ABSTRACT

The case we analyze is that which has come to be called the Katyn Massacre, the murder of approximately 14,500 prominent Poles apparently by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) in the early spring of 1940. While these men were actually held in three different prisoner of war camps, the first mass graves were uncovered by the advancing German army in 1943 in the Katyn forest in the Ukraine and the incident is now commonly associated with this place. A memorial cemetery has been constructed there and it has become the site of pilgrimages and other forms of commemoration. Who the actual perpetrators of the massacre are continues to be a matter of dispute. While most accept that the killings were carried out by the NKVD, and official documents released by the Soviet government in the 1990s appear to confirm this, there still exist those who claim that the Nazis were the responsible party, a claim originally made by the Soviet government in 1943 when the bodies were uncovered.

The massacre of these Polish citizens was from the very beginning encased in political conflict and controversy. The individuals killed were representative figures and their murder could never be treated simply as a crime against individual persons. The story of Katyn is one of silencing as much as it is of suppressed memory, thus one central issue of our paper concerns how traumatic memory, a category we will define and elaborate, is maintained under conditions of extreme political domination and public denial; another is the construction of a trauma narrative on this basis. In this latter process, we will highlight the witnessing and representative role of intellectuals, in the broad sense to include creative individuals such as artists, writers and filmmakers.

Introduction

In what came to be called the Katyn Massacre, the precipitating occurrence was the mass murder of over 14,500 Polish elite officers and over 7,000 other Polish citizens captured by the NKVD in April 1940 following the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland on September 17, 1939. The directly affected collectivities were the Polish military, at that time under attack not only from the west by the German army but also from the east by the Soviets, and the families and friends of those killed. However, neither the army nor the relatives of the murdered soldiers knew the precise circumstances of what happened. It took years to establish historical facts and to narrate them in a coherent and meaningful way. One reason why this took as long as it did was the

concerted attempts made by the wartime governments in the United States and Great Britain to silence any public discussion in the fear of alienating their Soviet ally, as well as the systematic attempts by the latter to cover up the facts. Any attempt on the part of Polish citizens in occupied Poland to raise the issue of possible Soviet guilt was treated as pro-German treason. As time progressed, the affected collectivities expanded from the military and relatives and friends to include the Polish nation, as the event, once constructed, became an important symbol in the struggle for independence from Soviet domination. It was also its potential anti-Soviet propaganda value which in large part motivated a renewed interest in the United States and Great Britain during the Cold War.

According to a cultural sociological understanding of social tragedy, this particular war crime could emerge as a cultural trauma capable of deeply affecting whole collectivities only insofar as the claims to truth could be firmly established and the symbolic attribution of suffering and guilt effectively enacted in the form of a story couched in universalistic moral terms. The present project aims at exploring the social conditions under which these claims were made in the name of these victims as well as the cultural trajectory of the trauma narrative that followed the event. We will investigate *how* the war crime of Katyn massacre entered the core of Polish collective identity, *when* it unfolded, and *what* were the results of transformation of that crime into a major cultural crisis that to this day overshadows Polish-Russian political relations.

While looking at the historical facts, we realize that there are several important social processes at stake. *First*, from the very beginning the construction of the trauma narrative of the victims was accompanied by the construction of what we may call a counter-trauma narrative by the perpetrators who sought to set forth an incorrect attribution of responsibility for the crime and to actively conceal the circumstances of the massacre. *Second*, we recognize that the unequal distribution of political and military power during World War II, not only between Poles, Germans and Russians, but also between Poles and their Western Allies, played an important role in conditioning the context of the whole story. In fact, we claim that a distinctive characteristic of traumatic narratives is an asymmetrical relation between perpetrator and victim and that this, in part, is what makes cultural trauma. In the present case, we deal with a situation that might be described as emergence of dialectic between the trauma narrative of the relatively weak victims based on strong premises and the counter trauma discourse of the relatively strong suspects based on weak premises. *Third*, while the power distribution mattered and continues to

matter, it is necessary to explore the conditions under which the correct attribution of responsibility for the massacre was prevented, the controversy sustained, and an eventual resolution made possible.

In other words, we recognize that it was not only the sheer power of political and military control, but also the intellectual attachments and emotional dispositions of various social groups on all sides that played a significant role in framing and handling the issue. These attachments, beliefs and perceptions, i.e. a set of time- and place-specific cultural codes and attitudes shaped the ways in which the incident was approached during the war and subsequently thereafter. One result is that these cultural codes initially obscured and suppressed the trauma drama of Katyn. From the perspective of cultural sociological theory, this very fact of the memory of painful experience being suppressed, not only the ruthless carnage itself, contributed to the emergence of collective anxiety and enabled victims to construct yet another dimension of their collective injury.

This collective memory of terrible injury had to be first retained, however, throughout the time of foreign occupation (German and Soviet), passed on to others and then discussed as well as visualized/iconized in various ways, if it was to enter Polish society and other societies as a major cultural force. For many Poles (as well as the German and Soviet leaders), the Katyn massacre, the calculated murder of a national elite, symbolized the death of the 2nd Republic (1918-1939) (Paul 1991: 113). In order to analyze this process, we have decided to employ an analytic binary of the private and the public spheres. At least in Poland, the memory of the Katyn massacre has been passed on from generation to generation within the restricted channels of the private sphere, but we recognize that as such it could not directly constitute a fully-fledged cultural trauma that – in turn – would establish the status of the massacre as cultural crisis and more universal moral tragedy. [43]

This memory was repressed by the Soviet political control over Poland efficiently exerted between 1945 and 1989, and as a result it could not be introduced to the Polish domestic public

[43] Is it a specific factor in the Katyn case that there were no competing 'emblematic memories' (Stern 2004) within Poland itself, as in many other cases? In narrating the memory of the Chilean military coup of 1973 and the many 'disappeared' one finds several (Stern locates 4 ideal-typical emblematic memory frames) competing frames within the affected national population. While there may have been contemporary Poles who endorsed suppressing public discussion of Soviet responsibility, everyone, except for "the small minority-mostly communists-who chose to believe the Soviet claims' (Cienciala et al 2007:219) appears to have accepted it was they who were responsible.

sphere, the locus of crucial engagements with the event. However, it was possible, at least to a certain extent, among the Polish diaspora in the West, especially in France, England and the United States to publically address it. The publicized trauma narrative of Polish emigrants and exiles was fueled by their own private memories and the existential anxiety and pain of the relatives of those killed who remained in Poland. However, as long as the Cold War status quo maintained the political and cultural structures that initially sought to repress the discourse of Katyn tragedy, the construction of cultural trauma remained latent and stalled. The potential of symbolic power associated with private sufferings can be fully actualized only in broad public sphere and only when the directly affected communities themselves are able to express it verbally and visually in a sustained way that eventually transcends individual tragedies and projects them onto the moral screen of the whole nation and later international community.

At the sociological level, we distinguish three crucial carrier groups (survivors, relatives and intellectuals/politicians interested in exploring the case) who sustained the trauma narrative within the two dimensions of social reality we have specified, some of them in both spheres simultaneously. They had their own social organizations and attempted to use the public institutions of their host countries as well. Some of them delivered extraordinary testimonies replete with what one could call thick descriptions that almost single handedly established Katyn as cultural tragedy because it endowed it with a tremendous sense of moral sensitivity and historical authenticity, for example Jozef Czapski's *Inhuman Land*, J.K. Zawodny's *Death in the Forest*, and Salomon Slowes *The Road to Katyn.*

However, it was only under the changing political and cultural conditions following the Autumn of Nations of 1989 and the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union that their trauma narrative could truly become a powerful public phenomenon, a grand trauma drama. For the first time in the post-War period it became possible for the public representations of it to surface widely and for a truly international discourse to emerge. In short, the Katyn story has undergone a metamorphosis from a political conflict and tragedy known by few to a genocidal event discussed by many. Only then was the Katyn massacre completely transformed from war crime to collective cultural crisis.

The most recent visualization of this traumatic event by the famous film director Andrzej Wajda and the whole gamut (and lack) of responses to the movie which have themselves created

a cultural story whose complexity refracts, as it were, the complexity of the actual trauma construction. There are at once compelling personal, national, international, moral and intellectual aspects to it that can possibly illuminate the Katyn trauma. Since they are brought to public life by a single event of artistic production we can contribute to the understanding of trauma construction by adding a performative analysis of it to a standard historical presentation of the story at hand. Such extraordinary individuals like Czapski and Wajda, both at once visual artists and intellectuals, were very much aware of the fact that events need representations if collective memory is to be firmly entrenched in the cultural fabric of society and to effectively support a formative sense of collective injury, not only among those who directly identify themselves with those murdered and their families because of national and civil ties but also among those who empathize with the victims because of more universal moral ties. Andrzej Wajda emphasized the role of "showing Katyn to the world" and the intensity of moral and cultural shock of audiences in the West that ensued, for example after the screening of the movie at UCLA before the Oscars ceremony of 2008 (Wajda 2008). Thus we have to recognize an iconic aspect of trauma construction as well, not only the salient discursive regimes. In the introduction to "Inhuman Land" written in 1984, Jozef Czapski mentioned that the greatest reward for him was that after many years there were still people who wanted to read his Katyn story. His mission, therefore, was proven to be complete. However, from the very beginning he was convinced that there's certain kind of profound paradox involved in the whole story. In the book he notices that "it would be impossible to live, impossible to smile, if one always remembered things and never erased any memories" (Czapski 2001: 96).

Thus beyond the dialectics of victims' trauma narrative and perpetrators' counter trauma discourse there is an important dialectics of memory and forgetting. This dialectics actualizes itself within the temporal logic of generational change and continued cultural renewal. This was clearly understood by Czapski who while talking about the continued interest in his work as the greatest reward modestly admitted that he "had not dreamt about it." The responses to the representations like his and his own attitude towards it should be culturally unpacked, for they contain the key to understanding what it really means that social actions become cultural events through the process of symbolic construction, not simply by themselves. This is one of the key things that this Katyn case study can contribute to sociological theory.

