part of participants in commemoration"¹¹. In other words, even though individuals might consider a certain representation of the past as part of their memory, what they are in fact doing is emotionally identifying with knowledge about the real, experienced memories of

⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1992).

⁹ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.', *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7–25.

¹⁰ Aleida Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 212–13.

¹¹ Hiro Saito, 'From Collective Memory to Commemoration', in *The Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, ed. John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-cheng Lo, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2012), 630.

others. A similar point was made by essayist Susan Sontag, according to whom “all memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds”¹².

Sontag’s criticism is aimed at what James Wertsch would call a strong version of the concept of collective memory. In this understanding, collective memory is seen as memory ‘of the group’, suggesting some kind of shared pool of memories which all members of a group can access. According to Wertsch, a more realistic definition is provided in the distributed understanding of memory in which collective memory is seen as memory ‘in the group’. This view acknowledges the significance of social encounters in remembering as well as the role of different memory instruments. These instruments can be both physical, such as books or the Internet, or abstract, such as commonly shared narrative forms.¹³

Another example of distributed memory is Aleida Assmann’s concept of social memory. Individuals spend their lives in a social environment, meaning that many memories will inevitably become shared with parents, grandparents and children. Naturally, these memories differ with each person, as they carry different meanings for different generations. Like individual memory, social memory is embodied, meaning that it is bound to the lifespan of its carriers. According to Assmann, social memory typically lasts a maximum of three generations, amounting to approximately 80–100 years.¹⁴

In addition to memory passed down in the family, a notable form of social memory is generational memory which refers to the similar experiences that bind together people of a certain generation. Each generation shares a great amount of tacit knowledge that is not fully accessible to people of the previous and following generation. These differences only become apparent when a new generation enters office, which happens at intervals of about 30 years. Assmann also argues that a generational shift is needed for the processing of personal (individual and social) memories, evidenced by the fact that a public interest in commemoration usually arises not earlier than 15 years after the events have taken place.¹⁵

According to Assmann, both individual and social memory can be described as ‘intergenerational’ in nature, as they are bound to living people who have a personal connection to the events being

¹² Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 85–86.

¹³ James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); James V. Wertsch, ‘The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory’, *Ethos* 36, no. 1 (March 2008): 120–35.

¹⁴ Assmann, ‘Memory, Individual and Collective’, 213–14.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 214–16.

remembered. This is to differentiate them from the more durable ‘transgenerational’ forms of collective memory which survive even after the original carriers of the memory have passed away. Assmann identifies two such forms of memory: cultural memory and political memory.¹⁶ Cultural memory is a broad term describing the memories of a society stored in “libraries, museums and archives”, only some of which are active at a given time¹⁷. I will refrain from using the concept of cultural memory for two reasons: it is too vague regarding which written records and objects can be counted as part of ‘memory’, and it places too much agency on the mnemonic instruments themselves, as if memory was somehow residing in them.

The more relevant of the two terms for my work is political memory. Political memory is employed by politicians to create continuity within a society, the most apparent example being the purposeful creation of national identities in 19th century Europe. Whereas individual and social memory are embodied and ‘bottom-up’ in nature, political memory is mediated and ‘top-down’, disseminated through education, rituals, monuments and so on. Unlike the diverse social memory, political memory is homogenic and simplified. Due to being mediated, political memory is not ‘memory’ in the strict, experiential sense. However, Assmann argues that a person or society can equally well ‘make’ memories for itself by adopting a certain vision of the past.¹⁸ Clearly, Assmann’s extension of memory to non-embodied representations of the past borders on other related concepts, such as identity.

A different point of view to collective memory is provided by James Wertsch and Henry Roediger, who argue for the concept of collective remembering. Collective remembering places the focus on negotiation: even though members of a group are not connected by some kind of hive mind, they engage in discussions about the past. The past is continuously reconstructed in a social setting, and often this process is contentious.¹⁹ In such an understanding of collective memory, Assmann’s political memory can be seen as the end result of a process of collective remembering among the political elite. On the other hand, whenever a politician attempts to disseminate this political memory to the larger public, they themselves engage in an act of collective remembering which the recipients can agree or disagree with. Following Wertsch and Roediger, I conceptualise collective memory as a continuous process of negotiating the past in a social setting rather than a static body of knowledge. In other words, collective memory in my understanding equals collective remembering.

¹⁶ Assmann, ‘Memory, Individual and Collective’, 215.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 220–21.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 215–16.

¹⁹ James V. Wertsch and Henry L. Roediger, ‘Collective Memory: Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches’, *Memory* 16, no. 3 (April 2008): 319.

A final distinction that needs to be made is between memory and history. Both are representations of the past, yet they should be kept conceptually separate. Wertsch and Roediger argue that the key difference between history and memory lies in their different goals. History aims at an objective representation of the past and is thus receptive to new evidence. Collective remembering, on the other hand, is usually connected to identity formation, meaning that individuals are likely to neglect contradictory proof if it goes against their desired narrative. The representations produced by collective remembering are typically black-and-white, whereas history recognises the ambiguity of past events.²⁰

During commemorations, history and memory can easily become conflated: subjective interpretations of the past are presented by politicians as historical facts. This is especially true in situations where the politicians themselves were part of the events being commemorated, as in the case of Poland. Moreover, for such political actors, political memory and social memory somewhat overlap: even though politicians present a simplified version of the past for the purposes of politics, on a personal level, they retain their own memories of the events. Nonetheless, the speeches delivered by politicians during commemorations are best understood as expressions of political memory.

1.2. Defining Commemorations

According to Timothy Snyder, a commemoration is “an attempt to fix an event at a certain point and describe it in such a way that it will be remembered in a certain way for the future”²¹. In a similar vein, Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing argue that any commemoration is comprised of two basic elements: remembering something important, and a special date²². These simple definitions catch two key features of commemorations: the emplotment (defined below) of history where certain events are identified as more significant than others, and the fact that this is done by human actors, each with their own values and competing goals.

Commemorations can take place between shorter and longer periods of time, ranging from the monthly commemorations of the Smoleńsk air disaster to celebrating 15 years of Poland’s EU membership. Typically, commemorations falling on certain key numbers are considered more important: a 100th anniversary is more significant than a 90th or 99th²³. This commonsensical fact is

²⁰ Wertsch and Roediger, ‘Collective Memory: Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches’, 320–21.

²¹ Timothy Snyder, ‘European Mass Killing and European Commemoration’, in *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 30.

²² Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing, ‘Understanding Commemorative Events’, in *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict* (Routledge, 2013), 3.

²³ *ibid.*, 2.

interesting due to its fundamental arbitrariness: there is no objective reason why in the endless passing of time, every fifth or tenth year should be seen as worthy of larger commemorations²⁴. Yet this habit has considerable real-world consequences, as politicians are forced to react to major anniversaries.

Commemorations are a fundamentally social activity. According to Saito, individuals always participate in commemorations as members of a group. In fact, taking part in a commemoration reinforces and validates a person's membership in a social group.²⁵ Due to their unifying potential, commemorations are often cited as a key tool in the creation and upholding of national identities. However, Saito notes that there is no inherent connection between national identity and commemorating. The focus on national identity probably stems from the fact that historically, commemorations were widely used in the forging of national identities and that the birth of nation states and the discipline of sociology are historically connected.²⁶

As argued by Snyder, commemorations are merely an 'attempt' at creating a fixed way of remembering an event. As time passes, commemorations can change, although the fact that they are reinforced by ritual repetition makes them rather resistant to major reworkings²⁷. Saito identifies three types of temporal effects that can affect commemorations, defined as period, cohort and age effects (age-period-cohort; APC). The period effect can be seen in how the changing realities of a society cause different aspects of a commemoration to be salient during different historical periods. The cohort effect refers to the passing of generations: just like members of certain generation share certain kinds of experiences, they are likely to see different aspects of a historical event as worthy of commemoration. Finally, the age effect refers to how individuals may change their views as they become older.²⁸ It should be mentioned that the APC effects of Saito step in primarily after a commemoration has already gained an established form. In cases where the participants of the events are still alive and actively taking part in the commemorations, the commemorations might not have reached a stable form to begin with.

The organisers of commemorations usually aim at transmitting a certain kind of message to their audience. However, as Frost and Laing point out, there is no guarantee that the audience will interpret the event in the desired way.²⁹ This observation highlights that any study of commemorations has to

²⁴ According to Frost and Laing (2013: 2), the practice of counting years in blocks of tens and hundreds essentially dates back to the Romans and the way they organised numbers.

²⁵ Saito, 'From Collective Memory to Commemoration', 630.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 635.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 634.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Frost and Laing, 'Understanding Commemorative Events', 11–12.

take into account at least three levels of meaning: the meanings that the researcher is able to extract from the commemorative events; the meanings that the organisers intended; and the meanings that the audience and larger public saw in the events. In my analysis, I will mainly focus on the first two. I will return to this topic in the Data and Methodology chapter.

1.3. Narratives in Commemorations

As I analyse the commemorations of 1989, I will be comparing different narratives presented by Polish political actors about the events of thirty years ago. At its most basic, a narrative is the presentation of a sequence of events in the form of a story. Humans are inclined to see their lives as being divided into episodes with a start, an end and recognisable turning points. Identifying and naming these turning points within a story is known as emplotment. According to Paul Ricoeur, emplotment is the tool that humans use for carving a meaningful narrative out of an otherwise meaningless succession of events³⁰. In commemorations, emplotment of the past into significant moments is what provides the motivation to commemorate a certain event in the first place.

According to Wertsch, textual resources such as narratives play a key role in the distributed understanding of collective memory³¹. Building on the works of Vladimir Propp³² and Frederic Bartlett,³³ Wertsch argues that collective memory is organised through two types of narrative structures: specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. Specific narratives refer to individual stories of the past, each with their specific characters and events. Schematic narrative templates, on the other hand, act as models for specific narratives. They are a type of narrative ‘skeletons’ that appear time after time in the different specific narratives of a particular society. Individuals might apply them to stories without even knowing it, which shows that commonly shared narrative conventions can themselves affect how memories are constructed.³⁴ According to Wertsch, schematic narrative templates are highly effective in mobilising people of the same “mnemonic community” into action, as their simple structure makes them easy to grasp and difficult to falsify even in the face of contradictory proof³⁵.

³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 1* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 65.

³¹ Wertsch, ‘The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory’, 122.

³² Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

³³ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. (1932; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁴ Wertsch, ‘The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory’, 122–23.

³⁵ James V. Wertsch, ‘Narrative Tools and the Construction of Identity’, in *Constructing Identity in and around Organizations*, ed. Majken Schultz et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 140.

In my analysis, I will be comparing specific narratives. However, schematic narrative templates are also clearly present in Polish discussions about the past. For example, Jaskułowski et al. have argued that Polish history textbooks present the story of the Polish nation through the following schematic narrative template: “the Polish nation lives peacefully; the peace is interrupted by some threat; there is a time of suffering and struggles, which inspires other nations; and, ultimately, the Polish nation triumphs over its enemies, thereby proving its love of freedom”³⁶. A different schematic narrative template focused on internal betrayal can be detected in the rhetoric of Polish right-wing politicians, exemplified by the famous assertion of PiS chairman Jarosław Kaczyński, according to whom Poland has a “terrible tradition of treason” and certain “Poles of the worse sort” have a genetic inclination for this³⁷. In this case, the narrative template could be sketched as ‘patriotic Poles versus treacherous Poles who serve foreign interests’, an idea that has its roots already in the Polish partitions.

1.4. Memory Regimes and Mnemonic Actors

My most important tools for analysing the commemorations of 1989 will be the concepts of mnemonic actor and the ensuing memory regime. The definitions I adopt come from Bernhard and Kubik who utilised these concepts in their study of the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism in 2009³⁸. In addition, I will present an alternative use of the concept of memory regime by Eric Langenbacher, as well as criticisms towards Bernhard and Kubik’s definition by Eva-Clarita Pettai.

According to Bernhard and Kubik, a memory regime is a “set of cultural and institutional practices that are designed to publicly commemorate and/or remember a single event, a relatively clearly delineated and interrelated set of events, or a distinguishable past process”³⁹. Taken together, all the major memory regimes of a country constitute the country’s mnemonic field or field of memory⁴⁰. Regarding the concept of commemoration itself, Bernhard and Kubik do not give a very detailed definition: they simply assign commemorations as a part of Jan Assmann’s “cultural memory”, defined as “the way the society views its past via newspaper articles, memorials, monuments, films,

³⁶ Krzysztof Jaskułowski, Piotr Majewski, and Adrianna Surmiak, ‘Teaching the Nation: History and Nationalism in Polish School History Education’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 39, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 80.

³⁷ Lucjan Łukowski, ‘Kaczyński Krytykuje Donosicieli. Gorszy Sort Polaków’, Youtube, accessed 29 February 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKFgVD2KGXw>.

³⁸ Bernhard and Kubik, *Twenty Years After Communism*.

³⁹ Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 14–16.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 17.

and buildings”⁴¹. The authors are particularly interested in official memory regimes that involve the participation of major political actors⁴².

According to Bernhard and Kubik, memory regimes can be classified into different types (unified, pillarised and fractured) based on the constellation of mnemonic actors (abnegator, pluralist, warrior, prospective) taking part in their formulation. The most harmonious type of memory regime is unified, referring to a situation where all relevant actors share an agreement on how the past should or should not be commemorated⁴³. Such a regime is formed by mnemonic abnegators, people who do not wish to take part in memory debates. This can be for two major reasons: either they perceive that there is a consensus about the past and thus nothing to debate, or they calculate that they have nothing to win in memory wars.⁴⁴ Sometimes a consensus can be based on collective silence, such as in the case of post-1975 Spain, where a decision was made not to discuss the atrocities of the civil war⁴⁵.

In a pillarised memory regime, abnegators are accompanied by mnemonic pluralists. Pluralists recognise the existence and validity of different interpretations of the past. They strive towards discussion and the establishment of common ‘mnemonic fundamentals’ as a way towards truth. A pillarised memory regime is thus characterised by several versions of the past living in peaceful coexistence.⁴⁶ In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, mnemonic pluralists are common among politicians of the former communist parties who seek understanding for their controversial pasts⁴⁷.

When a mnemonic warrior enters the scene, a unified or pillarised memory regime becomes fractured⁴⁸. Mnemonic warriors are the most radical type of mnemonic actor: unlike the moderate pluralists, mnemonic warriors recognise only one correct interpretation of the past, and anyone who is not willing to subscribe to it must be ousted from public life. This correct vision of the past should become the foundation of social life. The warriors’ conception of time is often mythical: present-day events are inseparably tied to the past that they reflect.⁴⁹ According to Bernhard and Kubik, mnemonic warriors and the ensuing fractured memory regime have the potential to damage democracy due to the polarisation they create in a society⁵⁰.

⁴¹ Jan Assmann, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 125–33, as cited in Kubik and Bernhard (2014): 8.

⁴² Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 16.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 17–18.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 17–18.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 12–13.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 30.

Bernhard and Kubik also postulate a fourth mnemonic actor type, the prospective, but go on to say that this type is not present in the current post-communist countries, as the category is typical of a revolutionary left. Like warriors, prospectives only accept one truth and see no place for competing views.⁵¹ Due to this similarity, I see the category as somewhat unnecessary: prospectives could simply be conceptualised as future-oriented warriors. This would leave three fundamental categories: those who stay out of the debate (abnegators), those who accept different views (pluralists) and those who only accept one view and wish to eliminate competing views (warriors including prospectives).

Bernard and Kubik emphasise that mnemonic actor categories are positions rather than identities, meaning that individuals can adopt different roles for different questions. Mnemonic actors choose their strategy based on two basic types of considerations: positional (political) and cultural (semiotic). Positional considerations are about calculating the immediate political benefits of a certain act, such as the possibility to form of a government with a certain party. Cultural considerations refer to the cultural connotations of such choices – the meanings that society associates with them.⁵²

Furthermore, the possibilities of mnemonic actors to choose a strategy are affected by what the authors call structural and cultural constraints, as well as by so called cultural choices. In the Central and East European context of 2009, the structural constraints included the type of regime change (rupture or reform), type of communism (hard-line or liberalised), and the existence of a left-right cleavage at the time of the commemorations. Cultural constraints included the ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages present in the country. Finally, within the cultural and structural constraints, mnemonic actors had the possibility to make cultural choices, the most consequential being the post-communists' choice of new political identity and the existence and nature of memory layering during the commemorations. Memory layering refers to a practice where memories of events that are not directly connected are commemorated as part of the same memory regime. In a different temporal and geographic context, the particular constraints and choices could be different.⁵³

A somewhat different understanding of memory regimes can be found in the works of Langenbacher. Similarly to Bernhard and Kubik⁵⁴, Langenbacher's approach to collective memory is actor-based: he draws attention to how memory regimes are formed in a process where members of the "elite or 'critical' community" compete for the dominance of their preferred memories⁵⁵. However, whereas

⁵¹ Kubik and Bernhard, 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', 11–14.

⁵² *ibid.*, 11–12.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 19–28.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 9–10.

⁵⁵ Eric Langenbacher, 'Changing Memory Regimes in Contemporary Germany?', *German Politics and Society* 21, no. 2 (2003): 49–50.

