CHAPTER V.11

CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT IN POLAND: HIDDEN INJURIES OF THE COLD WAR

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Abstract. Poland has sometimes been called God's playground because of its position on the old map of the continent. Far from being a stage set for historical dramas scripted elsewhere, Poland repeatedly made a difference. Recently, making a difference involved precipitating the decline of state communism and the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Central Europe. Poland's citizens rose in a mass movement of "Solidarity" in August 1980. Sparked by the Gdańsk shipyard workers' strike, this national coalition of self-managed, work-related teams successfully challenged the communist monopoly and paved the way for, among other events, the re-unification of Germany in 1989 and the breakdown of Soviet Union in 1991. The contemporary cultural competence of Polish managers is being shaped by the country's historical background, especially its recent history of de-communization and social interactions, which demonstrate the entrepreneurial thrust of post-communist transformations. They are also acquiring formal

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managerial education in rapidly growing schools of business, in the increasingly numerous entrepreneurial initiatives and on their jobs – in systematically privatized and internationally networked firms, companies and organizations.

Introduction

Poland, along with other post-communist countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania, has been subject to a learned ignorance on the part of countries west of the Elbe River. This learned ignorance about most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is one of the most dangerous legacies of the Cold War. Due to the barriers limiting the free flow of people and ideas between 1945 and 1989, stereotypes and prejudices of these areas held great importance, particularly among educated Western Europeans. While it might well be common knowledge among Western Europeans that Paris is the capital of France or that Westminster Abbey is located in London, most know little or nothing about Sofia or Riga.

Due to Cold War era political propaganda and closed borders, western stereotypes depicted Poles, Czechs or Hungarians as a gloomy, anonymous mass, residing in substandard apartment buildings and moving zombie-like through grey streets filled with dark, empty shops plastered with political slogans – all the while under the watchful eyes of the communist Big Brother. Stereotypes and general ignorance were duly reproduced in numerous ways; for instance by researchers, who had conducted comparative studies almost automatically excluding these countries, which had been on the other side of the iron curtain.

The stereotypes surrounding conditions in Central and Eastern Europe were so prevalent that this bias was evident in the selection of countries in which Geert Hofstede's questionnaire used to compare national cultural software[2] had been distributed. The founding father of cross-cultural comparative studies, Hofstede published the results of his findings as *Culture's Consequences* in 1980. Twenty-one years later, in 2001, the second, corrected and much expanded edition of the same fundamental study included "index score estimates for countries not in the IBM set" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 502). Results from sixteen countries had been added, ten of which were former

2. In Hofstede's (1980) view, national culture contributes most to an individual's value preferences, thereby 'national cultural softwares' are installed in individual minds during socialization in families, as well as in schools and other institutions controlled by nation-states. Needless to say, the assumption that values are somehow 'installed' during early socialization is criticized by researchers who account for a broader individual autonomy and discretion in creating personal hierarchies of values.

enemies from the Cold War era: Bulgaria, China, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Vietnam. Similarly, the Globe study[3], which began in the1990s and continues today, had originally been based on data from 62 countries, of which ten were the formerly communist Albania, China, Czech Republic, Georgia, East Germany (the former GDR), Hungary, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia and Slovenia (House *et al.*, 2004). Thus in comparing the cultural backgrounds of managers, understood primarily as their *individual* software influenced by a *collective* national cultural matrix, we are slowly and only very recently acquiring data that allows a cautious comparison of Polish (or Russian, Czech, Hungarian, Estonian) managers to their Western European counterparts.

Systematic and large-scale studies, like the ones undertaken by Hofstede in the 1970s and by House in the 1990s are not the only guides we might follow in studying the post-communist transformations and managerial beliefs and practices in formerly communist countries. There is a growing research literature, emerging from both joint international research projects and indigenous research projects and publications (cf. Wasilewski, 1995, Misiak, 2004, Staniszkis, 2005). Moreover, personal encounters become more frequent between academic and business communities. For example, students from formerly communist countries are growing in numbers among managerial trainees and MBA students at Western European business schools. Increasingly, managers and students from the formerly Communist countries, especially those in Central Europe, can help unravel the stereotypes and reduce any learned ignorance of Western European academics with respect to the former Warsaw Pact countries. However, this would require a revision of the tacit assumptions inherited from the Cold War and still going strong in the mainstream media. These assumptions, biases and prejudices are being revised, albeit very slowly, under the influence of real life interactions.

Approaching the issue of national culture as the basic source of differences between individual value preferences, one should be cautious. Researchers try to reconstruct individual cultural software within the hearts and minds of managers. First, following Hofstede, they assume that socialization patterns of younger generations remain relatively stable, that is,

3. The Globe study, conducted by teams of researchers supervised by Robert House *et al.*, was devoted to a comparative analysis of culture-bound visions and concepts of organizational leadership. Respondents chose from long lists of attributes provided by researchers and their responses partly coincided with the clustering of national cultures provided by Hofstede. House invited 172 researchers from 62 countries to participate and they in turn interviewed 17 300 managers from 951 organizations in an effort to avoid the western biases of most comparative studies to date, including and in particular, Hofstede's studies (cf. House *et al.*, 2004).

family, school and workplace remain the most significant sites of individual socialization and enculturation. Such an assumption may hold true, but it may also appear that growing internationalization of organizational activities makes other sites of socialization more important than families and schools. When speaking about socialization, researchers usually tacitly assume they also mean enculturation, i.e. adoption of cultural patterns (value preferences) by individuals, for instance, preferences for certain types of leadership or inequality arrangements, despite the fact that patterns of family life have been changing dramatically over the past 50 years, with generational cohorts drifting away from family controls and moving toward generational subcultures and individualized consumption. Proponents of cultural softwares are not blind to these changes, but their vision of socialization is supported by the fact that some preferences for fundamental values appear to be upheld over relatively long periods of time.

For instance, in the early 1970s a sociological study of national preferences was conducted. One of the most astonishing findings of the study concerned the relative prestige of various professions and occupations. University professors and medical doctors ranked highest, while the clergy and entrepreneurs ranked lower (although the latter gained respect again during the post-communist transformations), and politicians even lower. What is interesting is the fact that the rankings did not differ greatly from similar rankings resulting from sociological studies conducted 40 years earlier (in the late 1930s) and 30 years later (at the turn of the 21st century). Hofstede's assumption about the relative stability of socialization patterns, therefore, might very well hold true despite all the criticism claiming the changing loci of socialization and new multimedia-fed channels of enculturation (Magala, 2005). There is also a growing number of studies that indicate generational identities, in particular, being on the rise at the expense of familial ones. Some sociologists even speak of the "de-patriarchalization" of the world as a tendency of the past 200 years (Therborn, 2004, 306) However, one has to ask if a young socialized individual's loyalty to generational experiences (such as Woodstock music festival or a Paris student rebellion with the occupation of the Sorbonne) will prevail over his or her identification with kinship rituals, family timing of age-intervals and symbolic interactions with networks of relatives, or over national pride (such as might be demonstrated during international soccer matches). Sociologists are careful about this shift of loci in which national cultural identity emerges and is imprinted:

> What came out of the '1968' changes was not so much the beginning of an end to the western socio-sexual order, as an end to the twentieth-century industrial standardization of it, and of human life-course in general: an end

> to temporary standardization around a low-level (but above replacement) homogenization of birth rates, compulsory standard education (with a tiny elite supplement), a maintenance of strict sexual norms combined with increased possibilities of avoiding sexual accidents, a high marriage rate, and marrying concentrated to a short and historically early age-span, a prosperous decrease of inequality among class households, a wide, inter-class social diffusion of bourgeois family norms and housewife marriage, with the coming of livable pensions and of standardized retirement. In the two decades right after World War II this pattern of homogenization and standardization reached its zenith. Since then all these features have become more variable. (Therborn, 2004, p. 313-314)

Although Therborn's description is of the Swedish and other Northwestern European demographic processes, it fits post-World War II development in Poland very well indeed and makes one wonder if under the apparently hostile military doctrine of Cold War's NATO and Warsaw Pact, there was not an undercurrent of tacit parallel convergence with respect to broader socialization patterns and processes of industrialization and the construction of a consumer society. Granted, the growth of consumption under communist rule was not as swift as it was in countries west of the Elbe, but following the 1956 "thaw," communist rulers tried to match the supply of washing machines, TV sets and cars available to the western consumer. Perhaps in the long run, the difference between liberal and communist modernizers, as far as the mobilization of national cultures to discipline their respective populations is concerned, will be evidenced in a subclass of (violent, coercive, oppressive) means rather than ends (as Wallerstein suggests in his interpretation of the long term emergence of world systems theory). But let us return to the Polish national culture and to its transformations in the second half of the twentieth century. The first glimpse will be through the eyes of the ethnic Polish re-immigrants from Kazakhstan.