A Time Line of the Occurrences

In August 23, 1939, the governments of Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression agreement, popularly known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which essentially eliminated Poland from the map by dividing its territory between the two countries. The document also contained a secret agreement which legitimated the elimination of its intelligentsia. The following year in the early spring, approximately 15,000 Polish citizens, (the issue of whether or not they were prisoners of war is a legal issue, as no formal declaration of war against the Soviet Union was made), primarily reserve and regular officers in the military, but also including members of the police corps were murdered in the rural area of western Russia. [44] These individuals were generally recognized as the cream of Polish society. [45] The killings were carried out with German-made revolvers by the Soviet secret police (NKVD), individually with a single shot to the back of the head and the victims buried in stacked layers of tightly-packed mass graves. [46] The prisoners, mostly men but including at least one prominent female officer (Lt. Janina Musnicka Lewandowska, daughter of General Dowbor Musnicki), were held in three separate camps in the Soviet Union and killed within the space of a few weeks. Many prominent Polish Jews were included amongst the victims, about 5% of the inmates of one of the three camps (Kozelsk) were Jews, according to one account, among them the chief rabbi of the Polish army (Paul 1991: 70) and Slowes who survived. There were also Muslims killed and the monument now but in the memory of the Katyn Massacre contains four different religious symbols. [47] After the betrayal of the non-aggression pact agreement with German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviets gather captured pro-Soviet officers in the Polish military to form a Polish division in the Red Army. These officers present a list of those who would be

[44] There were also about 7,000 civilians killed at other unknown locations. According to Paul (1991:105), "for unknown reasons, the NKVD decided to spare 448 men from a total of 15,400…of those spared, 245 came from Kozelsk, 79 from Starobelsk, and 124 from Ostashkov" .

[45] According to Allen Paul (1991:65) "the German and Soviet governments collaborated closely in their efforts to eliminate the Polish intelligentsia". He and others suggest that the two governments may also have colluded in the Katyn massacre, making later claims and counter-claims of guilt and responsibility even more complicated.

[46] Only one eyewitness lived to describe the moment and method of execution, Stanislaw Swianiewicz now a professor of economics and author of In the Shadow of Katyn (W cieniu Katynia) 1976.

[47] One survivor, Father Zdzislaw Peszkowski, recounts, "At Kozelsk, I discovered Poland". Allen Paul, who interviewed Peszkowski in 1989, explains: "What he meant was that at Kozelsk he met the best that Poland could offer. At twenty-one he had been thrown together with men from all parts of the country, a cross-section of the nation's professional elite" (Paul 1991:70-71). Peszkowski was not a priest at the time but after receiving a Phd in Polish literature from Oxford after the war was ordained in the United States in 1954.

suitable to the head of the NKVD. This list contains many of those who had just months before been executed. The Russians tell these Polish officers that these men had been handed over to the Germans (Cienciala et al eds 2007:208). Later, in August 1941, the Soviets release General Wladyslaw Anders from a prisoner of war camp and persuade him to head a relatively independent Polish army to aid in the fight against the Germans. One of Anders first official acts in this new role is to obtain the release of Captain Jozef Czapski, a Russian-speaking Pole and an internationally recognized artist, with the intention of finding out what happened to the missing officers. In February 1943, the Soviets organize a Russian-based Polish government-in-exile to counter the one already established in London, which was the one legally recognized at the time. This is two months before the Germans announce the discovery of the bodies in the Katyn forest, as the advancing German army forces the Soviets to abandon the region in late summer 1941.

Early in the spring of 1943, a German military unit occupying a NKVD guest house in Katyn reports finding bodies of Polish soldiers. In part because of the severe weather conditions, but also because of the historic events occurring with the battle of Stalingrad (October 1942-February 1943) the Germans wait until late March to investigate and exhume the bodies. On 13 April 1943 in a broadcast carried by all German controlled radio stations, including those in occupied Poland, Radio Berlin announces that "the local population indicated a Soviet execution site at Kosogory…about 3000 bodies…had already been uncovered in a huge pit…" (128) and that these were the bodies of "thousands of officers of the former Polish army, interned in the U.S.S.R. in 1939 and bestially murdered by the Bolsheviks" (Paul 1991:210). On 17 April, the Polish government asks the International Red Cross (IRC) to investigate. Coming as it did in the wake of the defeat at Stalingrad, the discovery of the bodies at Katyn, which the German command mistakenly thought represented all the murdered Polish officers, presented a significant opportunity in the propaganda war and "Goebbels now saw an opportunity to divide the Allies. He wrote in his diary that as soon as he heard of this statement, he secured Hitler's sanction for the German Red Cross to ask the IRC for an investigation of the Katyn graves" (Cienciala et al 2007:218). [48] This insures that the murder at Katyn will become intimately couched within the wider political conflicts and intrigues of the war.

[48] Paul (1991:207) puts it this way: "The Germans recognized from the outset that their discovery presented a golden opportunity to split the Western Allies. They were keenly aware of the serious rift between the Soviets and the Polish government-in-exile over disputed territory in the western Ukraine and western Byelorussia. The Germans

Following a German request, an international commission worked in the Katyn forest carefully and systematically exhuming the bodies between 28-30 April 1943. The commission produced a 350 page report identifying the bodies and establishing the cause and approximate time of death (check on this). The Polish Red Cross, which at first refused to participate for fear of supporting German propaganda (and indeed the Germans thought Polish representation necessary to making their case believable), was represented at the site by a group of forensic specialists and other technicians, including some who were active in the Polish underground. The advancing Russian army and the lack of further discoveries cause the Germans to suspend operations and by June the Polish representatives are back in occupied Poland. [49] They strongly suggest Soviet guilt, but the use of German pistols and the difficulty in establishing the exact date of the executions, along with the clear propaganda motivations of the Germans, raise doubts. In addition to the continuous radio announcements (in Kracow and other major occupied cities the names of the dead were solemnly and repeatedly pronounced over loud speakers in the central square), lists of the names of the dead are published in German language newspapers throughout occupied Poland. However, the question of who carried out the killings is publicly disputed, the Germans accusing the Soviets and vice versa. Two days after the Berlin announcement (April 15, 1943), Moscow fires back with this statement: "In launching this monstrous invention the German-Fascist scoundrels did not hesitate at the most unscrupulous and base lies, in their attempts to cover up crimes which, as has now become evident, were perpetrated by themselves" (cited by Paul 1991:211). Stalin takes the opportunity to use the cooperation between the Polish Red Cross and German authorities as a pretext to break off relations with the Polish government in Exile, calling them "Hitler's Polish Collaborators". This

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knew also that more than ten thousand Polish officers captured by the Soviets in 1939 were still missing when General Anders and his army-in-exile left the U.S.S.R. in 1942".

[49] The advancing Red Army also was the precipitating cause of a very dramatic attempt to preserve some of the incriminating documents which would help establish Soviet guilt. The documents found on the bodies of the victims at Katyn, such as newspaper clippings and other dated material which would have importance in establishing the date of the executions were hurriedly collected by the Germans and shipped to occupied Poland for safe-keeping for fear of falling in the hands of the NKVD which was keenly aware of both their existence and importance. These documents were later packed into fourteen shipping crates as the Russian army approached Krakow where they were kept and sent to Germany. Further advances by the Soviet army and the pursuit of the NKVD pushed the documents further and further Westward, until they ended up in the private home of the elderly father of Dr. Werner Beck, one of the forensic experts enlisted by the Germans to carry out the exhumations at Katyn. Beck had himself seen to it that the documents arrived there, all the while with the Soviets in hot pursuit. The crates we finally burned on at his request, before they could fall into Soviet hands. All this came to light during the American House hearings in 1952, before which Beck testified (see Paul 1991:269ff. for the full account).

became one of the interpretative frames that would define any attempts by Poles to dispute the Soviet claims of German guilt.

Late in 1943, the Soviets establish their own Special Commission (The Burdenko Commission) to investigate 'the Circumstances of the Shooting of Polish Officer Prisoners by the German-Fascist Invaders in the Katyn Forest" (Sanford 137). Their report issued in 1944 supported this claim, repeating the false German figure of 11,000 bodies at Katyn. [50] A few days after publication, a ceremony was held at the gravesite in the Katyn forest where Polish soldiers of the Kosciuszko Division in the Soviet army paraded listened to a speech by their commanding officer, Colonel Berling in which the following words were uttered: "Our inexorable foe, the German, wishes to destroy our whole nation because he desires to seize our land…. That is why they murdered here in Katyn Forest the Polish officers and men. The blood of our brothers which was spilled in this forest cries for revenge" (reported by an eyewitness at the House Hearings and cited by Paul 1991:260). Katyn and the cry for vengeance became a strong motivating agent in both forces of the Polish military fighting in the war, those led by Berling and those more closely linked to the West, originally led by Anders.[51] The Soviets would name a tank the Avenger with this in mind. It was also a strong motivating force in the Polish resistance and in what was called the Home Army, the force behind the tragic Warsaw Uprising in 1944 where Polish forces were hopeless outnumbered by the Germans and where the Red Army, camped on the outskirts of Warsaw, watched passively. The Soviets viewed the Home Army with the same lens as it viewed the London government-in exile, as Polish nationalists who were a threat to Soviet aims in the

[50] The Russian report gained support from two significant Americans present when the Soviet report was made public. They were John Melby of the American embassy in Moscow and Kathleen Harriman, the daughter of Averell Hariman, the American ambassador. In her report, Harriman wrote "…it is my opinion that the Poles were murdered by the Germans. The most convincing evidence to uphold this was the methodical manner in which the job (the murders, R.E.)was done, something the Commission thought not sufficiently important to stress". Melby wrote: "It is apparent that the evidence in the Russian case is incomplete in several aspects, that it is badly put together, and that the show was put on for the benefit of the correspondents without opportunity for independent investigation or verification. On balance, however, and despite the loopholes, the Russian case is convincing" (both cited in Paul 1991:259). This is the message that Ambassador Harriman then sent to the U.S. State Department. Both Melby and Kathleen Harriman would later reverse their opinion when testifying before the House Select Committee in 1952.