Bernhard and Kubik assign memory regimes to specific events, Langenbacher rather seems to speak of the memory regimes of countries. In Langenbacher's use, a memory regime describes a situation where certain memories have won out as the most worthy of commemoration in a given society. For example, he speaks of the "Bonn memory regime" which grew in West Germany and which places the remembrance of the Holocaust as almost a founding myth of the nation⁵⁶. In another work, he describes how the authoritarian regime of Cuba has resulted in an exclusivist memory regime that prevents alternative memories of communism from arising to the public debate⁵⁷. In this way, Langenbacher's use of memory regime is similar to Bernhard and Kubik's mnemonic field. Following the latter authors' conceptualisation, it would be possible to state that within the mnemonic field of a given country, certain memory regimes are more influential than others.

1.5. Criticisms of Bernhard and Kubik's Framework

The mnemonic actor categories and ensuing memory regimes provide a clear and intuitive framework for the comparative analysis of memory politics across countries and time. However, the conceptualisations of Bernhard and Kubik also have their weaknesses, which are summed up well in a debate article by Eva-Clarita Pettai⁵⁸.

According to Pettai, Bernhard and Kubik's focus on official memory regimes brings certain restrictions to the choice of potential mnemonic actors and data. If only the official face of memory politics is to be analysed, then the most appropriate data would come from government statements, parliamentary sittings, speeches and so on. Most notably, the media cannot be included in such an analysis. However, instead of studying government statements, Bernhard and Kubik chose to examine commemorative events which are inherently public and thus include the wider society, media and 'critical elite'. If one wishes to follow Bernhard and Kubik's framework strictly, such actors cannot be included in the analysis, but at the same time this yields an incomplete picture of the memory debates surrounding commemorations.⁵⁹

Secondly, Pettai draws attention to the need to differentiate between different levels of severity in the fracturing of memory regimes. Bernhard and Kubik's framework makes no difference between a memory regime that is divided about who was the more heroic opposition figure and one where the

⁵⁶ Eric Langenbacher, 'Twenty-First Century Memory Regimes in Germany and Poland: An Analysis of Elite Discourses and Public Opinion', *German Politics and Society* 26, no. 4 (2008): 55.

⁵⁷ Eusebio Mujal-León and Eric Langenbacher, 'Post-Authoritarian Memories in Europe and Latin America', in *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 80, 101.

⁵⁸ Eva-Clarita Pettai, 'Debating Baltic Memory Regimes', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47, no. 2 (2 April 2016): 165–78.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 175–76.

whole legitimacy of the regime change is questioned, even though the latter is clearly more dangerous for the stability of a democracy.⁶⁰ One way to address this weakness would be to introduce new mnemonic actor categories, as was done by Mazzini in his 2018 study of the increasingly radical memory politics of Law and Justice. According to Mazzini, the memory politics of PiS since 2015 merit the introduction of a new mnemonic actor category – the memory excluder – who differs from the warrior in that excluders wish to remove their opponents not only from politics, but from belonging to the nation altogether.⁶¹ However, one can argue that the memory excluder is essentially just a more radical mnemonic warrior, just like a prospective can be seen as a future-oriented warrior. Even though Mazzini’s study correctly illustrates the deepening of mnemonic conflict in Poland, it opens the gates to an infinite number of new mnemonic actor categories, taking away from the comparative value of the original three to four categories.

Pettai also criticises the authors’ rather liberal conceptualisation of memory regimes as belonging to the “more mutable components of culture”, something that is subject to frequent changes depending on whoever holds political power⁶². She adds that the concept of memory layering makes the regimes even more malleable. According to Pettai, the word ‘regime’ should refer to a “set of principles, norms, and rules that fundamentally regulates the interaction of actors in a given field of activity (usually of government)”, which is not something that can necessarily be observed during a single commemorative event.⁶³ In this sense, Langenbacher’s use of memory regimes is perhaps closer to what Pettai calls for in her critique, because the memory regime ‘of a country’ is far more established than that of a single commemorative event.

Despite certain shortcomings of Bernhard and Kubik’s framework, I will nevertheless opt for their conceptualisation of memory regimes, as it goes hand in hand with the mnemonic actor categories that Langenbacher’s framework lacks. Furthermore, I see the concept of mnemonic field as sufficient to cover the kind of use intended by Langenbacher. Regarding the selection of data, I will follow Bernhard and Kubik’s focus on official mnemonic actors, as this will ensure comparability with the authors’ original study of the 2009 commemorations. I will return to my selection of data and mnemonic actors in more detail in the Data and Methodology chapter.

⁶⁰ Pettai, ‘Debating Baltic Memory Regimes’, 174.

⁶¹ Mazzini, ‘A Three-Dimensional Model of Enlarging the Mnemonic Conflict: The Case of Poland Under Second Law and Justice Government’, 52.

⁶² Pettai, ‘Debating Baltic Memory Regimes’, 174.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 174–75.

2. The Historical and Political Context of the Commemoration of 1989 in Poland

The commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the Roundtable and 4 June elections cannot be understood without taking into account their historical and political context. Most of the mnemonic actors of the celebrations had a connection to the events of 30 years ago, whether as politicians from one of the parties stemming from Solidarity or as inheritors of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR) that ruled Poland for 40 years. Contestation over the process that led to the end of communism has played a major role in the memory debates of Poland's Third Republic⁶⁴. Moreover, since the coming to power of Law and Justice in 2015, history politics have become a central part of political contestation.

In this chapter, I will sketch out the road that led from the early anti-communist demonstrations to the divided commemorations of 2019. For historical facts, I will rely mainly on the works of Jan Skórzyński and Antoni Dudek. I will start with a brief historical account of the 'Polish road to freedom', focusing particularly on the Roundtable Talks and the June 1989 elections. As I proceed through these events, I will present the major mnemonic schisms created during the complicated process. Following this, I will review the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism as studied by Bernhard and Kubik. Finally, I will outline the most recent political context of the commemorations, including identifying the commemorative events that will be analysed in the Analysis chapter.

2.1. The Polish Road to Freedom

The road to the Roundtable and the elections of 4 June 1989 was preceded by decades of opposition activity of varying intensity. At times, societal discontent manifested itself in large-scale protests, the most notable ones being in Poznań in 1956, in Warsaw and other major cities in 1968, on the Baltic Coast in 1970, and in Radom, Płock and the Ursus suburb of Warsaw in 1976. The protests reached their pinnacle in August 1980, when a strike starting from the Lenin Shipyard of Gdańsk spread to the entire country, forcing the communist authorities to allow the creation of the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”*; *NSZZ „Solidarność”*)⁶⁵. The new trade union led by Lech Wałęsa reached 7 million members already by the end of the year, surprising both the communists and the opposition⁶⁶. Solidarity was able to

⁶⁴ 'Third Republic' is a term commonly used for describing post-1989 Poland as opposed to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (First Republic) and the interwar Poland of 1918–1939 (Second Republic). The PiS government of 2005–2007 worked towards creating a 'Fourth Republic', suggesting that post-1989 Polish democracy was built on a corrupt foundation and needed to be rebuilt from scratch.

⁶⁵ Jan Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989* (Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, 2014), 45.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 46.

function for 16 months until it was outlawed with the declaration of Martial Law by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, pressured to do so by the threat of a Soviet intervention⁶⁷. During this time (13.12.1981–22.7.1983) many of Solidarity's leaders including Wałęsa were interned or imprisoned, while others managed to escape and went on to create the structures of the Solidarity underground, keeping the organisation alive for the rest of the decade.⁶⁸

In addition to Solidarity and other opposition groups, an actor who deserves special mention in the Polish fight against communism was Pope John Paul II. According to Skórzyński, in the 1970s, Poles were still mostly occupied with their daily lives, numbed by the “mirage of a better life” powered by western loan money⁶⁹. This atmosphere of passive acceptance of the status quo was only dispelled with the selection of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Kraków as the Pope in 1978. Already in 1979, the new Pope embarked on his first pilgrimage to Poland. It is estimated that over ten million Poles rallied to see the Pope in an orderly and peaceful fashion, showing that the ‘leading role of the Party in society’ was not needed for public organisation.⁷⁰ It became clear that the Pope supported the anti-communist cause, expressed famously by his words in a homily in Warsaw: “Let your Spirit descend. And renew the face of the earth, the face of this land. Amen”⁷¹. In today's Poland, the importance of the Pope in the anti-communist fight is emphasised particularly by the political right, which was clearly visible during the 2019 commemorations.

By the end of 1988, the internal and external circumstances of Poland had changed in such a way that the communist authorities were forced to enter into talks with the opposition. The Soviet Union was showing signs of loosening its grip over the Eastern Bloc following Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies. Poland's economy was in a dismal state, but acquiring western loan money was impossible due to the diplomatic blowback of the Martial Law period. The communists decided to attempt a strategy of co-optation, offering members of Solidarity's moderate wing a minority position in the government. However, the communists would not agree to relegalising Solidarity.⁷² The tables were turned in November 1988, when Alfred Miodowicz, leader of the government-endorsed All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (*Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych*, OPZZ) challenged Wałęsa into a live televised debate which the latter dominated. As a result, the opposition's

⁶⁷ Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 96.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 96–97.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 22–24.

⁷¹ ‘Apostolic Journey to Poland. Holy Mass. Homily of His Holiness John Paul II. Victory Square, Warsaw, 2 June 1979’, The Holy See, accessed 29 April 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790602_polonia-varsavia.html.

⁷² Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 128–33.

public support rose from 15–20% to 70%, returning the relegalisation of Solidarity on the table and paving the way to the Roundtable Talks.⁷³

2.2. The Roundtable and 4 June: A Mixed Legacy

The Roundtable Talks that eventually led to the end of communism in Poland took place between 6 February and 4 April 1989. It should be emphasised that the communists had no intention of giving up power: rather, the goal was to save People's Poland by introducing necessary political and economic reforms that could not be achieved without public support. The idea of including Solidarity in the elections came from the communists and was meant as a way of validating the regime and sharing the responsibility for the economic reforms that would unavoidably be painful for society. Realising this, the opposition only agreed to participate in the elections under the condition that the Solidarity trade union would be relegalised and that the next elections would be fully free.⁷⁴

The negotiations saw several impasses, with the most difficult questions relating to the electoral system, the distribution of seats, and the powers of the newly created Senate and presidency. The goal of the PZPR side was to bestow the president with extensive powers in order to maintain control of the parliament. A breakthrough in the dispute came during one of the closed meetings of the communist leaders and Solidarity in Magdalenka, where the PZPR representative Aleksander Kwaśniewski (who would later become president) came up with the idea of allowing fully free elections to the Senate.⁷⁵ The fact that the Senate elections were competitive was crucial, as it made them a form of referendum in which voters could show what they really thought about the communists⁷⁶. In addition to the relegalisation of Solidarity, the opposition was granted the right to publish their own newspapers, notably the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* headed by Adam Michnik⁷⁷. Even though the Roundtable Talks ended in an agreement, the pictures of Solidarity leaders raising toasts with their communist oppressors in Magdalenka did not sit well with activists used to 'fighting the commies', giving material for accusations of corruption⁷⁸.

The elections held on 4 June 1989 resulted in a staggering defeat for the communists, which came as a surprise to both sides and laid the foundation for many of the current schisms regarding the memory of 1989. Already in the first round of the elections, the Solidarity Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski "Solidarność"*, KO "S") won 160 out of the 161 seats available to them in the Sejm and

⁷³ Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 136–37.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 137–42.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 142–44.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 146.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 152–53.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 144–45.

92 out of the freely contested Senate seats, whereas the communists only won five Sejm seats. The magnitude of the communists' defeat was worsened by elements of the electoral system which played to the benefit of the opposition. In order to gain a seat in the first round, it was enough for a candidate to receive 50% of the vote in their constituency, making any votes given to their competitors obsolete. The direst mistake of the communists was the use of the country-wide list (*krajowa lista wyborcza*) which was populated exclusively by top candidates of the communist side. Only two candidates received the required 50% of votes,⁷⁹ meaning that candidates as prestigious as the sitting Prime Minister Mieczysław Rakowski and Minister of Internal Affairs Czesław Kiszczak failed to pass the vote.⁸⁰ Shocked by this, the communists pressured Solidarity to accept a change in the voting system in the middle of the elections to allow candidates from the country-wide list to run in the second round. This concession caused outcry among many Solidarity activists, and according to Dudek, it set a dangerous precedent of bending the law for political gains already during the first steps of democratic Poland.⁸¹

The surprising outcome of the elections left both the opposition and the communists in a difficult position. As formulated by Skórzyński, the voters gave Solidarity a mandate for much greater changes than what had been agreed on during the Roundtable Talks⁸². Furthermore, the opposition was afraid of a coup by the security forces and army, compounded by warnings from General Kiszczak and the events of Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989⁸³. There was also a fear of Soviet intervention, stemming from the experiences of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Hungary in 1956⁸⁴. Both fears would later be dispelled, but in June 1989, this could not have been known.⁸⁵

A turning point for the formation of the new government came on 3 July 1989, when Michnik published an article on the front page of *Gazeta Wyborcza* titled Your President, Our Prime Minister (*Wasz prezydent, nasz premier*), calling for the sharing of power between the two sides. In the end, Solidarity managed to form a government with the two puppet parties that for 40 years had formed a ruling coalition with the PZPR: the Alliance of Democrats (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, SD) and the United People's Party (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*, ZSL).⁸⁶ The idea to approach SD and ZSL

⁷⁹ As noted by Dudek (2016: 41), most of the candidates on the country-wide list fell short of the threshold only by around 2–3%, meaning they still gathered several million votes each, illustrating that a different electoral system would have yielded more seats for the communists.

⁸⁰ Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 154–55.

⁸¹ Antoni Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2016), 43–46.

⁸² Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 156.

⁸³ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 50.

⁸⁴ Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 156.

⁸⁵ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 51–52; Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 163–64.

⁸⁶ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 51–58.

came from the Kaczyński brothers and was subsequently adopted by Wałęsa⁸⁷. Jaruzelski was selected as president in line with the Roundtable Agreement, although this was made possible only by the fact that several oppositionist purposefully cast invalid votes in order to lower the quorum. The ‘power ministries’ of defence and internal affairs remained in the hands of the PZPR.⁸⁸ The prime minister of the first semi-democratically selected government came to be Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was seen as non-conflicting by both Wałęsa and ZSL. Wałęsa thought that he could exercise control over the government through the new prime minister but was gravely mistaken.⁸⁹

Wałęsa and Prime Minister Mazowiecki soon found themselves in open conflict, which would become known as the ‘War at the Top’ (*Wojna na Górze*) and became a major reason for why the Solidarity camp split politically in the way that it did. The ‘War at the Top’ picked up pace in December 1989 when Wałęsa called for the government to be vested with the power to rule by decree in order to accelerate the shift to democracy which according to him was too slow under Mazowiecki⁹⁰. Furthermore, Wałęsa announced his intention to run for president⁹¹. Interestingly from today’s perspective, among Wałęsa’s primary supporters in the presidential campaign was Jarosław Kaczyński’s Centre Agreement (*Porozumienie Centrum*, PC),⁹² the party that would become the foundation of Law and Justice – currently Wałęsa’s sworn enemy. The concept of ‘acceleration’ (*przyspieszenie*) advocated by Wałęsa would become a central part of the Kaczyński brothers’ political ideology. Conversely, the supporters of Mazowiecki rallied around the Citizen’s Movement for Democratic Action (*Ruch Obywatelski – Akcja Demokratyczna*, ROAD)⁹³ from which many activists would become founders of the Civic Platform – a party currently siding with Wałęsa.

2.3. The Fall of the Olszewski Government

Another key event reflected in today’s disputes about the Roundtable was the dissolution of the first fully democratically elected government of Jan Olszewski on 4 June 1992. The immediate reason for the event was a process of lustration being prepared by the government’s minister of interior, Antoni Macierewicz, the goal of which was to vet individuals in high state positions for cooperation with the communist security services. On 4 June, Macierewicz appeared at the Sejm with envelopes containing names of people whose file had been found in the archives. Alarmed by this, the parliament together

⁸⁷ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 57–58; Skórzyński, *Krótką Historia Solidarności 1980–1989*, 158.

⁸⁸ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 51–58.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 107.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 110.

⁹² *ibid.*, 111.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 114.

with President Wałęsa hurried to pass a vote of no-confidence on the government – ironically on the anniversary of the 1989 elections. Sensing his impending defeat, Olszewski gave a speech in front of television cameras, arguing that the Polish nation had the right to be ruled by people who had not served the security services. According to Dudek, Olszewski's government would have fallen even without the lustration law due to its inability to form a parliamentary majority, but the events of 4 June gave it a lasting legend.⁹⁴ This legend went on to live a life of its own in the rhetoric of right-wing politicians, including from PiS, according to whom the dissolution of Olszewski's government symbolised the power of 'post-communism' over a real break with the past.

Among the people on Macierewicz's list was Wałęsa, whose name was associated with the codename *Bolek* following the 1970 strikes in Gdańsk. The Olszewski case was one of many occasions in which Wałęsa has been accused of collaboration with the communists. Following the receipt of Macierewicz's envelope, Wałęsa's first comment was that in 1970, he had signed "three or four documents" but had never betrayed his colleagues⁹⁵. When it became clear that the Olszewski government would fall, he swiftly withdrew the statement⁹⁶. In 2008, the topic was revisited by Piotr Gontarczyk and Sławomir Cenckiewicz, historians from the Institute of National Memory (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) who published a 751-page book assessing the documentation on *Bolek* to determine whether the person in question was Wałęsa⁹⁷. In 2012, Wałęsa was even subjected to a formal lustration process in which he was acquitted⁹⁸. Nevertheless, in the eyes of right-wing politicians, Wałęsa had lost his credibility. The topic of Wałęsa's alleged collaboration in the 1970s has surfaced even during the current Law and Justice governments, most recently in 2016, when files concerning *Bolek* were found in the house of General Kiszczak's widow⁹⁹.