The Polish minority in Kazakhstan developed as a result of mass deportations from eastern Polish cities and villages occupied by Russians after September 17,1939, as Stalin assisted Hitler in occupying Poland according to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and exterminated its population. Ordinary citizens were divested of property and sent to Siberia or Kazahstan (as a function of ethnic cleansing of occupied eastern Polish territories) and members of the elite were executed (as in the case of the Katyn massacre of 14 000 Polish officers). Of the 3 000 ethnic Poles who returned to Poland between 1992 and 2000, more than 65% came from Kazakhstan. Most were high-school or university educated, between 18 and 40 years old, and

returned to the native country of their parents with the hope of improving their economic situation, for better education for their children and because of the emotional appeal of their national identity.

> Confronting the idealized image of Poland with everyday life after arrival often led to disappointment: immigrants did not know the legal rules and regulations, faced anonymous bureaucracies, often had to lower their professional ambitions, suffered a loss of status when looking for employment, and had to cope with the less than fluent command of Polish. […] National cultural identity of recent Polish immigrants from Kazakhstan has been studied with respect to acquaintance with cultural symbols, the personal significance attached to them and strong positive valuation on the one hand, and with respect to the correlative attributes of national cultural identity – for instance, they were asked about hospitality, taking care of the family, cultivating friendships, and engaging in passionate political discussions – on the other. […] Criterial identity has been studied via the Cultural Symbols Questionnaire, which included Polish and Kazakh politically significant sites, monuments and buildings, and important dates in national calendars. The Polish cultural symbols included, among others, the following photographs: a view of Cracow (the historical capital of the kingdom of Poland until the late 16th century), a shot from the film based on Sienkiewicz's (Nobel prize for literature, 1905) patriotic novel about Poland's past (written in order to raise the spirits after partitions of the late 18th century), the round-table negotiations between the last Communist government and Solidarity (a symbolic moment in the breakdown of the Communist power in Poland), the Grand Orchestra of Festive Assistance (a nation-wide charity collection carried out with heavy media coverage around Christmas/New Year's Eve), a blessing of the traditional Easter food [with painted eggs carried in small baskets to the church], and a portrait of Józef Pilsudski, who commanded the Polish armies, which won independence in 1918 and defended it against the Russian invasion in 1921.[…] The questionnaire on cultural values and scripts accounted for the following cultural dimensions: collectivism, humanism, materialism, liberalism and "sarmatism".[4] (Magala, 2005, p. 94)

The case of sarmatism in Polish re-immigrants from Kazakhstan is based on a research project conducted by Zuzanna Rejmer under Professor Pawel Boski at the Warsaw School of Social Psychology. What were the results of this study? What happened, when re-immigrants confronted their individual cultural software, installed by socialization into the Polish families

4. "Sarmatism" refers to the mythological elements in ideology of the Polish gentry of the late baroque period, which anchored its legendary roots in a nomadic tribe of Sarmatians (a tribe of this name actually existed in ancient times and had been duly recorded by the Greeks, but had little in common with later inhabitants of Central Northern Europe. Sarmatism), This former ideology of rank and file gentry is currently defined by social psychologists (Boski, 1992) as "resentment and distrust of those who succeed, anarchistic interpretation of liberties, low cooperativeness and excessive hedonism".

in exile, with contemporary Polish culture and society after their return? One puzzling discovery was that women adapted less quickly than men. Looking for explanation of this, one comes across the difference between an idealized national culture and actual national culture in use. The perception of this difference is important. If we want to understand the Polish cultural matrix, which influences individual cultural software as they are installed and updated, we can follow in the footsteps of the re-immigrants, looking at contemporary Polish culture through their eyes:

> prior to re-immigration, women had focused on idealized attributes of the Polish cultural identity, expecting warm interactions, friendly relationships, general assistance, and caring attitudes, and found instead a materialist, modernizing culture with autonomous individuals pursuing their entrepreneurial projects, with less time and willingness to cultivate friendly relations with others in their milieu. While men have accepted Poland as a country in which autonomy, independence, entrepreneurship, and pragmatic attitudes are highly regarded (and had already formed this image while still in Kazakhstan), women were less accepting (since they had previously focused on an idealized image and their expectations have thus been frustrated). These results are even more puzzling if one compares them with data, from which it follows that women were much better adapted to the new cultural reality than men. How is it possible that much better adapted women were much less happy and satisfied, and manifested lower levels of psychic well-being?
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> One possible explanation involves the prevailing gendered lifestyle that female immigrants led in Kazakhstan before their return to Poland. Both in the Kazakh culture and in the culture of the Polish minority in Kazakhstan, a woman plays traditional social roles: she takes care of the household and does not compete with men as far as participation in social and political activities goes. Contemporary Polish culture, however, is highly feminist and women are, at least formally, legally and theoretically, equal to men. They are active professionally and hold jobs, compete with men for seats in parliament, hold places in university education and top managerial positions. They are expected to perform as well or better than men – to pursue professional careers, fight for their share of power in organizations, etc. Female re-immigrants could feel alienated facing these expectations, which, in their eyes, are misplaced and misdirected, believing that these are roles and activities for men. Male re-immigrants, on the other hand, expected a business-like, pragmatic attitude, and accepted it even before re-immigration; they see this cultural identity as compatible with their social obligations and conducive to a competitive struggle. (Magala, 2005, p. 94-95)

However, this first glimpse of Polish national culture is that as seen through the eyes of a relative newcomer. Before embarking on a more detailed analysis of the historical, sociological, cultural and anthropological aspects of contemporary Polish culture and management, two significant aspects of contemporary Polish culture, which make it stand out among the cultures of other formerly Communist countries, must be noted. First, Polish managers tend to accept the model of success, which is much closer to the model preferred by their American counterparts than to that of German, French or British managers (whereas Czechs, for instance, tend to prefer either the French or the German model) (Czapinski, 1995, 94). This may explain in part the support granted by Polish (along with British, Italian, and Dutch, but not French or German) politicians - and accepted by a majority of citizens - to Polish participation in the international military force assisting the US army in Iraq.

Second, the high creative potential of Polish national culture had been signaled by sustained, long-term success in generating world-class literary, musical and visual artistic works. Two Nobel prizes for literature in the first and two in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Sienkiewicz in 1905, Reymont in 1924, Milosz in 1980, Szymborska in 1996) are cases in point. Native games played on God's playground merit some attention. In his Stockholm address (December 8, 1980) Czeslaw Milosz said:

> It is good to be born in a small country where Nature was on a human scale, where various languages and religions cohabited for centuries. I have in mind Lithuania, a country of myths and poetry. My family already in the Sixteenth Century spoke Polish, just as many families in Finland spoke Swedish and in Ireland – English; so I am a Polish, not a Lithuanian, poet. But the landscapes and perhaps the spirits of Lithuania have never abandoned me. It is good in childhood to hear words of Latin liturgy, to translate Ovid in high school, to receive a good training in Roman Catholic dogmatics and apologetics. It is a blessing if one receives from fate school and university studies in such a city as Vilno. A bizarre city of baroque architecture transplanted to northeastern forests and of history fixed in every stone, a city of forty Roman Catholic churches and of numerous synagogues. In those days the Jews called it a Jerusalem of the North. Only when teaching in America did I fully realize how much I had absorbed from the thick walls of our ancient university, from formulas of Roman law learned by heart, from history and literature of old Poland, both of which surprise young Americans by their specific features; an indulgent anarchy, a humor disarming fierce quarrels, a sense of organic community, a mistrust of any centralized authority. (Milosz, 1980, p. 2)

Indulgent anarchy, humour disarming quarrels, a sense of organic community, mistrust of centralized authority: we have been forewarned and introduced to the Polish national matrix collectively programming individual minds. Milosz had also mentioned a number of important historical, sociological and cultural components of his self-awareness and his national identity. It is exactly these components of national identity, to which we shall now turn.