The issue of the 'methodical manner' of the killings is an important one in that for both sides, it symbolized the ruthless inhumanity of the other. For those third parties, the manner of killing also was important in confirming already established images. For example, for many who supported the Allies, such as the two individuals above, the Germans were easily associated with such evil and the Russians less so. The Poles however had long experience of the ruthlessness on both sides in this struggle and could as easily see this act carried out by either.

[51] Just weeks before Normandy, the Polish Second Corps, led by Anders, were decisive in the battle of Monte Cassino on the road to Rome and the defeat of the German army on the Italian front. Other Polish troops were among those who landed on the Normandy beachhead in June 1944.

region and they did all they could to discredit and destroy both. Polish hopes and their sense of betrayal by both the Soviets and the British in this event are powerfully represented in Wajda's well-known trilogy.

At the Nuremberg tribunals in 1946 the prosecution of the perpetrators of the Katyn massacre fell under Soviet jurisdiction as it occurred in their allotted zone. The indictment read: "In September 1941 11, 000 Polish officers, prisoners of war, were killed in the Katyn woods near Smolensk". While it did not name the Germans as perpetrators, it was clear from the dating of the event who was to blame, as the region was at that point under German occupation. The case presented was based on the findings of the earlier Soviet report (Paul 1991:335). The German lawyers put up a strong defense and there was much suspicion of Soviet guilt, but in the end the Soviets formally withdrew their claims the case was omitted from the final verdicts announced in late September, 1946. Besides the general ambiguity amongst the Allies, another reason given was that the Tribunal was concerned only with German war crimes. GB and the US are reluctant to confront their Soviet allies on this matter and seek to bury it as an issue, the Polish government-in exile had expected this and sought to have the issue of Katyn excluded from consideration at Nuremburg.

With the continued Soviet presence, any discussion of Katyn was strictly forbidden in post-war Poland. One incident, recounted by one of the families of Katyn victims followed by Allen Paul, will suffice. "Shortly after the war, Magda Czarnek, then a medical student at the Jagiellonian University, met on a crowded Krakow streetcar an acquaintance she had not seen for several years. After exchanging a few pleasantries, the woman asked, "And how is your father?" Didn't you know?" Magda replied. "We lost him at Katyn." These words brought a shaken look to the woman's face as she glanced quickly at the passengers nearby, worried that some of them might have heard Magda's answer. Turning back to Magda she whispered, "Don't you know?" That is not something to say in public!" (quoted in Paul 1991:334). With much of their recent history deemed forbidden as topics of public discussion, Poles were directed to the official account of the war given in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia.* As something publicly forbidden, reference of Katyn was kept within the bounds of the private sphere, while in the public memory it became a symbol for Soviet oppression. If public discussion was forbidden in Poland, this was not the case

for the émigré Polish communities in the West. In the Cold war and under pressure from Polish-Americans, most notably the Polish American Congress (PAC, established in 1944, Sanford 141) leads to the creation of a congressional committee called the American Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Massacre, the Lane Committee. In 1951 the House establishes a Select Committee to investigate 'the facts, evidence and circumstances of the Katyn forest massacre" (142). Some of the witnesses called wear hoods while testifying to avoid identification for fear of their families living in Poland. Hearings held throughout 1952, in the highly politicized time of the Korean War and McCarthyism. In its final report, December 1952 named the Soviets as the responsible agent and recommended a case be made at the UN and the International Court of Justice against the Soviet Union and called for the establishment of an International Commission to investigate crimes against humanity. The USSR was denounced for 'one of the most barbarous crimes against humanity' (144). In 1965 a US postage stamp is issued commemorating the event and implying Soviet guilt, this was pushed through by Congressman Edward Derwinski of Illinois, Chicago having the largest concentration of Polish Americans. There is a campaign to establish a Katyn monument in Great Britain, which is strongly supported by the American based Polonia, an association of Polish Americans. In 1972 the Daily Telegraph prints a headline "Russian guilt for Katyn Reaffirmed" (Sanford 180). Books appear in GB and a BBC tv program 1971. A memorial is built in London in 1976 (185), yet it does not mention the perpetrators. Rise of dissident organizations and the emergence of Solidarity bring Katyn forcefully into the Polish public sphere. Intellectuals involved in KOR, the Worker's Defense Committee established in 1976 makes Katyn a central issue, calls for an April Anniversary commemoration and for "Polish citizens and émigrés to commemorate the anniversary of Katyn not in a spirit of revenge, but in a spirit of truth and fraternity among all people of good will of all nations" (Lipinski 351), so as not to confront the USSR in a direct way. Although CPSU chairman Nikita Khrushchev apparently ordered the files destroyed, the folder containing the original execution orders remained in the Soviet archives. In 1988, Polish PM Jaruzelski and Russian leader Gorbachev agree to the construction of a Katyn Memorial. In July 1988 at a meeting with Polish intellectuals, Gorbachev promises "he would accept the truth".

On April 13, 1990 the 50th Anniversary of the Massacre, Gorbachev reveals Soviet responsibility for Katyn. However, it is not until later that June that the KGB makes public the burial place of the thousands of others killed at the other two camps. It is clear now that in Katyn

itself 4421 officers were killed, and that 6311 of those kept in the camp in Ostaszkow and 3820 of those kept in the camp in Starobielsk were liquidated in Mednoe and Kharkov respectively. To this day there is no precise information concerning the tragic lot of remaining 7000 other prisoners.[52] In 1992, key documents were given to former Solidarity leader and current PM Walesa. 2007 Wajda's film is released. 2008 several Russian newspapers continue to blame the Germans for the Katyn massacre, something which might have to do with the case brought before Russian courts by Polish Katyn families seeking economic compensation for their loss. Their claims were denied there. For Poles Katyn remains an open wound.

The Maintenance of Memory

There are three prime sources in the maintenance of the memory of Katyn, the Polish military, the families and friends of the victims and the émigré Polish communities scattered around the globe. The Polish military was the first to bear collective responsibility for the loss of its men and along with the government-in-exile and the underground resistance the first organization to search for them. This was carried out under traumatic circumstances: the Polish army was decimated by having to fight a war on two fronts. While they valiantly resisted the German and Soviet enemy, they were ill-prepared and suffered devastating losses while trying desperately to hold out in anticipation of engagement from their British and French allies. The Poles had formal agreement with both countries, that in case of German invasion they would come to Poland's aid. Needless to say this did not happen. While their relations with Moscow were never friendly since they defeated the Soviet Army in 1920, an occurrence which led to the seizure of territory, border disputes and to hostile relations with their Eastern neighbor. [53] Still the Soviet invasion came as a shock, especially as it was justified by Moscow as merely a protective measure after the German invasion to aid Ukrainian and Lithuanian minorities on Polish soil. The members of

[52] It is surmised by historians that at least some of them may be buried in Bykownia, near Kiev (contemporary Ukraine), and in Kuropaty near Minsk (contemporary Belarus).

[53] The Soviet army was defeated in August, 1920 after pushing westward to spread the Bolshevik revolution and extend Soviet control over the region. The Communist forces were quite successful and were stopped only near Warsaw at the Vistula River and then pushed out of the newly reconstituted country. The Soviet army was only able to escape as it did with German help. The territory seized was ethnically mixed, but predominantly Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian, with numerous Polish Jews as well. Prior to the 1920 war, the Polish army pushed eastward and briefly controlled Kiev. The entire period between 1918-21 was an extremely complicated one with regards to the newly formed Poland and its neighbors.

the Polish army seized by the Soviets on the Eastern front were fooled into thinking they were merely being re-deployed by their Soviet allies. Many of the officers among them died at Katyn. The confusing circumstances contributed to the devastating affect on the Polish Army of the loss of so many of its officers.

The families of the victims at first reacted to the disappearance of a member individually. This would develop into a collective force as the search led by the authorities in the military and government progressed. Later, especially during the closing days of the Soviet occupation more formal organizations of Katyn families would form with in Poland. These organizations began much earlier amongst Polish émigrés, especially in the United States and Great Britain.

Knowledge, Remembrance and Meanings of Katyn Massacre in Poland, 1943 – 2008

"*To not have your suffering recognized is an almost unbearable form of violence*"

Andrei Nikolaevich Lankov, a Russian orientalist

"In the vacuum of complete dehumanization the bottom point is the point where meaning is attached to the sign anew and the silence overcomes itself"

Tomas Venclova, a Lithuanian writer

The sixty-five years of the Katyn trauma drama in Poland have constituted a narrative of protracted civil struggle for historical transparency and moral repair. Specifically, it has been a struggle for public acknowledgment of actual, Soviet responsibility for the extermination of Poland's elite citizens, for unveiling the missing links of history, and for symbolic closure of the issue as a cultural tragedy.

In order to state briefly the difference between the post-war situation of Polish Diaspora in Western Europe and the United States and in-country citizens, one could say that whereas the story of Katyn Massacre was an inconvenient truth in public discourse in the West, it remained a rather cumbersome official lie and eventually a top-secret issue in the public sphere of Eastern Europe until 1989. As a matter of fact, it continues to be a political taboo in the official discourse

of contemporary Russia, a circumstance that sheds additional light to the conditions of Soviet occupation in the region and its cultural legacy.