Taken together, the compromise of the Roundtable, the irregularities of the 1989 elections, the hesitation of Solidarity to take power immediately, the careful treading of the first Mazowiecki government, the accusations towards Wałęsa, and the dissolution of Olszewski's government have provided fertile soil for diverging legends about the birth of the Third Republic. According to

⁹⁴ Dudek, *Historia Polityczna Polski 1989–2015*, 212–23.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 218–19.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Sławomir Cenckiewicz and Piotr Gontarczyk, *SB a Lech Wałęsa. Przyczynek do biografii*, Monografie 40 (Gdańsk-Warszawa-Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008).

⁹⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Twenty-Five Years "After": The Ambivalence of Settling Accounts with Communism: The Polish Case', in *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 253.

⁹⁹ 'Co znajduje się w teczce Kiszczaka? IPN udostępnił część dokumentów [ZDJĘCIA]', *Gazeta.pl*, accessed 8 May 2020, <https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/56,114944,19660996,co-znajduje-sie-w-teczce-kiszczaka-ipn-udostepnil-czesc-dokumentow.html>.

Trembicka, legends about the Roundtable can be divided into a white and black legend, neither of which are strictly historically correct. Proponents of the white legend typically come from the participants of the Roundtable (especially the post-communists) and are supported by liberal media such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka* and *TVN*. They tend to paint the Roundtable as an example of an ideal, non-violent exit from communism and a uniquely Polish invention, almost like a Polish Coca-Cola that should be exported. Adherents of the black legend argue that the Roundtable was not only unnecessary but a mistake: it would have been enough to wait for the communist system to fall by itself. Instead, the chance for real democracy was lost in favour of ‘post-communism’ where communist elites harvested major economic benefits. According to Trembicka, this thinking has been most prominent among right-wing parties that have mostly not been in government, such as *Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe*, *Solidarna Polska* and *Kukiz ’15*.¹⁰⁰ Law and Justice has also played a major role in spreading this narrative, particularly with the concept of the Fourth Republic advocated by Jarosław Kaczyński’s 2006–2007 government¹⁰¹. The black legend is represented in expressions such as *układ* (‘pact’) and *zmowa elit* (‘collusion of the elites’) which present the Roundtable Talks as a dirty deal between corrupt Solidarity elites and the communists.

2.4. Commemoration of the Roundtable in 2009

Considering the impact that the Roundtable and the semi-free elections of 4 June 1989 had on Poland, it might be expected that those events would be commemorated in a unified, non-partisan way. However, the different interpretations regarding the events of 1989 have ensured that no unified way of commemoration has emerged. In anticipation of my analysis, it is worth taking a look at how the 20th anniversary of 1989 was celebrated, as studied by Bernhard and Kubik in 2009.

According to Bernhard and Kubik, the commemorations that took place in 2009 were thoroughly divided, with the government led by Donald Tusk (PO) celebrating separately from President Lech Kaczyński (PiS). Moreover, the dividing lines were different regarding the Roundtable Talks and the 4 June elections. In the case of the Roundtable, a number of different mnemonic actor roles could be identified among different political actors, whereas in the case of the elections, the division was rather bipolar. In both cases, the emerging memory regime was fractured, with PiS acting as a memory warrior contesting the legitimacy of the 1989 events.

¹⁰⁰ Trembicka, ‘Okragły Stół w Polsce: 30 lat sporów o znaczenie i skutki’, 106–9.

¹⁰¹ Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, in *Twenty Years After Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 71–72.

The divisions regarding the Roundtable became apparent in two historical conferences held on 5 and 6 February. The first one was held at the Sejm and opened by Speaker of the Sejm Bronisław Komorowski (PO), giving the event a semi-official character despite being organised by a left-wing think tank. The guests included participants of the Roundtable from both sides, such as Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Władysław Frasyniuk and Adam Michnik representing Solidarity, and Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Stanisław Ciosek and Janusz Reykowski representing the communists. Both sides presented the Roundtable as a joint effort where two reform-oriented sides came together to save Poland, leading the country to a European future. The post-communist participants conveniently disregarded the fact that the PZPR was not planning to give up power during the talks.¹⁰²

The second conference was organised at the presidential palace by President Lech Kaczyński who himself took a moderate stance on the nature of the Roundtable, which was understandable considering that he was one of the participants of the talks. However, many of the other participants of the conference, including PiS representatives, presented the Roundtable in a highly negative light. Macierewicz went as far as to call the Roundtable a national treason, claiming to have seen secret code messages that proved that the process was controlled from Moscow. Despite Lech Kaczyński's moderate stance, the conference thus provided a forum for conspiracy theories about the Roundtable Talks.¹⁰³

Lech Wałęsa, on the other hand, distanced himself from both conferences, choosing instead to deliver a speech in Konin. As the leader of Solidarity's fight against communism, he could not condemn the Roundtable Talks, even though he had later been the one to pressure the Mazowiecki government to abandon the agreement and accelerate reforms. Neither could he be entirely proud of his presidential tenure which had ended in a defeat against the post-communist Kwaśniewski. President Lech Kaczyński adopted a similarly ambiguous view, seeing the Roundtable Agreement as a necessary but incomplete step on the path to freedom. Finally, Donald Tusk as the prime minister avoided commenting on the Roundtable altogether, stating that at a time of economic crisis, the government did not want to spend large amounts of money on celebrations. According to Bernhard and Kubik, the reason for Tusk's abnegator stance was that he did not see any political benefits in memory debates, especially since his party could have been blamed as one of the benefitters of the 'dirty deal' between Solidarity elites and the communists.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Bernhard and Kubik, 'Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland', 61–65.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 65–67.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 67–71.

In the commemorations of the 4 June elections, the dividing lines were more clearly bipolar, with PiS acting as a memory warrior and Tusk adopting a more pluralist stance. Both Kaczyński and Tusk celebrated in their own events. The more divisive of the events took place in Gdańsk, where President Kaczyński celebrated with the Solidarity trade union, giving out distinctions to Solidarity activists and lamenting the fact that the government was not present. This was followed by an event at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers which was populated mainly by trade unionist and supporters of PiS who reacted with hostility to the PO representatives at the event. At the same time, Prime Minister Tusk organised an event on Wawel hill in Kraków which was attended by Wałęsa, Kwaśniewski and a number of distinguished foreign guests such as Václav Havel and Angela Merkel. During the event, Tusk made great efforts to thank the Polish Catholic Church and remembered to thank Lech Kaczyński for his work for the Solidarity cause. These conciliatory moves made the event far more inclusive than its PiS-endorsed counterpart. On the next day, when asked about why the celebrations were so divided, Tusk replied that “one Poland celebrates in many places” and that President Kaczyński had the right to choose which event to attend.¹⁰⁵ Similar comments would be heard in 2019, this time from the PiS-associated President Andrzej Duda.

2.5. Memory Politics after 2009

After the 20th anniversary, memory politics regarding 1989 fell mostly into the background for several years. Poland was ruled solely by the Civic Platform led by Donald Tusk for eight consecutive years, making PO the first party in democratic Poland to have been selected for a second term. The position of 4 June as the end of communism in Poland was solidified during the 25th anniversary in 2014, when the commemorations organised by President Bronisław Komorowski were attended by the president of the United States, Barack Obama. The main topic of mnemonic conflict in the years following 2009 was the Smoleńsk air disaster of 10 April 2010 in which President Lech Kaczyński and 95 other high-ranking passengers died. Clubs of the right-wing newspaper *Gazeta Polska* started organising monthly commemorations in memory of the victims, with Jarosław Kaczyński as a regular speaker vowing to reveal the truth about the events. Theories emerged claiming that the crash was an assassination planned by Putin and Tusk, despite official reports proving otherwise.¹⁰⁶

The winds of change started blowing in the summer of 2015, when the relatively unknown Andrzej Duda (PiS) narrowly defeated Komorowski in the presidential elections¹⁰⁷. The conservative press

¹⁰⁵ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, 71–76.

¹⁰⁶ Annabelle Chapman, ‘The Air Disaster That Haunts Polish Politics’, POLITICO, accessed 10 May 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-air-disaster-that-haunts-polish-politics/>.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Poland President Loses to Challenger’, BBC News, accessed 10 May 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32862772>.

celebrated Duda's victory with near-religious zeal, hailing it as a chance for Poles to regain their country from the hands of traitors¹⁰⁸. Later during the same year, PiS secured a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections, gaining an absolute majority in the Sejm¹⁰⁹. This was made possible by the fact that the United Left (*Zjednoczona Lewica*, ZL), including the post-communist party United Left Democrats (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, SLD), narrowly fell under the electoral threshold, dropping the political left out of the parliament for the first time since 1989¹¹⁰. Following the victory, PiS quickly set out to introduce sweeping reforms in public media, the judiciary and social policy, as well as in the politics of history.

Since 2015, PiS has adopted politics of history as a central tool for attracting and maintaining political support. According to Mazzini, mnemonic conflict during the PiS government has expanded to entirely new territories. A good example of this was the commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising in 2016 which until then had been a non-partisan event. In 2016, PiS wanted to incorporate the victims of the Smoleńsk air disaster into the commemorations, thus presenting the victims of the crash as martyrs equal to those who died in the uprising. According to Mazzini, this is a prime example of Bernhard and Kubik's memory layering in which unconnected historical events are presented through the same interpretative lens, as if they should be understood as part of the same history.¹¹¹ The legacies of PiS's political opponents – including former Solidarity politicians – are also often downplayed. Mazzini gives the example of the NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016, where a poster exhibition depicting Poland's accession to NATO was modified to present a PiS-centred view. Posters showing Bronisław Geremek (Wałęsa's advisor in Solidarity), Komorowski and Tomasz Siemoniak (minister of defence under PO) were removed, and the accession was presented first and foremost as the result of the work of Olszewski, his defence minister Jan Parys, and Jarosław Kaczyński.¹¹²

The memory politics of PiS tend to favour parts of Polish history connected to military heroism as opposed to civic resistance, thus building on the "romantic paradigm" of Polish patriotism¹¹³. A telling example of this is the four-minute animation 'Unconquered' released by the IPN in October

¹⁰⁸ Agata Kondzińska, 'Prawicowa Prasa Po Wygranej Andrzeja Dudy: Odzyskać Państwo z łap Zdrajców', wyborcza.pl, accessed 10 May 2020,

https://wyborcza.pl/1,75968,18034142,Prawicowa_prasa_po_wygranej_Andrzeja_Dudy__odzyskac.html.

¹⁰⁹ 'Rightwing Law and Justice Party Wins Overall Majority in Polish Election', The Guardian, accessed 10 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/27/poland-law-justice-party-wins-235-seats-can-govern-alone>.

¹¹⁰ Vanessa Gera, 'In Right-Wing Shift, New Polish Parliament Has No Left Wing', Business Insider, accessed 10 May 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ap-in-right-wing-shift-new-polish-parliament-has-no-left-wing-2015-10>.

¹¹¹ Mazzini, 'A Three-Dimensional Model of Enlarging the Mnemonic Conflict: The Case of Poland Under Second Law and Justice Government', 53–54.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 57–58.

¹¹³ Kornelia Kończal, 'The Invention of the "Cursed Soldiers" and Its Opponents: Post-War Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland', *East European Politics and Societies*, 21 August 2019, 77.

2017, presenting the history of the Polish struggle for freedom from 1939 until the fall of the Iron Curtain. The vast majority of the video is dedicated to the Second World War, with only the final 30 seconds listing the major protests of 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976. The video ends with 1979 when, according to the narrator, “the Pope gives us strength. Workers’ strikes spread throughout Poland. The communists lose. The Iron Curtain falls. The war is over. We prevail. Because we do not beg for freedom – we fight for it”.¹¹⁴ The video does not make a single mention of the Solidarity movement or Lech Wałęsa, making it appear as if the Pope was the person who single-handedly brought about the regime change. In addition, the video ties this achievement directly to the armed struggle of the Second World War.

A final topic of Law and Justice’s memory politics that deserves mention is the rehabilitation of the so called ‘cursed soldiers’ (*żołnierze wyklęci*) – partisans who fought the communist occupiers in the early after-war years and whose memory was silenced during the People’s Republic. The ‘cursed soldiers’ are highly controversial, because in addition to fighting the communists, they committed several atrocities against Jewish, Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities.¹¹⁵ Despite this, PiS has raised them to the status of the ultimate Polish patriot. According to Kornelia Kończal, the reason for this lies in the political identity of PiS as anti-communist: by emphasising the heroic fight of the ‘cursed soldiers’, PiS presents itself as an inheritor of their legacy, at the same time associating the opposition with the post-communists who must be fought.¹¹⁶ In this thinking, the ‘cursed soldiers’ eclipse the positive narrative of the Roundtable Talks, arguing that the source of true Polish patriotism is in armed struggle against oppressors and not in the evolutionary, civic resistance of the Solidarity mainstream.

2.6. The Run-Up to the 2019 Commemorations

The contested history of 1989 goes a long way to explain why specific commemorative events were organised in 2019. However, the process was also deeply affected by questions of present-day politics that as such were not connected to the memory of 1989. Before moving on to the Data and Methodology chapter, I will present the immediate political context of the commemorations, starting from the difficulties faced by the opposition in organising commemorations in Gdańsk and ending at the European Parliament elections of 26 May 2019.

¹¹⁴ IPNtvPL, ‘IPNtv: The Unconquered’, Youtube, accessed 10 May 2020, 3:41–4:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q88AkN1hNYM>.

¹¹⁵ Kończal, ‘The Invention of the “Cursed Soldiers” and Its Opponents: Post-War Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland’, 76.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 82.

The commemorative year 2019 started dramatically when during the final celebrations of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (*Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy*, WOŚP), the mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, was fatally stabbed while giving a speech on stage¹¹⁷. The culprit was a 27-year-old former bank robber suffering from paranoid schizophrenia who blamed PO for having unfairly put him in jail¹¹⁸. Initially, all political forces expressed their condolences over the tragedy,¹¹⁹ but very quickly discussion erupted over whether the death should be blamed on the “atmosphere of hate” allegedly created by PiS and public media¹²⁰. Adamowicz’s death would become intimately tied with the rhetoric of the opposition during the commemorations.

A few days before his death, Adamowicz had finished the concept of organising a commemoration of the 4 June elections in Gdańsk together with local governments. The project was taken up by his successor, Aleksandra Dulkiewicz. The idea to mobilise the leaders of local governments was provoked by the fact that PiS was showing no initiative to organise commemorations. The original plan of Dulkiewicz was to organise a new Roundtable around the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers on Solidarity Square, during which representatives of local governments would gather to discuss the future of Poland¹²¹. Dulkiewicz’s plan hit a wall when the Solidarity trade union of the Gdańsk shipyard managed to reserve Solidarity Square for their own celebrations¹²². The decision was supported by the government speaker Beata Mazurek, according to whom “the decision of [Voivode of Pomerania] Dariusz Drelich regarding the organisers of the celebrations of 4 June was thought-through and just. Without a doubt, certain symbols should not be politicised”¹²³.

¹¹⁷ ‘Paweł Adamowicz nie żyje. Prezydent Gdańska nie przeżył ataku nożownika’, Na Temat, accessed 22 May 2020, <https://natemat.pl/260689,pawel-adamowicz-nie-zyje-prezydent-gdanska-nie-przezyl-ataku-nozownika>.

¹¹⁸ Sylwester Ruszkiewicz, ‘Zabójca Pawła Adamowicza miał schizofrenię paranoidalną, niedawno odstawił leki’, WP Wiadomości, accessed 22 May 2020, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/zabojca-pawla-adamowicza-mial-schizofrenie-paranoidalna-niedawno-odstawil-leki-6338467136469121a>.

¹¹⁹ ‘Politycy komentują śmierć Pawła Adamowicza. „Uczyńcieś wiele dobrego i tego Ci nie zapomnimy”’, Wprost, accessed 22 May 2020, <https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10183542/politycy-komentuja-smierc-pawla-adamowicza-uczyniles-wiele-dobrego-i-tego-ci-nie-zapomnimy.html>.

¹²⁰ ‘Rodzina Adamowicza w PE. Debata nt. zwalczania “atmosfery nienawiści”’, Polsatnews.pl, accessed 22 May 2020, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2019-01-30/antonio-tajani-spotkal-sie-z-rodzina-adamowicza/>.

¹²¹ ‘Nowy okrągły stół. Tysiące samorządowców przyjadą do Gdańska w 30-lecie wyborów 4 czerwca’, Gdańsk - oficjalny portal miasta, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/nowy-okragly-stol-tysiace-samorzadowcow-w-gdansk-u-na-30-lecie-wyborow-4-czerwca,a,138535>.

¹²² ‘Obchody 4 czerwca. Wojewoda blokuje Plac Solidarności STANOWISKO MIASTA’, Gdańsk - oficjalny portal miasta, accessed 23 July 2020, <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/obchody-4-czerwca-wojewoda-blokuje-pl-solidarnosci- stanowisko-miasta,a,142420>.

