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Memory Entrepreneurs and the "Invisible Iron Curtain": Transnationalizing Historical Memories

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## ABSTRACT

Memory Entrepreneurs and the "Invisible Iron Curtain": Transnationalizing Historical Memories

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In the last twenty years, memory entrepreneurs have proliferated memories of Communism from Central and Eastern Europe transnationally across Europe, but for some an invisible Iron Curtain persists. How has the European memory field changed in the last two decades, and more broadly, what determines which mnemonic actors are successful in diffusing their historical memories transnationally? This dissertation demonstrates that transnational historical memory diffusion is, holding all else constant, determined not so much by the content of the memories themselves or the values they stand for, but the mode by which they are shared. Drawing on European historical policy documents, I find that since the 2004 European Union (EU) enlargement, the unified European memory field based on the Europeanization of the Holocaust has morphed into a pillarized memory field because it now also includes a totalitarianism memory regime that promotes the commemoration of Communism (but not its criminalization). Moreover, the EU has established the "dialogic imperative"—the inclusive and open mode by which historical remembering should take place. To determine which memories are most likely to get diffused transnationally, I draw on eight months of participant observation at two transnational organizations, which are both in different ways subverting the hegemonic European mnemonic regime based on the Holocaust by infusing the European memory field with memories of Communism. One tries to diffuse its memories of Communism through a "victimhood regionalism" strategy, which depends on essentializing Communism and defining the mnemonic contest as a zero-sum game of "us" *versus* "them," which primes it to propose retribution as the

solution to the Communist legacy problem. The other tries to propagate its memories of Communism through a "reconciliatory regionalism" strategy, which relies on differentiating Communism across time and space and defining the mnemonic contest as a negotiation between "us" *and* "them," which prompts it to suggest reconciliation as a solution to the Communist legacy problem. I argue that this latter strategy proves more successful at the European level because it is more compatible with the EU's dialogic imperative. In other words, successful transnational mnemonic diffusion necessitates a match between the memory entrepreneurs' regional strategy and the mode of communication hegemonic to the larger memory field. The major implication of this research is that the best way to resolve transnational mnemonic misunderstandings and foster reconciliation is to detach mnemonic positions from national/regional and political identities that cause intractable cleavages and instead interrogate the rules of mnemonic communication that govern a given memory field.

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## DEDICATION

To my Grandfather Jan Kozłowski  
for his memories  
of his Poland  
that are now forever mine

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

"Common identity requires at least an attempt to learn about each other. How can there be a common identity when in many countries and in many a political milieu, the truth about Communist totalitarian crimes is ignored and the history of East Central Europe is distorted? When the contemporary Russian government denies that on 17 September 1939, the Soviet Union committed an unprovoked act of aggression against Poland, violating four international agreements of which Moscow was a signatory, nobody even knows these events. Why do we so often hear about the 'Polish concentration camp'<sup>1</sup> of Auschwitz and never hear about the German concentration camp of Dachau or the Austrian concentration camp of Mauthausen? Why did the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* claim that the Katyń Forest Massacre was committed by the Nazis, when there is no doubt whatsoever that the Polish officers were killed by the Soviet NKVD? Are these manifestations of 'our common European identity'?"

—Wojciech Roszkowski, 2008 (Polish economist, former MEP and member of the Polish Law and Justice Party)

"The European East and West have not managed to synchronise their courses of history or to unite their collective memories. [...] The destiny of the European people was perhaps a common one, but their memory is not: there is a substantial split."

—Bronisław Geremek, 2009 (Polish historian, former MEP for the ALDE Group)

As this epigraph illustrates, historical memory lies at the heart of politics. Interpretations of historical memories after conflictual events such as massacres, wars, terrorist attacks, or totalitarian or authoritarian periods are paramount to political claims making, social movements, and identity building. The sociological literature on social memory, broadly defined, has considered many cases of post-conflict situations and the role of memory in "coming to terms" with violent events. This social memory literature is quite expansive, but this dissertation focuses the debate on memory entrepreneurs who actively and publicly pursue their own interpretations of the past in order to convince others of their correctness. These mnemonic actors, in various contexts, can range from citizens and activists to constituents, politicians, professionals,

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<sup>1</sup> The politics surrounding the phrase "Polish concentration camps" to refer to concentration camps built in Poland by Germans alone illustrate how contestations over rhetoric shape how

intellectuals and other elites. Often we see these groups, communities, or movements make claims of victimhood in order to seek restitution, whether monetary, legal or symbolic or some combination of each. Others focus on bridging the dialogue between individuals or groups construed as victims, collaborators and perpetrators or otherwise.

However, so far, the social memory literature has remained state-centric, focusing on memory conflicts within a single nation or between two nations, while the world is becoming progressively interconnected. In an increasingly globalized world where goods, people and ideas travel across borders at record speed, it is necessary to consider how *national* historical memories diffuse *transnationally* in order to fully appreciate the role of memory in politics. Importantly, this dissertation will center on the transnational level of analysis. While most of the sociological collective memory literature has developed in tandem with nationalism studies focusing on the nation-state, this project advances our understanding of how historical memories and the narratives within which they are embedded are transformed as they cross national borders into a transnational political space.

This dissertation tackles two major theoretical questions. First, What determines whether or not regional mnemonic activists are successful at diffusing their historical memories transnationally? To answer this theoretical question, I trace the case of Communism<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, I capitalize Nazism, Communism and Fascism and their variants recognizing that this is a political choice, and that it is as frequently that we find, especially the terms Communism and Fascism uncapitalized as we do capitalized. I do this for the sake of consistency and in order to retain a sense of balance as I treat a complex and sensitive topic that revolves, in part, around the comparison of these regimes and their effects. I capitalize these terms whether using them as proper nouns, e.g. Communist Party, or as adjectives, e.g. Communist systems because they all descend from specific historical political movements and parties that, whether we want to or not, condition how we think about each of these ideological systems. For example, it is impossible to talk about "nazism" as an ideology detached from the context of WWII and The National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische*

remembrance in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE<sup>3</sup>) as mnemonic entrepreneurs promote historical memories about Communism across European borders. Substantively, I answer the questions, Is there a European transnational culture of historical remembrance? And if so, what does it look like and how has it changed in the 21st century? Looking beyond official memory at the European Union (EU) level, I probe more deeply at mnemonic agency, and ask, What does current unofficial transnational historical memory activism in CEE look like? Who are these agents and what are they doing and why? Which memory entrepreneurs are successful and which are not in the European public space and why? Finally, the second theoretical question tries to answer, What makes the transnational European memory field different from national memory fields? Transnational memory fields have the potential to constitute new regional historical memories and identities distinct from national memories. By dissecting political as well as national and regional cleavages in mnemonic contests over Communism, I try to answer, How, when and why do political and regional cleavages over Communism remembrance intertwine and how do mnemonic actors explain these overlaps? Understanding that both denationalization and renationalization processes mark the transnational memory field, I ask, When are processes of renationalization most likely to stymie reconciliation?

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*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or NSDAP). However, I leave these terms uncapitalized when quoting a text where they are uncapitalized in the original. I do capitalize them when quoting a verbal communication with an interviewee despite not knowing whether the interviewee would have capitalized them in writing him or herself—I do this for the sake of consistency.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I use CEE to mean Central and Eastern Europe or Central and Eastern European. I use this term to loosely define the region between Germany and Russia, and in the context of the EU, this narrows down to the post-Soviet bloc countries that acceded to the EU. I use this term because it is currently the most popular way to identify the region in the literature and in the region itself. Other terms include Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Central-Eastern Europe or East-Central Europe. For a cultural and political analysis of the evolution of this term, see Troebst (2003).