The time between the first public information about the existence of mass graves in the Katyn Forest in April 1943 and the first official celebration of the Katyn Remembrance Day on April 13th, 2008 was a period during which this specific issue became a key signifier of Polish victimhood as inflicted by communist Russia. Much of this time was consumed by civil perseverance and moral dedication to an issue that was silenced and consigned to oblivion by the highest echelons of authority. To many the issue seemed almost lost, to others it remained vague or virtually unknown.

For those Poles who knew the facts as established in 1943, and remembered thereafter, this was a dramatic period not only because of the traumatizing potential of the knowledge they initially had to face and keep, but also due to the fact that before 1989, (1) this knowledge and remembrance have been strictly suppressed for decades, (2) the directly involved carriers of this knowledge systematically persecuted, threatened or socially marginalized, (3) a false account of events was disseminated from the outset of People's Republic of Poland, and (4) the issue was ignored altogether from the 1960s on by official media.

Beyond this there was an even greater number of individuals for whom the drama consisted in an anguish of uncertainty intertwined with the premonition that the Katyn massacre was not an isolated case. As time elapsed, the worst case scenario was finally confirmed. But before that confirmation could arrive in Poland, the Katyn drama symbolized in an ever increasing number of Polish circles the vast array of physical and psychological damage inflicted on the Polish people. It signified at once the extermination of Polish prisoners of war in the Soviet Union, the long lasting uncertainty and confusion concerning the facts, the brutally enforced silence, the gaping lack of information about "loss in the east," and last but not least the communist hypocrisy, obfuscation and deception with regard to this issue.

The specificity of the Katyn trauma consists then not simply in the systematic nature of the atrocities committed by the Soviet state apparatus and of the groups targeted, but also in the fact that the mass killings were cynically appropriated and used by two totalitarian regimes for their own political purposes, initially effectively silenced by democratic states, and that what was uncovered in 1943 had been shut down or falsely represented to a Polish society under Soviet domination.

Knowledge of the massacre had been scattered, incomplete and overshadowed by the perpetrators counter-narrative and their symbolic frames. Since memory is indispensable for the experience of trauma and since memory does not exist without its cognitive object, i.e., the actual knowledge of the incidents, the conditions of the Katyn cultural trauma construction might seem very unfavorable. Indeed, the Soviet political realism of the time determined an overwhelming corruption of reality, a paradigmatically Orwellian situation in which the control of the present strictly depended on control of the past. The latter meant the destruction and falsification of hard evidence, the psychological and physical torture of inconvenient witnesses, and above all the blurring of key social meanings and degrading the value of individual life. In this process, language itself was permeated by sayings such as an ambiguous Russian phrase "to lie like an eye-wittness" (Nim 2008: 22). This Orwellian reality filled with newspeak was also a Kafkian reality that created a social "labyrinth" as another Russian dissident emphasized (Abarinow 2007: 9, 13).

All this ensured the typical totalitarian condition of perennial fear, disorientation, suppression of knowledge and lack of critical public debate. However, these particular circumstances appear to have added to the sense of trauma felt in thousands of Polish households. Crucially, the Katyn tragedy was emerging not just as a trauma of tragic memory but as a trauma of scant, robbed and persecuted memory. It was not only about what was coded as extraordinary injury but also about a necessity of dealing with silence, uncertainty and falsehood in ordinary daily life.

Actual memory of the occurrence as such was relatively scarce for the simple reason that only approximately 394 out of more than 20,000 captured left the detention camps alive, spared by NKVD and initially grouped in a separate camp. Because, as one of the survivors Jozef Czapski noted (2001: 71), the prisoners had not even considered the possibility of mass extermination; the very few who survived and could be regarded witnesses did not quite realize then what exactly was going on in fall of 1939 and spring of 1940. For many Polish citizens the first weeks of terror and havoc caused by the Soviet occupation of Poland meant a brutal confrontation with the informational chaos and political arbitrariness of invading power. For this reason it seems more adequate to talk here about tedious processes of ascertaining and verifying knowledge, about channels and frameworks of communicating and disseminating it, and finally about acts of commemoration, artistic representation and responses to them.

This is also a reason why cultural trauma scholars tend to employ such notions as 'post-memory' (Hirsch). Working in a similar vein, the German scholars Aleida and Jan Assmann (reference) introduced the distinction between communicative and cultural memory. From this vantage point a key sociological question becomes how exactly is witness-based remembering conveyed and translated to the collective level and subsequently transformed into sustained social remembrance? The way we approach it here is influenced by an understanding of the micro-macro link in sociological explanation (Alexander 1987). We recognize that just as individuals need the horizon of cultural meanings to make sense of their experiences, so society needs individual testimonies and specific narratives laden with personal emotions, some of which can incrementally be turned into symbols, typifications and archetypes which then are formative in any given society's collective identity.

How exactly are these narratives turned into symbols and collective meanings? The present study emphasizes in this respect the role of discursive frames and visual representations predicated upon a specific set of cultural binaries that in turn are intertwined with emotional attachments. First of all, there is the dichotomy of truth and lie employed in all narratives surrounding the case. This fundamental binary is often accompanied by other oppositions such as the innocence and guilt, decency and perfidy, openness and secrecy. Secondly, in addition to the fundamental division of the public and the private we can speak of the dichotomy of the official and the underground, the state and the society. These binaries are not, of course, identical, but it is important to recognize that under the Communist regime they often overlapped to a considerable extent. The transmission of private narratives into public discourse was severely restricted, and in case of Katyn mostly downright impossible, in the last years of World War II and immediately after the War until so-called 'political thaw' of 1956. It continued to be seriously hampered by the state apparatus and its ideological orthodoxy almost until the very collapse of Communism in 1989. However, private discourses and the familial transmission of memory could never be completely muffled, and they eventually carved out a significant social niche whose meanings and cultural relevance began to be felt in public, at least to a certain degree. Interestingly, as we shall demonstrate later, this particular tension between state order and social order can easily be re-inscribed within the mythical tragedy of Sophocles' play "Antigone".

On top of this, we deal with yet another binary, namely that between what can and cannot be spoken, a dichotomy of what can (and should) be told and discussed, and what seemed to constitute the unspeakable. On the one hand, there is speech and text as forms of anthropological imperative to express oneself and testify. As Lithuanian writer and Professor of Slavic Literature at Yale University Tomas Venclova writes in his book titled *Forms of Hope*, "speaking and writing means overcoming and transcending" (1999: 129). Certainly, speaking and writing about the forbidden truth of Katyn, whether in private or in public, was a form of overcoming and transcending the Communist regime that suppressed it in Poland. On the other hand, the construction of each cultural trauma involves a specific distribution of the sacred and profane, and an understanding of the symbolic borders of its representation and reception. According to Izabella Sariusz-Skapska who devoted her Ph.D. dissertation to the Polish literary memory of the Gulag experience, "to not cross the border between testimony and silence of things that are ineffable is a condition of reliability of representation" (Sariusz-Skapska 2002: 22). The ineffable is understood as something that cannot be fully communicated, not only because of the limitations of language employed by story-tellers, but also because of impossibility of finding a full entrance into communicated narrative on the part of recipients. Moreover, there are also borders to what should be communicated, in that the risks associated with crossing the aforementioned borders can mean either the banalization of victims' suffering or the fascination with the profane and evil. Therefore while researching forms of knowledge, remembrance and post-memory one faces a double problem of, (1) the politically molded possibility and (2) the culturally molded ability to speak out and hear in a particular social context.

If we take into account the first criterion of the politically shaped possibility of public expression, we can distinguish at least three general periods within the temporal brackets established here during which the processes of trauma construction occurred. The knowledge of Katyn Massacre was being obtained and transmitted, remembrance enacted, and the event itself intellectually and artistically represented under various social conditions in the following, heuristically delimited political eras: (1) 1943 – 1956, (2) 1956 – 1989, (3) 1989 – 2008. If we refer to the second criterion of culturally shaped ability to communicate a specific periodization is much harder to establish. It is affected by political conditions but is also responsive to various other circumstances that have their own, often non-linear logic of temporal change. However, one can distinguish one such particular circumstance that has crucially affected the emergence

and maintenance of cultural trauma of Katyn in Poland and its broader significance. It is the lack of symbolic closure in trauma drama and determined pursuit of making it happen despite all adversities.

There is direct psychological evidence that possessing a life story in the form of a biographical narrative is a crucial part of the mental well-being of an individual, at least as far as Western culture is concerned (Tilmann, Habermas 2008). A meaningful and coherent narrative of this sort is one of the key conditions of making sense of one's life and thus creating and maintaining a relatively consistent self-identity, i.e., a sense of selfsameness and continuity, without which functioning in modern society is hardly possible. This complex narrativization of the life-course connects facts and endows them with meaning by reference to other meanings, emerges and develops significantly only in adolescence (Habermas 2008: 719). The key terms 'consistency' and 'coherence' should not be mistaken for 'stability', but what they do imply is that the ruptures, shocks and breaks that have occurred are meaningfully incorporated into and symbolically represented through personal narration. In practice this often means that particular events are narratively "closed as chapters."

The developmental logic of cultural trauma appears to resemble this pattern, providing once more an interpretive link between the macro and micro characteristics of human life. Meaningful events are rarely, if at all, constructed as such immediately upon their arrival in an individual's biography, and one makes full sense of them with time and often rediscovers them in the process of ongoing biographical interpretation. Tragic occurrences themselves usually come as shock, often accompanied by initial disbelief and/or confusion. It takes time to fully comprehend and represent them meaningfully, i.e. in relation to broader symbolic structures, with reference to other occurrences and in dialogue with those who are not directly affected but nevertheless remain potentially connected to them through emotional, ethical and symbolic means of social life.