¹²³ Rafał Mrowicki, ‘Prezydent Gdańska apeluje do wojewody po decyzji o obchodach 4 czerwca. Lider stoczniowej “Solidarności”: Proponuję nowe otwarcie’, Radio Gdańsk, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://radiogdansk.pl/wiadomosci/item/92047-prezydent-gdanska-apeluje-do-wojewody-po-decyzji-o-obchodach-4-czerwca-lider-stoczniowej-solidarnosci-proponuje-nowe-otwarcie/92047-prezydent-gdanska-apeluje-do-wojewody-po-decyzji-o-obchodach-4-czerwca-lider-stoczniowej-solidarnosci-proponuje-nowe-otwarcie>.

Following the decision, the Solidarity Trade Union published an invitation on their website, according to which for 30 years, the “the pact of the Roundtable” had protected the crimes of the communists (including killing ‘cursed soldiers’) ¹²⁴. This made it clear that the trade union was a firm supporter of the black legend. However, more important than politics of history and memory may have been the fact that the European Solidarity Centre (*Europejskie Centrum Solidarności*, ECS) – the partner of the opposition celebrations – had recently hosted events organised by LGBT activists and the Committee of the Defence of Democracy (*Komitet Obrony Demokracji*, KOD), which the local trade union saw as using the heritage of Solidarity for political goals¹²⁵. The president of the trade union, Piotr Duda, confirmed this in his speech during the commemorations, talking about “scandalous scenes” and insults towards the church taking place in Gdańsk¹²⁶. Even though Dulkiewicz and the trade union eventually came to an agreement, the conflict illustrates how politics of memory and present-day ideological quarrels can be part of the same disagreement.

Besides the controversy in Gdańsk and a few events dedicated to the beginning and end of the Roundtable Talks, the months leading up to 4 June were surprisingly quiet in terms of mnemonic debates. An exception to this was the death of Jan Olszewski on 7 February: the former prime minister received a state funeral of the highest honours attended by leading PiS politicians, and his death was widely commented in the conservative press¹²⁷. Olszewski’s legacy would become a major feature of the PiS-endorsed commemorations, including the decision to unveil the foundation stone for a monument to him on 4 June.

Later in the spring, the focus of politicians from all camps was clearly on the EP elections of 26 May, held merely a week before 4 June. Mnemonic contestation about the Roundtable and 4 June was largely absent from the campaign, with the exception of criticism from PiS towards some of the opposition’s ‘post-communist’ candidates whose roots were in the PZPR. Politics of history was present, but on a more universal level in the form of a debate over which values the European Union should be based on. According to the PiS campaign, Poland was to be seen as the “Heart of Europe” and the European Union should return to “the [Christian] values proclaimed by its creators and which

¹²⁴ ‘ZAPROSZENIE NA 4 CZERWCA’, NSZZ Solidarność Stocznia Gdańskiej, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://nszz-stocznia.pl/zaproszenie-na-4-czerwca/>.

¹²⁵ Sebastian Łupak, ‘Guzikiewicz o ECS: Albo logo Solidarności albo LGBT’, WP Opinie, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://opinie.wp.pl/guzikiewicz-o-ecs-albo-logo-solidarnosci-albo-lgbt-6371287020673153a>.

¹²⁶ [Relacja Online] NSZZ Solidarność Obchodzi 40. Rocznice Pierwszej Pielgrzymki Ojca Świętego Do Ojczyzny, Tygodnik Solidarność, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://tysol.pl/a33135--Relacja-online-NSZZ-Solidarnosc-obchodzi-40-rocznice-pierwszej-Pielgrzymki-Ojca-Swietego-do-Ojczyzny>.

¹²⁷ Marzena Nykiel, ‘„Olszewski Odchodzi – Agenci Pozostają”. Wyjątkowo Aktualne i Symboliczne. Oby Śmierć b. Premiera Skłoniła Polityków Do Refleksji’, wPolityce.pl, accessed 12 May 2019, <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/433110-olszewski-odchodzi-agenci-pozostaja-wyjatkowo-aktualne>.

were meant to become its foundation”¹²⁸. With this particular topic, the commemorations of 4 June and the EP campaign complemented each other. During the commemorations, PiS chose the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland in 1979 as the most important event for the creation of Solidarity, and Christianity as the common factor that brought a divided nation together.

The 30th anniversary of 1989 took place during an electoral super-year, which had a profound effect on the content of the commemorations especially for the underdog opposition. In 2018, the opposition had done reasonably well in the municipal elections, winning in large cities despite losing the elections overall. A victory in the EP elections would have secured a good position in the crucially important parliamentary elections in October – the first chance to oust PiS from government since 2015. The EP elections ended in a loss for the opposition, which too had repercussions for the commemorations. Finally, the presidential elections were looming in the distance, scheduled originally to take place in May 2020.

Despite the dominance of present-day politics, a number of commemorative events were organised throughout the year. The Roundtable Talks were commemorated to a limited degree, with President Duda holding an Oxford-style debate about the Roundtable for high-school students at the Presidential Palace on 5 February¹²⁹ and an international conference titled *On the Downfall of Communism – 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe (Jak upadał komunizm. Rok 1989 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej)* organised by the Chancellery of the President and the Ministry of Culture on 4–5 April¹³⁰. This event was framed as a continuation of the conference organised by Lech Kaczyński ten years earlier. At the same time, on 5 April, former presidents Kwaśniewski and Komorowski, as well as participants of the Roundtable from both sides, met at a conference titled *The Heritage of the Roundtable 30 Years Later (Dziedzictwo Okrągłego Stołu po 30 latach)*, providing a competing event for the PiS-held conference¹³¹. The most visible events, however, were centred around 4 June. By far the largest was the opposition-endorsed Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity (*Święto Wolności i Solidarności*) held in Gdańsk, an 11-day festival including debates, workshops and concerts, with the main events taking place on 4 June around the ECS¹³². A day before, on 3 June, the Solidarity trade

¹²⁸ ‘Deklaracja europejska - nowa “dwunastka PiS” na wybory do PE’, Onet Wiadomości, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/konwencja-pis-w-jasionce-deklaracja-europejska-co-zawiera/8z62wz9>.

¹²⁹ Prezydent.pl, ‘RELACJA: Debata Oksfordzka w Przeddzień Rocznicy Obrad Przy Okrągłym Stole’, Youtube, accessed 23 May 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pv_a-pP-_OA.

¹³⁰ ‘On the Downfall of Communism. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe’, Polish History Museum, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://muzhp.pl/en/c/1991/jak-upadal-komunizm-rok-1989-w-europie-srodkowo-wschodniej>.

¹³¹ ‘2019.04.05 Dziedzictwo Okrągłego Stołu po 30 latach’, Polska Lewica, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://www.polskalewica.pl/index.php/14-strona-glowna/398-2019-04-05-dziedzictwo-okraglego-stolu-po-30-latach>.

¹³² ‘PROGRAM / DZIEŃ PO DNIU’, ECS Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://www.ecs.gda.pl/2019gdansk-program>.

union organised a conference in Gdańsk titled He Awoke Solidarity in Us – On the 40th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Fatherland (*Obudził w Nas Solidarność. W 40. rocznicę pierwszej pielgrzymki Jana Pawła II do Ojczyzny*), attended by several government representatives¹³³. On 4 June, Speaker of the Senate Stanisław Karczewski organised a special sitting of the Senate attended among others by President Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki¹³⁴. This was followed by the revealing of the foundation stone for a monument to Olszewski¹³⁵. Finally, PiS used the occasion for organising the swearing in of new ministers in place of the ones selected to the European Parliament¹³⁶.

As I have shown in this chapter, the differing legends about the nature of the events of 1989 have their roots in a complicated history of victories, losses and concessions between Solidarity and the communists, with many controversial events taking place at the very inception of Poland's Third Republic. Considering the centrality of the politics of history for PiS and the mnemonic conflict that erupted during the 20th anniversary, one might expect to see PiS continue its warrior stance. On the other hand, by 2019, the political tables had turned, with PiS holding both the presidency and an absolute majority in the parliament. How did the commemorations play out? In the next chapters, I will analyse the differing commemorations of 1989 among the major political forces of Poland in 2019.

¹³³ Marek Lewandowski, 'Obudził w Nas Solidarność – 40. Rocznica Pierwszej Pielgrzymki Jana Pawła II Do Ojczyzny', *Tygodnik Solidarność*, accessed 23 May 2020, <https://tysol.pl/a33059-Obudzil-w-nas-Solidarnosc-%E2%80%93-40-rocznica-pierwszej-pielgrzymki-Jana-Pawla-II-do-Ojczyzny>.

¹³⁴ Senat Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 'Uroczyste 80. Posiedzenie Senatu.', Facebook Watch, accessed 10 July 2020, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=343182269713115&ref=watch_permalink.

¹³⁵ Blogpress.pl, 'Odsłonięto Kamień Węgielny Pod Budowę Pomnika Olszewskiego. "Panie Premierze, Dziękujemy Za Twoją Drogę"', wPolityce.pl, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/450224-odslonieto-kamien-wegielny-pod-budowe-pomnika-olszewskiego>.

¹³⁶ Prezydent.pl, 'Zmiany w Składzie Rządu. Uroczystość w Pałacu Prezydenckim', Youtube, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tL20eHqclHA>.

3. Data and Methodology

My data consists of 29 speeches and texts drawn from thirteen events clustered around the Roundtable Talks (6 February), the end of the Roundtable Talks (5 April), and the beginning of June. The latter included the commemorations of the semi-free elections of 4 June 1989, the beginning of John Paul II's first pilgrimage to Poland on 2 June 1979, and the dissolution of the Olszewski government on 4 June 1992. Out of the 29 performances, 23 were speeches, two were interviews for the media, one was a video played at a conference and three were declarations/resolutions. Many of the speeches were from the same people, amounting to a total of twelve different speakers. Nearly all of the speeches were freely available online in their original video form, except for the conference *The Heritage of the Roundtable 30 Years Later*, from which I was able to attain written versions of the speeches from the organisers. For one speech (Piotr Duda at the conference *He Awoke Solidarity in Us*), I had to rely on second-hand media reports.

My selection of data was motivated by three main factors: a focus on official mnemonic actors, the visibility of the commemorative events, and comparability with the commemorations of 2009. Mostly, the choice of official mnemonic actors came very naturally, as the keynote speakers of the events were typically influential politicians such as the current president and prime minister as well as former presidents and government figures. Incidentally, these people were often also involved in the 2009 celebrations. When it came to visibility, it was clear that the events receiving the most media attention were the ones concentrated around the beginning of June rather than the Roundtable Talks, showing that the commemoration (and contestation) of 1989 is currently anchored around the semi-free elections. Limiting the amount of analysed speeches was necessary due to the truly significant amount of performances especially during the opposition-held 11-day Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity in which tens of Solidarity activists, researchers, cultural figures and present-day politicians gave speeches and took part in panel discussions. A full list of the events and performances I analysed as well as links to the original source material can be found in Annex I. The same information with the performers in alphabetical order is provided in Annex II.

There were some borderline cases where a performer could have been included in the analysis, but in the end I left them out. One such case was Bronisław Wildstein, a prominent right-wing journalist and member of the IPN who performed directly after President Duda during the conference *On the Downfall of Communism*. Wildstein could be described as a mnemonic warrior due to his condemnation of 'post-communism', but since he was not a politician and as his speech did not alter the big picture of the mnemonic strategies of PiS, I decided to leave him out. Another group of performers not included in my analysis were the participants of panel discussions from both sides.

These debates included well-known public figures such as Solidarity leader Władysław Frasyniuk and conservative historian Wojciech Roszkowski, both of whom were analysed by Bernhard and Kubik in 2009¹³⁷. Nevertheless, I decided to leave them out, as handpicking certain panellists while ignoring others would have jeopardised the credibility of my selection of official mnemonic actors.

Due to my focus on official mnemonic actors, I will not analyse media responses to the commemorations. This means that I will not make claims about the reception of the commemorations by Polish society, but rather analyse the meanings that I as a researcher can reconstruct from the performances. Focusing on official mnemonic actors will provide an in-depth view of the intended meanings of the commemorations, but this will unavoidably involve missing some of their wider reverberations. While I cannot claim to know the full motivations behind the choices made by the performers, I can make assumptions based on my knowledge of the historical and political context behind them.

I am analysing the commemorations of 1989 using qualitative content analysis in which I search for patterns in my data with the help of codes¹³⁸. During initial coding, I focused my attention on fragments that involved historical interpretations or where history and present-day politics were conflated. In addition to the language of the speeches, I paid careful attention to the context in which they were given: who celebrated with whom, where, and what exactly was the occasion being commemorated. I did not analyse the body language and appearance of the performers, as doing this systematically to all speeches would have expanded my analysis too far¹³⁹. In the second round, I zoomed in on each of the separate speeches/texts, writing detailed notes on each one and watching each speech at least twice more. This process yielded a large number of preliminary codes which I compiled into a chart, revealing emerging patterns. Finally, I conducted a third round of analysis specifically from the point of view of mnemonic actors, applying the codes to the descriptions of Bernhard and Kubik's ideal types.

My final analysis included 11 codes and two subcodes, most of which were related to the mnemonic actor roles. Annex III presents all the codes, including their relation to the concepts of Bernhard and Kubik, my criteria for assigning them, and an example of each code. Not all the codes I identified during initial coding were included in the final analysis. For example, I initially had several codes for different assessments of the Third Republic, ranging from 'unquestionable success' through 'both

¹³⁷ Bernhard and Kubik, 'Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland', 62–66.

¹³⁸ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013).

¹³⁹ These aspects do carry meaning: for example, Wałęsa gave his speeches wearing a t-shirt with the text *Konstytucja* ('constitution'), a criticism towards PiS who according to critics was breaking the constitution.

successes and failures’ to ‘elements of post-communism’. However, as I adapted the codes to Bernhard and Kubik’s concepts, I realised that such a finely tuned coding was not needed for defining the different mnemonic actor roles, especially since – as I will show in the analysis – all actors agreed on the overall positive memory of the Roundtable and 4 June. As a result, ‘elements of post-communism’ became a part of Subcode 7.2 titled ‘associating the political opponent with the enemy in a historical reading’. Also, not all my interpretations are strictly related to the mnemonic actor roles. For example, naming heroes in a historical narrative is not a feature of one or the other mnemonic actor, even though avoiding discussion about the heroes of the opposing side is a form of mnemonic abnegation. I did not have a specific code for ‘heroes and villains’ but rather derived my interpretation from the way different actors either exalted, criticised or outright neglected certain historical figures.

It should be noted that wherever possible, I analysed the speeches directly from their video recordings rather than from written text. This allowed me to evaluate the speeches in their original context – as public performances rather than static texts. Ideally, I would also have had all the speeches in written form, but as most of them were not available online in full, this would have required transcribing all of them. Due to the large amount of data, I decided to rather invest my time fully in the analysis. In order to avoid data loss, I wrote detailed notes on each speech, compiled the recurring elements into a chart, and watched each speech at least four times in total to make sure no details were lost. Another option would have been to limit the number of commemorative events (and speeches) even further, but this would have resulted in an incomplete image of the commemorations.

The size of my analytical unit varied between a sentence at the smallest and a paragraph at the largest (as much as there are paragraphs in speech), depending on how spread out the arguments were. There were two exceptions to this: Code 6 (‘defining a single correct reading of history’) which could only be assigned based on the entirety of a speech, and Code 1 (‘not organising or attending an event’), which refers to (a lack of) action rather than an element of a speech. In some cases, several codes could be applied to a single fragment. For example, evoking a mythologised vision of time (Code 8) could be used as way of defining oneself as the inheritor of a historical narrative (Subcode 7.1).

The Analysis chapter that follows is structured according to the mnemonic actor roles exhibited by different political actors, with each role corresponding to specific codes detailed in Annex III. I will start by discussing abnegators, followed by pluralists. The section on mnemonic warriors is the longest with four subchapters. This is due to the fact that mnemonic warriors, while sharing the same basic set of codes, displayed three clearly differing major narratives. The fourth subchapter of the warrior section is dedicated to the use of the words ‘solidarity’ and ‘solidary’, which is part of

Subcode 7.1 ('defining oneself as the [only] inheritor of a historical reading'). The warrior section also includes references to the schematic narrative template 'patriotic Poles versus treacherous Poles who serve foreign interests', assigned as a part of Subcode 7.2 ('associating the political opponent with the enemy in a historical reading'). The Analysis chapter ends with a section on points of agreement (Codes 10 and 11), which are not related to the mnemonic actor roles.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse how the different political actors of Poland commemorated the events of 1989 in 2019. Rather than analysing the commemorative events one by one, I will organise my analysis according to the mnemonic actor roles different political actors adopted. In cases where the roles posited by Bernhard and Kubik fail to capture important patterns, I will analyse the patterns in the category closest to them.

I will refer to specific performances with the abbreviations explained in Annex I, which are based on the formula ‘surname-event’ (for example Dul-RAL for ‘Dulkiewicz-Rally’). For quick reference, Annex II provides the abbreviations in alphabetical order. With quotations, I will provide a direct reference to the source with a footnote. Quotations from video recordings include the minutes and seconds during which the quote was said. It should be mentioned that in many cases, the sources for different speeches are the exact same video recording, as the videos often covered an entire event, such as in the case of the Senate sitting or the speeches of the presidents at the ECS.

4.1. Mnemonic Abnegators

According to Bernhard and Kubik, mnemonic abnegators are characterised by an unwillingness to engage in memory debates either because they perceive that there is an agreement about the past or because they see no benefits in mnemonic conflict¹⁴⁰. In my data, I found two types of mnemonic abnegation: 1) not organising or attending an event 2) not mentioning a key person or historical event. The latter is connected to who the speakers presented as the hero in their narrative.

