Ever since Manheim's seminal study on generations, sociologists have generally agreed that, for an individual, the core of a generational habitus takes shape in the time of entering adulthood. It is the moment in one's life-course when a period of personal maturation intersects with formative historical events or forces – the moment at which a youth makes „fresh contact"[158] with history and the adult world. Such a statement indeed calls for a wide range of qualifications. Some of them are dealt with by Mannheim, such as why it is in the state of youth that people absorb the kind of experience that will be constitutive of their specific generational identity. Others remain outside his attention. Among the latter, there is the question of the nature of the formative historical events and forces. Why do just some events or periods in history play the generation-constitutive role, while others do not? What exactly does their formative function consist of? In these points, Mannheim remains largely silent. He takes for granted an independent rhythm of history, which sometimes gets more dynamic, sometimes more static, fostering the formation of generational awareness in the former case, while hindering it in the latter.

In the following, I will take the analytical advantage of the culturalist stream in current sociology in order to shed more light on this issue – in a particular context of a recent theoretical debate and with a particular empirical aim. It is the triple task of this chapter, first, to contribute to the general sociological theory of generations, second, to highlight the generational perspective in the sociological debate on cultural trauma and collective memory, and third, to present communism as one of the past historical events or rather periods which have left an intense generational chasm in its wake.

The sequence of the aims should perhaps be reversed, since the major contribution is attempted at the empirical level of getting the topic of communism – more concretely the post-communist articulation of generational cleavages in the process of collective, and traumatic remembering of communism – on the sociological table. It is less my ambition to correct anything substantial in the theory of cultural trauma as it has recently been developed especially by and around the Yale

[158] Karl Mannheim, „The Problem of Generations" in Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 293.

Center for Cultural Sociology.[159] Rather, I am making an extensive use of it, further strengthening the culturalist stance, and highlighting – both empirically and theoretically – the generational aspect involved in the debate, especially in the contributions by Bernhard Giesen and Ron Eyerman.[160] Neither is it my primary task to exercise a critique of Mannheim's theory of generations. A culturalist departure from his position, in accounting history as a producer of generational divisions, will be apparent throughout the text. After all, there is not much more to add here to Mannheim's conception on a general level. Even from the viewpoint of recent cultural sociology, though not only from this one, Mannheim's piece on generations remains remarkably inspirational, analytically rich, and theoretically sound. As such, it still calls for being amended, corrected, and developed via empirical investigations of the subject matter, rather than replaced by another theoretical paradigm.

From psychoanalytical to cultural concept of trauma (via the generational perspective)

One important amendment to Mannheim's theory of generations is provided by Bernhard Giesen[161], and it pursues the path taken in this text as well. It employs the concept of traumatic experience as a historical trigger of generational consciousness. Referring to the concept of historical time by Reinhart Koselleck, Giesen explores the way in which traumatic events leave a strong imprint in the shared experience of a young age cohort, providing a dramatic experiential ground for its definition as a distinct generation. "Thus the collective trauma of a generation

[159] Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[160] Bernhard Giesen, „Noncontemporaneity, Asynchronicity and Divided Memories" in *Time & Society* 13:1 2004a, 27-40. Bernhard Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German national Identity" in Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Ron Eyerman, "Intellectuals and the Construction of an African American Identity: Outline of a Generational Approach" in Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics. June Edmunds and Bryan S Turner, eds., (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). Ron Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity" in Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Ron Eyerman, "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory" in *Acta Sociologica* 47:2 2004, 159-169.

[161] Bernhard Giesen, „Noncontemporaneity, Asynchronicity and Divided Memories"

constitutes a distinctive historical horizon (…), a founding event of history that for the life span of this generation is shared neither by the preceding nor the succeeding generation."[162] Here there is one important aspect of a life of a generation. A generation is recognized by social actors – among other properties – as a carrier of a specific historical memory, and that specificity stems from the unique intensity of a cohort's encounter with history at the time of youth. Wars won and lost, occupations and liberations, cultural upheavals, economic crises or booms, revolutions and contra-revolutions, assassinations or emergences of charismatic leaders, any such historical turning point is jointly experienced by all concerned, regardless of age. Yet it is always just a circumscribed age cohort that encounters a particular historical experience of this kind in their formative years of entering (mentally at least) the adult world. This uniquely intense historical experience constitutes a distinctive generational bond, the basis of a mutual understanding that cannot be easily shared by those who have not gone through the same traumatic ordeal (or triumphant glory) at the time of making a "fresh contact" with both history and adult life at the same time.

The shared dramatic life-historical experience, however, does not only constitute an abstract sense, however strong, of an inalienable generational bond. It also becomes reflected, contextualized and sometimes rationalized by representatives of the generation it has brought to social and cultural existence, especially in their making sense of an experience of other generations. This is what Mannheim takes into account when he speaks of the "interpretive formative principles" of a generation.[163] A formative generational experience tends to wield a perspective for interpreting history in a wider scope. It provides a ground for understanding past historical events and experiences of earlier generations, but it also absorbs later impulses, and it makes a distinct sense of both within its own sensibility. Therefore a collective past, shared across all age cohorts, tends to present itself from different angles to different generations of one and the same collectivity. It is when such differences become articulate and clash with each other in conflicting interpretations that age cohorts become generations, that is, they are recognized as such by involved social actors and thus made socially real and mattering.

[162] ibid., 36.
[163] Mannheim, op.cit., 306.