A recurrent string of metaphors that is intuitively crucial in this respect is that of injury, wound and scar. A full-fledged cultural trauma emerges as a full recognition, symbolic elaboration and meaningful representation of social wounds that remains open. It continues to exist as a cultural process that tends, as it were, to turn wound into scar, something healed but still present. The symbolic closure is indispensable at this point. Lack thereof keeps the wound

open and fosters anxiety derived from deprivation of coherence in a narrative marked by tragic occurrence.

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Robert Nozick concluded an essay on Holocaust by stating, "perhaps every evil of whatever magnitude constitutes some distortion of human space. It has taken a cataclysm to get us to notice" (2006: 242).One role of a cultural sociologist is to show that "noticing" is more complex a process than meets the eye and that beyond it lie even more complicated social processes of representation that render "human cataclysms" cultural traumas. The following is meant to show how the mass killings of Katyn first affected the community of victims in their own country, how and why that community was denied a symbolic closure of the tragedy, and the specificity of the closure that was eventually realized.

The anonymous mass graves containing thousands of murdered Polish citizens were never meant to be found. The sites of the Soviet genocidal actions were dissembled by newly planted trees and well hidden, for example at NKVD spa centers like in the case of Katyn (Oseka 2007: 5).[54] There were systematic attempts at purposefully destroying these "death pits," such was, for example, the case of the massacre site near Kharkov in today's eastern Ukraine (Materski 2008: 132). The local population was often arrested, just in case, and then some were deported and subsequently replaced by people from other distant locations of the Soviet Union.[55] Deportation to the far eastern parts of Soviet Union awaited also many of the family members of those killed.[56] The NKVD sought to destroy any and all material traces of the massacre. For example, in June 1940 in the Starobielsk camp 3655 unsent letters of the imprisoned Polish citizens were burned (Adamska 2007: 12). Prior to the actual massacres a wave of letters had reached the

[54] The presence of young trees on the site of the massacre became actually yet another among numerous detailed evidence against Soviets. The international forensic commission employed a forester named von Herff who established that the pine trees growing there were 5 years old and planted 3 years prior to the arrival of the commission (Kwiatkowska-Viatteau 1988: 26).

[55] Jozef Czapski mentions in his book "Inhuman Land" that even the inhabitants of places like Buzuluk where the Anders' Army had stationed before it left Soviet Union were later deported by NKVD to distant parts of the country (2001: 104).

[56] It was a part of much larger deportation action organized by the Soviet invaders during their occupation of eastern Poland. According to the Ribbentrop-Molotow pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed in August 1939 the eastern voivodeships of Poland were left at the discretion of the latter. Until the Nazi breach of that agreement in June 1941 NKVD had probably managed to deport over one million people from those territories, i.e. around 8% of their total population. It is estimated that over 50% of them were Poles, nearly 30% Jews, and around 18% Ukrainians and Belarussian (Gross 2008: 7).

families in Poland, but these ceased abruptly in March 1940, a fact which later constituted yet another symbolic indication of when the massacres occurred, and hence who was to be blamed. Some of the letters to and from families, diaries, family pictures and other personal belongings retrieved in 1943 at the Katyn site, reached relatives in Poland. The sheer abundance of such things in the mass graves strongly suggested that the victims were kept unaware of their impending fate until the last moment.[57] For families in the country who managed to get access, these objects meant being "connected" to their lost relatives. Those who despite the fear of communist persecution did not destroy the recovered diaries and other personal items tellingly discontinued in 1940 or the last letters sent to them that year, all such things constituted a scarce body of sacred relics and priceless traces. Such documents are currently preserved in private and national archives as carriers of crucial material connection to the past that for half a century was consigned to dematerialization.

Just as the Soviet aggression against Poland in September 1939 came as a shock to Poles, so was the German aggression against Soviet Union received in June 1941. It was a highly unexpected breach of the non-aggression pact that Soviet government signed two years earlier with Nazi Germany. The eventual seizure of the western parts of Soviet Union by German troops meant also the sudden loss of control over the sites of massacres and *ipso facto* the critical loss of monopoly of the detailed knowledge about them. The Soviet Union and later also the communist government of Poland were therefore put in a highly precarious position that required an intense propaganda actions designed to cover up correct attribution of responsibility. As Andrzej Wajda's film emphasizes, a sovereign post war Poland was impossible without the elite that had been systematically decimated both by Nazi Germany and Soviet Union during WWII.[58] By the same token, a failure to cover up the Soviet act of liquidation of the Polish elite would have made an unobstructed inauguration of a communist Poland hardly possible in the years following the war. As a result, the knowledge and remembrance of Katyn massacre became coded as extremely dangerous to the externally enforced and thus potentially vulnerable Communist status quo in Poland. Remembering the truth about Katyn was understood as an utmost threat to

[57] A striking fact discovered by the exhumation specialists in 1943 was that the bodies were buried in the order that matched precisely the system of transportation of the prisoners from the camps to the execution sites. It was established thanks to the pertinent record kept by the officers in their private diaries and later found next to them in the death pits (Kwiatkowska-Viatteau 1988: 26).

Communism's political credibility and the Soviet Union's proclaimed moral status as Poland's liberator in WWII. Hence it became an object of strict suppression, and mass symbolic violence systematically followed the mass physical violence that occurred in 1940. The symbolic violence of Communist propaganda at the time of installing new Soviet-dependent Polish communist regime was interpreted by those directly affected as adding an unbearable insult to already existing injury. After all, the new Communist authorities "protested too much." For some this meant the high moral obligation to persist and make sure that the knowledge was passed on and thus less dissipated throughout society. Others, however, were effectively silenced or chose to silence themselves because of the risks involved in the early post war and only began to communicate their trauma many years later, if at all. The memory of the mass murder of the Polish elite was at first, relatively, an elite social fact.

In this context, it comes as no surprise that the specific carrier groups with first hand knowledge and those who harbored the most emotionally charged memory of the massacre, such as the families of the murdered, were either chased after or closely watched by the NKVD and its collaborators in Poland. Polish forensic specialists and other experts from Poland who visited Katyn in 1943 were defined as one of the most significant among these carrier groups. Among them were: Ferdynand Goetel, Jan Skiwski, Dr. Edmund Seyfried, Konrad Orzechowski and Dr Edward Grodzki. Goetel was one of the people who prepared written accounts of what the group found as the results of the work of international specialists on the site, all of whom arrived at similar conclusions, namely, placing blame on the Soviets. In 1945, Goetel and Skiwski were officially considered criminals in communist-controlled Poland but they managed to flee the country illegally. Others were arrested and interrogated in NKVD prisons in Poland. Orzechowski was subsequently deported to east Russia. The fate of Dr Grodzki remains unknown to this day.

Another person of similarly crucial importance was Kazimierz Skarzynski. He organized the on-site proceedings of the Polish Red Cross in the Katyn Forest between April and June in 1943 and contributed significantly to the creation of the lists of the murdered, i.e., the Katyn records independent of the German ones. As one of very few Poles who actually saw the mass graves and examined them, Skarzynski prepared a report that was promptly delivered to London.

[58] At the time when Soviets imprisoned Polish officers and intellectuals in the east, Germans conducted their own actions against Polish non-military intelligentsia. For example, Sonderaktion Krakau and AB actions whereby

The documents and material evidence were sent to Krakow's Institute of Forensic Research. He continued his work in Poland aimed at uncovering full truth in subsequent years. Skarzynski's knowledge, however, quickly became dangerous to himself and his family. Threatened by an imminent NKVD capture, he spent last years of war under changed surname in the countryside. He managed to leave Poland illegally with his family in May 1946. Skarzynski's report was evaluated as very valuable by the British Foreign Office, yet this certainly contributed to treating it as a top-secret item (Przewoznik 2007: 15). The findings included there were later published, but only in 1955 and in a Polish journal "Kultura" edited in Paris by Jerzy Giedroyc, the venue that until the end of communism in Poland remained one of the key sources of "underground" knowledge and memory for Polish society.

Finally, there was an interview with Jozef Mackiewicz published on June 3, 1943 after he had visited Katyn as an observer in spring that year. Mackiewicz was a known literary figure in pre-war Poland and during the war a journalist in Goniec Codzienny ("Daily Messenger"), a Polish newspaper that was being issued in Vilnus controlled after 1941 by Germans. The interview titled "I saw it with my own eyes" reported quite extensively on the Katyn massacre. Mackiewicz stated that he had "absolutely no doubts that the massacre had been conducted by Bolsheviks" (1988: 55). He referred to the works of the international commission and provided information about the established facts, witnesses and specialists involved in the issue. But what is most significant from a cultural sociological point of view in that testimony is the language in which Mackiewicz couched his recollections. Asked if he remains "under impression" of what he had seen he replied:

> „I don't know if one can call it being 'impressed.' Impression is a result of some, usually singular event or fact, limited in itself. Smolensk which I saw, Katyn, crimes, corpses, ruins, bolshevism that I went through myself, and the letters, letters of children to their fathers, beginning with the words: "Dear Dad" or "Dear Daddy," being dug out now from the piles of squashed, putrid bodies, from this swamp of death or the semi dried Polish uniforms... Yes, all of this creates a sort of long chain of associations, thoughts, reflections sinking deep in the heart. I would not call it an impression. An experience rather" (1988: 51).

This, one of the first statements from the interview, was aimed at establishing Mackiewicz's authority as a witness and introduces a significant distinction between 'impression' and

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thousands of academic and other professionals were imprisoned and liquidated between 1939 and 1941.