Cultural Features: an overview of historical and sociological aspects of the Polish culture and society in 2006

The Republic of Poland, member of NATO since 1999 and of the European Union since 2004, is a middle-sized European country with more than 38 million inhabitants and covers 312 000 km². Poland is located between the Baltic Sea in the north, the Odra and Nysa rivers to the west, the Bug river to the east and the Sudetes (*Karkonosze*) and Carpathian (*Tatras*) mountain ranges in the south. Poland borders on Germany to the west, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the south, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania to the east and the Russian enclave in Lithuania to the northeast. The GDP is around $546 543 billion (ranked 23rd in the world) and the GDP per capita is around $15 000 in 2006. The largest urban centres include Katowice in industrial Silesia (pop. 3.5 M), the capital city of Warsaw (pop. 2.7 M), Kraków (pop. 1.4 M), Łódź (pop. 1.3 M), the Tri-city of Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia at the coast (pop. 1.1 M) and Poznań (pop. 1 M). In 2006 Kraków was among the top five European tourist destinations after Florence, Rome, Venice and Istanbul.

History

The first Polish state was unified in the tenth century and its rulers accepted Christianization from Rome in 966. In 1241 Polish troops clashed with Mongol armies of the Golden Horde near Legnica; although the battle's outcome remained inconclusive, with Henry the Pious killed in action, Poland and Northwestern Europe had been spared. After the period of medieval fragmentation, the Kingdom of Poland was reunified under King Wladyslaw I in 1320 and consolidated (along with numerous city fortifications, a long ring of castles along the southeastern borders had been built apparently to forestall further Mogol invasion) by his son, Casimir III (who also defeated the Ruthenian prince conquering Lvov and western Ukraine).

A golden age of the Polish kingdom came after the Polish-Lithuanian union of Lublin (1569), when the ancient freedoms (won in a political struggle between gentry[5] and kings in the Polish parliament, or *Sejm*) were safeguarded. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Res Publica*, translated into Polish as *Rzeczpospolita*, means both republic and commonwealth) was one of Europe's largest and wealthiest countries, with the parliamentary control of royal power (albeit only the gentry enjoyed full representation in local and national parliaments). In 1683 the Polish king Jan III Sobieski defeated the Turkish army besieging Vienna and turned the tide in a conflict of the Holy Alliance's struggle to contain Turkish expansion north of the Balkans. On May 3, 1791 the Polish parliament adopted the world's second Constitution (after the United States and before France).

While the Constitution demonstrated the dynamics of the Polish Enlightenment, it also meant that Poland, as opposed to all its neighboring countries, failed to develop an absolutist state. Indeed, soon afterwards, in 1795, Poland was partitioned by the three absolutist states Russia, Prussia and Austria. Napoleon recreated the Polish state during his Russian campaign, but after his defeat the partitioning states split Poland anew at the Congress of Vienna (which led to three large uprisings against the occupying powers, in 1830, 1848 and 1863). Poland re-emerged in 1918 as a result of the simultaneous defeat of all three partitioning powers in World War I, the Poznan and Silesian uprisings and the implementation of Wilson's plan. The reunification of the second Polish Republic between the two World Wars (1918-1939) had been sabotaged by the successors to the former partitioning states, Germany and the Soviet Russia.

In 1920 Soviet Russia invaded Poland, hoping to impose a communist system and Russian control on a newly independent state and to export the communist revolution to Germany, which was considered ripe for a communist takeover. Soviet Russians failed on both counts: their armies had been defeated east of Warsaw and Germany did not experience a victorious communist revolution. However, they did sign the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of August 1939 in order to destroy "the bastard of Versailles" as both the Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia called the second Polish Republic. Having signed the pact, Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, thus starting the Second World War.

5. The Polish gentry included the richest magnates with huge estates and the mass of the impoverished lower gentry. All of them enjoyed the privileges and parliamentary rights guaranteed in 1425 by the "Neminem captivabimus" law (which forbade the monarch to imprison members of gentry without a valid court sentence)

World War II had been more destructive to Polish society than to all the other European countries involved in war: Poland lost the highest percentage of its citizens (6 million, of whom 3 million were Polish Jews). Most of the German concentration camps with gas chambers had been constructed on Polish territories. Poland had also ranked fourth in contribution to the Allied forces fighting Nazi Germany; providing the most troops after the Americans, the British and the Soviets to the anti-Nazi coalition. In the last phase of the war, on August 1, 1944, when the Soviet army reached Warsaw, Europe's largest underground resistance, the Polish Home Army (AK), organized an armed uprising in the capital. Stalin stopped his advancing troops and refused to allow the British Air Force to land behind the Soviet front in order to support the insurgents. Soviet troops waited on the Eastern bank of Vistula while Germans put down the uprising, exterminated the population and systematically destroyed the entire city.

Soviet victory in World War II did not mean the beginning of liberty for Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Livonians or Estonians. It meant another foreign occupation by military troops and an imposed social order with puppet regimes loyal to the communist power centres in Moscow. If the governments of Czechoslovakia and Poland had any illusions about their future, they were quickly dispelled when both were forced to reject the Marshall Plan, which both initially accepted. The difference in the quality of infrastructure between countries east and west of the Elbe River can, to a large extent, be traced to this event – while Western Europe started to develop with US aid and in a more balanced way, the communist-dominated societies had been mobilized to follow the Soviet pattern of collectivization of agriculture and industrialization with military blueprints in mind and under totalitarian control by the communist party.

The Polish resistance to Sovietization was strong: peasants resisted collectivization, which had to be limited after 1956 and the Catholic Church refused to become an instrument of the communist control. In 1956 the workers went on strike in Poznan demanding better wages and greater civil liberties ("bread and freedom"). Together with students and quickly growing crowds, they stormed the headquarters of the hated secret police. The authorities sent in troops and restored order, but were forced to liberalize economic and cultural policies. In 1968 intellectuals and students protested government censorship and repression of the intelligentsia. In 1970 the workers rioted again, this time in coastal cities (Gdynia, Gdańsk, Szczecin), and again the government shifted resources to supply more consumer products. In 1976 workers protested rises in food prices in Radom; repressions and trials of their leaders triggered the emergence of the Committee

or the Workers' Defense, which meant growing solidarity of different social classes. In August 1980 the workers in Gdańsk shipyards went on strike, sparking a national strike and quickly turning an economic protest against low wages into a political protest and a demand for an independent trade union representing the interests of the employees of state companies and not of the ruling party. Their leader, Lech Wałęsa became the first Chairperson of a non-communist trade union. *Solidarność* was born and issued an appeal to the working classes of the Soviet-dominated Europe. Solidarity functioned legally until December 13, 1981, when the new military party boss, General Jaruzelski, yielded to Soviet pressure and imposed martial law on the country, imprisoning Solidarity activists.

Communist leaders realized, however, that resistance against communist rule was too strong to continue to uphold the communist-controlled system and members of the opposition were invited to enter into the round table negotiations (1988) about the next parliamentary elections. (Jaruzelski told his fellow members of the central committee of the Communist Party in 1987 that "the frying pan on which we are sitting is still quite hot"). In 1989 a controlled and moderated revolution took place (Staniszkis, 1991, Gerrits, 1990, Kenney, 2003, Zybertowicz and Los, 2000). The results of the first free elections were clear: communists lost and Poland acquired the first non-communist Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, east of the Elbe and the first non-communist President, Lech Wałęsa, who was sworn in on December 22, 1990. Wałęsa negotiated the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Polish territories (including the illegally stationed tactical nuclear weapons from the northwest). The economic reforms of Leszek Balcerowicz (shock therapy) have stimulated economic growth (5.5% in the first half of 2006), but unemployment around 15% is among the highest in the EU. The reduction of unemployment, the development of infrastructure (modernization of railroads and construction of highways) and the increase in R&D investments continue to be the most important challenges of successive governments. At present, Poland continues structural reforms of its economy in order to be able to adopt the European Single Currency between 2009 and 2013.