To answer these questions, I use the case of Communism remembrance in Europe since 2004 because it offers the perfect site in which to witness how a set of memories unique to one region diffuse to another region as Eastern and Western Europe integrate into a single political and economic institution that is the EU. The EU is itself a unique regional institution and a laboratory of transnational integration where, at least formally, national borders fall away to create a multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious collectivity above and beyond the traditional nation-state. Moreover, Communism remembrance and commemoration permeates the daily lives of Poles, Czechs and others in CEE. Far from being a part of the past, memories of Communism live on in the form of national holidays, the names of streets or bus stops, in family stories and even contemporary policy debates. Episodes of Communist history turn into hotly debated and contested exchanges in mainstream media, the parliament, and at the family dinner table. Far from being the sole province of historians or memory scholars, history and memory is the stuff of everyday conversations and preoccupations of everyday people. Because memories of Communism are constantly recalled, reworked and relived in contemporary CEE, this memory field is a ripe one for studying how and why things are remembered the way they are.

Ironically, in part because Communism memories are found everywhere—permeating political, social and cultural daily life—they are difficult to locate, isolate and study. This dissertation deliberately blends together institutional/organizational analysis with cultural analysis to provide a fuller picture of memory work around Communism that neither method alone could achieve. Analyzing official government documents gives a sense of the structure of institutional policies that the EU has propagated in the last twenty years, thereby giving us a picture of the political memory field. Interviews with Members of the European Parliament

further fill in the details of some of the key contentious issues in those policy debates that took place behind the scenes. But an analysis that stops there would miss the important memory work that is taking place at the grassroots level and would be overly Brussels-centric. Memory entrepreneurs working in CEE are the drivers behind many of the changes in the European memory field that current EU policies reflect. For this reason, this project also includes a cultural analysis using ethnographic methods to better understand the people, their stories, their memories and mnemonic toolkits, and their motivations behind their memory activism. The benefits of a joint political and cultural analysis lie in not only bringing to light any gaps or disparities between the official and unofficial memory fields but also in highlighting the agency behind mnemonic change.

Drawing on existing European institutional documents, a dual-site comparative ethnography and expert interviews with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), I find that historical memories of Communism have diffused into the mainstream European historical narrative in the last 15 years to some extent, but not to the extent that many mnemonic activists from Central and Eastern Europe would like. More specifically, I argue that, yes, there is a transnational European memory field, one that since CEE accession to the EU has shifted from a mnemonic field dominated by the Europeanization of the Holocaust to one that now also includes the Europeanization of totalitarianism, marked by the duality of Nazism and Communism. This shift has meant that commemorative practices associated with Communism are now mainstream, but to the disappointment of some more radical mnemonic activists from CEE, the criminalization of Communism has not been institutionalized. These mnemonic battles were so contentious that, in addition to the substantive shift in the European memory field, we see the EU instituting a shift in the allowable *mode* of remembering. The EU is moving away

from a single master narrative that underpins the origin myth of contemporary Europe and toward what I call a "dialogic imperative" that intends to create an inclusive space for multiple voices and multiple reinterpretations of the past to be discussed and considered. At the grassroots level, unofficial memory activism in CEE is alive and well and can be characterized by two regional-identity-building strategies—what I call "victimhood regionalism" and "reconciliatory regionalism." The former defines a region primarily by its victimhood status and as a body to which something has been done while the latter recognizes victimhood but also affirms agency and the positive contributions that the region has made to others. The latter is more successful in the European memory field because it conforms to the hegemonic mode of mnemonic communication in the field, while the former clashes with it posing a roadblock to its success. And finally, I argue that what is distinct about transnational memory fields is that they create a space where national memories are confronted directly, whether participants in transnational institutions like the EU want them to be or not. Regional, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic cleavages are amplified and existing political cleavages take on new meaning. This helps to crystalize new regional historical memory regimes and identities independent of the national. Of course national mnemonic frameworks remain strong and domestic interests persist at the international level. The transnational memory field is marked by simultaneous processes of denationalization, where existing national historical memories taken on new meanings within the transnational sphere, and renationalization, where regions or nations attempt to reimpose a national identity that they fear is being undone in the transnational field. However, not all renationalization attempts related to mnemonic activism create division and stymie reconciliation. Mnemonic activists who employ a victimhood regionalism strategy are more likely to renationalize their historical memories in a way that is exclusionary and creates

hereditary enemies that must be neutralized at all costs breeding eternal conflict rather than mutual reconciliation.

The policy implications of the extent to which memories transnationalize and form a cohesive collective memory that many nations can identify with are numerous, but at the core the existence of the European project itself is at stake. The European Union needs some cohesive understanding of itself grounded in a common future but also a common past. One or the other will simply not do. European institutions recognize this, but it is difficult to propose a meaningful social identity for the EU that is top-down, despite the EU's efforts. Events in Europe in the last three years—Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine, large-scale migration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe, and the exit of the UK from the EU—demonstrate, now more than ever, how precarious a multi-national project like the EU can be and how important collective identification with a common "Europe" is to the European project.

Before diving into these arguments directly, in the rest of this chapter, I review the existing sociological literature on social memory to highlight some of the key debates and locate my theoretical contributions. I also discuss the data on which this project relies, methods of analysis, and the strengths and limitations of each. Finally, I give a brief chapter overview to give an indication of what is to come.

## **Sociology and Social Memory**

Sociology has taken up the study of collective memory, or more broadly social memory, while struggling to differentiate itself from the fields of psychology and history, despite the fact that neither of the classical sociological thinkers (Marx, Weber, Durkheim) addressed collective memory in any depth. Generally in sociology, collective memory is treated as a social



reconstruction of a past that involves practices like commemoration and monument building but also general forms like myth, identity and tradition (Olick 1997; Olick and Robbins 1998; see also Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011).

Maurice Halbwachs, the French philosopher/sociologist and the "father" of memory studies, distinguished among four types of memory—autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory. Autobiographical memory is memory that we have directly experienced as individuals; historical memory is the memories we develop from historical records; history is the "recalled past that is no longer an important part of our lives," and collective memory is the "active" past that shapes our identities (Olick and Robbins 1998: 111). Yet these distinctions are not clear-cut and can and have indeed produced some disciplinary tensions, particularly with the discipline of history. Collective memory scholars have had to defend their field from that of history because history and memory are so intimately intertwined. In short, traditional historians see history, but not memory, as truth telling. Since the 1980s, however, this view has been challenged as social and cultural historians use memory itself as evidence, and the field of oral history has received more attention. Cultural historians, much like sociologists, also concede that history is always mediated through experience. For example, from the nationalism literature, we know that memory has been used for nationalist purposes in the past and has therefore been shown to not be objective.

While the debate over the distinction between history and memory, on the one hand, and various types of memory, on the other, is not resolved, scholars now are suggesting that we treat memory as mnemonic practices found in different fields of power rather than enumerating or typologizing different collective memories as ontological entities. Olick and Robbins (1998) therefore propose that the field of "social memory studies" be treated as a "general rubric for

inquiry into the varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged" (112). They suggest that "we refer to distinct sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites, rather than to collective memory as a thing" so as to enable us to "identify ways in which past and present are intertwined without reifying a mystical group mind and without including absolutely everything in the enterprise" (112). Such a move can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid transcendentalism while shielding memory from psychologization.

Nevertheless, it is common practice in sociology to distinguish between individual memory, collective or social memory, and history. Savelsberg and King (2011) maintain that collective memory looks at how memory is conceived of in relation to groups (geographical, political, ideological etc.) and the subjective meaning given to it rather than the objectivity to which much of history aspires. Jeffrey Olick (1999a) explains that there is no collective memory without individuals participating in social life, and there is no individual memory without social experience. As Pierre Nora would put it, there is a collective "will to remember" that distinguishes *lieux de mémoire* from simply *lieux d'histoire* (1989:19) by bringing history into the everyday socially lived world. Finally, Barry Schwartz (2009) maintains that collective memory is more selective and malleable than history, and rather than chronicling all past events it remembers some and forgets others.