'experience' that can be mapped in the more general cultural understanding of the difference between the shock of a violent occurrence and the cultural trauma of violence later inflicted. It refers to the building of an experience through associations and connecting its facts to the horizon of culture and affect. Moreover, Mackiewicz stated that "the Katyn tragedy is not anymore a tragedy of particular persons or their families but of the whole nation" (1988: 54). While developing this thought, he emphasized that "he was deeply convinced that the widest possible groups of the Polish nation as well as all other nations should understand a deeper sense and danger of Bolshevism" (1988: 54). This can be interpreted as one of the first public acts of trying to connect the tragedy of Katyn to more universal moral codes and thus to represent the massacre as a cultural trauma. Because of the factual and symbolic weight of the interview, as well as a string of anti-Soviet publications authored by him in 1944 in Warsaw and Krakow, Mackiewicz was sentenced to death by Polish Communists.[59] He escaped Poland in January 1945 and continued to publish on the Katyn massacre first in Rome, then in the Parisian *Kultura* and later in London where he authored the first work in English about it. His testimonies constituted one the key sources of knowledge about Katyn.

It became clear that those few eye-witnesses had to either flee the country or be imprisoned shortly after WWII. They managed to pass on their knowledge to specialists and lay people in the country and through their work aided a more general framing of the massacre. But it was the personal trauma of the families, especially of the wives, mothers and children of those killed that supplied the critical mass of highly emotionally charged tragic narratives (see for example those collected in Kaczorowska (2003 in Polish and 2006 in English). Their situation became particularly dramatic as any inquiries concerning the fate of "the lost in the east" and the public sharing of knowledge and opinion about Katyn began to be strictly prohibited and persecuted. Yet thousands of women waiting in vain for their husbands, brothers and sons were one of the key elements of society that imperceptibly were undermining the official discourses. Their forced silence in the first decade following the war compounded the traumatizing sense of helplessness and initially confined their suffering to strictly private sphere. The dissemination of "false information about Katyn crime" was punished by the Communist government of Poland

[59] Earlier during the war, he had gained a controversial reputation as a journalist in German-controlled Vilnus, was accused of collaboration with Nazi Germany by Polish Home Army, and subsequently sentenced to death by it. However, he was not executed and later absolved due to lack of hard evidence and a growing suspicion that the whole issue came about as a result of provocation of Soviet intelligence that was infiltrating Home Army.

with the two-year sentence in labor camp. Acts of invigilation targeting the families took place and those caught spreading "the false knowledge" could even be accused of espionage (Oseka 2007: 7). If one was identified as a child of those "lost in the east" the entrance to education and other institutions could have been seriously hampered if not impossible. Once drafted to the Polish army, the sons of those murdered could have been actually directed to work in mines and other industrial locations controlled by Communists (Skapski 2009 – my interview).

Under such strenuous political and social conditions the wives, sisters and mothers of the exterminated officers were important carriers of remembrance of the victims not only due to the knowledge some possessed but most importantly because of their emotional attachment to the case. The atmosphere of fear and the strict official control of the Katyn narrative fostered suspicion towards the government and its official propaganda. As members of elite families, the women came to feel responsible for saving the traces of what was for them a true Polish heritage, the vestiges of their life-world that now was to be systematically erased. That feeling was buttressed by the fact that many of them belonged to the first generation raised and educated in independent Poland created in 1918 after 123 years of political non-existence caused by partitions (Ksiazek-Czerminska 1999: 7). For some the imposition of Communist regime could have appeared as a continuation of previous Russian domination under a different banner. The disappearance of their husbands in the Soviet occupied Poland was linked to it and the binary of truth and lie was mapped onto the division of society and state; though not quite underground heroes, the wives, sisters and mothers of the murdered launched one of the key mechanisms of transmission of remembrance into the public sphere. In the first period this was completely "privatized" and restricted to the occasional distribution of leaflets and individual acts of sabotaging official propaganda. As their official and personal abandonment persisted, their fate eventually became emblematic.

In short, the first period of the emergence of Katyn as trauma drama was marked by shock, confusion and extreme forms of symbolic struggle surrounding the massacre and its circumstances. The key narratives were created and the clash of victims' discourse, related counter-discourses and acts of covering the story up shaped the reception of the crime. Still, in the 1940s in Poland the name of Katyn was being mentioned openly along Auschwitz as a symbol of German genocidal actions (Oseka 2007: 7). The official discourse blaming the Germans subsided in the wake of Stalin's death in 1953 but continued to be one of the key

elements of legitimation of Poland's communist government. It was only in 1956 when the political climate was changed unequivocally by the unfavorable light shed on Soviet Communism. Many of Stalin's crimes were revealed by the Soviet government itself. Although this provided a powerful context for an unambiguous evaluation of the Katyn massacre, Communist propaganda in Poland did not cease to employ the standard Soviet version for its own purposes of political and cultural control. Until the end of the 1950s the name of "Katyn" had its own entry in encyclopedias, defining it as a geographical location in Russia and falsely identifying it as the site of massacre of Polish citizens committed by Germans after they had seized that territory in 1941 (e.g. Suchodolski 1959: 407).

The next 25 years saw the official silence on the issue on the part of Poland Communist authorities. The great encyclopedia published by Polish Scientific Publishers (PWN) in 1965 has no mention of Katyn (1965, Vol. V). This situation has not changed in subsequent decades. It is hard to judge today what the exact motivation was behind the change of strategy in approaching the tragedy of Katyn. Yet for a sociologist not the shift itself or its political intricacies are of the greatest significance but rather the cultural consequences. In the eyes of the vast majority of those who remembered the massacres symbolized by Katyn or found out about it in the wake of the thaw of 1956, this act of introducing a total censorship on the Katyn issue had one fundamental meaning among others, namely that it could be viewed as an indirect, and probably unwitting, acknowledgment of the Soviet responsibility (Oseka 2007: 7).

From that moment on, a series of persistent iconic and discursive actions were taking place. The official silence was countered by repeated unauthorized civil undertakings. The symbolic opening of this period of publicly enacted resistance was marked by the inception of so called "Katyn Valley" on the main cemetery of Warsaw. On All Saints' Day in 1959. A commemoration site for the Katyn victims was created there, a place where a cross and plaque were put by unidentified people. It was openly named "the symbolic grave of the Polish officers murdered in Katyn". Perpetrators were not explicitly named, but the plaque stated that the officers "perished on foreign soil at hands of a cruel enemy" and that "they deserve memory and honor." The traditional candles were laid there in acts of spontaneous response. The site was liquidated after only one day by state militia officials, who noted that they had managed to "reintroduce order to the cemetery" (Sawicki 2007: 18). Though "state order" was promptly reintroduced, the public manifestation revealed the existence of a "societal underground order",

which destabilized it symbolically. It was a brief but visible cry for recognition which triggered a sense of moral empowerment, first in Warsaw but later also in other cities whose inhabitants connected to the murdered kept visiting the "Katyn Valley" in the following years. This cry for recognition was a signifier of a secretly lived trauma that expressed a deep sense of suppressed "we" and the responses of authorities made it clear they cared about the incident. The Communist government indeed treated the situation seriously, initiating an official investigation and launching a secret police operation that consisted in systematic intelligence efforts to find out who stood behind the cemetery event. The results, however, were poor and what might be called resistance performances continued to be enacted there until the collapse of Communism in 1989. These occurred not only on the 1st of November but also on other days like April the 13th and September the 17th. The apogee of this string of iconic actions was reached in the heyday of Solidarity struggle in 1981 when a real 4-meter high monument weighing 8 tons was put on the focal spot of the "Katyn Valley." Like all previous material symbols of resistance erected in that place, it was promptly removed by the authorities, but became much discussed in many private circles in Warsaw and other places and interpreted as yet another demonstration of civil disobedience and political disbelief. In effect, the actual fame of the "Katyn Valley" has been discursively and iconically cemented, at least in the capital city and those connected to it (Sawicki 2007: 19). In the end, the story of the cemetery performances only indicated that the dedication with which the Communist authorities sought to erase the remembrance of Katyn was directly proportional to the actual cultural potential of this memory as a general signifier of the Soviet-related Polish sufferings and, ultimately, to the extent of the moral debacle of Communist regime in Poland.

A quarter of a century after the "Katyn Valley" was created as a symbolic space of anti-communist contestation, there appeared in Poland the first school textbook that described the Katyn massacre vaguely enough to create precedence in the official discourse about it. The civil success of Solidarity was preceded by the election of a Pole, Karol Wojtyla, as the Pope John Paul II in 1978, effecting a wave of unauthorized discourse about Katyn. No one seemed to be afraid of talking about Soviet responsibility in the Solidarity inspired time of unprecedented "festival of freedom" (Materski 2008: 122). Underground materials were circulated around the country and meetings organized by the church played an important role in the life of city intelligentsia, the group most directly attached to the story of Katyn crime. By then the Iron

Curtain was already rusty and porous enough to let information from the outside in and create a "strange situation" in which the official censorship itself began to be unsure about what exactly was allowed to be published (Abarinow 2007: 11). As a result, there was a plethora of illegal publications created inside or smuggled into the country from Western Europe and the probability of encountering information about Katyn increased dramatically. The grand international myth of Solidarity was emerging, even if the movement itself was temporarily muffled by the Martial Law introduced by the Communist government in 1981.