Some socio-political remarks

The strongest political parties represented in the Polish parliament are the moderately conservative *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS) or "law and justice", whose Chairman became the Prime Minister), and the liberal *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO), or "citizens' platform". Each of these parties won about

35% of the votes in the last election, with the PiS ahead of the PO, while the populist *Samoobrona* (Self-defence) and the post-communist Alliance of Democratic Left acquired just more and just less than 10%, respectively, of the vote. The ruling coalition is led by PiS and includes the Self-defence party and an ultraconservative *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (League of Polish Families), which barely made it to Parliament itself with only 4% of the votes.

The two strongest parties, PiS and PO, reflect different power bases. PO finds support among middle-class professionals and in large urban centres, while PiS has followings among the lower-middle classes and the less urbanized southeast. Top politicians from PO began their careers in the former liberal party, while top PiS politicians belonged to more conservative parties. Both groups have their political roots in Solidarity, but each stems from a different aspect of Solidarity's heritage. PO's platform is freedom and equal opportunity to compete in a democratic market society. PiS rests its political accent on tracing the injustices of the communist regime and examining illegal deals made by the communists as they secured privileged positions for themselves in the transition towards a market economy. Emotional appeals to justice and the risks of a market economy in a country with a high unemployment rate allowed PiS to take lead in the last elections and to continue to lead according to later polls. Their policies reinvigorated The Institute of National Memory, which manages the post-communist archives, including the archives of the secret services, and facilitates screening candidates for public offices as far as their past collaboration with the secret services is concerned. The Institute also enables access to the personal files of individuals repressed under the communist regime.

From a sociological point of view, the current Polish society is the result of postwar processes of urbanization and industrialization, during which the population moved from villages to townships and cities. Because the Polish middle class, especially the entrepreneurs and professionals, had been heavily targeted by the occupying powers during the war – those who were not executed were imprisoned in the Gulag or sent to Auschwitz – the reproduction of the educated strata was a simple necessity facing postwar Polish society. Members of the lower classes, who had been elevated to the ranks of skilled industrial labourers, vocationally trained service personnel and professional bureaucrats, saw this as an opportunity for upward social mobility. This situation was not dissimilar to what happened in other European societies at the time; although in the Polish context it acquired a certain specific characteristic, due to the propagandistic use of the promise of upward social mobility by the communist leaders. Aware of their lack of

popularity and support, Polish communists relied on the appeasement and neutrality of those they had moved to the cities, educated and employed as professional bureaucrats and skilled labourers. While the Communist leaders were generally right in betting on at least passive neutrality from those who benefited from the opportunity they were given, there were regular disappointments and some spectacular miscalculations.

When facing the conservative intelligentsia of Krakow, where the communists were singularly unpopular, the communist authorities decided to counter Kraków's influence with a large industrial city, Nowa Huta, constructed from scratch as a modern, working-class utopia in the suburbs of Kraków. Nowa Huta remains one of the better preserved historical monuments of the socialist realist style in architecture and urban planning, but the cultural influence and consumer appeal of Kraków proved irresistible. Nowa Huta has never become a hub of alternative, anti-bourgeois lifestyle, but turned into one of many suburbs of Kraków. Moreover, the city witnessed one of the most bitter struggles waged by the industrial workers against local authorities. In 1970s the workers decided that they wanted to establish a church within the Communist utopia. On another occasion in the same period, workers tried to blow up a large monument of Lenin in the centre of the city. Those who struggled for a new church have succeeded, somewhat symbolically rejecting the appeal of a secular ideology in their visual environment and re-asserting their rights. Those who threatened Lenin's monument failed and had to wait for the fall of Communism to see it dismantled. Symbolically, the suburb of Nowa Huta is often used by the *avant-garde* from Kraków's lively artistic scene to organize international performances, exhibitions and arrangements of urban space.

The role and influence of the Catholic Church (and of religious life in general) in Poland, although clearly manifested, is fairly difficult to assess. As a result of World War II and the postwar changes, large eastern Orthodox (Ukrainians and Byelorussians), Protestant (Germans) and Jewish communities had been lost, and Roman Catholics became a decisive majority for the first time in Poland's recorded history. Today 89% of Poles identify themselves as Catholics, while 75% declare that they attend church services on a regular basis. However, lifestyles, as measured by sociologists, do not reflect support for official church policies, for instance with respect to birth control, declining number of births and increasing divorce rate. Nor do voting patterns in parliamentary elections reflect church influences (i.e. voters seem not to acknowledge preferences voiced by the clergy). One of the country's broadcasting companies – *Radio Maryja* in Toruń (and the associated, but significantly less popular TV station *Trwam*) – is led by a

priest, but is not officially endorsed by Bishops of the Catholic Church, who find Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, its managing director, insubordinate and not representative of their official views.

The use of religious symbols in contemporary Polish art, especially by the younger generation, also testifies to a relatively critical, liberal, open-minded and ironic view of the religious and national heritage. Dorota Nieznalska's *Fidelity* and *Crown of Thorns* are cases in point (figure V.11.1), as is Robert Rumas' *Pickled Madonna in a Jar* (figure V.11.2). Monika Zielińska's *When I Grow Up, I want to be a Virgin* (figure V.11.3) is another example of a relative ease, with which blasphemous themes are tackled by artists on a regular basis.

Figure V.11.1
FIDELITY (LEFT) AND CROWN OF THORNS

Source: Dorota Nieznalska

Figure V.11.2
PICKLED MADONNA IN A JAR

Source: Robert Rumas

Figure V.11.3
"WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE A VIRGIN"

Source: Monika Zielinska

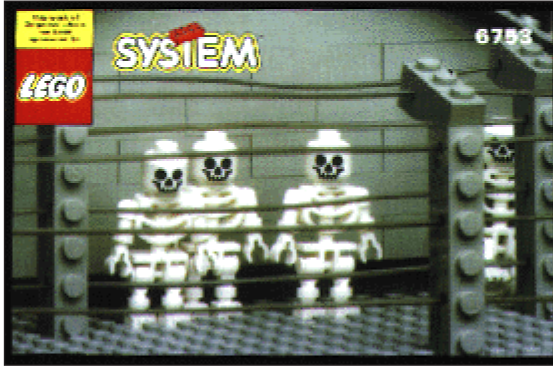
Another example of an ironic twist in religious symbolism is Eugeniusz Get-Stankiewicz's poster and relief sculpture on a medieval house in Wroclaw's main market square. Get-Stankiewicz's combines a wooden cross, a small figure of Christ, four nails and a hammer under the title *Do It Yourself* (figure V.11.4). While on the one hand this is a blasphemous reduction of a sacred symbol of Christianity to the profane level of do-it-yourself kits, on the other it is a profound and subtle comment on the individual conscience and on a necessity to sincerely experience – by authentic reconstruction of Christ's martyrdom – our own failing responsibility, our share in sins, both original and otherwise. As opposed to some other contemporary works of sacrilegious art, for instance Serrano's *Piss Christ* or Ofili's *Madonna with Elephant Dung*, this work does not intend to shock by blatant blasphemy. The contrasting of the sacred and of the profane is much more subtle and intellectually (and morally) challenging. This is art of the highest quality – an unobtrusive, elegant trigger of self-ironic, philosophical and moral reflection. When Pope John Paul II visited Wroclaw during his pilgrimages, Get-Stankiewicz presented him with a copy of his work. The gift was gratefully accepted.

Figure V.11.4
DO IT YOURSELF

Source: Eugeniusz "Get" Stankiewicz

An exercise in visual anthropology of the Polish symbolic environment would be incomplete without the most ironic comment by Zbigniew Libera on the most tragic chapter in Poland's history; his *System* is a set of Lego blocks from which a concentration camp can be built and is one of the most powerful artistic protests against genocide and dehumanization in contemporary European art. Libera's *System* is a profoundly humanist attempt to understand the capacity with which mankind's increasing skills in processing, interacting, communicating and exchanging can be easily turned to inhuman, sinister purposes by uncontrolled, totalitarian regimes. No wonder his work, an object mimicking a popular toy was purchased by New York's Jewish Museum (figure V.11.5).