No matter what the chosen term, Olick and Robbins (1998) urge us to consider the processes of remembering as a constant social activity. We should examine "mnemonic practices" rather than just memories themselves. For this reason, in this dissertation, I predominantly use the term historical memory or memories while avoiding "collective memory" because the "collective" part of that term is always vigorously contested and seems to

overemphasize an assumed unity with which a group remembers. Collective memory also gives the impression of a static thing that is remembered, while I want to focus on the practices of remembering.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, by using the term "historical memory," I do not wish to deemphasize the social nature of historical memory making. On the contrary, I wish to expose and analyze the social rules that mnemonic actors establish that govern the communication and sharing of historical memories, what I call the "mode of mnemonic communication," or what Olick might call "communicative practices." Of course these vary over time and space. Therefore, this dissertation will also develop the concept of "memory fields" populated by many more specific "memory regimes" following Bernhard and Kubik to underscore that when we discuss historical memories it is not just the remembrance of specific memories that we are talking about but rather a "set of cultural and institutional practices" that allows that event to be remembered in the first place<sup>5</sup> (2014: 14). Each memory field then has its own dominant mode of mnemonic communication that defines the temporal and spatial dimensions of the "what" to be remembered. In other words, it is not that there are rules about what we can or cannot remember, like we should remember Nazism but forget Communism by putting it in the past. Or even what

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<sup>4</sup> To be sure, I still focus on social remembering and not individual remembering. This dissertation does not explore in any depth individual, familial or generational memories, even though some of my interviewees recall personal or family experiences of Communism. The focus remains on shared memories as they are imagined through the national and regional lens and as it increasingly permeates borders to diffuse transnationally.

<sup>5</sup> Another analogous and popular term found in the literature is memory frameworks. Originating with Halbwachs, the social frameworks of memory to him are the "instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (1925:40). Thus social frameworks of memory may be cultural practices and ideas specific to a given time and culture through which groups make sense of memories. Wawrzyniak and Pakier (2013) extend social frameworks to place (which closely connected to time was also an important concept for Halbwachs) and propose the idea of regional frameworks as a geographically bounded space of remembrance. On regional integration see Kühnhardt (2010).

moral valence to ascribe to memories like we should remember that Nazism was evil while Communism was normatively variegated. Rather, the rules pertain to how we think of the memory itself—e.g. Communism—*across are time and space*. Do mnemonic actors communicate the memory as dynamically changing across time and varying across geography or do we essentialize it into a static memory that has the same properties across time and place? Moreover, the mode of mnemonic communication is also defined by a collective sense of who the actors in the mnemonic contest are and what their relationship is to each other. Do mnemonic actors think of the mnemonic engagement as "us" *versus* "them" or "us" *and* "them"? In other words, my mode of mnemonic communication should not be confused with Irwin-Zarecka's (1994) "rules of remembering" or Zerubavel's (1996) "rules of remembering" that "tell us quite specifically what we should remember and what we can or must forget" (286). Instead, I argue that each memory field is marked by a hegemonic mode of mnemonic communication that defines (1) whether or not we can essentialize (meaning distill the memory to its essence by extracting it from its historical and geographical specificity) the memory to be remembered or forgotten *whatever* it may be—the Holocaust, Nazism, Communism, colonization, slavery, authoritarianism—and (2) how we should treat our mnemonic interlocutors, as "us" and "them" negotiating partners or "us" versus "them" the enemy to be defeated and delegitimized at all costs.

Finally, memory scholars have located the recollection, communication and effects of collective remembering in many spheres of public life be it social, cultural or political (Zelizer 1995). For example, collective remembering is used by various social groups be they national, ethnic or religious to forge a sense of community identity and belonging over time. In cultural production, whether through novels, film or art, memories of past events like the Vietnam War,

Watergate or the JFK assassination are repackaged, not to accurately represent history, but to create meaning out of morally ambiguous or complicated events even if that meaning changes over time and depends on the identities of the consumer (see e.g. Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz's 1991 study of how moral entrepreneurs struggled over how to represent feelings of moral ambiguity surrounding the divisive Vietnam War in designing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial). In the political sphere, memory use for the "establishment and maintenance of political identity emerges as supreme" (Zelizer 1995: 227). In the political arena, collective memories in the form of founding myths are used to legitimize the establishment of imagined communities like nation-states (Smith 1985). Remembering requires public speech and claims making (Arendt 1958) and it therefore necessarily takes place within a space of power negotiation—getting to control who, what, how, when and where is remembered or forgotten is a form of political power (Connerton 1989). It is a form of political power because it controls what is possible to say or even imagine and it designates who in the community matters and is to be listened to and who is to be excluded and silenced.

This dissertation remains decidedly within the political space of memory making—both "official" and "unofficial." While there have been many studies of official state remembrance practices like commemorations, parades, speeches, and memorial building, this project examines how elected officials and bureaucrats actually "legislate" history through parliamentary resolutions and public financing programs. Savelsberg and King (2011) argue that the social memory literature has largely overlooked this space where memories meet the law. The project then flips the coin to interrogate the political work of civil society activists<sup>6</sup> (unofficial memory

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<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this project, I use the terms "memory entrepreneurs," "memory activists," and "mnemonic actors" interchangeably to refer to people who actively reshape existing

work) who strive to diffuse their interpretations of history and change official collective memories. For analyses of how social movement actors wield memories for their cause see Armstrong and Cragge's (2006) work on how Stonewall became the founding collective memory of the gay liberation movement or Tsutsui's (2006) study of why the Korean "comfort women" movement emerged when it did after a period of 40 years of silence following WWII or Jansen's (2007) work on Latin American social movements and the political uses of resurrecting and appropriating the memories of historical figures. The civil society actors discussed in this dissertation, however, are less of a social identity based movement. Rather the diffusion of their memories themselves is most important to them than the advancement of any one social group. These mnemonic actors then can be thought of as composing a "memory movement," which Ghoshal defines as a "sustained collective effort to bring increased attention to past incidents or individuals, or to transform the way such pasts are understood" (2013: 332). Another way to think of this mnemonic activism is in terms of "memory projects," which Irwin-Zarecka defines as "projects designed to give presence to the previously absent or silenced past" (1994: 133). I consider both<sup>7</sup> the unofficial mnemonic actors (civil society groups) and official mnemonic actors (politicians) as composing the Communism memory movement or memory project.

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historical memories and promote new ones in a myriad of fields, including but not limited to memorialization. James E. Young, an English and Judaic Studies scholar, coined the term "memory entrepreneur" in his 1993 book, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. He used the term in reference to those designing Holocaust memorials in Europe, Israel and the US to show how memorials are used to convey certain meanings and to mask others. In sociology, however, the term "memory entrepreneurs" has been adopted by Jeffrey Olick and others from Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz's idea of "moral entrepreneurs," also referring to memorialization activists in the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. More broadly, however, they define memory entrepreneurs as those who "seek public arenas and support for their interpretations of the past" (1991: 382).

<sup>7</sup> Ghoshal (2013) reserves the term "memory movement" only for the grassroots and not state action.

## Transnational Historical Memory

The collective memory literature that takes up nationalism in particular has adequately shown how memories serve as an important tool for elites to forge the idea of a continuous national identity to legitimize political action and representation (for classic works see Anderson 1983; Renan [1882] 1996; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; for more recent case studies see Gillis 1994; Kubal 2008; Roniger and Sznajder 1999; Zerubavel 1995; on CEE specifically see Mark 2010 and Mink 2013). This research has unfortunately largely remained nation-centric. However, there is a burgeoning literature on the transnational character of historical memories as transnational communities and identities emerge in an ever more globalized and interconnected world and particularly as cosmopolitan values such as human rights garner more legitimacy in the global political space (see Sikkink 2011). In *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder argue that a universal "cosmopolitan memory" is emerging in which the Holocaust functions as a "touchstone for a disoriented, deterritorialized humanity searching for moral clarity amid constant uncertainty" (2006: 24). In *History, Memory and Trans-European Identity*, Aline Sierp discusses the potential for the Europeanization of national memories of WWII in order to forge a common European identity. She concludes that although "memories in Europe are far from uniform" the "construction of a European memory framework may be possible" (2014: 152).