Though still relatively arcane, the truth about Katyn became an undeniable fact of life among many representatives of the Polish intelligentsia, a commonly recognizable cachet of increasingly self-confident societal "us" against the discredited governmental "them." Incrementally growing social pressure effected further alteration of the ruling party's stance and in closing years of the 1980s the Katyn massacre was sporadically thematized in official media and political institutions like the Parliament. It was also the time when the first large-scale sociological research on Polish collective memory was conducted. Two things about these studies strike the reader: (1) 23% declared that they talked about history "often" and 54% - "sometimes;" (2) nearly 3% declared that they talked with others about such things as Katyn or the Ribbentrop-Molotow Pact, and more than 5% discussed the Stalinist period in Poland or the Martial Law (Szacka 2007: 3). The overall cultural impact of Solidarity and anticipatory climate of 1980s became obvious but the research showed the scale of damage caused to the Polish collective memory by Communist propaganda. A clear discrepancy between a heightened general historical interest and specific discursive commitments indicated the cultural legacy of four decades of autocratic regime. Even if, as a later study showed, 40% found out about Katyn during the Communist period, that awareness seemed to be one among many other tragic memories and as a key trauma still apparently confined only to those directly connected to its occurrence. The excitement and then euphoria associated with leaving Communism behind appeared to be the euphoria of the exhausted as far as collective identity was concerned. However, in view of those who cultivated still circumscribed but now stronger commitment to the issue, the end of the 1980s meant a renewed hope. The demand for proper recognition of Katyn, however slim, seemed hardly quenchable.

In the newly forged climate of broader political change in Eastern Europe a series of new discourses about Katyn made an ineradicable impact on Polish intelligentsia. So it came as a

profound disappointment and ultimate disillusionment when on July 14, 1988 Mikhail Gorbatchev announced at the official meeting with the representatives of Polish intellectuals at Warsaw's Royal Castle that "there exists no secret documentation which would shed a new light on the Katyn crime" (Materski 2008: 124). For the truly radical change in the official presentation of events Polish citizens had to wait until the revolution of 1989, and specifically till April 13, 1990 when the official news agency of Russia (TASS) finally acknowledged, even if under somewhat inadvertent circumstances, the Soviet responsibility for the massacres in Katyn and the existence of further extermination sites of Mednoe and Kharkov.[60] It took place exactly half a century after the moment when the world first heard the terrible news of Katyn.

As Andrzej Wajda admits himself, this was the time when his cinematographic intervention into the Katyn trauma drama should have taken place (Wajda 2007: 5). Changes in Moscow at the outset of the 1990s seemed to create sufficient symbolic space for a relatively open, long-term dialogue with by then a completely politically altered Warsaw. They promised a potential for eventual exposure of relevant Soviet archives and reconciliation. An ensuing full disclosure of knowledge and responsibility would mean a clear symbolic closure of the trauma. This potential, however, was hardly ever fulfilled in a manner suggested by the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. In Polish society itself, however, a qualitatively unprecedented era of the Katyn trauma drama began.

The Round Table Talks in spring 1989 gave Poland the first democratic elections in Eastern Europe and 1990 was the year when Lech Walesa became the President of Poland and the Polish Communist Party was officially dissolved. The opening of last decade of the twentieth century meant the point of no return in terms of the developing Katyn trauma drama. Even if painful, new concrete prospects of unfettered inquiry and commemorative catharsis were opened. Still, it took another decade to realize a partial symbolic closure of the trauma and then nearly another 10 years to launch the official full-fledged process of ritualization inside the country. Despite what might be interpreted as a significant delay of the official commemoration of Katyn, the crime did emerge as a key signifier of WWII tragedy and Polish trauma of Soviet occupation. This metamorphosis of formerly subterranean and private tragedy of Polish soldiers into a central

[60] As a matter of fact, Soviet government led by Gorbatchev had appeared to be forced to admit its guilt officially after a few Russian historians, such as Natalia Lebedeva, obtained a rather unwittingly issued permission to examine NKVD archives that indirectly proved Soviet responsibility (Materski 2008: 125 – 126). The text of the TASS

traumatic narrative of country's history is remarkable. The finally liberated country caused many tragic but previously stifled Polish memories to surface. As Michael Kimmelman wrote in *The New York Times*, "Poles have especially good reason to see themselves as long oppressed, having been fought over and occupied for much of the last century by vicious regimes" (2009: 6). How then has it been possible that this particular crime and its ordeal became a distinguished trauma narrative?

After 1989 the most apparent change was a sudden public visibility of Katyn. Books, articles, documentaries, discussions, and monuments of various kinds filled media and public sphere in general. The classic accounts of the crime and its circumstances finally found their way to bookstores and libraries. Among them were tellingly titled diaries such as "Inhuman land" by Jozef Czapski or "Without last chapter" by Wladyslaw Anders, and novels such as "The silent, the invincible" by Wlodzimierz Odojewski or "Katyn. Post mortem" by Andrzej Mularczyk. The latter became the narrative base for Andrzej Wajda's film. But perhaps the most significant was the emergence of a new civil movement, The Katyn Families Association, with affiliation abroad, as well as in Poland itself. The few relatives of the victims who remained alive could finally speak up and express their anguish. It was this non-governmental and explicitly apolitical organization that created a symbolic forum for them, and established itself as a key carrier of remembrance and an indelible sign of unhealed Polish war wound. It has become a logical cultural continuation of half a century long persecuted memory.

Interestingly enough, the absolute priority of the Association's public mission was to establish official symbolic cemeteries at the three massacre sites revealed by Gorbatchev. Finding out where exactly the other sites are that continue to hide over seven thousand of the murdered was also defined as crucial. The first goal, understood as the unprecedented real symbolic act of the dignified commemoration of the victims and of "emphasizing of the drama," has been realized. The second still remains a task for the future. For this reason, the symbolic closure was felt as partial. However, the official opening of the Katyn cemetery on July 28, 2000 functioned as a key event for the trauma drama and played an invaluable role as catharsis, not only for the families but also for Polish society as a whole. This was the case because over the

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announcement itself was cautious but powerful enough and launched an avalanche of irreversible changes to the issue.

years Katyn has become the effective synonym of the Soviet massacres committed on Polish citizens during World War II (Skapski 2009 – my interview).[61]

The Association refers to various cultural binaries to frame the specificity of the Katyn trauma drama and to present its pursuits to the public. The crucial ones are dichotomies between civilized and barbarian actions and dignified and degrading conduct. Reference is also made to legal obligations that were breached by the Soviet perpetrators and the ethics of full acknowledgement, transparency, repentance and compensation. As its leaders unanimously recognize the "shamefulness of Russian position" connected to "the crime unknown in civilized world," they are acutely aware that what they have achieved in terms of symbolically closing the Katyn trauma deepens its actual potential as such also for Russian society. As a matter of fact, the actual place, Katyn, happens to be an old NKVD execution site where thousands of anonymous Russian citizens were also buried. The solemn and well-organized commemoration of Poles murdered there raises broader questions about internal Soviet crimes and inspires the remembrance of those thousands of Russian citizens who also fell victim to the regime.

As a full-fledged cultural trauma Katyn potentially assumes another meaning, namely that of a key condition of Polish-Russian political relations and thus of being a part of common European identity as well; more specifically, Europe's attitude towards history of Communism. While in 2008, 52% of Poles believed that contemporary Russia must openly settle its historical issues, especially the Katyn Massacre, in order to count on Poland's partnership, 69% of them declared that it is necessary to "forgive Russians" (Koscinski, Serwetnyk 2008). This narrative is embraced also by the leaders of the Katyn Families Association (Skapski 2009 – my interview). However, the establishing of Polish symbolic cemeteries in Katyn, Kharkov and Mednoe, as well as ongoing efforts to uncover further extermination sites meet understanding and strong support in relatively small circles and only in such Russian organizations like "Memorial." The contemporary Russian responses still have among them publications such as Jurij Muchin's "Anti-Russian Meanness" that continue to maintain untenable Soviet-like explanations. The very possibility of such public discourse undermines the prospects of political reconciliation from Polish point of view. Moreover, recent legal efforts for compensation made by some of the Katyn families encountered rejection at every level of the Russian court system. This form of recognition has been clearly denied to the victims. What seems to emerge out of this

[61] Two other official cemeteries were openned in the same year in Kharkov in Ukraine and Mednoe in Russia.

international circumstance is the realization not only the harm done to Katyn families and to the legacy of Soviet Communism but also that certain meanings of "Russianness" are at stake. This obviously emotionally and culturally compounds the already existing problems.

Finally, the Association recognizes also that any closure in the form of official commemoration may mean the potential of the actual ossification of memory and hence its partial trivialization (Sariusz-Skapska 2002: 11). Paradoxically, the acts of symbolic closure may make the tragic story dull, as historically catalogued and resolved. The symbolic closure is necessary, for it crucially alleviates the private anguish of those directly involved and raises public awareness of country's actual history, but at the same time it may distance those whose expectations towards such things are shaped not by abstract attachments but concrete emotions. As temporal distantiation slowly adds its own dimension, potentially turning traumatic events into mere historical facts, these may become disconnected from the moral and affective fabric of society that originally gave birth to them. Public disinterest becomes probable when there emerge attempts at political instrumentalization. This nearly happened to Katyn in the time shortly before the establishment of Katyn commemoration day in Poland. The members of the Association and other public figures involved remain concerned with the danger of a right wing instrumentalization of this event and have opposed it explicitly (Szumer 2007: 3). As the Polish Parliament finally and unanimously declared the 13th of April the National Remembrance Day of Katyn Victims in 2007 and first official commemoration followed in 2008, the Katyn trauma drama was at once re-launched and closed. On the one hand, that is what contributes to the emergence and maintenance of cultural trauma in the first place. On the other hand, there is recognition, especially among the Association leaders, that in order for even the most tragic events to become and be maintained as cultural trauma, they need self-reflective representation and specific narratives that connect to more global human aspects of life. And finally, there is a more general understanding in Polish society that even such deeply tragic events need to be at least partially left behind in a sense conferred to this recognition by Czapski.