Figure V.11.5
SYSTEM



Source: Zbigniew Libera

Management models and organization dynamics

When one compares the materialist and post-materialist value clusters as measured within the World Value Surveys (cf. Inglehart *et al*., 1998) in three last decades – 1980, 1990 and 2000 – one is struck by a certain pattern of differences between The Netherlands, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States on the one hand, and Poland, as well as Finland, Germany, France, Ireland and Spain (and, somewhat less surprisingly, Hungary and the Czech Republic) on the other. In the former group, respondents who express post-materialist values begin to dominate in 1990 and their domination increases in 2000. In the latter, materialists dominate and continue to do so in the 1990s and after 2000, although not increasingly. Two determinants of this situation can be at work: what make the Polish respondents resemble their Czech or Hungarian (and East German) counterparts are the legacy of Communism and the rapid rate of the post-Communist transformation. Personal well-being and sophisticated lifestyle choices are distant and luxurious issues for those who are exposed to the risks of the job market in an open economy and who must focus on survival. At the same time, they cannot assume they will get a free ride in a job in a state-owned enterprise. Working for the state is generally thought of as loafing, which is considered to be morally reprehensible, often involving low productivity and appropriation of state property. Such employment, however, creates a buffer from exploitation of an individual by the state. The disappearance of a hostile government reduced the most important of these informal buffers against economic poverty, namely tacit acceptance of lower productivity:

the workers believed themselves to be underpaid and in return they underperformed in their jobs. With positions in private companies and salaries linked to performance, lowering one's productivity became self-defeating. What makes the Polish respondents resemble their French, Irish or Spanish counterparts may also be the Catholic element in the national tradition (in a sense, Hofstede's dimensions have been influenced, as he himself admits in the second edition of *Culture's Consequences*, by his Protestantism). These similarities across some European cultures should be kept in mind when studying the influence of national culture, tradition and social patterns on management models, and organizational dynamics.

What had changed? First, education became much more attractive than ever before; it also became much more accessible to everyone, rather than to a relatively small urban upper middle class. The younger generation's search for jobs resulted in increased motivation to acquire higher education, which in turn prompted a rise in the number of institutions of post-secondary education in the country. Employers want better educated employees, and future employees expect to find better jobs if they hold higher qualifications. The scholarization coefficient of Polish society has increased between 1986 and 2003 from 11% to 44%, which places Poland slightly above the EU average (Chłopecki, 2006). Second, the process of urbanization is far from over and most of the new aspirants of upward social mobility move from small towns and villages into the larger cities. Although the urban population of Poland reached 63% at the beginning of the 21st century, only 15% of Poles live in the largest cities (population above half a million), and only 34% live in medium-sized cities (population above 50 000). Unemployment is much higher in small towns and rural areas than in the largest cities. Most job seekers are doubly mobile: they are better educated than their parents and they seek employment in cities larger than the one from which they originally came. This means that those who remain in villages and smaller towns, who are older and who have less education run a higher risk of unemployment and poverty. Social stratification becomes much more geographically differentiated and recognizable now than it was prior to 1989 (although there has been a certain gentrification of at least some smaller towns) (GUS, 2002 and 2003; Council for Economic Strategy, 2003; Palska, 2002).

Studying corporate culture, researchers have often compared the Polish companies to their sister companies in both Western and Central Europe. For instance, Barbara Fryzel studied three companies, one Polish, one Dutch and one Czech, all of which belong to a global chain of food retailers (the world's second largest, after Wal-Mart). In the Netherlands and in the Czech Republic this chain of stores leads the market and hence tried to compete

through differentiation, whereas in Poland the chain faced equally strong competition and focused on cost reduction in order to survive and eventually achieve a more competitive advantage (Fryzel, 2004). In her study, Fryzel sent her questionnaire to a small number of top managers and a relatively large group of middle managers in various stores belonging to the chain. She was interested in comparing the answers to the following questions:

- Does promoting teamwork directly influence the organization's effectiveness?
- Do managed commitment and access to individual psychological reserves help in building a cooperative climate and reducing conflict?
- Do partnership and reduction of conflicts increase organizational stability and reduce turnover?
- Does implementation of ethical principles in the everyday functioning of the company increase the corporate reputation?
- Does facilitating an emergence of leadership attitudes among managers facilitate the implementation of TQM?
- Does implementation of TQM increase subjective satisfaction of clients, thus contributing the company's increased competitiveness?
- Do all the above contribute to the emergence of a proactive corporate culture? (Fryzel 2004)

Fryzel analyzes her findings under five headings: organizational structure, methods of management and leadership models, corporate culture, work quality plus product quality, and competitive ranking of the company. In terms of organizational structure, Fryzel is interested in its relative flatness and in hierarchies, delegation of authority, and control mechanisms. She distinguishes (following the authors of studies in Michigan and Ohio) between leadership as employee focused and leadership as productivity focused and uses the Leadership Grid. In terms of corporate culture, Fryzel accepts Hofstede's model and describes corporate cultures within a four dimensional model, i.e. from the point of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. Competitive ranking is determined by analyzing companies with the following criteria in mind: profitability, market share, SWOT analysis and stock prices.

Fifty-four individuals responded to the questionnaire and their answers were processed by eleven experts from the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic. The experts evaluated the distance of the respondents' representation of their corporate culture from an ideal proactive corporate

culture, i.e. low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, collective and feminist attitudes. The Polish respondents differed from their Dutch and Czech counterparts in a number of areas, for instance in pointing out the existence of the vertical hierarchy inside the company (52% of the respondents). Poles perceived company policies as stabilized rather than growth-oriented and they considered their team's job performance to be average rather than outstanding or lower than average (73% of Poles answered in this way, compared to 54% of the Czech and 71% of the Dutch respondents). Another clustering emerged as a result of the question about client satisfaction: 87% of the Dutch respondents considered it very important for themselves, while only 45% of the Czechs and 32% of the Poles shared this opinion (Fryzel, 2004).

The most differentiated answers were given to the question about organizational justice; 75% of the Dutch thought that their salary system was just and fair, compared to 45% of the Czechs and 21% of the Poles. At the same time only 31% of the Poles thought that their job responsibilities depended on their knowledge and competence – as opposed to 63% of the Czechs and 58% of the Dutch. A majority of the Polish respondents (63%) saw responsibilities as linked to the position in a hierarchy (as opposed to 27% of the Czechs and 25% of the Dutch), not to the intrinsic merits of an individual. Fryzel writes:

> Considerable differences can be observed in the communication system and information sharing. The answers of Czech (72.2%) and Dutch (79.2%) respondents confirm a general trend towards developing an open communication system. In the Polish company, the communication system was perceived as unhelpful as far as information sharing went. Access to information depended, according to respondents, on one's position in the formal hierarchy (68.4%). In Czech and Dutch companies, the direct supervisor was the principal source of information (63.6% and 58.3%), while in Poland peers formed the main source of information shared (57.9%). The same pattern of differences were repeated in a question about the timing of information. Taken together, all answers suggest that information reached all relevant individuals on time (70.3% of the Poles), which had been confirmed by the Czech (81.8%) and Dutch (87.5%) samples. However, in the Polish case respondents thought that information might have been late in reaching them, probably because of less open and transparent communication chanels (57% of the Polish respondents). (2004, p. 152)

In comparing the relative stability of the Dutch parent company and of the Polish and Czech branches/subsidiaries/affiliates, Fryzel adds:

> As far as turnover of top managers goes, it is high both in Poland and in the Czech Republic (less than 3 years in a single position), while it has been defined as medium (between 3 and 5 years in a single position) in the Netherlands. Similar to the case of perceived competitiveness, the turnover situation is linked to the economic characteristics of the job markets in all three countries. In Poland and in the Czech Republic there are a highly competitive job markets. Despite a generally high unemployment rate, qualified candidates in top positions have many opportunities for changing jobs. This trend towards managerial job-hopping coincides with a high destabilization within the companies, which do not guarantee tenure and security of employment. Thus individuals with considerable knowledge and skills are not motivated to commit themselves on a long-term basis to a single employer. They perceive each position as a short-term chance for maximizing their individual profits. In the Netherlands, where jobs are more stable, employee turnover is lower. (2004, p.177)