A long-time European memory scholar, Aleida Assmann, describes what this European memory framework could look like. She writes that a transnational European memory framework would mean "national memory constructs" would have to be reinterpreted within the context of "European knowledge" of this history. "Within such a framework," she continues, "Europeans could learn to face up to their memories and to listen to others with empathy. Such a

European memory would not provide a platform for political legitimization; rather, it would work against exaggerated self-images and antagonistic images of others." Assmann is careful to refute the misconception that creating a transnational memory framework replaces national memories. Instead, she writes, that transnational "historical consciousness does not eliminate national memories but rather integrates them." Stressing the importance of a common mnemonic framework of European historical understanding for European identity building, she concludes that the "project of a United States of Europe will remain an empty dream" without such a framework (2007: 23).

Not only is this a topic of great interest to sociologists, historians and political scientists, but it is also getting a lot of attention at the governance level. At the intersection of scholarship and policy, political scientist and European Commission consultant Carlos Montero Closa (2011) reminds us that for the first time in the European Union's history, historical memory is starting to fall under the jurisdiction of European governance. Closa was the author of a study that helped the Commission legitimate its decision to not uniformly ban the denial of Communist crimes in Europe.

In fact, European historical memory has become a multi-million dollar research industry sponsored by the EU. For example, the 30-country Commission funded project, "In Search for Transcultural Memory in Europe," or ISTME, which is based at Lund University in Sweden and the University of Copenhagen, claims to "go beyond the nationally oriented memory studies that tend to reify the bond between culture, nation and memory" (ISTME website). Instead the project "investigat[es] the transcultural dynamics of memory in Europe today" by "explor[ing] the tension between attempts to create a common European memory, or a unitary memory ethics,



on the one hand and numerous memory conflicts stemming from Europe's fragmentation into countless memory communities on the other."

There is a debate in the literature on transnational memory about whether transnational memory making revolves around "truly" regional or supranational interests or identities or, much like before the EU even existed, if it comes down to domestic interests. Mälksoo (2009) and Closa (2011) argue that transnational memory politics is a contest between East and West, two regions with two different sets of historical memories of the 20th century and unequal economic and political power. For example, Mälksoo argues that Poland and the Baltic States are the European subaltern and that anti-Communism memory is a part of this region's foreign policy that rests on being taken seriously and on equal footing with the West. Clarke (2014), on the other hand, argues that CEE is not actually putting up a unified anti-Communist front but rather each country does it for different reasons that depend on its unique *national* context. He argues that Mälksoo and Closa see things as uniformly East versus West, while according to him, EU memory policy is still dominated by national rather than regional or transnational interests. For example, he argues that the Baltics' national interests are to convince the EU to take a tougher stance against Russia and to guarantee their security. Hungary's anti-Communism, on the other hand, sprang up among the right in opposition to the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), thus boiling down to domestic electoral exigencies. This then "spilled over" into the international arena in the form of the EU becoming a boogey-man for Prim Minister Orbán (much like Russia is for the Baltics). Germany, however, Clarke argues, is not letting domestic issues spill into the international arena. Germany's stance of prioritizing the Holocaust (rather than Communism) has not changed since unification and even though many funds have been committed to commemorating and researching the GDR dictatorship it has not taken an anti-Communist stance

like Poland, Hungary or the Baltic States, despite the fact that five out of seven post-unification governments have been the conservative Christian Democrats. Essentially, Clarke (2014) argues that Eastern European countries crudely instrumentalize historical memories of Communism to meet their national interests in the international arena while Germany ascetically refrains from such behavior. Eastern Europeans do not really have common interests in advocating for an anti-Communist stance at the European level; rather each does so for different *domestic* reasons.

The point of my research is not to adjudicate which countries politicize historical memories of Communism at the international level for their own gain. Nor is it even to determine whether a "real" or "true" transnational European collective memory exists or not. My research rather traces the changes in the actively (re)told historical narrative of the EU over the last quarter century without reifying a single idea of Europe or a single collective memory that could presumably come to define the EU. By building up a straw-man concept—"European collective memory"—it is easy to point to differences in how nations reinterpret the past or to differences in their national interests and thereby argue that there is no European collective memory or even common European culture of remembrance. My contribution to the literature is to move the conversation away from studying the reasons why nations "instrumentalize" historical memories to examining the transnational discursive space in which ideas of Europe and its history are hotly contested on a near-daily basis. The absence of a "common" European memory (even if that is the future ideal for many) does not mean preclude some shared mnemonic field in which collective and "collected" memories are communicated. It is within this public space that a transnational mnemonic field emerges and is constantly practiced and recreated. European historical memory is not something that exists or does not; it is something

that always has, is and always will be (re)imagined but in different ways in different political and social contexts. Thus I argue that although national identities remain strong, regional cleavages along the East/West divide also remain strong, although memories in the "East" and "West" are by no means uniform. Moreover, once national memories enter the transnational European arena, they have to mold to some extent to the values framework that the EU has established and more recently the rules of mnemonic communication. Thus the kind of memories and narratives that are promoted in the European discursive space are necessarily limited, in ways that they are not (as strongly) at the domestic level (e.g. a politician can say some things in Poland that she cannot say in the EP because they would be interpreted as too inflammatory or incomprehensible—the cultural, political and historical context within which memories are discussed and interpreted matters). Finally, my research does not assume that national and transnational processes are mutually exclusive. Rather it explores *the extent to which* the transnational discursive space denationalizes or universalizes national memories thereby creating new transnational memories. In other words, I do not treat transnationalization and renationalization as two opposite and mutually exclusive processes.

There is in fact a very recent body of literature that moves the debate beyond whether there is or is not a transnational European collective memory. In *History, Memory and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*, Aline Sierp, using Italy and Germany as case studies, argues that there is a European community of remembrance, but just because there is, does not mean that there exists consensus and that "does not necessarily imply the erasure of national and local forms of remembrance" (2014:3). Rather, she continues, "it means the creation of a further supranational arena where diverging memories can find their expression and can be dealt with in a different way" (3) than before the EU existed as a unique public arena. Sierp uses Western

European examples and writes about WWII memories, but alludes to the need to look at Central and Eastern European memories. My project takes that head on; it shows that while renationalization processes are in part a reaction to the project of building an ever-closer union, the EU does provide a public sphere where discourse can take place and where there is room for exchange of opinions, information, knowledge and importantly a space for reconciliation.<sup>8</sup> It can provide a pressure relief valve where nationalist grievances and frustrations can be aired thereby tempering nationalist fervor. More than that, the more historical memory is discussed and debated in the transnational space, the more that space is institutionalized as a legitimate avenue for such discussions in the future and provides a democratic outlet through which nationalist sentiments can be processed, rather than through violent or revolutionary means.

### **Moving Away from the "Instrumentalization" of Memory: Presentists v Path-Dependantists Debate**

Given that memories do not accurately reflect the past and that they are socially constructed, another key question in the social memory literature revolves around explaining why some memories become popularly accepted and others do not? Given that collective remembering is a process (Zelizer 1995), why do some collective historical memories diffuse and others do not? Part of the reason that memories change over time is that the needs of the groups that wield them change. In other words, the usability of memories changes over time. The social memory literature has been roughly split into two groups, with perhaps the more dominant in sociology being the "presentists," who argue(d) that memories are instrumentally manipulated in the present for political purposes. Scholars like Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) focused on

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<sup>8</sup> The transnational memory field especially is marked by multidirectional mnemonic travel voyaging vertically from the national to the supranational and back and horizontally from one nation to another, not to mention the subnational level (see Rothberg 2009).

invented traditions while others examined how social groups represented their interests through recollection (Griffin and Bollen 2009; Feldman-Savelsberg, Ndonko and Yang 2005; Armstrong and Cragge 2006). In response, the "path-dependantists" argue that there are limitations to just how much one can bend memories out of shape. In other words, there are limits to the malleability of the past.