To account for such cases, the concept of cultural trauma comes particularly apposite, although it should not be hastily applied to all instances of generational conflict over history. It departs from the psychoanalytically restricted understanding of traumatic experience, but for good analytical reason. Psychoanalysis stresses deep inhibitions in one's psyche to recall disturbing past experiences, that is, something in one's past which is difficult to digest morally and existentially. Trauma or traumatic situation, in this perspective, is located in one's past, and the mechanisms of repressing it from memory are largely unconscious. Yet once the traumatizing experience is identified in one's past, for example by a psychoanalyst, the traumatic effect does not automatically disappear by this virtue. To the contrary, the disturbing past experience is just made subject to reflection and self-reflection.

The concept of cultural trauma takes the step, and it understands the painful process of reflexive memorizing as a *constitutive* part of the traumatic experience. Should a discomforting past experience become traumatic, it still must remain in the memory reservoir of the concerned actors. They may strive to forget it, repress it in their self-understanding, disregard it while solving practical problems of today, and make it meaningless. At the end of the day, however, one can always be reminded of it, accidentally or intentionally, either as an individual, or by a challenge to an entire collectivity to which s/he belongs. If such a remainder brings about the feelings of discomfort, insecurity, anxiety, a doubt about one's Self, the experience in its traumatic effect has never been completely forgotten or repressed. It still surfaces as a distinct moment of reference in one's biography, as it does in common history.

In other words, an event or an experience is not traumatic in itself. It is the uneasy memory of it that makes it traumatic. An event and its experience assume the meaning of trauma in so far as recalling them shatters one's personal or collective self-understanding.
"Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."[164] After all, Sigmund Freud himself comes close to the point when he says, e.g.: "It is as if these patients had not finished

[164] Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma" in Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 10.

with the traumatic situation, as though they were still faced by it as an immediate task which has not been dealt with; (…)."[165] But the psychoanalytical position switches the cause and the symptom. It still locates trauma in the past, and stretches its impact mysteriously to the present. The cultural sociological approach, to the contrary, shows that traumatic are the barriers – cultural and social, communicative and psychological – that actors face when trying to make sense of their past experience, to get the latter in line with how they want to see themselves today. Then repression of a past deeply disturbing experience is not only a psychological phenomenon, it also stems from limited communicability of such experience. It is the impossibility to square such experience with our present self-understanding and self-esteem that makes it truly traumatic.

The cultural sociological approach does not completely disregard and devaluate the psychoanalytical inspiration. It just re-formulates one of its central concepts in order to endow it with a wider empirical reach and a richer explanatory power, at least from the sociological point of view. In fact, the cultural approach employs the concept of trauma for the same analytical reason as psychoanalysis did – that is, in order to account for an aspect in our experience that otherwise may have gone unnoticed. This is the ultimate reason for replanting the concept of trauma from the psychoanalytical soil into the cultural sociological one.

We adopt the concept of cultural trauma precisely because it makes it possible to relate past experience and its present memorizing to the empirical process of articulation of generational cleavages. It makes it possible to account empirically for the case of 'divided memories'[166] as one, though not the sole, aspect of articulation of generational distinctions. And the generational analytical perspective, in turn, makes empirical sense of the generational transferability of trauma through communicative non-transferability of the traumatizing experience onto those who have not lived through that experience. Just as individual trauma comes with a biographically shattered self-esteem and self-understanding, collective trauma relates to the historically wounded identity of a collectivity. Trauma comes with a transposition of a present

[165] Sigmund Freud, "Fixation to Traumas – The Unconscious" in Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966), 340.
[166] Giesen, „Noncontemporaneity, Asynchronicity and Divided Memories"

conflict onto the chronological dimension. It is a powerful reminder that integrity and identity finds its sources in the body's past. And the nature of generational conflicts makes it clear that this applies as well to collective bodies, that is, to collectively shared identity and integrity.

For generations are not only historically emerging and disappearing collectivities. They also are relational phenomena. As there would be no generation without a shared historical lot of a specific age cohort, there also would be no generation without other generations sharing the same collective identity (national, ethnic, religious, regional, etc.). One's own generational feeling is only acknowledged in encounters, physical or ideational, with what is identified as representations or representatives of a different generation inhabiting the same historical region. It is not just a particular historical experience that makes a generation out of an age cohort. It is this experience being absorbed, understood, and represented differently than how representatives of other generations understand and represent *this same* collective experience. Generational conflict – and generations alone, for that matter – can only emerge if individuals identify with others not only along the same-age line, but also with those who are generationally different, with *their* predecessors, and *their* ancestors. Generations make experiential sense only within a collective body with a shared history, but divided memory of it. It is only then that a difference in memorizing the past matters in the present. An articulated generational cleavage or conflict, in turn, reminds us of a shared (historical) identity of *all* involved. The life of generations is an experience of *the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous*.[167]

Uneasy memories of communism

The making of history that matters

Although the concept of cultural trauma has mainly been discussed and developed in reference to the Holocaust, slavery and Nazism[168], the East-Central European communism seems to be an equally inviting historical case to be accounted for in this analytical perspective. And this is the

[167] Mannheim, op.cit., 283.
[168] Alexander, Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity

case despite the latter poses some specific difficulties for such analysis at the same time. The reason for both, analytical usefulness of the concept of cultural trauma and analytical difficulties of using the concept, is basically the same: communism is, compared to the other cases, a *more recent* historical "event" – but one which has *already* been subject to conflicting public interpretations and discoursive struggles in the post-communist countries. It is the vivid and publicly contested memory of the communist past, shattering common national identities and peculiarly dividing national communities in the post-communist countries, which signifies presence of the trauma process. It is therefore somehow surprising that the question of communist trauma has so far largely remained outside of sociologists' attention.[169]