Since the official registration of the Katyn Families Association in 1992 around four thousand individuals have joined it. They have had opportunities to openly tell and share their private stories, and project them into the public discourse. Association members contributed to the emergence of clear public articulation of the Katyn trauma as a special cultural event. Beside their struggle for official commemoration, they engaged in the projects of publishing personal

stories of silenced and abandoned women that were previously thwarted. This effort stems from the conviction that in absence of authentic documents, only literature and private diaries can fill the lacuna of recognition, acknowledgment and empathy.[62] Those killed have been unambiguously represented as a patriotic elite, their history disclosed in details and their tragic fate narrated in a way that connects the tragedy not only to an injured Polish identity, but also to a more general human sensibility.

It has been shown that the murdered were the prisoners of war without war being declared, their death sentence saw no trial, their death was accompanied by no funeral, their names were consigned to anonymity, the crime of which they were victims was left, and still remains, without punishment, and the damage of execution was followed by lie and indifference instead of recognition and compensation. Because the victims were carefully chosen by the perpetrators according to specific military and civil criteria, and because they were denied all that constitutes human symbolic conduct in boundary situations, their families became the Antigones of national fate. Through the publication of memoirs and diaries, the murdered Polish elite were finally publicly and unequivocally represented in their own country as normal family members who became inadvertent martyrs. They were rescued from anonymity by connecting them clearly to their daily life-world. At the same time they appear as martyrs because their main "guilt" was their specific citizenship combined with particular social origin and occupation and who therefore were viewed by the victimized and the perpetrators alike as one of the key carriers of Poland's cultural continuity and professional values, regardless of specific religious background.

All these symbolic components and anthropological imperatives of trauma drama have been recently artistically condensed in Andrzej Wajda's movie titled simply "Katyn", to date the most internationally visible statement about the incident. The film, short listed for an Oscar for the best international movie in 2007, explicitly thematizes an "Antigonic" element of the story. It realistically depicts the incident itself and links it to the contemporaneous crimes of Nazi Germany committed on Polish society, but focuses primarily on what the massacre meant to families, particularly to wives and sisters of the victims. In the opening text of the first set of memoirs written mostly by wives and daughters of the victims and published by the Katyn

[62] To this day the Russian government has not delivered to the Polish side 21857 personal NKVD folders of the killed. It claims that they had been destroyed. However, there is no confirmation that they were indeed burnt

Families Association under the title "Written with Love," one of the first sentences refers to the "terrible silence" that shrouded longing and despair (Bakowska 2000: 9). Wajda, whose father was among those murdered in Kharkov, visualized this aspect and reveals through it the brutal and cold-blooded destruction of a particular life-world. By shifting the attention from soldiers themselves to those who loved them and whose loss was publicly unrecognized, Wadja made the extension of sentiments and identification possible.

The movie was noticed internationally and was received as a shocking story, from Berlin to Los Angeles. However, the difficulties with global distribution caused largely by the indolence of Polish National TV, responsible for the movie as a commercial product, contributed to "murdering of the film" (Wajda 2009: 16). In addition, the reluctance of certain audiences to be confronted with it,[63] and what some viewed as a problem of an occasionally "too arcane" contextualization of the movie (Applebaum) has significantly decreased its anticipated international impact. The director was apparently aware of the predicament created by "Katyn"'s obscure historical references, something which may make parts of the film politically illegible (Wajda 2009: 16), but as a part of the legacy of great silence concerning various aspects of Soviet history this very predicament renders the movie a kind of invitation to unpack East European mysteries. This problem has been reversed with Polish audiences. The Katyn trauma drama appeared so symbolically and politically charged in that country that the movie has been susceptible to political manipulation, not unlike the official remembrance of the massacre described above. Referring to this danger, Wajda has stated that he is more afraid of the allies of the movie than its enemies (Wajda 2007: 5).

But regardless of the specific problems of immediate reception, the widespread visibility of a movie by the country's most noble director, honored in 2000 with an Oscar for his whole oeuvre, created a significant intervention that may serve as a pattern to follow and made lack of knowledge of the crime much more shameful than before. Certainly in Poland itself few could fail to notice it upon its release in fall of 2007. Already before the screening of the movie 95% of Poles had declared that they knew the name "Katyn," yet as much as 40% had not known who

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(Materski 2008: 131).

[63] "Katyn" has so far been largely ignored as an "inconvenient" picture for example in Italy, the fact linked to the influence of Italian leftist circles (GW 23 April 2009). However, even one of the biggest cinema networks in the country that belongs to the family of Silvio Berlusconi launched only a DVD distribution of the movie. Whereas this may have come as an unexpected disappointment for some observers, it has not been surprising that the Russian distribution of the movie is almost non-existent.

exactly is to be blamed for the massacre and 10% had still believed that the perpetrators were Germans (GW 23 April 2007).[64]

The movie released to the market in 190 copies half a year later, on September 21, 2007, was watched in the cinemas across the country by 1,021,881 persons only during the first two weeks, 265,000 of which viewed it in the first weekend of its screening.[65] By the 20th of October 2007 the number had already reached two million[66]. By the end of 2008 the number of viewers reached 2,7 million.[67] Such an attendance could not fail to change the sociological figures mentioned before. Above all, as an artistic intervention it represented and recalled Katyn as a grand symbol of the individual's helplessness vis-à-vis the totalitarian state and re-inscribed this recollection within a personally and concretely grounded narrative. Due to this connection the film has vividly depicted a group experience that thanks to this portrayal made decisive strides towards confirming itself as a truly collective experience of Poland as a cultural community. It was one of the more important representations that attached anew the meaning of human suffering to the sign of Katyn and aided the victims' silence overcoming itself.

Some Notes Toward a General Conclusion

Lack of symbolic closure deepens cultural traumas. It is conceived of as necessary for controlling the trauma and sufficient for launching of the processes of reconciliation.

We can distinguish specific parts of it:

1. overcoming anonymity
2. overcoming silence by the victimized

[64] There is here, of course, a methodological problem at stake, namely how can researchers be sure that the statement „Yes, I have heard about Katyn" is not distorted by a more general framework that stigmatizes ignorance. It would perhaps be better to possesses in this respect studies that elicit pertinent knowledge or lack thereof indirectly. Still, even if the figure of 95% regarding those who declared they knew of Katyn were exaggerated, it is not unrealistic to assume that the vast majority of society indeed have heard about it by 2007 and thus could identified and respond to the issue.

[65] http://www.wprost.pl/ar/115088/Katyn-obejrzalo-milion-widzow/ (May 12, 2009)

[66] http://film.wp.pl/id,81557,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1803e (May 12, 2009)

[67] http://www.money.pl/gospodarka/wiadomosci/artykul/rekord;frekwencji;-;32;mln;polakow;odwiedzilo;kina,20,0,311828.html (May 12, 2009)

3. acknowledging the guilt openly by the perpetrators
4. establishing ritualized commemoration
5. establishing the reconciliation dialogue between representatives of the victimized and representatives of community to which the perpetrators belonged

As we have seen, the case of cultural trauma of Katyn starts with the fundamental problem of sheer knowledge of facts, something usually taken for granted in trauma discourses. The very awareness of occurrences was for a long time partial and what was known was either suppressed or framed in a way that made the story controversial. The specificity of the case forces us to ask new general questions about the relation between such categories as knowledge, awareness, memory, commemoration, remembrance, media. The sociological definitions of these terms are often taken for granted and their epistemological status hardly explored. One of the values of this study is that it may contribute to a better understanding of what we really mean when we employ these concepts in sociological practice.

Beyond power/knowledge category there seems to exist a complex notion of memory/knowledge (perhaps this should also include 'memorialization'). Both definitional elements of the latter are mutually constitutive and fundamental. Yet, they are also largely passive phenomena. Memorizing something constitutes a necessary but not a sufficient condition of using it, i.e. making it consequential for one's biography and the environment. There is, of course, no memory without knowledge; memory needs its objects (thus memorialization as sites of memory as well as commemoration and the practices which go along with that). At the same time, we cannot really know anything if we do not have memory. In actual practice, these categories largely overlap.

Therefore the issue of cultural trauma is less a matter of sheer memory and more a matter of what structures memory and how, and then what and how "activates" it so that it may become a social fact with Durkheimian ramifications. Memory/knowledge compound requires to be symbolically unpacked through social performances and artistically elaborated in order to be turned into active remembrance. Memory/knowledge appears often as something essentially "dormant." To be become "active" and thus culturally consequential, it requires emotional

commitments of various groups, ritualization of its core messages and recurrent presence in different media. Above all it, needs to be experienced affectively and represented artistically within channels of broadly conceived popular culture if it is to matter for modern collective sense of belonging and continuity.

Claiming Trauma through Social Performance:
The Case of *Waiting for Godot*

Elizabeth Butler Breese

In November 2007, Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts* was performed in two neighborhoods in New Orleans: Gentilly and the Lower Ninth Ward. In Gentilly, a house destroyed by Hurricane Katrina served as the set; in the Lower Ninth Ward, the play was performed at an intersection of formerly busy streets. On face value, the production of a classic French Surrealist play on the streets of two neighborhoods largely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina is curious. Why did producers stage, actors perform, or audiences attend this play in such unlikely locations? What did the play mean to the audience and actors in New Orleans? Further, what meanings did the production convey to audiences other than the one physically present at the performances?

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* debuted as experimental, avant-garde drama. Today, it is widely acclaimed as one of the premier dramatic works of the twentieth century. Throughout the play's arc from experimental to canonical drama, critics, academics and journalists have recognized that *Waiting for Godot* has a "special relevance" and resonance when it is staged in contexts of political oppression, violence, and disaster (Bradby 2001: 162). Instead of the numerous explanations for resonance in these contexts, I offer one: productions of *Waiting for Godot* have achieved "re-fusion" in contexts of trauma. I closely examine *Waiting for Godot*—the circumstances of its creation, its aesthetics and available meanings—in order to analyze productions of the play and its unique resonance in contexts of trauma (Eyerman and McCormick 2006).