However, by the turn of the century, Jeffrey Olick, a central figure in this debate, acknowledged that memories are both used in the present *and* limited by the past. For example, in response to the strong presentist line of thinking in the literature, he showed how previous commemorative practices create memory genres that condition the kind of commemorative practices that are possible in the future (Olick 1999b). Others showed how simple demographic change and the passage of time limit responses to traumatic events (Cunningham, Nugent, and Slodden 2010). There was an agreement that memories are *both* malleable and persistent to smaller or larger degrees depending on the kind of memory, and time, place, and context within which it is located. For example, borrowing from social movement theory, Ghoshal (2013) develops the idea of "mnemonic opportunity structures" to explain how "memory movements" are both limited by and given new opportunities to commemorate racial violence. A memory movement's successful commemoration relies on the components of the mnemonic opportunity structure—commemorative capacity of not only the movement's financial/organizing capacity but also the location of remembrance (whether a particular location has a rich tradition of commemoration or not); moral valence of the historic characters being commemorated; and the ascribed significance of the past that is being remembered. When it comes to the policy arena, Closa (2014) argues that whether or not a mnemonic policy like criminalizing communism is successful depends on the power of the mnemonic actors (who has the largest number of votes?),

the persuasiveness of the argument (does the framing resonate with a broad group?), and the policy's goodness of fit (does the policy proposal require deep changes in other policies?).

Nevertheless, in the political arena especially, despite the acknowledgment that historical memories are limited or tempered in some ways by the past, the overwhelming research focus remains on how mnemonic actors instrumentalize memories to ensure that certain memories persist or that other memories change. Olick and Robbins (1998) present a model of mnemonic change/persistence that identifies the drivers of change and persistence as "instrumental," "cultural" and "inertial." Much of the work in the literature has focused on the "instrumental" side of the model. Instrumental persistence is a form of mnemonic activity where actors "intentionally seek to maintain a particular vision of the past" and instrumental change is when actors intentionally seek to change the interpretation of the past. Cultural persistence occurs when cultural representations get canonized and institutionalized while cultural change happens when there is a paradigm shift or new facts are uncovered. Inertial persistence occurs when strong customs or traditions prevent change while inertial change, through atrophy or decay, makes some memories less relevant or resonant. Olick and Robbins (1998) acknowledge that one problem with this model of change is that it sees change as coming exclusively from external forces beyond the memory itself, i.e. from intentional mnemonic activists, from cultural institutions or from larger historical and geographical environment changes. Memories are not successfully diffused just because they fit the given context or because some are closer to the historical "truth" than others. The substance of memories matters too and over time memories are burdened by their "own histories and memories as texts" (Olick and Robbins 1998: 130). Indeed overemphasis on instrumentalization as a theoretical concept to explain memory outcomes is not very useful because it narrowly focuses on the skill with which mnemonic entrepreneurs

manipulate memories to fit the given institutional context or the extent to which different actors cynically "twist" memories from historical truth for their purposes. This project distances itself from the vocabulary of "instrumentalization" because it is not theoretically helpful in explaining why, for example, some civic actors approach the same memories (Communism), coming from the same region (Central and Eastern Europe) at the same time and in the same institutional context (EU) in very different ways. Both try to "frame" their mnemonic entrepreneurship to fit the EU context, e.g. framing Communism within the language of EU fundamental values like freedom, human rights and democracy. Both stretch memories and remember some things and forget others in a more or less conscious way. Not only is the instrumentalization lens not sufficiently conceptually refined, it has the potential to delegitimize mnemonic actors (something researchers should avoid doing). In other words, using history as a tool is not necessarily a morally destructive thing to do. Overuse of the concept of instrumentalization or politicization in the literature has the potential to devolve into the kind of unproductive mud-slinging contests we witness in the political arena where the term is used to delegitimize public actors by accusing them of doing something to history that legitimate actors do not do.<sup>9</sup> In other words, it is self-evident that there is a political valence to using history because it is impossible to discuss history in a vacuum as if ideological persuasions and worldview differences did not exist. Of course that is not to say that some mnemonic actors bend historical memories beyond recognition in a way that denies the reality of most people who have lived through that history. However, sociologists should not proceed down the road that leads them to becoming predominantly fact-checkers, the arbitrators of truth distinguishing the lies

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<sup>9</sup> Recall Clarke's contrast of the Baltic States' twisting of history to meet their national "interests" to Germany's righteous abstaining from such low behavior (2014).

from truth and the myths from objective history. That would seem to be an unproductive, endless battle that is not particularly helpful for sociologists to better understand collectivities' understandings of group identity, past, present and future and how this changes over time.

For these reasons, this project tries to move the social memory debate around why some memories diffuse successfully and others do not toward a closer examination of the memories themselves. What are the multiple interpretations or understandings of a given mnemonic object like Communism? And how are the groups of mnemonic actors in a given mnemonic contest variably defined? And finally, context does matter but not only in these sense of what kind of framing a dominant cultural or institutional paradigm requires in order to be successful (e.g. framing in terms of the global human rights paradigm, see Tsutsui 2006 or the victimhood paradigm in criminal justice, see Weed 1995 and Walklate 2007). We should also ask, What does the context of the memory field say about what the right way is to communicate memories? Should memories be universalized or particularized? Should memories claim objectivity or subjectivity? Should memories clearly delineate "us" from "them" or instead blur group identities?

A closer examination of memories themselves and the rules by which they are communicated will open up a space where researchers can consider collective remembering beyond the instrumentalization of memory for political or national interests. My conversations with civic and political mnemonic activists alike are evidence that understandings of Communism are situated within much more complex worldviews that do not simply boil down to political party identity or even national identity. Pointing to a person or organization's political or social identity does not do enough to explain how that person or group makes meaning out of the



Communist past. How do we then conceptualize the use of historical memory in the public sphere?

### Conceptualizing Memory Regimes and Mnemonic Actors

To understand why some memories diffuse widely and become institutionalized and others do not, we need to understand the memories themselves and the people championing them. To this end, I borrow Bernhard and Kubik's (2014) typology of memory regimes and mnemonic actors (with some reservations). They define a memory regime as "an organized way of remembering a specific issue, event, or process at a given moment or period" (2014: 16). They identify three types of regimes; unified, pillarized and fractured. They go on to explain that an "ensemble of memory regimes, understood as the organized way of remembering all salient issues in a given country in a given period, can be conveniently referred to as 'the field of memory' or 'mnemonic field'" (16-17). The authors define each regime by the presence and relative power of different kinds of mnemonic actors; warriors, pluralists, abnegators and prospectives (although in practice the latter group is rarely found in their case studies and in mine too). When a memory warrior enters a memory regime, it becomes fractured. When a memory regime is pillarized, it is populated by a mixture of pluralists and abnegators. A pillarized memory regime contains people with different interpretations of the past but these are tolerated and therefore do not become politicized. Finally, when a memory regime is unified, largely free of mnemonic conflict, it is composed only of abnegators.

Bernhard and Kubik (2014) use the political strategies of mnemonic agents to categorize them as a warrior, pluralist or abnegator. Mnemonic warriors see a memory conflict as "us" *versus* "them" where there is only one "true" version of the past. They want to delegitimize alternative visions of the past rather than negotiate so that their version of the past legitimizes

their claim to power. Pluralists see "us" *and* "them"; they want to negotiate on multiple versions of the past and see pluralism as the frame which allows many parties, including their own, to exist. Abnegators only see "them," i.e. those who dwell on the past. They avoid discussions of the past altogether seeing them as irrelevant to the present and rely on a pragmatism that tackles present-day problems that allows them to legitimize their position in power.

Memory regimes change when different kinds of actors enter and exit the memory regime or their relative power changes. For example, the entrance of strong warriors automatically fractures the memory regime and may even force existing abnegators to become pluralists, finding a need to respond to claims about the historical past posed by the new warriors. Alternatively, if pluralists gain the upper hand they can reduce the salience of collective memory and turn warriors into abnegators, making it politically costly for the warriors to engage in mnemonic conflict at the moment thus turning a fractured memory regime into a pillarized or unified one. Memory regimes also change due to the passage of time and historical anniversaries but also external shocks like traumatic events, policy changes, scholarly revelations, war or economic crises. Because memory regimes change frequently, the authors stress that we should study memory regimes at a "given moment or period" (16).