The lack of attention to the trauma aspect in collective memorizing of the communist past relates to a certain uniqueness of this case as compared to the other historical examples of the trauma process. Firstly, the Czechoslovak "Lustration Law",[170] contemplated in public and political forums since the very regime change and implemented in 1991, was of a different kind than the post-war Nuremberg Trials in Germany, in two respects at least. It was not imposed by a foreign power, and (as such) it is a powerful symbol of an *internal* division within the national community between victims and culprits of the communist injustices. While in the cases of Nazism and the Holocaust the whole collectivities, Germans or Jews, have naturally been seen as

[169] Piotr Sztompka has come relatively close to this topic in his article "The Trauma of Social Change: A case of Postcommunist Societies". (Piotr Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change: A Case of Postcommunist Societies" in Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)) But, as the subtitle says, his primary concern is with *postcommunism*. In such a case, however, serious problems arise with the analytical use and explanatory power of the concept of trauma. Hans Joas rightly points out that "as a whole his chapter is characterized by an extremely wide notion of trauma so that almost every social change would have to be seen as traumatic." (Hans Joas, "Cultural Trauma? On the Most Recent Turn in Jeffrey Alexander's Cultural Sociology" in: *European Journal of Social Theory*. 8:3 2005, 372) Moreover, in Sztompka's use of the concept, the question of traumatic memory, the difficult recalling of a traumatic experience – which is central to the cultural (and also psychoanalytical) understanding of trauma – disappears altogether.

[170] The "Lustration Law" was implemented in order to legally prevent former high positioned functionaries of the Communist Party, contracted collaborators of the communist secret police, and members of the communist "People's Militia" to hold higher offices in the post-communist state bureaucracy and other institutions (like, e.g., state sponsored or non-private universities and media). In the following part of the article, I will be exclusively focusing on the Czech and

perpetrators or victims respectively, this does not apply to the post-communist national communities. Secondly, the level, nature and acts of historical guilt have been vibrantly present issues within post-communist societies from the very moment of regime changes, and they have constituted sharp symbolic divisions with concrete consequences for the involved actors. Not only did the question of historical guilt come from inside, it also came *immediately* after the historical break – and formation of generational divisions, as we will see shortly, has ever since been an important part of this historical self-reflection.[171] And thirdly, while the process of cultural constitution a trauma of slavery among American Blacks was a rather gradual process, triggered by later developments like the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the intensified interest in ethnic (African) roots of black Americans, and the establishment of widely recognized public representations of American Blacks (black literature, black history accounts, intellectuals and writers, political representatives, etc.)[172], all of this – political and social mobilization, strong sense of national identity, and public representations – has been at work since the actual collapse of communist regimes.

It therefore seems that we cannot refer to a certain delay in the trauma effect of the collective memory of communism, a delay that has been noted in the other three instances (even though in each for different reasons, partly suggested above), and which is another constitutive part of the trauma process. Still silence has been a part of this process as the latter developed in the post-communist environment. It has been the silence of those who have been persistently and impassionedly asked for explanation of the nature and motives of their assumed collaboration with the communist regime. Their personal testament should provide an answer to how it had been possible at all that majority of the adult population so willingly exchanged trivial or just

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Czechoslovak case. But much of the argument, on the general level, can easily be applied to other post-communist countries and contexts as well.

[171] In the post-war Germany, according to Giesen's account, the public salience of the question of historical guilt as well as the strong sense of a generational difference constituted around this question did not appear before "the 1960s, when a new generation entered the political stage. This generation was born after the war and did not have personal memories of the Nazi past. Children of this generation broke the coalition of silence and faced their parents with inconvenient questions that until then had been the mark of outsiders (…)." (Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German national Identity", 127)

[172] See Eyerman 2002, 2004a, 2004b

fallacious certainties for significant concessions, and thus made the long continuation of the unjust regime possible. What has been sought is a remedy for the wounded national identity, a clue to a national understanding and self-understanding. The silence of the communist trauma is the unwillingness of the assumed culprits to explain what in the eyes of many of them is inexplicable, since their language does not fit the newly created framework of historical imagination. The criteria of sincerity have changed with the historical turn. The addressed feel that the query for an explanation is in fact a demand for their apology, a demand that is psychologically uncomfortable, since such "coming out" can never lead to a full understanding and reconciliation. The stakes are too high, and the discoursive means at hand severely restricted.

It is an important feature of post-communist environment – and this particularly applies to the Czechoslovak and Czech case – that it has provided a largely uncontested agent of critical historical self-reflection: the youth. Young people (especially university students, young professionals, but to some extent also high school students) took an important part in triggering the processes that eventually led to the old regime's collapse. True, the picture of the youth's revolutionary involvement soon reached an almost mythical dimension in the post-revolutionary culture. Yet all the more it has endowed the youth with a strong legitimization to ask the uncomfortable questions. It elevated them to the symbolic status of those who: first, could not have been straightforwardly responsible for the past injustices; second, have therefore been the most sincere in their revolutionary involvement; and third, whose lives has already been and still will be affected by the troubled past nevertheless. This symbolic position dissociated them from majority of the adult part of the population, and it did so prospectively and retrospectively as well. They are presented and self-presented as those with a unique historical merit and imagination, as wittingly captured in Adam Michnik's famous quip: the young people made the revolution happen, since they did not know it was impossible.

It is also the historical immediacy of the trauma discourse which has made the emerging generational cleavage a more salient aspect of the historical self-reflection in post-communist societies. It is the urgent public and political concern with the relatively recent past that represents one of the most dramatic discoursive fields through which the generational cleavage has been articulated.