PiS and the opposition categorically avoided each other’s events. Out of the official mnemonic actors I analysed, not a single one performed at each other’s events. A partial exception to this was Andrzej Duda, who sent a letter to both of the competing events held in Gdańsk, perhaps in order to not appear biased to either side (Dud-AWO; Dud-ECS). The mutual ignoring reached its peak during the conference He Awoke Solidarity in Us, where Prime Minister Morawiecki took the opportunity to invite Dulkiewicz who was “located somewhere close by” to take part in the conference, thus ignoring the Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity taking place 200 metres away¹⁴¹. However, it should be mentioned that these acts were not mnemonic abnegation in the strictest sense of refusing to discuss

¹⁴⁰ Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 14.

¹⁴¹ ‘Premier Mateusz Morawiecki podczas konferencji “Obudził w nas Solidarność” w Gdańsku’, Premier.gov.pl, accessed 10 July 2020, 2:59–3:12, <https://www.premier.gov.pl/multimedia/wideo/premier-mateusz-morawiecki-podczas-konferencji-obudzil-w-nas-solidarnosc-w-gdansk.html>.

the past. Rather, they were the result of political resentment and the attempt to present competing narratives about the same events.

A certain caveat should be made regarding the concept of mnemonic abnegation: saying that a mnemonic actor avoided commemorating implies that the historical event was something that should have been commemorated in the first place. In the case of Poland, the natural question is whether a political actor commemorated ‘the fall of communism on 4 June’ with the magnitude it deserved. From this point view, it is clear that PiS took an abnegator stance on the 4 June elections by not attending the opposition-held Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity and not organising a major event themselves. However, depending on the historical reading, the opposition could also be considered a mnemonic abnegator for barely mentioning the fall of the Olszewski government or the first pilgrimage of the Pope. This example shows that mnemonic abnegation cannot be separated from the historical interpretations of the political actors in play.

The clearest case of mnemonic abnegation was the decision of PiS to use 4 June for the swearing in of new ministers in place of the ones selected to the European Parliament. This required the attention of Duda, Morawiecki and the entire government, keeping the PiS leadership occupied from attending other events. There is no reason why the new ministers had to be sworn in specifically on the anniversary of the 4 June elections, and thus the event should be seen purely as a move to play down the Gdańsk celebrations. Duda and Morawiecki made no references to the anniversary in their speeches, further trivialising the importance of the day (Dud-MIN; Mor-MIN). Admittedly, PiS did organise a commemoration of the fully free Senate elections on the same day, but the event was restricted to honorary guests and was thus very different from the public festivities of Gdańsk.

A different type of mnemonic abnegation could be seen in how certain key actors were left out of speeches recounting the achievements of Solidarity. This was particularly true in the case of Wałęsa, who was largely omitted from the speeches of PiS representatives. Regardless of Wałęsa’s faults, he was the leader of Solidarity during the victorious 4 June elections, and therefore the near-complete exclusion of him should be seen as a conscious act of mnemonic abnegation by PiS. Speakers who did not mention Wałęsa a single time included Morawiecki (Mor-AWO; Mor-SEN; Mor-OLS; Mor-MIN), speaker of the Sejm Marek Kuchciński (Kuc-SEN) and Piotr Duda (DudP-AWO). In cases where Wałęsa was mentioned, this was often either in a negative light or in a pluralist setting where Wałęsa was presented as one among many important actors (Kac-WNE; Dud-ECS). On the other hand, several PiS politicians talked about President Lech Kaczyński, either by exalting his work (Dud-ECS; Mac-OLS; Kac-WNE), by citing his thoughts about the Senate or the Roundtable (Dud-POL; Dud-DOW; Vid-DOW; Kar-SEN), or by just casually mentioning him (Dud-SEN; Dud-MIN).

In the speeches of the opposition, Lech Kaczyński was all but absent. It seemed that the goal of PiS was to elevate Lech Kaczyński as one of the most important actors of Solidarity. This again raises the question of whether the opposition could be blamed for mnemonic abnegation regarding the role of the former president. However, leaving Lech Kaczyński out cannot be compared with the case of Wałęsa, as the former was at best one among a larger group of important Solidarity politicians.

4.2. Mnemonic Pluralists

According to Bernhard and Kubik, mnemonic pluralists accept differing views about the past and advocate for a society where those differences can be discussed in a tolerant setting¹⁴². Within my data, I identified three codes that matched this description: 1) admitting the merits of many sides 2) arguing that history is not black-and-white 3) calling for dialogue. Some mnemonic actors who were present in 2009 maintained their pluralist role, whereas others changed to outright warriors. Still others appeared as conciliatory at first glance but acted in a highly exclusionary way towards their political opponents.

The clearest mnemonic pluralist of 2019 was Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the former president who sat on the communist side during the Roundtable Talks. Overall, his message was very similar to what Bernhard and Kubik observed in 2009, presenting a thoroughly positive assessment of the Roundtable Talks¹⁴³. Kwaśniewski's two speeches on 5 April (Kwa-HER) and 4 June (Kwa-ECS) were constructed around proving that Poland's successful shift to democracy was as much a merit of the communists as it was of Solidarity and that it was his duty to remind about this. In both speeches, he described the communist side as courageous and visionary for having opened the road to Poland's democratisation. In his 4 June speech, Kwaśniewski shrouded the difference between the actions of Solidarity and the communists by saying that "we cannot separate all the different events that took place in history, because history is not a puzzle, it is rather a river that flows at varying speeds, meanders, but creates a certain continuity, a certain common path, a common fate"¹⁴⁴. This metaphor suggests that actions as diametrically opposed as the workers' strikes and Martial Law were somehow all necessary in the process that led to Poland's democratisation. The passage also exhibits a mythologised vision of time,¹⁴⁵ a feature which Bernhard and Kubik associate with mnemonic warriors but which Kwaśniewski managed to use as a way to blur the difference between victims and perpetrators. In the same speech, Kwaśniewski also spoke about the value of compromise and

¹⁴² Kubik and Bernhard, 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', 15.

¹⁴³ Bernhard and Kubik, 'Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland', 62.

¹⁴⁴ GdanskPL, '30 Lat Polskiej Demokracji. Forum Obywatelskie', Vimeo, accessed 10 July 2020, 37:44–38:01, <https://vimeo.com/340662588>.

¹⁴⁵ Kubik and Bernhard, 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', 15.

criticised PiS for rejecting the way of dialogue which he saw as the only path towards creating a community (Kwa-ECS). The last example shows that while Kwaśniewski took a pluralist stance towards the complicated history of the Roundtable, he took a warrior stance against PiS for rejecting the heritage of compromise created there.

Another mnemonic pluralist was former president Bronisław Komorowski who spoke together with Kwaśniewski both at the conference of 5 April (Kom-HER) and at the ECS on 4 June (Kom-ECS). In both speeches, Komorowski wanted to provide the point of view of a former anti-communist radical who had initially been a sceptic of the Roundtable. In his 4 June speech, Komorowski argued that in 1989, there were serious grounds for doubting the honesty of the communists, seeing as plans existed for introducing a new version of Martial Law (Kom-ECS). Komorowski's pluralism was expressed in how he advised caution for Kwaśniewski's overly positive evaluation of the Roundtable while at the same time not questioning his right to espouse such a memory (Kom-HER; Kom-ECS). On the other hand, Komorowski too criticised PiS for disregarding the unquestionable achievements that followed the Roundtable and 4 June, showing that he saw them as a non-negotiable mnemonic fundamental (Kom-ECS).

A somewhat unexpected mnemonic pluralist was sitting president Andrzej Duda who was by far the most conciliatory of the PiS politicians. While this is what should be expected from the office of the president, Duda has usually been a faithful representative of the PiS point of view. From the very start, Duda made it clear that he was not a supporter of the black legend of the Roundtable: in his interview for *Polsat News* on 5 February, he described the legacy of the talks as “not unambiguously positive but on the plus side” (*bilans nie jest jednoznacznie pozytywny, ale jest dodatni*), an opinion he would repeat on later occasions¹⁴⁶. On the same day, he organised an Oxford-style debate about the necessity of the Roundtable at the Presidential Palace which by its very format encouraged a civilised debate about the pluses and minuses of the talks (Dud-OXF). In his letter to the ECS, Duda described the dividedness of the day as “freedom”, arguing that every individual was celebrating in the way they “preferred and needed” – a truly pluralist statement reinforcing the right to disagree¹⁴⁷. Interestingly, the exact same argument was used by Tusk during the divided celebrations of 2009¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Wywiad Prezydenta RP Dla Polsat News [CAŁOŚĆ]’, Prezydent.pl, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wywiady/art,190,wywiad-prezydenta-rp-dla-polsat-news-calosc.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Andrzej Duda, ‘„Jeśli Zabraknie w Nas Solidarności, Jeśli Nic Nie Będzie Nas Ze Sobą Łączyć, to Polska Będzie Słaba, a Nasza Wolność Znowu Zagrożona”’, prezydent.pl, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/inne/art,1022,jesli-zabraknie-w-nas-solidarnosci-jesli-nic-nie-bedzie-nas-ze-soba-laczyc-to-polska-bedzie-slaba-a-nasza-wolnosc-znowu-zagrozona.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, 76.

According to Duda's letter (Dud-ECS), it was normal among free people to argue – a statement very similar to how he often¹⁴⁹ comments on the state of Poland's democracy, saying that the fact Poles are arguing is the sign of a healthy democracy.

While Duda maintained his generally positive view of the Roundtable and 4 June throughout his performances, the content of his speeches varied greatly depending on the audience. His most conciliatory speech was the letter to the ECS in which he described 4 June as the day when Poles changed from "subjects of a communist regime" to "citizens of an independent Poland"¹⁵⁰. On the other hand, he described 4 June as an "extremely important date" on the "Polish road to freedom", suggesting that there were also other events worth commemorating¹⁵¹. He went on to list the "heroes" of 1989, those being "Lech Wałęsa, Bogdan Borusewicz, Jacek Kuroń, Zbigniew Bujak, Lech Kaczyński, Andrzej Gwiazda, Anna Walentynowicz and many, many others"¹⁵². The list was pluralist in nature, as it included politicians from completely different sides of the ideological divide following 1989. It is notable that Wałęsa was first on the list, when in most of Duda's performances, he was not even mentioned (Dud-OXF; Dud-DOW; Dud-AWO; Dud-SEN; Dud-MIN). Also, Duda made no mention of the Pope or 'post-communism', whereas in his speeches to the Senate (Dud-SEN) and at the conference On the Downfall of Communism (Dud-DOW), both were featured. In some cases, Duda's criticism of 'post-communism' bordered on a warrior stance. Overall, Duda's view of 1989 was similar to that of his predecessor in office, President Lech Kaczyński, who in 2009 represented a moderate but critical assessment of the Roundtable and 4 June¹⁵³.

When it comes to calling for dialogue, the opposition-held celebrations in Gdańsk stood out. Many of the performers encouraged Poles to set aside their differences and seek reconciliation, including Dulciewicz (Dul-DEC; Dul-RAL), Tusk (Tus-RAL), the aforementioned Kwaśniewski (Kwa-ECS) and the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity signed at the celebrations (Dec-DEC). Tusk and Dulciewicz made references to the tragedy of Adamowicz's death, presenting it as proof that Poland's public sphere was in need of fixing (Dul-DEC; Tus-RAL). In her two speeches, Dulciewicz lamented the growing hostility in Polish society, with families unable to sit at the same Christmas table (Dul-DEC; Dul-RAL). She called for "everyday solidarity", referring to the little acts of kindness that

¹⁴⁹ 'Wywiad Prezydenta Dla Telewizji Trwam i Radia Maryja', Prezydent.pl, accessed 20 July 2020, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wywiady/art,165,wywiad-prezydenta-dla-programu-rozmowy-niedokonczone.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Duda, '„Jeśli Zabraknie w Nas Solidarności, Jeśli Nic Nie Będzie Nas Ze Sobą Łączyć, to Polska Będzie Słaba, a Nasza Wolność Znowu Zagrożona”'.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Bernhard and Kubik, 'Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland', 70.

together could initiate a “national transformation”¹⁵⁴. Tusk advised his audience not to exclude anyone, emphasising that in 1989 Poles had not divided into camps “between east and west, city and countryside, rich and poor”¹⁵⁵. The Declaration, in turn, called for building “our common future in a spirit of dialogue”¹⁵⁶. While at first glance all these statements seem like admirable pluralist calls for reconciliation, they in fact hide a warrior stance: rather than calling for Poles of different political opinions to come to a compromise, they called for Poles to unite against the evil that was PiS. This message was part of a larger narrative in which the opposition drew a sharp line between ‘us’ – the inheritors of Solidarity – and PiS – the mnemonic usurpers who needed to be fought.

4.3. Mnemonic Warriors

According to Bernhard and Kubik, mnemonic warriors want to present themselves as the sole carriers of the truth and demand their opponents to either accept this vision of the past or be ousted from public life. They have a tendency to draw a sharp line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and often espouse a mythologised vision of time.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, they have the potential to damage democracy due to the polarisation they create in society¹⁵⁸. In my data, I identified three overarching behaviours indicative of a warrior stance, all of which are connected: 1) defining a single correct reading of history 2) defining oneself as the (only) inheritor of that history 3) associating the political opponent with the enemy in that history. Both the opposition and PiS were guilty of this type of rhetoric.

It should be emphasised that neither side questioned the basic premise of the Roundtable Talks or the 4 June elections. The only mnemonic actor who outright spoke about the “pact of the Roundtable” was Antoni Macierewicz,¹⁵⁹ while other PiS politicians took stances along the lines of Lech Kaczyński’s interpretation according to which the Roundtable Talks were “a move in a game of chess, the most fitting for that concrete situation”¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁴ GdanskPL, ‘W Samo Południe. Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności’, Vimeo, accessed 10 July 2020, 22:33–23:22, <https://vimeo.com/340672824>.

¹⁵⁵ GdanskPL, ‘Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu’, Vimeo, accessed 10 July 2020, 47:06–47:13, <https://vimeo.com/340649419>.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności oraz odśpiewanie hymnu narodowego. TREŚĆ DEKLARACJI’, Gdańsk - oficjalny portal miasta, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/deklaracja-wolnosci-i-solidarnosci-odspiewanie-hymnu-narodowego,a,147600>.

¹⁵⁷ Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 15.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 30.

¹⁵⁹ Blogpress.pl, ‘Odsłonięto Kamień Węgielny Pod Budowę Pomnika Olszewskiego. “Panie Premierze, Dziękujemy Za Twoją Drogę”’, 6:00–6:07.

¹⁶⁰ Prezydent.pl, ‘Międzynarodowa Konferencja „Jak Upadał Komunizm. Rok 1989 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej”’, Youtube, accessed 10 July 2020, 41:47–41:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy8ukMJqQ10&t=2910s>.

The warrior behaviours are best approached through the three major narratives displayed during the competing commemorations. They can be sketched as: 1) “We Are Inheritors of Solidarity, and PiS Is Attacking This Heritage” 2) “The Pope Created Solidarity, and We Are Inheritors of the Pope” 3) “We Are Inheritors of Olszewski, and the Opposition Is an Inheritor of Post-Communism”. A fourth, minor narrative tracing the road to 4 June to the after-war anti-communist resistance was presented during the special sitting of the Senate (Kuc-SEN). In addition, virtually all actors presented themselves as inheritors of Solidarity by either defining the ‘values of Solidarity’ or by using the words ‘solidarity’ or ‘solidary’ in their speeches and giving them very different meanings. For simplicity’s sake, I will refer to the three main narratives as the Solidarity narrative, the Pope narrative and the Olszewski narrative.

4.3.1. “We Are Inheritors of Solidarity, and PiS Is Attacking This Heritage”

The opposition presented itself as the rightful inheritor of the Solidarity movement’s legacy. According to the historical interpretation presented at the events, the fall of communism in Poland started in Gdańsk, Lech Wałęsa was one of its heroes, and 4 June 1989 was an unambiguously positive date, with no need to connect it to the ‘other 4 June’ of 1992. Even though the historical reading presented during the events was positive and in line with what might be called the internationally accepted narrative, the way in which the speakers attacked PiS made them mnemonic warriors¹⁶¹.

Dulkiewicz’s central message was that the atmosphere of hate growing in Poland had led to the death of Adamowicz and needed to be combated (Dul-DEC). According to Dulkiewicz, history had shown where the “desire for power, hate, lies, breaking the rule of law” could lead, suggesting that PiS was leading Poland to a very dangerous direction¹⁶². In a similar vein, the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity called for a “democracy without arguments full of hate” and a “public sphere free of lies”¹⁶³. Considering that the opposition was not blaming itself, it is implied that PiS was the one responsible for these problems. Dulkiewicz called for the audience to not let their “joy and pride over the miracle of Solidarity” be taken away, suggesting that PiS was trying to negate the heritage of 1989¹⁶⁴. In her speech at the Rally, she reminded the audience that the freedom regained 30 years ago came with a responsibility: the responsibility to vote, which she urged the audience to use smartly in the parliamentary elections, thus using the commemorations to further a political agenda (Dul-RAL).

¹⁶¹ In Bernhard and Kubik’s original book, mnemonic warriors tend to be the ‘bad guys’ who distort history for their selfish gains. However, the term should apply to all actors who draw a sharp line between ‘us’ and ‘them’, even if they represent the internationally accepted narrative about the past.

¹⁶² GdanskPL, ‘W Samo Południe. Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności’, 26:06–26:20.