There are, however, some limitations to Bernhard and Kubik's model. First, their model assumes the nation as the bounded context of mnemonic disputes. Elevating this model to the transnational level necessitates a look at transnational memory regimes where memory regimes may become pillarized or fractured, not just along political lines, but also along national and/or regional lines. Second, what may be a pillarized or fractured memory regime at the national level may become a unified memory regime at the transnational level. Conflicting interpretations of

the role of one's nation in the Holocaust in France, Sweden, Germany and Austria for example did not prevent the EU from unifying around the idea that the Holocaust was the most horrific event of European history thereby legitimizing closer European integration. As my research shows, fractured memories of Communism in nations like Poland, Hungary or the Baltic States, did not prevent the rise of a strong, vocal and organized group of mnemonic warriors *and* pluralists (collaboration of warriors and pluralists is not something Bernhard and Kubik's model predicts) from the CEE region from agreeing that their historical experiences of Communism are not adequately recognized by the EU and pushing for more recognition. In other words, while mnemonic warriors and pluralists may fight against each other in the national mnemonic contest, they may collaborate in the transnational field. Thus the scale of the memory field, not just the substance of the memory or composition of mnemonic actors, matters for the outcome of whether a memory field will be unified, pillarized or fractured.

Another weakness of Bernhard and Kubik's model is that it focuses primarily on the official political field, seeing memory politics as primarily a game of political elites, becoming potentially susceptible to the automatic differentiation of mnemonic actors into those who instrumentalize or politicize history and those who do not, a problem discussed above. Thus, if not careful, this model can result in a crude typology of memory warriors that politicize historical memory for their own political interests (to win elections) and mnemonic pluralists or abnegators that respect different political interpretations of the past and do not politicize it or outright distance themselves from historical memory altogether. This also means that we get a picture of mnemonic change as coming from the challenge of mnemonic warriors who destabilize the mnemonic field and the pluralists who try to fight back and retain their relative power, sometimes with the help of abnegators that momentarily turn into pluralists. Put even

more primitively, the warriors are the bad guys and the pluralists and abnegators are the good guys. To avoid these traps, my analysis avoids the assumption that mnemonic "challengers" necessarily aim to or de facto fracture memory regimes or have a fundamentalist "us" versus "them" strategy. In other words, I argue against the picture that Bernhard and Kubik's model implicitly paints that everything is going well until mnemonic warriors challenge the status quo and fracture<sup>10</sup> the memory regime. Second, my analysis examines in depth unofficial elite memory actors who do not have explicit political interests (they are not politicians). That is not to say that unofficial memory actors, just because they do not run for office, are completely divorced from the political context in which they operate or have not political affiliations of their own. All public claims of historical reinterpretation are inherently political, but examining their other qualities, will help researchers explain why some historical memories catch on and others do not.

Finally, my analysis looks at the interaction of two memory regimes, one of the Holocaust and one of Communism as they shape and interact with each other,<sup>11</sup> whereas Bernhard and Kubik's case studies focus only on the machinations of a single memory regime, that of the 1989 revolutions. I find that pluralists have an easier time participating in *multiple* memory regimes, thus potentially bridging gaps between fractured or even pillarized memory regimes while warriors defend a single memory regime that they are wedded too and block all memory regimes that could challenge it. Moreover, when a memory field is expanded geographically (and therefore usually also culturally, economically, politically), and if a new

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<sup>10</sup> Bernhard and Kubik do however argue that fractured memory regimes are dangerous to the viability of liberal democracy itself while pillarized or unified are not. This assessment requires more research but seems convincing.

<sup>11</sup> Although, undoubtedly, this dissertation is primarily about Communism remembrance.

strong unified memory regime enters the field, then what used to be a unified memory field may become pillarized (or even fractured).

Applying Bernhard and Kubik's typology to European collective memory, we see that by the 2000s there is an almost consensual<sup>12</sup> unified memory regime of the Holocaust, which dominates the entire European mnemonic field (overlooked are other mnemonic events like authoritarianism in Southern Europe; colonialism by Western powers; and of course Stalinism/Communism). In the aftermath of the 2004 "external shock" of the Big Bang expansion of the EU, a lot of mnemonic warriors from CEE entered the European memory field and challenged this "Europeanization of the Holocaust" memory regime by adding a new and seemingly incompatible memory regime of Communism (itself fractured and filled with some very vocal warriors and many less vocal pluralists and abnegators). At the post-2004 EU level then, the relative power of pluralists and abnegators from Western Europe diminished as the presence of popular, vocal memory warriors steadily rose. The presence of memory warriors from CEE moves the European mnemonic field from a unified one (based on the Holocaust) to a pillarized one (based on Nazism *and* Communism). It is not fractured because while the mnemonic warriors made some in-roads in getting their memory regime of Communism recognized they did not succeed in completely breaking up the consensus around the Europeanization of the Holocaust. The mainstream of the EP is still comprised of pluralists who continue to recognize the fundamental role of the Holocaust in EU integration politics but allow for a different interpretation of the past based on totalitarianisms other than Nazism, namely

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<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that differences in interpretation or even radical dissenters do not exist. Rather it is to say that there exists a broad and general *constructed* agreement on moral valence of the Holocaust as the ultimate evil and the central role of the Holocaust in the process of European integration.

Communism. Moreover, the pluralists, in response to the CEE warriors, have managed to institutionalize their preferred mode of mnemonic communication, namely dialogue, as opposed to the imposition of another hegemonic historical narrative that would dominate the EU memory field.

If we apply Bernhard and Kubik's typology of mnemonic entrepreneurship to non-official actors, we find that in terms of their chosen mnemonic strategies, the model is very helpful. The two case studies which are discussed in depth in this dissertation are two European organizations that deal with Communism memories—the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in Prague and the European Network Remembrance in Solidarity in Warsaw. The Platform is for the most part a group of mnemonic warriors (although surely in its member organizations there are plenty of people that are mnemonic pluralists) and the Network is a group of mnemonic pluralists, although some of its staff and leadership may have warrior-like views. Thus the Platform's warriors tend to see the "participants in memory politics" as "us versus them" and the Network's pluralists see it as "us and them." The Platform's warriors see collective memory as one that is "non-negotiable"; there is "only one 'true' vision of the past," while the Network's pluralists seek negotiation but "within an agreement on the fundamentals of mnemonic politics" (Bernhard and Kubik 2014:15). The Platform's warriors see the events to be remembered as happening in a "single mythical past" while the Network's pluralists see "multiple pasts." The Platform's warriors believe that mnemonic contests should be carried out without negotiation and compromise, while the Network's pluralists want to "practice respect, tolerance for alternative views of the past" (Bernhard and Kubik 2014:15) and are ready to negotiate. These are the *Who*, *What*, *When* and *How* of the dominant strategies of mnemonic warriors and pluralists. The last, *Why*, seems less applicable to actors that do not hold elected or political office because for these

activists the mnemonic contest is not primarily about legitimizing one's political power or delegitimizing another's. In Bernhard and Kubik's model mnemonic actors use these strategies to diffuse their historical memories. What does this look like at the transnational level?