The immediate and continuing political sensitivity and public salience of the question of the communist past in post-communist societies brings about two sorts of problems for a sociological analysis. Let me briefly address them both. On the one hand, any attempt at a sociological account of the current trauma process runs the risk of becoming part of the process itself, instead of reclaiming the status of an ideologically disinterested (if not impartial) analysis designed to provide a deeper understanding of the stakes involved. It can easily be read through the partisan lenses of "which side are you on". This may not be a problem for a more radical sort of 'public sociology', yet it is a problem for any truly critical theory. For the latter's task is not to provide an intellectual ammunition to a party in ideological or political conflict, but to cultivate a critical understanding and self-understanding of the involved actors.

The other side of the problem is analytical in kind, and it takes us back to the subject matter. As students of generations well know, their topic is largely elusive when the task is to analyze generations that are still in the making. It is a comfortable theoretical enterprise to account for the generation of the 1960s, for example, since this generation has already secured its symbolic status in western history, it has established itself through a distinct identity and various cultural representations. We have already been able to observe how representatives of this generation and its identity have later left a distinctive impact on culture, politics, family patterns, and also work ethic. And knowing the outcomes, it also is easier for us to trace back the relevant aspects of the formative experience of this generation.

None of this is readily on hand when we look at the post-communist age cohort, the post-communist youth. And yet we still can see how intensely young people in post-communist countries are haunted by the past of their parents, teachers, bosses, older politicians and journalists, neighbors and colleagues at work. Certainly this is not their only or primary concern. It only comes to mind in certain situations and contexts. But it has already found its place in their historical sensitivity, even though it is troubling for some more than others, and it has been articulated in specific forums (the media, universities, social movements, judiciary, institutions of political representation, etc.), to which not all of them have equal access.

The personal past of their older mates matters to young people, too, since it seems to affect their current lives and their future as well. The strong sense of a historical break, which makes the past of parents and grandparents seem so unique and their past world so different from that of today, is the basic experiential ground for an equally strong feeling of generational difference. At this point, it even does not need an explicit or articulate content. It is irresistibly suspected and taken for granted. Substantial articulation of the generational difference, after all, will be almost naturally delivered by the urgent examination and re-examination of the mysterious past, i.e., in a process instantaneously triggered by the sense of a dramatic historical break.

The question of the elders' past can only be seen as a generational problem because this past becomes a part of *common* history, that is, a history that bounds the younger and the older together. It is not easy to ignore history's challenge in an environment which persistently brings the communist past up as a problem for mundane social and political processes, not only for the shared national identity. The interest in the past is unswervingly imposed by the sense of the latter's practical importance. Here history offers itself as a source of understanding of those affected by it, as a ground for explaining their present behavior, making sense of their present motives, and inferring what may be expected from them. And all this is easier achieved to the extent to which the past gets anchored in a frictionless framework of collective memory, while the will to a critical 'historical understanding' has weakened.[173] Historical understanding, with its ambiguities and uncertainties, always seems less practical in providing a clear point of orientation in the present and for the future. And an appeal to such 'historical understanding' of past experience in its ambiguity will readily be recognized as a cunning trick, as an attempt to

[173] Here I use the distinction made by Peter Novick with reference to Maurice Halbwachs: "Indeed, collective memory is in crucial senses ahistorical. To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behavior. Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes." (Peter Novick, The Holocaust in American Life (Boston: A Mariner Book, 2000), 3-4) This way of contrasting 'collective memory' with 'historical understanding', strongly evokes a positivist preference for the latter as the rational, indeed scientific attitude to the past. It will be clear form my further text that I see it analytically more useful and empirically proper to read this distinction as one between two ideal-typical strategies of dealing with the past in concrete struggles among concerned parties over the interpretation of a shared past.

obscure the past and blur the clear line between good and evil, as just another way of retouching the historical and personal guilt. The promise of an easier orientation in the *contemporary* world incites morally categorical questions, which are as discomforting for the human products of communism as were those confronting members of the German war generation some decades ago.[174]

Posing the question of guilt

The trauma of the communist past finds it public expressions and hovers in the collective memorizing process as a trauma of perpetrators, not as a trauma of victims (as is the case of the Holocaust and slavery in Jewish and black American historical memory). In this general sense, the post-communist ordeal of collective remembrance resembles the trauma process in the post-Nazi Germany, described by Giesen[175]. Being labeled as a perpetrator, as one who took part in the atrocities or injustices of the past regime and therefore is held responsible for current problems and contamination of national identity, itself is a stigmatizing position. But the core of the trauma process resides in the limited communicability of the perpetrators' past experience. It is the actual impossibility to rationalize the past experience which only converts stigma into trauma. In their self-defense, the accused have often inclined to present themselves as victims of the unfavorable historical circumstances – which is the case of (post-)communists as it was the case of the members of the German war generation.[176] The kind of 'historical understanding' which muddles up victims and perpetrators, however, is not easily acceptable, especially from the moral point of view, and particularly by those who did not live in the troubled past.[177]

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[174] See note no. 6.
[175] Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German national Identity".
[176] ibid.
[177] The status of outsiders vis-à-vis the communist society has not only pertained to the post-communist youth, but also, e.g., to Czech or Czechoslovak emigrants, to clear dissidents or those who had been in a sense exempt from facing the moral-political dilemmas of life in communism (like some segments of the working class, which still had nothing to lose but their chains, even during the communist times). Again, not all of the representatives of these categories have been equally eager in posing the question of historical guilt – but they have certainly been better psychologically predisposed to do so.

Moreover, even if the analogy between communism and Nazism would seem inadequate in terms of historical understanding, it has nevertheless become a part of the struggle over interpretation of responsibility for communist injustices. 'Look, we were no Nazis', goes one of the self-defensive patterns of easing the past compromises with the communist regime. Yet also this statement is readily recognized as an instrumental strategy of avoiding personal responsibility, rather than being taken as a satisfactory historical explanation, and much less as an apology. It is little convincing because it looks utterly inappropriate. It only confirms the traumatizing nature of a remembering which is marked by helplessness in rationalizing one's past behavior, and eventually by unwillingness to even try to do so. The point is that the concrete extent and character of the past atrocities plays just a little role in the cultural production of trauma. Trauma is constituted retrospectively, and what matters is the *dramatization* of challenges which history brings to the present.