The results of this study are influenced by external conditions: the similarity of Czech and Dutch responses are certainly influenced by the company's much better market position in these countries than in Poland (about 14% market share and dominant position in both the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, as opposed to 2.5% and uncertain position among serious competitors in Poland). However, management also faces two post-Communist legacies and one new one related to the open job market. The first is the legacy of dominant individualism, which makes teamwork more difficult and slows down the buildup of company commitment (a paradoxical effect considering an overtly collectivistic nature of the communist ideology with the stress on apparent egalitarianism). The second is the legacy of the extreme centralization of frozen organizational hierarchies, which makes the Polish employees look for hidden hierarchies and inner circles in all corporate structures of professional bureaucracies, even if there are none and if the old boys' networks are relatively transparent (any delays in information sharing tend to be perceived as the workings of these hidden power brokers). Finally, volatile job market and a relative lack of permanent positions in contemporary lean and mean corporations contribute to the increase in turnover, which may be higher than in Western European countries (though not necessarily in other parts of the world, such as in the United States) (Leinberger and Tucker, 1991)

In order to better understand the models of management Polish managers have in mind when they go about managing their companies, it is fitting to make use of the metaphor employed by Monika Kostera, a specialist in corporate anthropology, and Andrzej Koźmiński, an economist and head of the Academy of Management and Entrepreneurship in Warsaw, a top private school of business in Polish rankings. Kostera and Koźmiński

refer to their findings as “four theatres” in an effort to construct a typology of managerial discourses detected during their study of Polish managers. Kostera and Koźmiński began their study by interviewing five management consultants (two of them foreigners working in Warsaw) to compile a list of 87 emotionally charged stereotypes often used in business discourse. The list was subsequently shortened to 29 highly contentious items and distributed to the selected managers. Kostera and Koźmiński conducted their study by asking 53 managers (24 women and 29 men, 36 from the public and 17 from the private sector) to write down brief responses to a series of statements. The managers who participated in the study were enrolled in a course taught by Kostera and Koźmiński as part of the MBA program at the Academy of Management and Entrepreneurship. Their answers were analyzed after their responses were clustered according to typology. Among the statements collected by researchers are the following:

> 2. People do not want to take responsibility. […]
>
> 7. People work better when they are afraid of losing their jobs. […]
>
> 10. Trade unions are difficult partners for the management […]
>
> 15. Experience is more important than university knowledge. […]
>
> 21. The ratio of the CEO’s to a worker’s earnings is today about 100:1.
>
> 22. A man can be a good secretary. (Kostera, Koźmiński, 2001, p. 327)

When clustering the metaphors used by their respondents, Kostera and Koźmiński (2001) arrived at four basic types differing in dramatic effect: the Japanese theatre of dolls, European-American theatre, happening and global show[6].

The Japanese theatre of dolls is based on a projection of stability, obviousness and order:

> Both positive and negative, straightforwardly valuating statements can be associated with the Japanese theatre metaphor. The list of these statements looks very similar to the rhetorical style of Trybuna Ludu, the pre-1989 communist party daily newspaper or training material for ‘activists of socialist enterprises’, filled out with a traditional notion that foreigners should not buy land in Poland. The acceptance or rejection is comparable to carrying a doll without one’s own face showing. The ethical system of communism can be correctly portrayed as a theatre of that kind (see e.g. Głowiński, 1992). The

6. Kostera and Koźmiński did not find any Polish examples of the last type, so they included an American corporation to provide a case in point to save their typology.

> ideological death of communism did not eliminate that kind of mindset from the mentality of managers. On the contrary, the re-emergence of strong patriotic and religious feelings, repressed under communism, paradoxically enhanced it (Kennedy, 1994). (Kostera, Koźmiński, 2001, p. 332)

In the European-American theatre, players who enact their managerial performance are versatile and continuously reflect, detect and face dilemmas and deal with ambiguities. They manifest creativity, filling in gaps in the scripts and make choices that are guided by moral intuition, not by traditional immutable values:

> The play currently being adapted for the stage seems to be a version of the Polish market economy, where free market ideals are combined with historically rooted ideals in a recent or not so recent context. In such complex situations managers actively construct their own codes of ethics, reflecting their ideals and values – both old and new. (Kostera and Koźmiński, 2001, p. 332)

A happening[7] is defined as the theatre of improvisation and impression management. Researchers grouped under this heading those comments and answers that indicated that managers interact with their subordinates and submit specific issues to recurrent interpretations, which Kostera and Koźmiński, following Giddens, associate with the ethical discourse of late modernity, which is not anchored in solid traditions but in fluid modernity and continuous negotiation and renegotiation of values, heavily influenced by local contexts:

> This is the moral order of action-determined discourses within business, where the situation ultimately 'rules' itself and it is imperative to act. The actions can only be judged *ex post*, and all participants are well aware of this. Time will show – but at the moment the actors refer to 'small ethical narratives' within the context, derived from the imperative of action. (Kostera and Koźmiński, 2001, p. 333)

The four-theatre interpretative frame is subsequently applied to make sense of managerial discourse in three Polish companies; managerial discourse in the Gdańsk shipyard is classified as the Japanese theatre of dolls; ABB Zamech in Elblag as the European-American theatre and the Szczecin shipyard is likened to a happening.

In the case of the Gdańsk shipyard, which is the historical birthplace of the independent trade union and anticommunist social Solidarity movement, the sense of identity and pride is strong and situations are often

7. Kostera and Kozźminski (2001) define a happening as "an unstructured play, impossible to duplicate, where the boundaries between the actors and audience are blurred" (p. 332).

perceived and evaluated in terms of sharp moral differences between black and white.

> Society and the state have the moral obligation to help us out and keep us going. […] Management is and should be democratically elected by the workers and by consequence should serve their interests. […] The communists [and post-communists] are after the Gdańsk Shipyard. They want its bankruptcy and closure as an act of historical revenge. (Kostera and Koźminski, 2001, p. 334)

In case of the ABB Zamech, a turbine manufacturer, the managerial discourse reflects a carefully designed and executed restructuring of the Polish company acquired by ABB through the implementation of eleven priority projects, which all had local leaders and were subjected to monitoring by an international steering committee. This resulted in a realistic adjustment to the local conditions, while company policies remained uncompromised. The following interventions improved communication between the Polish subsidiary and the international head office: installation of a satellite link, provision of intensive courses in English for all employees and "management training (a 'mini-MBA') was organized to build up common terminology in functional areas such as finance, marketing, production, human resources, etc." (Kostera and Koźmiński, 2001, p. 335).

In the case of the Szczecin shipyard, reflecting on managerial discourse within the company led to the conclusion that managers there, in contrast to Gdańsk, did not feel that they would always be rescued from failure. Moreover, they began without a clear vision (unlike ABB Zamech), but determined to take action themselves (unlike at the the Gdańsk shipyard). The Szczecin shipyard focuses on two parallel courses of action – a search for new clients for their ships and a search for financial solutions, which would allow them to restructure their debts:

> The restructuring process in turn developed in two parallel paths:
>
> - The strategy of market penetration led to a new specialization; mid-size container ships; this dramatically changed the system of production management, the firm's organizational structure and motivation system;
>
> - The debt restructuring negotiations that were undertaken led to the introduction of a new financial control system, asset reorganization and sell-out, new forms of co-operation with banks; new forms of financing of ship production and finally to privatization of the yard. (Kostera and Koźmiński, 2001, p. 336)

In conclusion, Kostera and Koźmiński relate the modes of thinking of the Polish managers to the ongoing transformations of the Polish economy

and to the changes in their enterprises. Kostera and Koźmiński's conclusions may serve as a useful guide to Polish managers:

> The Japanese theatre mode represents an anchor embedded in the past and linking dramatic change with the existing mindsets inherited from the past. […] Old values, norms, beliefs and institutions are used to promote reforms. This is the case of managers acting as populist politicians mobilizing workers to support change on the grounds of traditional values (Koźmiński, 1995). The same old values, however, are more often used to stop change or to slow it down.
>
> The European-American theatre mode produces rational strategies of change linking dynamizing and stabilizing factors into a viable and coherent whole. This rationality mode is based upon the accumulation of knowledge (in the minds of managers) about mechanisms of the emerging market economy. […]
>
> The happening mode produces ambitious reforms and restructuring programs based on deep beliefs, often undertaken without detailed knowledge of possible outcomes. The famous Balcerowicz plan aimed at turning the then centrally planned economy into a market type economy was such a move on a macro scale. On the enterprise level bold structuring fits this model. (Kostera and Koźmiński, 2001, p. 337)

These three main types of the Polish managerial mindset can serve as a useful summary and initial analysis of organizational discourses one is likely to encounter in Poland.

