

The Memory Politics of the Anti-communist Underground. Between State-sponsored Commemorations, Popular Culture and Commercialization

The project aims to analyze the practices of commemorating the anti-communist underground in Poland after 1989. We are interested in how and why the anti-communist partisans were transformed into the highly symbolic and contested figures known as the 'Cursed Soldiers'. The aim of the project is also to answer the question of what meanings are attributed to the 'Cursed Soldiers' by various social actors. Our research will include not only official ceremonies, but also various informal commemorations of the 'Cursed Soldiers'. We consider it particularly noteworthy to look at the functioning of the symbolism of the Cursed Soldiers in popular culture (for example, the phenomenon of so-called patriotic clothing or nationalist rap music). We are also interested in the historical determinants of these practices: to what extent they are shaped by the earlier models of commemoration, such as the January insurgents or partisans of the People's Army.

The commemoration of the 'Cursed Soldiers' has not yet been systematically and comprehensively analyzed, although it plays an enormous role in social and political life in Poland. Our project is the first comprehensive and multi-faceted study of the practices of commemorating the 'Cursed Soldiers'; it will broaden our knowledge on an important aspect of contemporary Poland. However, the reason for addressing this topic is not only the will to analyze a phenomenon that has not yet been thoroughly investigated. We also want to reflect on the very category of collective memory, especially its transformations in the era of popular culture and commercialization, as well as its relationship with national identity and broadly understood nationalism. We assume that collective memory should be understood in processual and dynamic terms, as entangled in power relations, as well as a phenomenon shaped by both global, transnational, national and local contexts.

Our research is qualitative; it focuses on the meaning people give to the anti-communist underground. We plan to use methodological tools that give us the opportunity to look at how the informants themselves define social reality and how they behave in natural (non-laboratory) everyday and ceremonial situations. In our research we will use interviews, observation, participatory observation and ethnographic interview. Our research will include categories of people such as teachers, politicians and officials, football fans and social activists who are crucial to the commemoration of 'Cursed Soldiers'. We will also analyze existing data and use critical discourse analysis. We will analyze different cultural artefacts related to the commemoration of the 'Cursed Soldiers' (e.g. school textbooks, stickers, musical lyrics, press articles, or politicians' speeches on the occasion of the National Day of Remembrance of the 'Cursed Soldiers').

An important element of our methodology will also be visual anthropology, which will result in shooting an ethnographic film. The application of this method is a response to discussions in cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology about new research methods and alternative ways of presenting knowledge that transcend the limitations of written text and the hermetic character of academic discourse. The film in our project will therefore have two functions: 1) as a methodological tool and 2) as a popularization tool. As a methodological tool, film will record reality, its complexity and details that escape field notes and will reveal embodied experiences of social life that are difficult to present in written language. As a means of popularising knowledge, film will make it possible to go beyond the specialist language of science and reach out to a wider audience.

The research will result in at least three articles published in international journals with Impact Factor. We are planning to submit articles for publication in journals such as *Memory Studies*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* or *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. We also intend to publish the monograph in a prestigious international publishing house (e.g. Routledge or SAGE). Our analyses will also result in a 40-minute long ethnographic film.