The question of guilt has been central to the reflection of the communist past, in three respects. Firstly, there has been the question of who was guilty for the widespread injustice of the communist regime, from imprisoning people for publicly stating their political views opposing the policies of the Communist Party and the regime in general, to withholding passports or making it impossible to pursue a career for which one was qualified or to study at a university or even a high school (for reasons like having a family member emigrated to the West). Who was responsible for creating the atmosphere of fear, docility, and opportunism for a large part of the population? Secondly, there has been the more immediate concern with people's past, when new elites and leaders were looked for after the regime change, not only in politics, but also in the media, at schools and universities, in the state bureaucracy and other institutions. How is someone reliable to be found when those who were qualified for these positions had often been part of the old communist "nomenclature" or too close to it? How are true proponents of the old regime to be recognized in contrast to those who just played the game and did not harm anyone directly, at least? And thirdly, the question of guilt arises as many problems of the democratic transition are attributed to the communist heritage. Who is to be held accountable for the current problems in political life, the economy, and social relations – problems which could have been avoided if only we had not started with the burdens the corrupt communist regime?

Disclosing a generational gap: the revolutionary generation vs. the normalization generation

Young people have not been exempt from facing these dilemmas. They have been involved in all of the three versions of the post-communist discourse of guilt, although perhaps most immediately in the second one. This especially concerns the age cohort that, at a young age, took part in the regime changes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. As noted above, in Czechoslovakia students and young people in general played a crucial role in what has become known as the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Violent suppression of a student demonstration in Prague, on 17 November that year, unleashed a series of events and activities, which eventually led to the regime change. Students and young people were particularly active in the first weeks and months of the changes – at universities or in the work place.

It was these events and the implicated conflicts what started to draw the dividing line between what has later been labeled as the *revolutionary* and *normalization* generations. The former took its label from spectacular involvement of many of its representatives in the process of the regime change. The latter received its brand name from the Communist Party vocabulary of the 1970s. Then the official term 'normalization' served as a legitimization of the massive crackdown of Czechoslovak authorities (especially the Communist Party, judiciary, and police) on any sign of ideological dissent, in a widespread and perpetual campaign that followed the military and political termination of the democratizing reform process known as Prague Spring of 1968. By and large, the term 'normalization' had soon become a symbol of the repressive policy of the Communist Party under the renewed Soviet control. Long before the regime change in 1989, it had been widely (but always privately or just implicitly) understood as an ideological nickname for creating the atmosphere of fear, distrust, intrigues, opportunism, docility, and submissiveness. Apparently, with such a history of the term and its meaning, the label itself imposes a great deal of stigmatization on those who happen to get generationally identified with and by it.

However, it should be noted that this culturally defined and discursively reproduced generational division has effectively run through the young cohort itself. That is, it has also divided those who were in their twenties and sometimes even late teens at the time of the regime change. The cultural definition of the generational divide exerted its social power from the very start. What was at stake among the young people themselves, too, was the level and nature of their involvement or non-involvement in concrete processes of the regime change at universities or in work places, their short institutional past (especially in the Socialist Union of Youth, but sometimes also already in the Communist Party), their reputations among peers. All this sorted people within this age cohort itself, making 'revolutionaries' of some and 'normalizers' of others, regardless of age. True, in concrete individual cases, this seldom happened definitively, once and for all, in every respect. Such clear-cut divisions are rare in history, and they are even rarer at times of an inflamed generational partition. Formative generational classification struggles initially often occur under the disguise of other sorts of social and political struggles, and almost always in persistent negotiations and endeavor to join the side one wants to represent and seeks to belong to. In these struggles, generational divisions find their dramatic articulation, so that they can serve as a cultural label of belonging to the people of today (or the future) or to the people of yesterday. It gradually becomes a commonly understood scheme of interpretation and as such it is at hand to be employed in concrete social interactions. The actual generational categorization of actors and their generational self-identification comes to word situationally, that is, in proper moments and in relevant contexts. However episodically such (self-)categorization may occur, it often works with a powerful social effectiveness, in so far it is tied with positive or negative social sanctions, expectations and self-esteem.

Of course, the cultural definition of the generational gap has not been completely arbitrary in historical terms. The ultimate generational division between 'revolutionaries' and 'normalizers' has also reflected the shift in formative historical experience of both age cohorts. The representatives of the young revolutionary generation were about to enter the world of adults in the second half of the 1980s. This was a world whose effective working principles they saw in moral corruption, hypocrisy, and cynical submission to the communist regime. By itself, however, this would not have been a different experience than that of the normalization generation of the 1970s. Then, in the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact occupation of the country in

1968, the installment of the pro-Soviet puppet regime and the political purges that followed (especially in the work place and also in the Communist Party itself), another historical round of the morally corrupting struggle for positions took place. This was the experience which largely shaped the world of the normalization generation, including the nature of its basic inner practical and moral conflicts running along the axis "cowardly collaboration vs. heroic resistance". These were the extreme points which in many social contexts and relations (at work and in schools, in wider families, among friends, in church and other associations, etc.) provided working criteria for a moral categorization and self-understanding of social actors.