Poles apart? Getting by, getting along and getting things done in Poland

Understanding Polish mindsets requires three steps: first, a crash course in the taken-for-granted beliefs about the consequences of the Second World War, which privileged Western Europe, while subjecting Eastern Europe to the Communist experiment imposed by the Russians; second, due recognition of the role played by the Polish workers and intellectuals in the peaceful overthrow of the Communist system (including the role played by Polish Catholicism as a cultural resource); and third, a brief introduction to the different emotional temperature of everyday communications, which is has a greater range in Poland than in most Western European countries (especially the Protestant ones) and in the US.

The first step, the crash course in taken-for-granted beliefs about consequences of the Second World War, is indispensable for dealing with

managers and employees in all Central European countries, but Polish sensitivities exceed those of her neighbours. The reasons can be found primarily in the extreme policies of extermination implemented by the Nazi and Soviet governments after the invasion of Poland in September 1939, and in the fact that the Polish contribution to the allied victory in 1945 has not been fully acknowledged in history books. For instance, the Polish uprising in Warsaw on August 1, 1944, the largest armed uprising in occupied Europe, and subsequent Soviet refusal to assist the allies, has often been removed from history books, even though it may be seen as the first bloody act of Cold War. Inclusion of this episode would require a rather sophisticated analysis of overlapping blueprints; while the Nazi Germany was being defeated, Stalin had already privatized victory of the Soviet soldiers in the last year of World War II and was turning it into the first phases of the Cold War. The ideological climate of public and academic discussions among historians, politicians, writers, journalists and propagandists has been coloured by Communist ideological offensive. Until recently, genocide committed by the Soviets has not been condemned as morally and unreservedly as is the Nazi holocaust, although Stalin's victims surpassed those of Hitler in number.

> Everybody knows of Auschwitz and Belsen. Nobody knows of Vorkuta and Solovetsky. Everybody knows of Hitler and Eichmann. Nobody knows of Yezhov and Dzerzhinsky. Everybody knows of the 6 million of the Hollocaust. Nobody knows of the 6 million of the Terror-Famine […] In the 1980s, Molotov and Kaganovich, two elderly Eichmanns, were living on a state pension in Moscow. (Amis, 2002, p. 257)

This ignorance of the Russian genocide was carried over from the 1930s and World War II (when it was justified as necessary in order not to meddle in the domestic affairs of allies) to the Cold War period and beyond. Soviet psychological warfare had been conducted from the very beginning through the leftist parties and media and most significantly through the Komintern controlled "useful idiots". This was the name given by cynical manipulators[8] to those western public intellectuals, who, like Jean Paul Sartre, demonstrated blind anti-Americanism and uncritical acceptance of the Soviet version of events. When one of the early warnings against the Soviet system imposed on Poland had been published by Czeslaw Milosz as *The Captive*

8. Some of them managed to survive purges and wrote about their activities – for instance Arthur Koestler had duly recorded his experiences as a Komintern propagandist reporting on Spanish Civil War and using his political preferences and propagandist skills as a substitute for the reality of the war. George Orwell's testimony also belongs to this genre of "revisionist" literature about Soviet geopolicies under Stalin.

Mind (Milosz, 2001), Sartre was among those who publicly accused Milosz of spreading vile bourgeois propaganda. One must not forget that this climate was changing very slowly – with the first major shift after the brutal invasion of Budapest in 1956, where Soviet tanks had put down armed uprisings against the Soviet regime, the final one after the armed intervention of Warsaw Pact armies in Czechoslovakia in 1968[9]. After 1968 *The Captive Mind* became a commonplace. Before 1956 *The Captive Mind* was an awkward reminder that appeasement of the Soviets allows them to pursue policies of colonization and militarization of entire nation states occupied after the Second World War. Learned ignorance of Western Europeans of their Central and Eastern continental neighbours cannot be gradually abolished without studies of self-imposed political censorship on Western European intellectuals. In a sense, an analysis of Martin Amis in *Koba the Dread* (Koba was a political pseudonym of Stalin in his early terrorist days) allows us to see what the "captive minds" of Kingsley Amis' peers did to protect the Soviet Union and her policies from critical examination and moral evaluation. Martin Amis is particularly important, because his father, Kingsley Amis, the author of *Lucky Jim*, had been a member of the Communist party. Having left the party to protest the suppression of the Budapest uprising in 1956, Amis tried to explain to his son the self-imposed ideological blinds, which prevented him from a sober analysis of Soviet totalitarianism. Similarly, the opening section of Milosz's *The Captive Mind* reads like an introduction to a contemporary guide to post-Communist sensitivities among Polish professionals:

> My book takes the reader into the world inhabited by the intellectuals of Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, and Budapest. It is a world familiar to me, but it may well seem to him foreign and even exotic. I try to explain how the human mind functions in the people's democracies. If I have been able to write this book, it is because the system invented by Moscow has seemed, and still seems to me, infinitely strange. Any civilization, if one looks at it with an assumption of naïve simplicity (as Swift looked at the England of his day), will present a number of bizarre features which men accept as perfectly neutral because they are familiar. But nowhere is this so marked as in the new civilization of the East, which moulds the lives of eight hundred million of human beings. We are, I think, only beginning to understand it, and in years to come thou-

9. Martin Amis quotes his father, Kingsley Amis, explaining that in the times of his leftist political sympathies his father experienced "a conflict of feeling and intelligence, a form of willful self-deception whereby a part of mind knows full well that its overall belief is false or wicked, but the emotional need to believe is so strong that that knowledge remains, as it were, encysted, isolated, powerless to influence word or deed" (Amis, M. 2002, p. 273).

> sands of books will be devoted to the study of this stupefying and loathsome phenomenon. (Milosz, 2001, p. xv)

From the point of the dynamics of the Polish resistance to the Communist system in the last quarter of the 20th century, the sequence of events, which are commonly described as the breakdown of the Communist system in Central and Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union can be described as a drama in three acts.

The first act

The Communist system evolved after Stalin's death, and some of the most repressive features slowly faded away, although they never disappeared. The Cold War, which grew into a sophisticated virtual game of mutually assured destruction, gave Europe and North America half a century of stability, paid for by the suffering of the enslaved citizens within Sovietized Central European dictatorships and by African and Asian victims of wars by proxies conducted by two superpowers elsewhere. While the lucky half enjoyed the benefits of market and democracy, the other half did not reap any benefits from Marshall Plan or balanced industrial development (Central and Eastern Europe) or became substitute tokens in the superpowers' global game.

The second act

The accumulation of strikes, protests and coordinated actions by workers and intellectuals resulted in the mass political movement of Solidarity. This mass protest could not be contained in the totalitarian frame of democracy. The creation of an independent trade union meant the emergence of a foothold for civil society within a political dictatorship. The communist party elite lost its fundamental ideological legitimacy – the claim to represent real interests of the working classes. The majority of employees of state enterprises clearly distanced themselves from their official representatives and the introduction of martial law failed to return them to the fold of state-controlled institutions. In August 1980 *Solidarność* was born; in December 1981 it was suspended and suppressed; but in 1988 its representatives were asked to negotiate with the communists a transition to a democratic system. In 1989 Solidarity candidates won landslide victories in the first postcommunist elections to the Polish parliament.

The third act

The selection of Mikhail Gorbachev for the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1986 signaled a generational turnover at the Kremlin. Economically challenged by technological advances of western corporations (such as the advent of the personal computer) and financially constrained by Ronald Reagan's Star Wars military research and development program, the Soviets decided to reform and modernize their system. One way of doing so was to encourage *Glasnost*, openness, and to unleash less censored public debate in order to perceive, analyze and make more rational decisions about solving the increasingly difficult problems faced by the system. *Glasnost* should have led to restructuring and improvement (*Perestroyka*). It did, but reformation attempts turned out to be deadly for the system as a whole. The Soviet empire fell apart; Republics proclaimed independence; East Germans broke down the Berlin wall and in 1989 put and end to East Germany itself; and finally, in 1991, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved.