¹⁶³ ‘Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności oraz odśpiewanie hymnu narodowego. TREŚĆ DEKLARACJI’.

¹⁶⁴ GdanskPL, ‘W Samo Południe. Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności’, 25:17–25:22.

Wałęsa's performances included both pluralist and warrior elements. In his two speeches, he conspicuously placed himself at the centre of history, almost as if he alone had dismantled communism in Poland (Wał-ECS; Wał-RAL). At the Rally on Długi Targ, he started by thanking the crowd for having "let him lead" them in 1980 and 1970¹⁶⁵. At the ECS, Wałęsa apologised for having made many decisions "without asking", such as ending the 1980 strike, setting up the Roundtable Talks, and forming the first ruling coalition¹⁶⁶. By saying this, Wałęsa acknowledged some of the critique towards his authoritarian leadership but at the same time clearly painted himself as the decisive figure in these turning points. Wałęsa said he felt bad about having had to resign from the Roundtable Agreement and to break the first coalition government but that this had been a necessity (Wał-ECS). This feeling of moral ambiguity was similar to what Bernhard and Kubik observed in Wałęsa's performance in 2009¹⁶⁷ and falls within the code of 'history is not black-and-white'. During his speech at the Rally, Wałęsa criticised PiS by saying that "they" should be more thankful for the victories gained through "our wonderful, common fight" that had made it possible for PiS to rule in the first place¹⁶⁸. By presenting PiS as 'them', Wałęsa disregarded the fact that many top PiS politicians such as the Kaczyński brothers had been part of the common fight he spoke of, especially when it came to paving the way to his presidency.

The clearest mnemonic warrior within the opposition was President of the European Council Donald Tusk, who outright compared PiS to the communists (Tus-RAL). He started his speech on Długi Targ by describing the death of Adamowicz as "extraordinarily symbolic", and while he did not specify what the death symbolised, he was likely referring to the hostile public sphere created by PiS¹⁶⁹. Tusk described the Poles as a great, proud European nation that sometimes had been "unfortunate with its rulers", likening the democratically elected PiS government to the illegitimate rule of the PZPR¹⁷⁰. According to Tusk, the audience needed to take inspiration from the virtues of the PRL opposition when facing PiS in the parliamentary elections, giving three directions drawn from the experiences of 1989: 1) never give up and always believe in victory 2) work hard for that victory every day, like Lech Wałęsa 3) do not exclude anyone (Tus-RAL). He compared the current opposition to Solidarity by saying that unlike PiS, they were a "positive force" fighting "for" something rather than being "against", thus evoking a primal division between good and evil¹⁷¹. Tusk's statement "your public

¹⁶⁵ GdanskPL, 'Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu', 13:00–13:12.

¹⁶⁶ GdanskPL, '30 Lat Polskiej Demokracji. Forum Obywatelskie', 18:55–19:30.

¹⁶⁷ Bernhard and Kubik, 'Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland', 67–68.

¹⁶⁸ GdanskPL, 'Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu', 21:06–21:33.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 37:00–37:06.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 38:38–38:43.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, 55:24–55:32.

television, our internet” made a direct comparison to *Gazeta Wyborcza*’s famous headline Your President, Our Prime Minister¹⁷². In essence, Tusk made it appear as if the 2019 parliamentary elections were a repetition of 1989, with the opposition rising once more to the role of Solidarity to topple the authoritarian regime of PiS. Tusk’s warrior position represented a major change from the abnegator and pluralist rhetoric he had displayed during the 2009 commemorations¹⁷³.

A heavily featured topic in the speeches of the opposition were the local governments, which the speakers tied to the heritage of Solidarity. Every single opposition speaker included a reference to their importance. The 4 June celebrations included an event titled Self-Governing Republic (*Samorządna Rzeczpospolita*) during which mayors of local governments debated the state of Poland’s democracy and signed a list of 21 theses aimed at reforming Poland towards a federal state in which local governments would have much higher autonomy (The-SEL). The number of the theses was a reference to the 21 postulates of the August strikes of 1980, as was the preamble’s call for the state to respect the constitution (The-SEL). In other words, the local governments depicted themselves as the Solidarity movement, while PiS was dealt the role of the communists. The very fact that the event was held on 4 June suggested that the freedom of local governments was an integral part of the victory of 1989, and that those gains were now under threat. Still, most of the theses were connected solely to present-day politics (The-SEL). Even though the creation of local governments was one of the early successes of the Third Republic, the 21 theses should be seen primarily as a political initiative aimed at the upcoming parliamentary elections, having little to do with the commemoration of 1989.

4.3.2. “The Pope Created Solidarity, and We Are Inheritors of the Pope”

One of the two main narratives of PiS during the 2019 festivities was that the Solidarity movement owed its creation to the first pilgrimage of John Paul II in 1979. This was most clearly apparent during the conference He Awoke Solidarity in Us organised by the Solidarity trade union on 3 June, but also during the honorary sitting of the Senate on 4 June. The Pope narrative did not challenge the legitimacy of the Roundtable or 4 June per se, but rather redefined the events as a continuation of the Pope’s work. This was expressed explicitly by the president of the Solidarity trade union, Piotr Duda, who argued in his speech that the events of 1980 were merely the “completion” of the Pope’s words¹⁷⁴. The Pope narrative also served to reinforce the self-identification of PiS with the Catholic Church, a theme which was widely featured during the EP elections preceding the commemorations.

¹⁷² GdanskPL, ‘Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu’, 58:11–58:14.

¹⁷³ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, 71.

¹⁷⁴ [Relacja Online] NSZZ Solidarność Obchodzi 40. Rocznicę Pierwszej Pielgrzymki Ojca Świętego Do Ojczyzny’.

The Pope narrative was not as radical as the other two narratives, because in most cases it did not define the opponent as an outright enemy, although Prime Minister Morawiecki came close to making such a statement (Mor-AWO).

Out of major PiS politicians, Morawiecki went the furthest in defining PiS as the inheritor of the Pope's legacy. In his speech at the conference in Gdańsk, Morawiecki described the Pope as having brought a "seed of agreement" to a deeply divided Poland¹⁷⁵. He continued that today, the goal of PiS was that same agreement, the awakening of the "silent majority"¹⁷⁶. This gave the impression that the mobilisation of the nation to vote for PiS was comparable to the national and spiritual awakening brought about by the Pope. At the end of his speech, Morawiecki adopted a near-religious tone, saying: "As you wrote in the *Roman Triptych*, he who wants to find the way to the source must go against the current. We are not afraid to go against the current. Despite the majority, the huge majority of the media, despite foreign and Polish forces, powerful forces of this world. For we know that we are following your road. (- -) we now want (- -) to show how beautiful the paths of solidarity can look like in the coming years, in the coming decades"¹⁷⁷. The passage displays a mythologised vision of time, with the past and present blending together. Additionally, the reference to 'Polish and foreign forces' carries elements of the schematic narrative template of 'patriotic Poles versus treacherous Poles who serve foreign interests', giving the idea that part of the Polish media is working against Polish interests with the help of foreigners.

Even though the special sitting of the Senate was formally dedicated to the 4 June elections, the Pope narrative was also heavily featured there. The event began with the reading of a joint resolution of the Sejm and Senate,¹⁷⁸ dated "on the 40th anniversary of the 1st pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland, on the 30th anniversary of the rebirth of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, and of the partly free elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland"¹⁷⁹. Thus, the resolution elevated the pilgrimage of the Pope as the most important event to commemorate. The resolution was followed by a speech from Duda, who started by emphasising the importance of John Paul II and even traced the fall of the Berlin wall and the subsequent revolutions in Central Europe to the Pope (Dud-SEN). Morawiecki reminisced the famous words of the Pope from 40 years ago about "renewing the face of this earth",

¹⁷⁵ 'Premier Mateusz Morawiecki podczas konferencji "Obudził w nas Solidarność" w Gdańsku', 1:01–1:23.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 1:57–2:06.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 7:01–7:54.

¹⁷⁸ It is worth mentioning that the resolution was passed almost unanimously, meaning that both PiS and the opposition supported it.

¹⁷⁹ 'UCHWAŁA SEJMU RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ z Dnia 16 Maja 2019 r. w 40. Rocznicę I Pielgrzymki Jana Pawła II Do Polski Oraz w 30. Rocznicę Odrodzenia Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i Częściowo Wolnych Wyborów Do Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej', accessed 3 June 2020, http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc8.nsf/uchwaly/3465_u.htm.

as well as revisited his concept of the silent majority, speaking this time of the “deep nation, masses” that awoke in 1979, 1980 and 1989¹⁸⁰. The event was closed by Speaker of the Senate Stanisław Karczewski, who also dated the beginning of the road to 4 June to the Pope (Kar-SEN).

The Senate sitting also featured a fourth narrative about the Polish road to freedom, articulated by only one speaker, Marek Kuchciński (Kuc-SEN). According to Kuchciński, the road that led to the 4 June elections started already during “anti-communist uprising” of 1944–1953; in other words, the period of the ‘cursed soldiers’¹⁸¹. When recounting the different protests and uprisings that led to 1989, Kuchciński focused on events that involved martyrdom, such as the deaths of protesters during the Poznań uprising of 1956, the self-immolation of Ryszard Siwiec during the 1968 protests, and the miners shot at the Wujek mine in 1981 (Kuc-SEN). He thus tilted his historical reading towards the romantic paradigm of Polish patriotism, where military heroism is valued over civic resistance. Kuchciński’s performance was notable as it represented a type of rhetoric commonly used by PiS in politics of memory but which was curiously absent from the 2019 commemorations.

Among the opposition, Tusk was the only speaker to claim ownership of the heritage of the Pope (Tus-RAL). In his speech on Długi Targ, Tusk told his audience that “what you are fighting for is what the Polish Pope spoke about”, presenting the opposition as inheritors of the Popes legacy¹⁸². He also expressed his amusement over how the Pope was being commemorated in Gdańsk, considering that he did not even visit Gdańsk on his first pilgrimage (Tus-RAL). In saying so, Tusk conveniently forgot that he himself had organised the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the 4 June elections on Wawel hill in Kraków, when Gdańsk would arguably have been a much more logical place¹⁸³.

4.3.3. “We Are Inheritors of Olszewski, and the Opposition Is an Inheritor of Post-Communism”

The second major narrative of PiS was connected to the dissolution of the Olszewski government, best exemplified by the unveiling of the foundation stone for a monument to him as part of the 4 June celebrations. According to this narrative, the first democratically elected government of Jan Olszewski was the true beginning of Poland’s freedom, but its untimely demise pushed Poland into a state of pseudo-democracy where former beneficiaries of the communist system continued to wield considerable power. Therefore, the 1989 elections could not be commemorated without remembering the events of 1992. References to ‘post-communism’ as a feature of the Third Republic were a part

¹⁸⁰ Senat Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, ‘Uroczyste 80. Posiedzenie Senatu’, 40:40–41:44.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 30:32–30:46.

¹⁸² GdanskPL, ‘Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu’, 56:31–56:41.

¹⁸³ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, 75–76.

of this narrative. The Olszewski narrative was more radical than the Pope narrative, because by defining PiS as the sole inheritor of Olszewski, it painted the political opponents of PiS as inheritors of post-communism. Unsurprisingly, no one from the opposition side evoked this narrative. Allusions to post-communism were featured to different degrees in the performances of Duda (Dud-POL; Dud-DOW; Dud-SEN), Kaczyński (Kac-WNE), Morawiecki (Mor-SEN; Mor-OLS; Mor-MIN) and Macierewicz (Mac-OLS). The concept of a “paradise lost” or an “aberrant past” as described by Bernhard and Kubik is an integral part of the Olszewski narrative¹⁸⁴.

The fiercest proponent of the Olszewski narrative was Antoni Macierewicz, who was a textbook example of a mnemonic warrior (Mac-OLS). After all, Macierewicz was the person who in 1992 compiled the list of former agents that led to the dissolution of Olszewski’s government. Macierewicz was the only mnemonic actor to outright call the Roundtable a “pact” and to describe the Magdalenka negotiations as a “conspiracy”¹⁸⁵. He evoked the schematic narrative template of treacherous Poles by referring to Olszewski’s opponents a “group originating from Russian agents”¹⁸⁶. He presented PiS as a great patriotic movement created by the masses who rose to answer Olszewski’s famous question: “who will Poland belong to”¹⁸⁷? The performance of Macierewicz was in line with his typical provocative style, comparable to his speech during the 2009 commemorations¹⁸⁸.

Duda and Morawiecki also included elements of the Olszewski narrative in their performances, with Morawiecki being the more passionate denouncer of post-communism. In his speech at the Senate, the prime minister argued that the freedom of the first semi-free elections (a term which he saw as something of an oxymoron) was hampered by the overwhelming access of the communists to media and other means of campaigning, adding that “these disproportions showed themselves” very soon after the elections¹⁸⁹. He spoke about the “sad 4 June” of 1992 which had created the basis for the “twisted and difficult” (*pokręcona i niełatwa*) history of the Third Republic¹⁹⁰. At the unveiling of Olszewski’s memorial stone, he ensured that PiS was going to continue the work of the Olszewski government for a strong, just and solidary Poland (Mor-OLS).

In the case of Duda, references to Olszewski and post-communism were the factor that most clearly clashed with his otherwise pluralist position. In his speech at the conference On the Downfall of

¹⁸⁴ Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 13.

¹⁸⁵ Blogpress.pl, ‘Odstonięto Kamień Węgielny Pod Budowę Pomnika Olszewskiego. “Panie Premierze, Dziękujemy Za Twoją Drogę”’, 6:00–6:07, 6:46–7:09.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 6:08–6:24.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 8:28–9:00.

¹⁸⁸ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘Roundtable Discord: The Contested Legacy of 1989 in Poland’, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Senat Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, ‘Uroczyste 80. Posiedzenie Senatu’, 37:13–37:40.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 38:42–39:07.

Communism, Duda referred to the disappointment of 4 June 1992 which had severely slowed down reforms that could have brought Poland out of “what would become called post-communism”¹⁹¹. In his speech at the Senate, he expressed amusement over the fact that “post-communists” were teaching Poles about what democracy was, referring most likely to Kwaśniewski and the SLD candidates who ran in the EP elections from the European Coalition’s list¹⁹². This comment clearly defined the post-communists as ‘them’ and challenged the legitimacy of the opposition-held commemorations where the two sides were celebrating together. When speaking about the Senate, Duda included elements of the treacherous Poles narrative template by saying that the Senate had always accompanied Poland in times of freedom and had been taken away by outsiders during times of captivity, including by the “representatives of Moscow”, referring to members of the PZPR¹⁹³.

A mnemonic actor who was difficult to situate was PiS chairman Jarosław Kaczyński, who fell somewhere between a pluralist and a warrior. Kaczyński did not publicly perform during any of the celebrations but instead appeared in a radio interview on *Wnet.fm* on 4 June, sharing his memories of the events of 1989 and commenting on the accusations volleyed at him by Tusk (Kac-WNE). Kaczyński said his memories of the “first” 4 June were “very pleasant”, not least because his brother got selected to the Senate¹⁹⁴. Kaczyński’s pluralism came from recognising the merits of many sides, at least on a superficial level. When asked about him and his brother’s role in the presidential campaign of Wałęsa, Kaczyński said he had known Wałęsa mainly from his “wonderful times of the 1988 strike”, giving his sworn enemy at least some credit¹⁹⁵. On the other hand, he described the decision to support Wałęsa as a grave mistake, hoping that “God would forgive me during the Last Judgement”¹⁹⁶. Regarding the secret negotiations in Magdalenka, he gave credit to Lech Kaczyński, Władysław Frasyniuk (a former Solidarity leader and ardent critic of PiS) and Tadeusz Mazowiecki for not having raised toasts with the communists, while the other participants had gone on “far-reaching, arrogant (*butczany*) fraternisation for which they are rightly criticised”¹⁹⁷. Kaczyński thus subscribed to the interpretation that the seed of post-communism was sown during the Roundtable Talks. However, the main point of Kaczyński seemed to be to emphasise the importance and wisdom of his brother, including in situations where Jarosław himself should have listened to him.

¹⁹¹ Prezydent.pl, ‘Międzynarodowa Konferencja „Jak Upadał Komunizm. Rok 1989 w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej”’, 12:42–13:32.

¹⁹² Senat Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, ‘Uroczyste 80. Posiedzenie Senatu’, 22:37–22:53.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 12:26–12:40.

¹⁹⁴ Radio WNET, ‘Kaczyński (1/2): Tusk kłamie w Każdej Sprawie. Opozycja Ma Jedną Politykę – Kłamać, Kłamać, Kłamać’, Youtube, accessed 10 July 2020, 0:24–1:08, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PH_nKyzvipw&t=9s.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 5:16–5:22.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 6:12–6:20.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 7:06–7:41.

4.3.4. “We Are Inheritors of Solidarity” – Defining the Word

In addition to the three main narratives discussed above, mnemonic actors from all political camps claimed ownership of the legacy of the Solidarity movement by using the terms ‘solidarity’ (*solidarność*) or ‘solidary’ (*solidarny*) in their speeches and giving the words different meanings. Some speakers also defined the values of Solidarity. Of course, it could be claimed that ‘solidarity’ in its dictionary meaning of “a feeling of community and shared responsibility arising from an agreement of views and aspirations”¹⁹⁸ is a term that can be used neutrally as a part of political speech. However, in the context of the commemorations of 1989 in Poland, any reference to ‘solidarity’ has the potential of evoking an association with the movement. In fact, it is quite common in Poland for speakers discussing the Solidarity movement to play with the difference between “solidarity written with a small or capital letter” as a rhetoric tool¹⁹⁹.