The problem for the young in the late 1980s was that now, while cynicism, hypocrisy and submissiveness were still expected as a norm of adult behavior, they no longer at least safeguarded a chance for a relatively good career. It seemed that good positions had already been taken and the circulation of cadres principally reserved for an already re-consolidated, narrow and enclosed nomenclature elite. Even young members of this elite started to perceive that they can hardly convert their privileged family background into the capital they sought, that is, especially the economic one.[178] The experience of growing up in the late 1980s was thus a variation of the proletarian socialization: amoral submissive assiduousness no longer promised noteworthy gains, and civic indifference did no longer resulted in serious losses. Compared to the young people of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the young of the late 1980s had less to gain by being obedient, and less to lose by being disobedient.

Also this brought many active young people into the revolutionary project and post-revolutionary politics at all levels.[179] And one of the tasks they embraced was how to get rid of the corrupt proponents of the old regime. Of course, not all of them were active in this direction, not all of them to the same degree and in the same style, and young people were not the only ones involved. Older people took part in the various 'councils' and campaigns as well. Yet while the

[178] Ivo Možný, Ivo, Proč tak snadno. Některé rodinné důvody sametové revoluce (Why So Smoothly. Some family reasons for the velvet revolution) (Praha: SLON, 1991).
[179] We could call these young people active in the so called "civic forums" at universities and places of work, but also in the media and newly emerging political parties and movements, a *generational unit* (Mannheim 1964), since they were representative of the whole generation, or at least acted like they were.

latter tended to stress professional competence, and disregard small concessions to the old regime on the part of those who were being profiled, the question of moral purity acquired a more prominent place among the young.[180] Sure there may have been a pragmatic element at work in stressing moral competence by the young people. As they were at times reminded, they had not had that much time and opportunities in their lives to get involved in the corrupting practices of the old regime, to joint the Communist Party, to sign a petition against the dissidents, to accept a position in the political apparatus. Neither had they had the time and opportunities to gain sufficient professional reputation and skills required after the regime change.[181] And if some of them had managed to advance in taking some part in the old regime practices, this qualified them to being more easily attached to the generation of the normalizers and normalized.

However, it would be misleading to see the moralizing posture among young revolutionaries solely in the perspective of a purely pragmatic calculus of personal gains and losses. What is at work here, rather, is the 'practical sense' as Pierre Bourdieu[182] coins the term. The moral attitude mirrors some basic dispositions, schemes of orientation in the social world, which reflect the specific experience of historical socialization described above. It is this experience which endows the attitude with subjective cogency for the concerned social actors, and which gives Bourdieu's concept its explanatory power. The accent on moral competence of new leaders at all levels of different sorts of institutions (not just the political ones) can be understood, in the case of the young revolutionaries, as an expression of a mental disposition which no longer took the corrupt world of normalization for granted. For them, immunity against the lures of opportunism

[180] Milan Otáhal and Miroslav Vaněk, Sto studentských revolucí (A Hundred of Student Revolutions) (Praha: Lidové noviny, 1999).

[181] In fact, it has become a prominent maker of this generation to complain about the lack of competences: weak at foreign languages, no experience abroad, no proper orientation in the world of politics and business, no knowledge of newest developments in the fields of their interest, etc. They felt to be deprived of all of this by the regime they dismantled. Ironically, the change they had sought made losers of them again – a truly tragic situation. They soon began to distinguish themselves generationally from those even younger people who, in their eyes, were able to consummate all the new opportunities opened up by the regime change. No wonder the young revolutionaries have leaned so much to the value of moral credit. For many, it seems to be the only asset remaining to them. (See Radim Marada, „Social Construction of Youth and Formation of Generational Awareness after Socialism" in Petr Mareš et al. Society, Reproduction and Contemporary Challenges (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2004)

[182] Pierre Bourdieu, Practical Reason (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

was still less a matter of personal heroism and still more a matter of common sense – while the readiness to give in was not only morally dubious but also less and less intelligible. In the late 1980s, it was still more difficult to get a reasonable explanation from their peers who were too active in expressing their loyalty to the communist regime, especially by joining the Communist Party.

Imposition of silence

The young people of the late 1980s could perhaps still understand their parents, who entered the Party during the 1970s or earlier. But they were sorry for them, rather, since the parents had made this concession in order to keep life chances of their children open, without the offspring seeing any noteworthy point in such a sacrifice.[183] In both instances – in contact with their peers and their parents – this resulted in a communicative barrier: irritating, depressing, and embarrassing at occasional attempts to break it. As demonstrated also by Alan's study, membership in the Communist Party has been carefully avoided as a conversational topic in many families, before as well as after 1989. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, this was still an understanding silence. The reasons for political and moral concessions were clear without saying, and the shared silence protected those who made them against the feeling and label of cowardice or weakness, if not unscrupulousness. No family wants to have such a person in home. By the end of the 1980s, the silence started to be driven by futility, rather than understanding.

When the question of guilt and past misdeeds was publicly raised later on, in the time of post-revolutionary institutional and moral purification, those who had in some way compromised with the communist regime did not have any convincing language at hand to explain their moral-political concessions and retain a sense of self-esteem at the same time. And this especially has been a problem for the representatives of the normalization generation. What has remained to them, in the context of a public discourse of historical guilt, were arguments pointing to their

[183] Josef Alan, Josef, "Rodinné vztahy a členství v KSČ" ("Relations in Families and Membership in the Communist Party") in Otevřená minulost: autobiografická sociologie státního

professional ambitions and care for their families – both in danger had they not been loyal to the communist regime. But these arguments came little satisfactory to the audience, partly in relation to the historical significance of the past misdemeanors (legitimization and in effect support of the unjust regime), partly for the futility of such collaboration which after all often did not bring the fruits that were to justify it ("look at those who resisted the lures of opportunism, and still achieved something and provided for their families"). The outcome has been the picture of amoral cowardice combined with historical incompetence. And this is difficult to face by way of a rational communication.