Beyond the context of these two sensitivities (legacies of both World War II and the postcommunist period) it is important to keep in mind that the Polish scripts of emotional display differ from Western European or North American ones. They allow more leeway in the display of emotions. As Polish social psychologists argue, comparing expression of emotions in British and Polish school children, one often encounters the contrast between the English reserve (which entails controlling and hiding emotions, both positive and negative) and the Polish spontaneity. Dealing with the Polish managers, one should expect to notice many more manifestations of emotions than would be the case with, for instance, British managers, because:

> in Polish culture, behavior that shows feeling is seen as the norm, not as a departure from the norm (…) Polish culture offers scripts that encourage people to express their feelings freely, to act upon their feelings and to be guided in their actions by feelings. (Wierzbicka, 1994, quoted after Szarota, 2002, p. 229, cf. also Wierzbicka, 1999)[10]

10. AnnaWierzbicka is a Polish linguist, specializing in comparative semantics, who lives in Australia. She has published a fascinating study of natural semantic metalanguage comparing key words in five languages, English, Russian, German, Japanese and Polish (cf. Wierzbicka, 1997) According to Wierzbicka, an understanding of cross-cultural differences should involve an awareness of emotional significance of a certain relation as reflected in words: a Polish *przyjaciel* or a Russian *drug* means something emotionally much more significant for individuals in those cultures than an English friend usually means to an American or a Brit.

Although this emotional range does not compare to Latin American levels, it should be taken into account. If we assume that the average distance between individuals conducting normal conversation in a British or American environment is equal to 1, then a Latin American distance would be 0.5, and a Polish one about 0.75 – not quite as reduced physically as in Rio de Janeiro or Guadalajara, but perceptibly smaller than in London or New York. As one Polish researcher aptly remarks, the:

> Polish casual conversation zone seems to be about two to four inches smaller than the American one; a short distance, but enough to feel that creepy in-your-face effect which makes you pull back to the comfort zone. Which of course makes the other person lean in closer… If the conversation becomes emotional, there is a disagreement or a point is to be made, a Pole will move closer to the other person and might even grab the other person to stop them moving. For according to him, how can anyone be really involved in a conversation at a distance. (Klos-Sokol, 1994, Ronowicz, 1995)

At the same time, a certain reserve with respect to the participation in heated discussions is necessary. For instance, Dutch managers, who are socially accepted by their Polish counterparts and who had participated in sensitive discussions, often comment on their revision of taken-for-granted assumptions, for example, their prejudices about about the Pope, especially when he was Polish. In Protestant Dutch culture the Pope is not respected and the Polish Pope John Paul II was known disparagingly as "poppie-joppie". However, when the Dutch used this expression and poked fun at the Pope, their Polish colleagues made it clear that they did not appreciate it. Although the contract they had been negotiating was ultimately signed, many fences had to be mended as a result of the papal joke (Alonso, 2006, p. 2).

But irritation displayed when foreigners poke fun at the Polish Pope does not translate into the high position of religion as a criterion of national self-identity. Perhaps the best illustration of this ranking is the fact that at one point in the postcommunist Polish government the top positions were occupied by non-Catholics. There was a protestant Prime Minister (Jerzy Buzek). There was a neocommunist President (Aleksander Kwaśniewski). There was a Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bronisław Geremek, who had been rescued by a Polish family from a Jewish ghetto during World War II. As researchers who had investigated criteria of distinguishing national groups among the Poles found out, individuals employ a mixed (both an ethnic and a citizenship-based) approach:

> Basic criterion attributes are here the features supporting functional integration of a community (knowledge of language, common morality and loyalty). Secondary importance was attached to ethnic descent, historical ties or a place of living. The lowest importance was that of religion. This set suggests that 'nation' is understood as a community based in the present time and oriented towards communication, cooperation and coexistence. It also shows that especially in politically neutral groups there is a clear distinction between national and religious issues (Błeszyńska, 2002, p. 321).

These findings lead to the conclusion that doing business with the Poles, while not the same as doing business with the British or the Dutch, is not prohibitively unusual and daily becomes less so as new generations of Poles get socialized into a democratic society and learn how to take entrepreneurial risks in an open economy. However, it does require a certain degree of sensitivity to the historical legacy of World War II and the recent Polish Communist past. It is safe to assume that more Poles will quote Orwell than Western Europeans will Miłosz, meaning that the burden of lifting the iron curtain of learned ignorance will, in most cases, probably rest on an east-bound traveller. He or she might also take Laura Klos-Sokol's *Shortcuts to Poland*, a brief guide written by an American and published in Warsaw, quoted approvingly not only by entertained business people but also by informed comparative scholars such as Anna Wierzbicka. On a higher level of cultural sophistication one might surprise one's Polish friends by quoting a melancholic poem by Wisława Szymborska entitled "Utopia", which forms an elegant comment on the futility of the communist experiment as experienced by Milosz, Szymborska and most of the Poles:

> Island where all becomes clear.
>
> Solid ground beneath your feet.
>
> The only roads are those that offer access.
>
> Bushes bend beneath the weight of proofs.
>
> The tree of Valid Supposition grow here
>
> with the branches disentangled since time immemorial.
>
> The Tree of Understanding, dazzlingly straight and simple
>
> sprouts by the spring called Now I Get It
>
> The thicker the woods, the vaster the vista:
>
> the Valley of Obviously.
>
> If any doubts arise, the wind dispels them instantly.
>
> Echoes stir unsummoned

and eagerly explain all secrets of the worlds.
On the right a cave where Meaning lies.
On the left the Lake of Deep Conviction.
Truth breaks from the bottom and bobs to the surface.
Unshakable Confidence towers over the valley.
Its peak offers an excellent view of the Essence of Things.
For all its charms, the island is uninhabited.
And the faint footprints scattered on its beaches
Turn without exception to the sea.
As if all you can do here is leave
And plunge, never to return, into the depths.
Into unfathomable life.

(translated by S. Baranczak and C. Cavanagh)

Conclusion

Dealing with Polish – and other Central European – managers does not differ from dealing with Western European counterparts any more than dealing with Southern European managers differed, in the eyes of the northern professionals, from dealing with their northern peers. However, one should keep in mind that, although the emotional temperament may not be much higher than the temperaments one is used to in Western Europe and in North America, the hidden injuries of the Cold War are not yet healed, especially within the context of increasingly aggressive Russian policies (energy blackmail, bellicose public speeches, discrimination of new members of the EU). One should assume an increased sensitivity to the patronizing attitude displayed to Polish and other Central European colleagues by their western counterparts. This sensitivity is well justified by learned ignorance of the media, which had been very slow, especially west of Elbe, to draw conclusions from the end of the Cold War. Genuine ignorance of the contribution these old European nations made to the development of European civilization in arts, sciences and politics cannot be an excuse only because the western Allies made a fatal mistake in Jalta. Imagine what a French manager would think of someone who did not know what Montesquieu had written, or what Pasteur had invented, what a British manager would think of someone who had never heard of Dickens and Newton, or what a German manager would think if someone told him that Wagner is just a software label, and Porsche a gadget designer. Yet this

is what happens to a Romanian manager, who meets a French or a Canadian counterpart totally ignorant of the contribution made by Brancusi or Ionesco, Eliade or Cioran, to the cultural heritage of mankind.

Let me finish with an anecdote: having participated in a scientific conference in Vienna in mid-1990s, I had listened to a Hungarian colleague who criticized Italian managers and consultants training their Hungarian counterparts after a takeover of their company. She said that the Italians were arrogant and insensitive to the local knowledge and experience of Hungarian professionals who survived Communist policies. An Italian colleague who was present did not dismiss her criticism but thought it was grossly exaggerated. A few hours later, however, in a Viennese bar, the same Italian scientist burst out against the company assembled there complaining bitterly that although he managed to host his own satirical program on Italian TV, the tyranny of English as the dominant language at the conference deprived him of a chance to participate in witty exchanges on a par with both the British and other colleagues whose English was superior to his. He felt excluded and undervalued. When he left, some of our British colleagues found his outburst disproportionately emotional. This is Europe. Integration goes on, but managing inequalities remains as difficult as ever. It is important to remember that some inequalities are more unequal and heal more slowly than the others.

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