### Conceptualizing Mnemonic Diffusion

There are many reasons why some versions of history diffuse *transnationally* and others do not. Let us for example take Spain's accession to the EU in 1986 (along with Portugal). Spain's transition to democracy, after the authoritarian Franco regime crumbled in 1975, was marked by a peaceful, negotiated transition of power that ensured amnesty for the previous regime, with transitional justice limited strictly to reparations and symbolic measures. This came to be known as the Spanish transition model based on the *pacto de olvido*, or the pact of forgetting. The transitions to democracy in CEE followed a similar path, largely peaceful negotiated transitions of power based on immunity for previous regimes.<sup>13</sup> Yet when Spain joined the EU in 1986, the insertion of its memories of the Franco regime posed no clash with the then already dominant memory regime of the Holocaust. This is because (1) memories of Francoism in Spain were suppressed, if not forgotten (2) there was no pressure coming from the EU, or other international organizations like the UN, for Spain to come to terms with Francoist crimes (Hajji 2014) and (3) Spain's memories of the radically nationalist, quasi-Fascist authoritarian regime did not challenge the dominant memory regime of the Holocaust in the rest of Europe since condemning the Franco regime could be seen as part of the existing efforts to condemn Fascism and Nazism.

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<sup>13</sup> Although transitional justice measures like lustration laws and prosecution of Communist leaders started much sooner after the transitions in some countries like the Czech Republic.

Thus a unified mnemonic field in Europe remained in tact despite the entrance of a new historical memory regime that was simply subordinated to the dominant memory regime of the Holocaust. By 2004, at the time of the CEE accessions, the context as well as the mnemonic substance was different. By then the memory boom of the 1990s had been in full swing, encouraging all nations to reckon with their pasts. The CEE countries seeking accession to the EU were in fact driven to reassess their Communist pasts by the EU which, unlike for Spain and Portugal, now required strict conditions upon entry of dealing with nations' criminal pasts. The 1993 Copenhagen rules made specific demands for acceding countries regarding human rights and minority protections. In addition, the sheer scale of the 2004 Big Bang enlargement created a situation where a large group of countries entered the existing EU with a strong and distinct regional identity. Moreover, part of this regional identity revolved around the shared experiences of Communism, a historical experience that was distinct from those of the countries of the EU with which the region was now joining. In fact, this historical experience was so different that it clashed substantially with the existing dominant memory regime of the Holocaust that had united Western Europe through 2004. Unlike Spain and Portugal's memories of their authoritarian regimes, the historical memories of Communism in CEE were so different that they could not be subsumed within the existing anti-Fascist memory regime. This clash broke up the unified European mnemonic field and produced a pillarized one where the Holocaust memory regime is no longer the only dominant memory regime available to EU member states. CEE mnemonic actors managed to insert their own memory regime based on totalitarianism, that is the inclusion of memories of Nazism and Communism. That much has been granted by the older member states. But the following mnemonic innovations, all of which were and still are being attempted, were not accepted—more radical efforts toward equalizing Nazism and Stalinism, or even



Communism more generally; accepting that Communist regimes were more evil than Nazi ones; criminalizing the negation of Communist crimes specifically or further to condemn Communist *ideology* as such; supporting the establishment of an international criminal court to prosecute specifically Communist crimes. Thus an unintrusive commemoration of historical memories of Communism has been institutionalized by the EU (the kind promoted by the Network) while a more aggressive criminalization of the Communist past (the kind advocated or by the Platform) has not.

On the face of it, this seems strange—Why has the Network been more successful in diffusing its memories of Communism than the Platform? Both the Platform and the Network deal with the same Communist history that poses a real challenge to the dominant European memory regime of the Holocaust. The same rise in international criminal law and attention to human rights generally that forced Spain to reckon with its past<sup>14</sup> should in principle also apply pressure to CEE countries to deal with Communist crimes. Moreover, both the Platform and the Network appeal to fundamental EU values, like democracy, freedom, non-discrimination and human rights, which underpin the EU legal system and European identity.

Yet the Network is more successful than the Platform on two key measures: receiving financing from the EU and having its historical memories of Communism institutionalized at the EU level. First, the Network has successfully applied for two project grants from the EU's Europe for Citizens Program for its *Sound in the Silence* project, which encourages youth to reflect on history through participatory art projects and the *In Between?* project, which takes

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<sup>14</sup> These include the 2002 recommendation of the United Nations Human Rights Office to investigate Franco killings and disappearances; the 2002 adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; and the 2005 adoption of the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.

youth across CEE in search of multicultural historical legacies. The Network has also received honorary patronage from the European Parliament for its *Freedom Express* campaign comprised of a travelling exhibition and study visit program for youth dealing with the 1989 revolutions. The Platform has also received two grants from the Europe for Citizens program for its first two projects the *Lest We Forget: Memory of Totalitarianism in Europe* secondary school reader and the travelling exhibition *Totalitarianism in Europe: Fascism-Nazism-Communism*. Although the Platform executed these projects, the grant applicant was the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and not the Platform. The Network applied successfully<sup>15</sup> for a 200,000 euro operating grant from the Europe for Citizens program while the Platform failed to receive this grant when it applied. In addition, the European Commission seems more amenable to partnering with the Network than with the Platform. At the 4th annual networking meeting for Europe for Citizens grantees, the European Commission partnered with the Network along with the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship and the European Solidarity Centre to organize the conference. The Platform was present at the meeting but it was not a co-organizing institution. From the Czech Republic, the mainstream Institute of Contemporary History was chosen instead, which some in the Czech Republic believe should take over the task of archiving and analyzing Communist-era archives to depoliticize the process currently led by the publically funded and led Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.

The second measure of success is the extent to which each organization's goals have so far been met at the EU level. The Network's goals of increasing the recognition and

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<sup>15</sup> The grant was rescinded last minute due to a technicality that the Europe for Citizens program only offers operating grants to non-governmental organizations. The Network is a public organization but it has a private foundation to improve its ability to fundraise.

condemnation of Communism have been partially met by the EU but not to the extent that the Network would like. The Communist legacy has been officially recognized by EU, but it is still not well known in the West. August 23rd is officially recognized as an EU commemorative day, but Western countries do not actively commemorate it or participate in ceremonies organized by CEE. Communism has officially been condemned, but unofficially ENRS believes it is still treated flippantly with disregard. Finally, ENRS feels that the region's overall history and contributions have still not sufficiently been recognized and appreciated in the West. On the other hand, the Platform's ultimate goal of criminalizing Communism has not been adopted by the EU at all. Communist ideology has not yet been acknowledged as criminal (the Council of Europe did this, but the EU has not). The EU has rejected multiple Platform proposals to criminalize the denial of Communist crimes, the use of Communist symbols and discrimination based on political identity. Nor has its Justice 2.0 project of establishing an international court to prosecute criminal crimes received any traction with the EU.

It may seem that the ultimate goal of the Platform is more difficult than that of the Network and that is why it is less successful. After all, passing symbolic legislation that does not carry with it any legal consequences is easier than passing substantive criminal law. In part, the reason why criminalizing Communism is difficult is because it is out of step with the criminal legal codes of a large part of the EU's member states. For example, the 2008 FD criminalizing the denial of international crimes based on race, religion or ethnicity passed because it was a good policy fit; most member states already had some form of this type of legislation, thus it would not require a significant policy overhaul at the member state level, while very few have such laws relating to political identity or Communism specifically. Thus criminalizing Communism is indeed a big challenge. Yet, getting buy-in on historical memories and their

commemorations in countries where those historical memories have little resonance is also a tall order. Once you pass an official symbolic resolution that establishes a commemorative day, how do you get people for whom those memories are irrelevant to enthusiastically participate only because it is important to you? That may be just as challenging as passing any piece of criminal law. Thus while the goals are different, both tasks are daunting. Symbolic resolutions are also of course in line with the Platform's goals—they help to establish a context in which criminalizing Communism is not completely out of the bounds of what is possible. The Platform then can also take credit for the passage of these commemorative resolutions. However, because its mnemonic regionalism strategy is in conflict with the EU's dialogic imperative, it is less likely to successfully promote increased recognition and condemnation of Communism at the transnational level because it will be shut out of mainstream debates. The Network, on the other hand, is more likely to be heard and taken seriously because it does play by the EU's mnemonic communication rules.