There is still another intervening variable that makes it difficult for members of the 'normalization generation' to attempt a public reconstruction of their communist experience. Since about the later 1990s, there has been a growing tendency among younger film directors, writers, journalists, and sometimes historians and social scientists to account for and come to terms with the communist past of their nation.[184] From these endeavors, there have emerged two representative types of the 'normalization character': cynical opportunists on the one hand, and devoted communists on the other. The former participate in the regime game only to the point of securing their job and family, and perhaps gaining some private profit (like the permission to travel abroad), the latter actively foster the regime, although still less by conviction, and still more because they know that their privileges depend on it. Without overestimating the impact of the culture and media industry, these pictures have certainly contributed to limiting the space of imagination in dealing with the communist past, especially for those who do not have direct (adult) experience with it. The extent to which these are the only imaginable prototypes of the life in communism, biographical stories of the older generation are but variations of the two prototypical characters. There is no place in this interpretative framework for those who did not belong to nomenclature, nor to the dissent, who made some concessions to the communist regime to avoid troubles, but who *did* feel this as a moral problem, and whose identity was

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socialismu (An Open Past: Autobiographical Sociology of State Socialism), Zdeněk Konopásek, ed., (Praha: Karolinum, 1999).

[184] It is quite symptomatic, in this respect, that also the director of the German Oscar awarded movie *The Lives of Others*, dealing with the communist past in East Germany before 1989, has come as if from another world than he is depicting, in double sense: Florian Henckel von

shattered for that reason. There is no place in such a framework for the ambiguous experiences and the complexity of pressures of life during communism, in which keeping moral credit in one respect sometimes required giving it up in another. The other option during the communist times, in the eyes of many, was to resist and become a pointless hero – perhaps admired by some for a time, but abandoned by others for good, keeping some moral credit within their families, but confronted with a label of practical irresponsibility therein.

The categorical nature of the question of guilt, along with the variety of contexts in which it has been posed, has brought about peculiar discursive dynamics. At the abstract level, the dividing line between guilt, that is, responsibility for the past injustices, and exemption from such responsibility has been clear. However abstract – that is, de-contextualized – this question is, it has been posed dramatically and urgently in various public forums. But the criteria of guilt (responsibility) have, at the same time, varied according to the context and the stake, and most often they have been lumped together and used arbitrarily or instrumentally. What did it mean to be a proponent of the old regime? Was an active and intentional participation in Communist Party campaigns against real or potential threats to the regime necessary to qualify one for historical guilt? Or did just utterly formal membership in the Union of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, which many chose for their CV's as a less compromising alternative to joining the Communist Party, amount to a support to the regime? What constituted effective collaboration with the oppressive communist regime? Did it concern just those in higher positions within the Communist Party nomenclature and those found in communist secret police files as its collaborators? Or did every member of the Communist Party (about a 1,5 million people from the population of 15 million in Czechoslovakia) contribute to past injustices, and thus cannot be exempt from their guilt and responsibility? Must every journalist, every teacher, every state bureaucrat, every artist appearing on TV, every store manager, etc. – regardless of their membership in the Communist Party – have been somehow allied with the regime? Did not all 99% of the adult population who took part in the staged elections (with results known in advance) effectively support the regime?

Donnersmarck was born in the western part of Germany (in Cologne) in 1973. He was only 16 years old when the Berlin Wall came down, and he was 33 when making the movie.

Confronted with the lack of clarity in its own criteria, the imperative question of guilt has resulted in the kind of ambivalence that is constitutive of cultural trauma.[185] It is largely due to such ambivalence that the question of historical guilt has become so urgent for some (especially the younger), and so discomforting for others (especially the older). "Like psychological ambivalence, its manifestation at the sociocultural level sets the stage for the frequently observed tendency for generation after generation to engage in compulsive examining and reexamining, bringing up new aspects of the trauma, reinterpreting, reevaluating, and battling over symbolic significance."[186] Smelser's account is generally right. But it should be added that the compulsion to examine and reexamine the past is not only incited by the very absence of the clear criteria of good and evil, by the ambivalence of the past experience when confronted with present challenges and attempted self-understandings. The urgency alone stimulates the sense of ambivalence which is difficult to overcome communicatively.

On the part of the normalization generation in particular, such ambivalence has brought about a silencing effect. For this was the generation which, unlike still older generations, did not have any sound excuse for taking part in the corrupt communist project. Members of the older generations can at least refer to the attractiveness of the communist idea after experience of the 1930s' economic depression and the Second World War. And those who took an active part in the reform process of the Prague Spring of 1968 (especially if they were later expelled from the Communist Party) can refer to the democratic potential of their vision of 'socialism with human face'. They can be, and often are (even by themselves), seen and labeled as foolish, historically disoriented, but not as morally corrupt. The possibility to refer to these historical circumstances of *their* guilt – if they have accepted it at all – makes them generationally different from those who already lack any such historical explanation of their collaboration life strategies.

The memorized history is by no means on the side of the normalization generation, it works mercilessly against this generation. However its representatives may try, their explanations are perceived as either incomplete or deceiving. Whatever they say in their defense – how they made

[185] Neil Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma" in Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity. Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[186] ibid., 54

fun of the communists in private or avoided participating in May Day parades by making themselves ill – this may at most be a folkloric part of their conversations with coevals. But it finds little resonance among the young, *if meant as an evidence for personal courage and dignity*. The young lack the right imagination to value such 'heroism without risk', they have already adopted different criteria of sincerity.