For the opposition, ‘solidarity’ was a central concept during the celebrations. Dulkiewicz’s concept of everyday solidarity referred to the compassion that Poles needed to show each other in order to heal Poland’s ailing public sphere (Dul-DEC; Dul-RAL). The Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity, on the other hand, pledged loyalty to the heritage of Solidarity so that the “values that united us would again become a reality”, without defining what those values were (besides in a very general way as “freedom, solidarity and self-governance”)²⁰⁰. The 21 theses of the local governments called for a “self-governing and solidary” Poland²⁰¹. Tusk called for the opposition to reignite the famous chant from the 1980s saying “there is no freedom without solidarity” (*nie ma wolności bez solidarności*)²⁰². Considering that the original phrase had the double meaning of referring to the movement and the concept, it is clear that Tusk used the chant as a way to identify with the movement’s legacy. Kwaśniewski – whose claim to the heritage of Solidarity is questionable – actually defined the “fundamental values that created Solidarity”, those being “freedom, democracy, free markets, rule of law, respect for our individuality, for our differences, not discriminating anyone”²⁰³. What these examples show is that the term ‘solidarity’ can be dropped into the most different of contexts to create a connection to the positive image of the Solidarity movement.

¹⁹⁸ ‘solidarność - definicja, synonimy, przykłady użycia’, Słownik Języka Polskiego, accessed 4 July 2020, <https://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/solidarno%C5%9B%C4%87.html>.

¹⁹⁹ ‘O Solidarności Wielką i Małą Literą Pisanej’, Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Rzeszowskiej, accessed 4 July 2020, <https://oficyna.prz.edu.pl/wydarzenia/2019/o-solidarnosci-wielka-i-mala-litera-pisanej>.

²⁰⁰ ‘Proklamacja Deklaracji Wolności i Solidarności oraz odśpiewanie hymnu narodowego. TREŚĆ DEKLARACJI’.

²⁰¹ ‘21 tez samorządowców dla Polski. Prezydent Aleksandra Dulkiewicz: “Dziś jest ten pierwszy krok do zmiany na lepsze”’, Gdańsk - oficjalny portal miasta, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/21-tez-samorzadowcow-dla-polski-prezydent-dulkiewicz-dzis-jest-ten-pierwszy-krok-do-zmiany-na-lepsze,a,147761>.

²⁰² GdanskPL, ‘Święto Wolności i Solidarności. Wiec Na Długim Targu’, 1:01:58–1:02:28.

²⁰³ GdanskPL, ‘30 Lat Polskiej Demokracji. Forum Obywatelskie’, 48:23–49:15.

PiS utilised the term ‘solidarity’ as well, adapting it to their chosen narratives and political goals. In Duda’s letter to the ECS, the president defined solidarity in a pluralist spirit as “mutual respect despite differences and a dignified life for everyone”²⁰⁴. The term ‘dignity’ (*godność*) is a central concept in PiS rhetoric, referring to the sense of self-worth that according to PiS was taken away from many Poles during the years following 1989. In his letter to the conference He Awoke Solidarity in Us, Duda spoke of how human dignity and the dignity of the worker were central to the Pope’s thinking and how in today’s Poland these concepts were finally becoming a reality²⁰⁵. This went hand in hand with building a “just and solidary state”²⁰⁶. Morawiecki spoke in a similar way at the conference, arguing that just like the Pope had put the family at the centre of social life and the worker at the centre of economic life, so too PiS wanted “as many people as possible to benefit from the fruits of economic growth, freedom, justice and solidarity”²⁰⁷. For PiS, ‘solidarity’ was something that the government’s economic and social policies were able to provide.

4.4. Points of Agreement

Despite the thoroughly divided commemorations, there were also some points that were widely agreed on among the mnemonic actors. As mentioned earlier, all politicians with the exception of Macierewicz agreed on the overall positive meaning of the Roundtable Talks and the 4 June elections, even if they disagreed on who the heroes of the process were and how to evaluate the years that followed. However, the clearest point of agreement concerned the international significance of the Polish road to freedom. Speakers across the political spectrum reminded about the leading role of Poland in the fall of communism, many of them outright saying that the Berlin wall fell thanks to Poland (Dud-POL; Dud-DOW; Dud-SEN; Dul-DEC; Dul-RAL; Kom-ECS; Kuc-SEN; Kwa-HER; Res-SEN; Tus-RAL; Vid-DOW; Wał-RAL). Another common argument among both the opposition and PiS was the idea that Poland represented a case of a bloodless revolution that should be seen as an example abroad (Dud-POL; Dud-DOW; Dul-DEC; Dul-RAL; Kuc-SEN; Kwa-HER; Tus-RAL; Wał-ECS).

²⁰⁴ Duda, ‘„Jeśli Zabraknie w Nas Solidarności, Jeśli Nic Nie Będzie Nas Ze Sobą Łączyć, to Polska Będzie Słaba, a Nasza Wolność Znowu Zagrożona”’.

²⁰⁵ Andrzej Duda, ‘„Idea Solidarności Głoszona Przez Jana Pawła II Jest Fundamentem Budowy Silnej i Dostatniej Polski”’, *prezydent.pl*, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/inne/art,1021,idea-solidarnosci-gloszona-przez-jana-pawla-ii-jest-fundamentem-budowy-silnej-i-dostatniej-polski.html>.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ ‘Premier Mateusz Morawiecki podczas konferencji “Obudził w nas Solidarność” w Gdańsku’, 4:34–5:15.

5. Discussion of Main Findings

Having analysed the 2019 commemorations, it is clear that the official memory regime of Poland pertaining to the events of 1989 remains fractured. However, unlike in 2009, neither side questioned the legitimacy of the Roundtable or the 4 June elections per se. Instead, mnemonic warriors on both sides rallied around three major narratives that displayed them as the rightful inheritors of their desired historical reading and their opponents as the enemy in that history. For the opposition, the major narrative was to present itself as the inheritor of the Solidarity movement's legacy and to accuse PiS of trying to negate this heritage. For PiS, there were two major narratives: first, to credit the creation of Solidarity to the Pope and to claim ownership of the Pope's heritage. The second major narrative of PiS was to present Jan Olszewski as a hero of Polish democracy, PiS as the continuer of Olszewski's work, and the opposition as inheritors of post-communism. There were also mnemonic actors who took elements from the above narratives but were overall pluralists.

Most mnemonic actors displayed characteristics of several roles, showing varying shades of pluralist and warrior behaviour. The clearest mnemonic warrior on the opposition side was Tusk, who outright compared PiS to the communists. Dulciewicz embraced a similar rhetoric, softened to some extent by her calls for 'everyday solidarity'. Wałęsa was uncompromising in his condemnation of PiS, but the moral ambiguity he felt about 1989 added a layer of pluralism to his performances. The clearest pluralists on the opposition side were Komorowski and Kwaśniewski, with the former expressing his doubts about the honesty of the communists at the beginning of the Roundtable Talks while overall recognising the successes of the Third Republic. Kwaśniewski – the only representative of the communist side – presented a carefully crafted reading of history in which both the communists and Solidarity were visionary reformists striving for democracy.

In the PiS camp, the fiercest mnemonic warrior was Macierewicz, but his extreme views should not be seen as representing the official stance of PiS. Next on the list was Morawiecki, whose continuous references to post-communism and PiS as the continuer of the Pope's work made him a clear mnemonic warrior. Duda was an overall mnemonic pluralist, assessing the Roundtable in positive terms and emphasising the right to disagree, although he too included references to post-communism in some of his speeches. Kaczyński could be described as an 'unenthusiastic mnemonic warrior' who gave some credit to his political opponents while mercilessly condemning others. No individual actor on either side was a clear-cut abnegator, but PiS as a whole tried to abnegate the 4 June elections by first not organising major state-endorsed celebrations and later by scheduling the swearing in of new ministers on the same day.

Why did the opposing political actors choose the mnemonic strategies they did? It makes sense to first review the independent variables identified by Bernhard and Kubik in 2009. The basic structural constraints of liberalised communism and negotiated extrication naturally remained unchanged. When it came to cultural choices, the post-communists continued to identify as social democrats, although with a twist: since their failure in the 2015 elections, SLD had become a political ally of PO, running from the same list in the European Parliament elections. This meant that any remnants of the original left-right divide following 1989 had vanished. The situation also provided PiS with the possibility to accuse the opposition of fraternising with the communists, which they did to some extent. The political divide between PiS and the opposition, of course, was deeper than ever.

A cultural choice that according to Bernhard and Kubik was not present in 2009²⁰⁸ was memory layering, “the combining or mixing of a commemoration of one event with the cultivation of memories of another event or events”²⁰⁹. In 2019, memory layering was at the core of the strategies of both PiS and the opposition. Both of the major narratives of PiS were built on the basis of memory layering. In the Pope narrative, the elections of 4 June were presented as a continuation of the Pope’s work, giving a motivation to celebrate them together. In the Olszewski narrative, ‘the other 4 June’ was presented as a tragic event which could not be separated from the memory of the 1989 elections. In the case of the opposition, memory layering could be seen in how the death of Adamowicz was utilised as an element of the commemorations. The entire Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity was presented as his testament, and in the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity, his death was given symbolic value as a turning point which together with the 30th anniversary of 1989 required a return to the values of Solidarity.

With the independent variables of Bernhard and Kubik accounted for, what other reasons remained for the mnemonic strategies of PiS and the opposition in 2019? Compared to 2009, the most immediate difference was that the political tables had turned: PO had fallen into the opposition, whereas PiS was holding both the presidency and a majority in the Sejm and Senate. In 2009, PO had taken an abnegator stance on the Roundtable and a pluralist stance on the 4 June elections and had effectively managed to disarm the mnemonic attacks of PiS. Clearly, in 2019, the opposition thought it could not afford such a harmonious approach, instead drawing a sharp line between itself as the inheritor of Solidarity and PiS as a mnemonic usurper. PiS, on the other hand, initially adopted an abnegator strategy similar to that of PO in 2009. It seems that being forced into the opposition prompted PO to seek political support by adopting a warrior position, even if this position was that

²⁰⁸ Bernhard and Kubik, ‘The Politics and Culture of Memory Regimes: A Comparative Analysis’, 275.

²⁰⁹ Kubik and Bernhard, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, 28.

of a fierce defender rather than a revisionist. For PiS, the fact that the party was comfortably sitting in government meant that it was more enticing to avoid a direct confrontation with the opposition and instead organise small-scale commemorations of its own.

Did the opposition's strategy pay off? According to Bernhard and Kubik, in 2009 the warrior strategy of PiS "boomeranged" back at them when the party lost both the presidential elections in 2010 and later the parliamentary elections in 2011, thus suggesting that the choice of mnemonic strategy had a major influence on the election results²¹⁰. In 2019, the opposition lost both the European Parliament elections and the parliamentary elections. In the EP elections, neither side used the upcoming commemorations of 1989 as a political weapon, showing that they did not see them as a useful campaign theme. With the parliamentary elections, the opposition utilised the commemorations to the fullest as an occasion to kickstart their campaign, with Tusk coming from Brussels to heighten spirits and Dulkiewicz directly encouraging Poles to vote smartly. Still, in the election campaign that followed, the memory of 1989 was in no way a central theme, showing that the 4 June commemorations were merely a platform from which to start a campaign focused on present-day political issues. In the terminology of Bernhard and Kubik, the opposition tried to combine a positional (political) strategy with a cultural (semiotic) one,²¹¹ attempting to infuse their political project with the positive meanings of the Solidarity movement. This was most apparent in how the local governments were mobilised to run in the Senate elections, which was framed as a continuation of Solidarity's work but in fact was due to the simple fact that many of the opposition's most recognisable candidates were local politicians. Still, the reason why the opposition lost the parliamentary elections was certainly not because of voters punishing them for mnemonic confrontation but because of their inability to challenge the political programme of PiS.

Compared to 2009, the political usefulness of mnemonic conflict about 1989 seems to be receding. One reason is the passage of time, with a growing number of young Polish voters having no direct connection to the events of 30 years ago. For PiS, one reason might be that after more than four years of governing, the party's goal of building a Fourth Republic is already steadily progressing, even though the term has been switched for 'good change' (*dobra zmiana*). A good example of this is the reforming of the judiciary, a project which PiS frames as cleaning out the judges who served during communist times²¹².

²¹⁰ Bernhard and Kubik, 'The Politics and Culture of Memory Regimes: A Comparative Analysis', 292.

²¹¹ Kubik and Bernhard, 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', 11.

²¹² 'Ziobro: Po Upadku Komunistów Sądy Dyscyplinarne Nie Usunęły z Zawodu Tych, Którzy Dopuszczali Sie Nieprawości', *Gazeta Prawna.pl*, accessed 19 July 2020, <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/1427017,ziobro-sedziowie-komunizm-reforma-sadownictwa.html>.

Nevertheless, PiS has clearly chosen a historical reading of 1989 which emphasises the Pope and the fall of the Olszewski government and attempts to elevate the role of Lech Kaczyński as one of Solidarity's main actors. It is likely that PiS will continue to develop this version of history as the founding narrative of democratic Poland. A future study should investigate how PiS commemorates the 30th anniversary of 'the other 4 June' in 2022. If PiS chooses to organise major state-endorsed celebrations, this will force the opposition to wage mnemonic warfare to defend the memory of the Roundtable, the 4 June elections, and of Solidarity concentrated around Wałęsa.

Even if the memory of 1989 as a political weapon is no longer as important as ten years ago, the larger ideological divides that frame that discussion are strong as ever. The battle between a liberal and conservative Poland is simply being fought on other fronts, with politics of history and memory occupying an important role in it. Today (July 2020), the main ideological conflict revolves around whether sexual and gender minorities have a place in Poland. The LGBT threat was a central campaign theme for PiS both in the EP, parliamentary and presidential elections, raising its head even during the commemorations in the form of a conflict between Dulkiewicz and the Solidarity trade union. For PiS, the so called 'LGBT ideology' is incompatible with Poland's Christian identity, and on top of that, 'LGBT ideology' is compared to Bolshevism, showing that the painful memory of communism is still a useful tool for attacking political opponents²¹³.

The crusade against 'LGBT ideology' relates to another topic deserving of further research: the role of public media in Poland's mnemonic conflict. During my preliminary research, I noticed that in many cases, the *Wiadomości* evening news of the public television channel *Telewizja Polska* (TVP) were a more fervent memory warrior than PiS itself. For example, the channel commented on the 21 theses of the local governments as an initiative that could lead to civil war,²¹⁴ which was a far cry from Duda's moderate comments on the topic²¹⁵. Considering that since 2015 TVP has become a shameless propaganda outlet of the governing party,²¹⁶ the question arises whether this division of work is coordinated. A study of the cooperation of PiS and right-wing print media in the fight against the LGBT threat during the EP elections of 2019 showed that the ultra-conservative weeklies *Sieci* and *Do Rzeczy* systematically echoed and amplified the messages of PiS, allowing PiS politicians to

²¹³ 'Ryba: Ideologia LGBT Większym Zagrozeniem Niż Bolszewizm', wPolityce.pl, accessed 17 July 2020, <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/459466-ryba-ideologia-lgbt-wiekszym-zagrozeniem-niz-bolszewizm>.

²¹⁴ 'Przegrali Wybory, Chcą Wojny Domowej?', *Wiadomości*, accessed 19 July 2020, <http://wiadomosci.tvp.pl/42919244/przegrali-wybory-chca-wojny-domowej>.

²¹⁵ Senat Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 'Uroczyste 80. Posiedzenie Senatu.'

²¹⁶ Eva Połowska, 'Watchdog, Lapdog, or Attack Dog? Public Service Media and the Law and Justice Government in Poland', in *Public Service Broadcasting and Media Systems in Troubled European Democracies*, ed. Eva Połowska and Charlie Beckett (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 241.

appear moderate while still getting a radical message across²¹⁷. A comparative study of the coverage of TVP and another TV channel such as TVN could shed light on whether a similar dynamic was in place between PiS and *Wiadomości* TVP during the 2019 commemorations.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Piotr Żuk and Paweł Żuk, ““Euro-Gomorra and Homopropaganda”: The Culture of Fear and “Rainbow Scare” in the Narrative of Right-Wing Populists Media in Poland as Part of the Election Campaign to the European Parliament in 2019’, *Discourse, Context and Media*, no. 33 (March 2020): 1–11.

²¹⁸ ‘OKRĄGŁY STÓŁ Zapis Debaty Odbytej 4 Kwietnia 2019 Roku w Warszawie’, 5 April 2019.

Conclusions

In my dissertation I set out to answer the following research question: how did different Polish political actors commemorate the events of 1989 in 2019 and why? To answer this question, I utilised Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik's theory of the politics of memory to analyse 29 speeches and texts drawn from thirteen commemorative events centred around the anniversaries of the Roundtable Talks and the semi-free elections of 4 June 1989. To lay the ground for my analysis, I provided a thorough presentation of the political and historical context in which the commemorations took place. Where relevant, I sought additional evidence for my arguments by comparing the commemorations of 2019 to those of ten years ago.