The above discussion should not suggest that young people have been the only ones to raise the question of the communist past and the historical guilt. These problems have by no means been an issue for the youth only – ever since the regime change, they have been generally present in the public discourse. Instead, my account should have brought to the fore some of the specific reasons that have made young people vitally interested in the communist past at all. The point is not only that their formative generational experience or their youth predisposes them mentally to pose these questions. Their age alone is a symbol which makes this psychologically easier for them, since they can hardly be fought back by the same discoursive ammunition. And it is the communicative barrier – aggravating full mutual understanding with the older about the moral dimension of their common past – that in turn makes them feel generationally alienated and eventually curious.

Confronted with the question of historical guilt, eventually even the culprits come to see inadequacy of such arguments. It therefore comes as no surprise that publicized biographical interviews concerning life in the communist past have so far almost exclusively been reserved for either clear dissidents (expelled from work and sometimes imprisoned by the communist regime) or the undoubted representatives of the communist regime, the top functionaries amounting to about the same small number as the dissidents.[187] This is no longer due to a lack of interest on the side of the interviewers (sociologists, journalists, etc.), political celebrities of the communist regime on both sides have already given their accounts, repeatedly. Josef Alan, the Czech sociologist, tried to break this silence by the end of the 1990s, and he still encountered a persistent reluctance to speak: "Many of those confronted with the question of what the Communist Party meant in their lives refused, politely yet categorically, to respond. Others

[187] Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Urbášek, eds., 2005. Poražení?-Vítězové? Životopisná interview. (Losers?-Winners? Biographical Interviews.) (Praha: Prostor, 2005).

reacted as if they were subject to torture – and this was not only the case of the former Communist party Members. In this sense, an auto/biographical research all too much reminds of vivisection."[188] Alan's study astutely captures the phrase of non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous: "Those who lived through a different time than in which they talk about their past lives, in fact anticipate this 'incomprehensibility'. They suspect how difficult it is to explain, clarify and rationalize anything – especially before their own children. In effect, it means to accept that by part of their lives they do not belong to the present, that they even can represent relicts of the regime despised by all, including by themselves."[189]

Here we come to the generational core of the cultural concept of trauma. A direct historical experience acquires traumatic nature when it becomes difficult to communicate this experience across generations because of its enormous complexity, at least in the eyes of those concerned. The bearers of such experience easily convince themselves that those who did not live in their past, can never fully understand it – a paradigmatic generational statement. They do not want to explain, since their contemporaries do not need any explanation, and the younger generation would not take it anyway. If there is any reason to apologize at all for their past misdeeds, there is nobody around to apologize to. The guilt is too general, and the young would have been the same had they lived in the same time – just another excuse.

The post-communist memorizing of the communist experience once again reveals the paradoxical nature of collective trauma: *trauma* is transferred from one generation to another because of the difficult communicative transferability of the *experience* to which it refers. What is traumatizing is not the past experience itself but the situation, in which this experience gets dramatized in acts of collective memorizing. Yet it is the dramatized and compulsive process of collective memory that, at the same time, poses insurmountable barriers to this experience being communicatively shared among generations.

[188] Alan, op. cit., 168
[189] ibid., 169

"1974" as Cultural Trauma

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> No one could have ever conceived that the treacherous coup and the Turkish invasion that followed it in 1974 would overturn the smooth course of time; these age-old habits and folkloric traditions. Along a line of other tragic consequences in our lives and the development of our land and its people, the blow to our mores, customs and the traditions of our land was devastating.
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> Demetris Christofias
> President of the Republic of Cyprus, February 9, 2009 [190]

This paper outlines the major manifestations of 1974 as a cultural trauma for Greek Cypriots and elaborates on the implications of this trauma in the context of the "Cyprus issue." [191] Greek Cypriots remember "1974" as the Turkish invasion that displaced around 180,000 people, caused the death of hundreds and resulted in 1,619 missing persons[192] and the island's semi-occupation. As a message repeated in almost every official talk, the president's words are not exceptional even as they assert the exceptionality of a profoundly traumatic event: "1974" is a cultural trauma for Greek Cypriots not only because it left "indelible marks upon their group consciousness" but also because it is experienced, until today, as an event that changed "their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004a: 1). In this paper, we explain how "1974" became a cultural trauma for all Greek Cypriots through its commemoration, institutionalization and routinization.

In particular, we use cultural trauma theory to analyze the processes through which Greek Cypriots have interpreted the 1974 events as a painful trauma that shapes their current identity. In the first section, we establish scope restrictions, unpack some theoretical issues and sketch the social processes that fuelled the construction of 1974 as a cultural trauma. Next, we expand our analysis into trauma routinization. In this section, our objective is to show how everyday rituals are evocative of the trauma and how they echo and reproduce the trauma in Greek Cypriot culture. Finally, we examine the problematic nature of the trauma's transmission and

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[190] Talk given by the president of Cyprus in commemoration of the occupied community of Kondea, at the church of Ayios Charalambos in the Geri refugee housing project. Translation by authors. Full text in Greek at http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/All/8D2BEC4C716A7A46C2257558005C485C? Opendocument (Retrieved March 4, 2009).

[191] The "Cyprus Issue" is a term used to describe the unresolved situation of conflict on the island since 1974. The United Nations have used the term in various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It could be argued that from the perspective of the unilaterally declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC, since 1983) there is no "Cyprus Issue" but a problem of TRNC's international recognition.

[192] This number was the official estimated figure for the Greek Cypriots who went missing in July and August of 1974. This estimate has been continuously revised, especially since the beginning of excavations by the Investigative Committee for Missing Persons (established in 1981) in August 2006. For more on the politics of the recovery of missing persons in Cyprus and the controversy on determining their actual number see Cassia (2005; 2006).