I analysed my data using qualitative content analysis in which I assigned codes to different sections of the speeches ranging from sentences to paragraph-long fragments. I was specifically interested in fragments which involved historical interpretations or where history and present-day politics were conflated. My first round of analysis yielded a large number of preliminary codes which I then adapted to Bernhard and Kubik's framework, resulting in a set of 11 codes and two subcodes. In the final round of analysis, I used these codes to categorise the speakers into different mnemonic actor roles. In line with Bernhard and Kubik's original study, I focused my attention on official mnemonic actors, opting for an in-depth analysis of the official message of the commemorations in favour of analysing the reactions of Polish society to them.

As detailed in the previous chapter, my analysis revealed that the commemorations of 1989 were thoroughly divided, with PiS and the opposition celebrating separately. More than that, the two sides commemorated different events: PiS emphasised the importance of the 40th anniversary of the first pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to Poland and the dissolution of the government of Jan Olszewski, whereas the opposition primarily commemorated the first semi-free elections. The opposition in particular used the commemorations as an opportunity to launch their campaign to the autumn parliamentary elections, showing that the commemorations were as much about attacking political opponents as they were about remembering 1989.

Unlike in 2009, both sides featured mnemonic warriors. For PO, the fact that the party was in opposition precluded the option of adopting a pluralist or abnegator stance to the memory of 1989, although there were notable (pluralist) exceptions, such as Komorowski and the post-communist Kwaśniewski who celebrated together with PO. Conversely, PiS initially took an abnegator stance to the events of 1989, showing meagre interest in organising commemorations. However, as the commemorations unfolded, actors from all sides took warrior positions of different degrees, evoking

elements of three major narratives which can be described as the Solidarity, Pope and Olszewski narrative. Out of PiS politicians, the only mnemonic pluralist was President Duda, although he too drew elements from the Pope narrative and Olszewski narrative.

The analytic framework of Bernhard and Kubik proved its utility in the new temporal setting. The mnemonic actor categories could easily be applied to today's political actors. A group that somewhat strained the framework were the mnemonic warriors of the opposition, who rather acted as fierce defenders of the internationally accepted narrative than as historical revisionists. However, the analysis showed that the category of mnemonic warrior can be applied to all actors who attempt to exclude their political enemies, regardless of the particular content of their historical narrative.

The independent variables that according to Bernhard and Kubik created Poland's fractured memory regime in 2009 held true but had to be expanded. Poland was torn by a deep political rift, but the divide was between two parties stemming from Solidarity rather than between left and right. The basic mnemonic disputes rooted in the irregularities of Poland's negotiated extrication from communism were present, providing the content for the Solidarity, Olszewski and Pope narratives. However, the commemorations were as much motivated by present-day politics as they were by historical interpretations. The fact that neither side utilised the upcoming anniversary as a campaign theme during the EP elections showed that the memory of 1989 was not considered as important for gaining political support as it was ten years ago. An entirely new feature of the commemorations compared to 2009 was the presence of memory layering, which was used by PiS to divert focus from the semi-free elections of 1989 to the Pope and Olszewski, and by the opposition to present the death of Paweł Adamowicz as a symbolic moment which required a return to the values of Solidarity.

There is no reason to believe that the polarisation apparent during the 2019 commemorations is going to diminish. As formulated in an essay by *Rzeczpospolita* journalist Michał Szuldrzyński, the commemorations were not designed to unite but to divide²¹⁹. Both sides decided to exploit the polarisation of Polish society to attack their political opponents rather than to strive towards a unified way of commemorating 1989. Despite calls for national reconciliation, neither side showed any willingness for real compromise. As a result, democratic Poland continues to lack a coherent foundational narrative accepted by the whole of society. This unfortunate fact adds to a long list of issues polarising the Polish nation, placing a challenge on the future of Poland's democracy.

²¹⁹ Michał Szuldrzyński, 'Rocznice, Które Mają Dzielić', *Rzeczpospolita Historia*, accessed 29 February 2020, <https://www.rp.pl/Historia/305309888-Rocznice-ktore-maja-dzielic.html>.

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Annex I

The chart displays all the analysed events and who performed in them, together with direct links to the full performances. Performers who were not analysed are not included in the chart, but even those performances can be viewed through the links.

The abbreviations are based on the first three letters of the performer's last name and the name of the event. For example, Andrzej Duda's letter to the conference On the Downfall of Communism is shortened as Dud-DOW. A shorter system with just the initials and a date (e.g. AD_4.4) was not possible, as some of the key mnemonic actors had the same initials (Andrzej Duda and Aleksandra Dulciewicz), many actors had several performances, and often those performances fell on the same day.

Date	Name of Event	Performers Analysed
5.2.2019	Interview on Polsat News (POL)	Andrzej Duda (Dud-POL): https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wywiady/art,189,prezydent-o-okraglym-stole-bilans-nie-jest-jednoznacznie-pozytywny-ale-jest-dodatni.html
5.2.2019	Oxford-style Debate about the Roundtable (OXF)	Andrzej Duda (Dud-OXF): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pv_a-pP-_OA
4.4.2019	Conference: On the Downfall of Communism. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe (DOW)	Andrzej Duda (Dud-DOW) Video shown at the conference (Vid-DOW) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy8ukMJqQ10&t=2910s (entire event)

5.4.2019	Conference: The Heritage of the Round Table 30 Years Later (HER)	Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Kwa-HER) Bronisław Komorowski (Kom-HER)
3.6.2019	Conference: He Awoke Solidarity in Us – On the 40th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Fatherland (AWO)	Piotr Duda (DudP-AWO) https://tysol.pl/a33135--Relacja-online-NSZZ-Solidarnosc-obchodzi-40-rocznice-pierwszej-Pielgrzymki-Ojca-Swietego-do-Ojczyzny Mateusz Morawiecki (Mor-AWO) https://www.premier.gov.pl/multimedia/wideo/premier-mateusz-morawiecki-podczas-konferencji-obudzil-w-nas-solidarnosc-w-gdansku.html Andrzej Duda (Dud-AWO) https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/inne/art,1021,idea-solidarnosci-gloszona-przez-jana-pawla-ii-jest-fundamentem-budowy-silnej-i-dostatniej-polski.html
4.6.2019	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Former Presidents at the European Solidarity Centre (ECS)	Andrzej Duda (Dud-ECS) https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/inne/art,1022,jesli-zabraknie-w-nas-solidarnosci-jesli-nic-nie-bedzie-nas-ze-soba-laczyc-to-polska-bedzie-slaba-a-nasza-wolnosc-znowu-zagrozona.html Lech Wałęsa (Wał-ECS) Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Kwa-ECS)

		<p>Bronisław Komorowski (Kom-ECS)</p> <p>https://vimeo.com/340662588 (entire event)</p>
4.6.2019	<p>Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Proclamation of the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity (DEC)</p>	<p>Aleksandra Dulciewicz (Dul-DEC)</p> <p>https://vimeo.com/340672824</p> <p>The declaration itself (Dec-DEC)</p> <p>https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/deklaracja-wolnosc-i-solidarnosci-odspiewanie-hymnu-narodowego,a,147600</p>
4.6.2019	<p>Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Self-Governing Republic (SEL)</p>	<p>21 Theses of Local Governments (The-SEL)</p> <p>https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/21-tez-samorzadowcow-dla-polski-prezydent-dulkiewicz-dzis-jest-ten-pierwszy-krok-do-zmiany-na-lepsze,a,147761</p>
4.6.2019	<p>Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: The Rally (RAL)</p>	<p>Aleksandra Dulciewicz (Dul-RAL)</p> <p>Lech Wałęsa (Wał-RAL)</p> <p>Donald Tusk (Tus-RAL)</p> <p>https://vimeo.com/340649419 (entire event)</p>
4.6.2019	<p>Special Sitting of the Senate (SEN)</p>	<p>Resolution of the Sejm and Senate (Res-SEN)</p> <p>http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc8.nsf/uchwaly/3465_u.htm</p> <p>Andrzej Duda (Dud-SEN)</p> <p>Marek Kuchciński (Kuc-SEN)</p>

		<p>Mateusz Morawiecki (Mor-SEN)</p> <p>Stanisław Karczewski (Kar-SEN)</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=343182269713115&ref=watch_permalink (entire event)</p>
4.6.2019	Unveiling of the Foundation Stone for a Memorial to Olszewski (OLS)	<p>Antoni Macierewicz (Mac-OLS)</p> <p>Mateusz Morawiecki (Mor-OLS)</p> <p>https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/450224-odslonieto-kamien-wegielny-pod-budowe-pomnika-olszewskiego (entire event)</p>
4.6.2019	Swearing in of New Ministers (MIN)	<p>Andrzej Duda (Dud-MIN)</p> <p>Mateusz Morawiecki (Mor-MIN)</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tL20eHqclHA (entire event)</p>
4.6.2019	Interview on Radio WNET (WNE)	<p>Jarosław Kaczyński (Kac-WNE)</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PH_nKyzvipw&t=9s</p>

Annex II

Abbreviation	Name of Speaker/Document	Date	Name of Event
Dec-DEC	Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Proclamation of the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity
Dud-POL	Andrzej Duda, president	5.2.	Interview on Polsat News
Dud-OXF	Andrzej Duda, president	5.2.	Oxford-style Debate about the Roundtable
Dud-DOW	Andrzej Duda, president	4.4.	Conference: On the Downfall of Communism. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe
Dud-AWO	Andrzej Duda, president	3.6.	Conference: He Awoke Solidarity in Us – On the 40th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Fatherland
Dud-ECS	Andrzej Duda, president	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Former Presidents at the European Solidarity Centre
Dud-SEN	Andrzej Duda, president	4.6.	Special Sitting of the Senate
Dud-MIN	Andrzej Duda, president	4.6.	Swearing in of New Ministers
DudP-AWO	Piotr Duda, president of the Solidarity trade union	3.6.	Conference: He Awoke Solidarity in Us – On the 40th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Fatherland
Dul-DEC	Aleksandra Dulkiiewicz, mayor of Gdańsk	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Proclamation of the Declaration of Freedom and Solidarity
Dul-RAL	Aleksandra Dulkiiewicz, mayor of Gdańsk	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: The Rally

Kac-WNE	Jarosław Kaczyński, PiS chairman	4.6.	Interview on Radio WNET
Kar-SEN	Stanisław Karczewski, speaker of the Senate	4.6.	Special Sitting of the Senate
Kom-HER	Bronisław Komorowski, former president	5.4.	Conference: The Heritage of the Round Table 30 Years Later
Kom-ECS	Bronisław Komorowski, former president	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Former Presidents at the European Solidarity Centre
Kuc-SEN	Marek Kuchciński, Speaker of the Sejm	4.6.	Special Sitting of the Senate
Kwa-HER	Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former president	5.4.	Conference: The Heritage of the Round Table 30 Years Later
Kwa-ECS	Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former president	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Former Presidents at the European Solidarity Centre
Mac-OLS	Antoni Macierewicz, Sejm deputy	4.6.	Unveiling of the Foundation Stone for a Memorial to Olszewski
Mor-AWO	Mateusz Morawiecki, prime minister	3.6.	Conference: He Awoke Solidarity in Us – On the 40th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Fatherland
Mor-SEN	Mateusz Morawiecki, prime minister	4.6.	Special Sitting of the Senate

Mor-OLS	Mateusz Morawiecki, prime minister	4.6.	Unveiling of the Foundation Stone for a Memorial to Olszewski
Mor-MIN	Mateusz Morawiecki, prime minister	4.6.	Swearing in of New Ministers
Res-SEN	Resolution of the Sejm and Senate	4.6.	Special Sitting of the Senate
The-SEL	21 Theses of Local Governments	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Self-Governing Republic
Tus-RAL	Donald Tusk, president of the European Council	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: The Rally
Vid-DOW	Video shown at the conference	4.4.	Conference: On the Downfall of Communism. 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe
Wał-ECS	Lech Wałęsa, former president	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: Former Presidents at the European Solidarity Centre
Wał-RAL	Lech Wałęsa, former president	4.6.	Celebration of Freedom and Solidarity: The Rally

Annex III

Category	Name of Code	Corresponding to Bernhard and Kubik's Conceptualisation (2014)	Criteria	Example
Mnemonic Abnegator				
Code 1	not organising or attending an event	"Avoid mnemonic contests." (15)	a) Not organising an event that according to the opponent should be organised b) not attending such an event organised by the opponent.	The unwillingness of PiS to organise major state-endorsed celebrations on 4 June; the decision of PiS to organise the swearing in of new ministers on 4 June.
Code 2	not mentioning a key person or historical event	"A politics of convenient or purposive forgetting" (14)	Not mentioning a key person or event in a situation where historically speaking, the person should be mentioned.	A speaker reciting the history of the Solidarity movement but not mentioning Lech Wałęsa. (Kuchciński 4.6, Senate)
Mnemonic Pluralist				
Code 3	admitting the merits of many sides	Not explicitly stated in the conceptualisation, but the authors described Tusk in 2009 as a pluralist for admitting the merits of many sides (71-75).	Giving credit to different, sometimes opposing sides, such as politicians from PiS, PO, the former communists, the Pope, Wałęsa.	"our heroes Lech Wałęsa, Bogdan Borusewicz, Jacek Kuroń, Zbigniew Bujak, Lech Kaczyński, Andrzej Gwiazda, Anna Walentynowicz and many, many others". (Duda 4.6, ECS)
Code 4	arguing that history is not black-and-white	"there are several visions of the past that are acceptable." (15)	Warning against too much simplification; referring to the ambiguity of a historical event.	"I will admonish you a little bit about the memory of those who were the other side of that dialogue, because sometimes I have the impression that in contemporary historical writing, you can get the idea that Solidarity discussed with Solidarity and signed an agreement with Solidarity". (Kwaśniewski 4.6, ECS)
Code 5	calling for dialogue	"Negotiation on memory issues but within an agreement on the fundamentals of mnemonic politics." (15)	Any statements calling for disagreeing sides to reach out to each other; calls for compromise; talking about the importance of dialogue.	"Monologues do not create communities. Only dialogue can create a community". (Kwaśniewski 4.6, ECS)

Mnemonic Warrior				
Code 6	defining a single correct reading of history	“Memory is non-negotiable, as there is only one ‘true’ vision of the past.” (15)	Appears negatively through the absence of Codes 3 and 4: a lack of statements admitting the merits of many sides or that history is not black-and-white.	Appears on the speech level.
Code 7	drawing a sharp line between ‘us’ and ‘them’	“Mnemonic warriors tend to draw a sharp line between themselves (the proprietors of the ‘true’ vision of the past) and other actors who cultivate ‘wrong’ or ‘false’ versions of history.” (13)	Any statements where the speaker defines ‘us’ as opposed to the political opponent as ‘them’.	“If it had not been for our wonderful, common fight, I would not have become president, and they would also not have become presidents, or ever come to power. Thanks to our victories, they are now able to serve in these different roles”. (Wałęsa 4.6, Rally)
Subcode 7.1	defining oneself as the (only) inheritor of a historical reading	Same as above: defining oneself as the carrier of the ‘true’ vision of the past (13)	Promises to continue the work of a past hero; comparing ‘us’ or the audience to the people being admired. Using the words ‘solidarity’ or ‘solidary’ as well as defining the values of the Solidarity movement are also part of this subcode.	“Prime minister Jan Olszewski, we thank you for all your work, for you path. We promise not to step away from the wonderful ideals that you tried to always engrain in us”. (Morawiecki 4.6, Olszewski memorial) “solidarity meaning mutual respect despite differences and a decent life for everyone” (Duda 4.6, ECS)
Subcode 7.2	associating the political opponent with the enemy in a historical reading	Derived from the above: ‘them’ as not only liars, but as inheritors of the enemy in the warrior’s narrative (13)	Directly or indirectly comparing the political opponent with the enemy in the historical narrative. Tusk’s comparison of PiS to the communists is part of this subcode, as are all references by PiS to ‘post-communism’, because PiS blames post-communism on its political opponents. Evoking elements of the	“Your public television, our internet” (Tusk 4.6, Rally) “others [in Magdalenka] went on far-reaching, arrogant fraternisation [with the communists] for which they are rightly criticised, it caused distaste already then”. (Kaczyński 4.6, Wnet)

			schematic narrative template ‘treacherous Poles VS patriotic Poles’ is also part of this subcode.	
Code 8	espousing a mythologised vision of time	“the distinction between the past, present, and future is sometimes collapsed.” (13)	Any statements where events of the past and present are blended together; addressing a person from the past and pledging loyalty to them.	“We are not afraid to go against the current. (- -) For we know that we are following your [the Pope’s] road”. (Morawiecki 3.6, Pope conference)
Code 9	referring to a paradise lost/aberrant past	“the meaning of events is often determined by their relation to some ‘paradise lost’ or—negatively—an ‘aberrant past’.” (13)	Any references to mistakes of the past or a past that should be returned to, with the idea that those mistakes/goals are now being addressed again.	“We should also remember it [4 June 1992], because it was a very sad date, that is why our history of the Third Republic is so twisted, difficult”. (Morawiecki 4.6, Senate)
Unrelated to the Mnemonic Actors: Points of Agreement				
Code 10	1989 as a bloodless revolution	N/A	Stating that the Roundtable and 4 June helped avoid bloodshed.	“Poland gave an example to Europe and the whole world that it is possible to build democracy without violence and bloodshed”. (Tusk 4.6, Rally)
Code 11	Poland as responsible for the fall of the Berlin wall	N/A	Stating that the fall of communism began in Poland, often explicitly mentioning the Berlin wall.	“Do you remember that 30 years ago, first there were elections in Poland, and then the Berlin wall fell? It was thanks to us”. (Dulkiewicz 4.6, Rally)