Through these two case studies, I argue that the key deciding factor that allows one interpretation of history to diffuse and not another, is not so much the substance of the historical memory itself, but the *mode* in which that memory is communicated. The mode of historical communication by mnemonic actors that want to diffuse some memory(ies) must match the mode of mnemonic remembrance that is hegemonic within the intended space of diffusion. In short, the Network abides by the EU's hegemonic mode of remembrance—the dialogic imperative—while the Platform does not, and that is why the former is more successful than the latter. The Platform communicates historical memories of Communism through what I call a "victimhood regionalism strategy" that is inimical to the dialogic imperative, while the Network

uses a "reconciliatory regionalism strategy" that fits much better with the dialogic mode of remembrance. Let us take a closer look at these regional strategies.

### **Mnemonic Regionalism: Victimhood Regionalism and Reconciliatory Regionalism Strategies**

There have been attempts in the literature recently to conceptualize an analytical space of historical remembrance that lies between the national and the global—the regional (Pakier and Strath 2010; Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2013; Pakier and Wawrzyniak 2016). For example, Pakier and Wawrzyniak's (2016) volume discusses a variety of mnemonic contests that are common to Central and Eastern Europe as a region but also the diversity of these historical reinterpretations are across the region itself. The volume asks whether the mnemonic framework of Eastern Europe is unique, yet its shortcoming is that there is no systematic way to conceptualize mnemonic regionalism. How can we compare different ways in which mnemonic actors try to differentiate mnemonic regions? As the editors point out, mnemonic regions need not be defined solely by geography. When it comes to painful historical moments, memories often revolve around victimhood, and that becomes the defining axis that distinguishes one region from another. This project proposes two dominant ways in which regions create a regional identity when struggling over how to come to terms with a painful past—victimhood regionalism and reconciliatory regionalism.

Both the Platform and the Network are regional organizations, encompassing the Central and Eastern European region. In the post-1989 context, how does each organization weave its specifically regional historical narrative about Communism into a European memory field dominated since the end of WWII by Western Europe? To tackle this question, I borrow Lim's concept of victimhood nationalism. Lim writes that "On an analytical level, post-war

*Vergangenheitsbewältigung* cannot be properly grasped without a reflection on the interplay of collective guilt and victimhood nationalism on the transnational scene. A transnational history of 'coming to terms with past' would show that victimhood nationalism has been a major obstacle to any historical reconciliation effort" (Lim 2010: 139). Lim explains that victimhood nationalism requires the identification of the perpetrator nation. It also revolves around a power asymmetry, where the disadvantaged nation tends to overcontextualize historical memory to emphasize its innocent victimhood while the advantaged nation tends to undercontextualize historical memory to turn attention away from its crimes. In some scenarios the overcontextualization and undercontextualization is vivid. For example, from one of my own case studies, we see that the mnemonic contest out of which the Network was born was the decontextualization by Germany (the stronger country) of its expellees from Poland after the war and the overcontextualization by Poland (the weaker country) of the fact that Poland committed that historical wrong only because Germany occupied Poland in the first place in the context of WWII. However, in other cases it does not work very well. When convenient the Platform, for example, decontextualizes Communist crimes from time and place in order to convince others that CEE countries were victimized by a Communism that was evil at all places and in all times. In my case studies then this insight is less helpful.

In my work, I develop an ideal type of mnemonic regionalism that I call "victimhood regionalism," borrowing from Lim's "victimhood nationalism." In addition to defining the mnemonic contest as between "us" and "them" where them is some enemy to be eliminated, victimhood regionalism also requires the essentializing of the memory to be remembered, i.e. the distillation of a complex historical memory down to some mysterious and not easily characterized essence in order to make moral claims about it. This victimhood regionalism

strategy is indeed a strategy because it helps the group dealing with a problematic historical memory to define *What* the problem is and *Who* is involved in it. Importantly, the *What* of the problem is defined along temporal and geographical axes where temporal and spatial differentiation is collapsed into an essence—the universal is emphasized over the particular. The effect of defining the mnemonic problem in this way is that for those who adopt the victimhood regionalism strategy the solution is often the uncompromising imposition, through any means, of one's own memory regime as the only possible truth. This strategy, whether intentionally or not, contributes to the coalescence of an imagined transnational community based primarily on victimhood rather than any other attributes. It is out of step with the EU's dialogic imperative and that is why the Platform has not yet succeeded to impose its historical interpretations of Communism or secure more EU funds. Of course this is not the only practice through which to build mnemonic regionalism. In turn to my second case study to explain reconciliatory regionalism, a very different model of building regional identity when coming to terms with a problematic historical past. This is the strategy that the Network's mnemonic pluralists employ. It (1) does not define others as enemies and it (2) does not essentialize the memories to be remembered. This strategy leads to the prognosis of dialogue as the solution to mnemonic problem. This reconciliatory regionalism strategy leads to the coalescing of an imagined transnational community that is not based primarily on victimhood. In addition, this strategy is more likely to lead to regional reconciliation than the victimhood regionalism strategy.

## Data and Methods

This dissertation triangulates three major data sources and methods; institutional document analysis; extensive ethnographic fieldwork at the two major international memory

organizations in Central and Eastern Europe; and semi-structured expert interviews with Members of the European Parliament. First, I conducted a content analysis of major European institutional documents since 2000 to trace the development of Communism remembrance and assess the extent to which memories of Communism have become transnationalized. This data allows me to answer the questions of, Is there a European transnational culture of historical remembrance? And if so, what does it look like and how has it changed in the 21st century? I pay particular attention to how the memories and understandings of Communism have been inserted into the European debates, the points of conflict and contestation, and any areas of agreement or consensus. I treat the arena of European public discourse as the space indicative of the extent to which memories of Communism have become transnationalized. Following Olick and Robbins (1998) and Zelizer (1995), I treat memory as a process, and therefore the transnationalization or diffusion of memories is too a process, rather than a state or a binary variable where "0" would designate no transnationalization and "1" would mean complete transnationalization. At the same time, I treat EU memory policies and debates surrounding these policies as a locus of contestation *about* the extent to which memories of Communism should or should not be institutionalized in the EU historical narrative(s). In other words, I treat the transnationalization of memories as a process, as something always in the making, rather than as an objective state that can be achieved once and for all.

To examine why and how some reinterpretations of Communism diffuse transnationally and others do not, I consider unofficial memory activism. I draw knowledge of European memory activism from participant observations conducted at the two major transnational organizations in this field. These in-depth accounts of the everyday work of memory entrepreneurs allowed me to answer the questions, What does current unofficial transnational



historical memory activism in CEE look like? Who are these agents and what are they doing and why? Which memory entrepreneurs are successful and which are not in the European public space? There are many groups that deal with memories of Communism, but I narrowed down the scope to (1) multinational organizations (2) based in Central and Eastern Europe (3) that deal centrally with memories of Communism and (4) treat European institutions and publics as their target audience. These criteria allowed me to hone in on the process of diffusion to examine how national memories of Communism are reconstructed for transnational interlocutors who generally have little knowledge of or interest in this topic. How do these organizations get their fellow European audiences to listen and how do they make the case that their experiences are relevant beyond CEE's borders? These scope criteria resulted in the identification of two key organizations—the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in Prague and the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity in Warsaw. Existing literature on European transnational memory communities also highlights these two institutions as the major European players in this field (see Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015:327 and Welsh 2015:177).

The first participant observation was conducted in Prague at the Platform of European Memory and Conscience from June to August 2014. I collected data about the Platform from a wide variety of sources that encompassed conferences, internal meetings, lobbying meetings, public commemorations, frequent informal discussions, formal interviews, and print and video materials. My participant observation relied on consent from the Managing Director of the Platform, Neela Winkelmann, to attend Platform sponsored conferences, internal meetings, events and lobbying trips to Brussels. In exchange, I supported the everyday work of the Platform.

The second participant observation took place at the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity offices in Warsaw from September 2015 to February 2016. I collected data about the Network and its mnemonic strategy from participating in its various conferences, project planning, events, internal meetings, frequent informal discussions, formal interviews as well as a review of its internal documents like progress reports and strategy plans, promotional materials, online content, and print/video project materials. Much like with the Platform, my access to the organization relied on Director Rafał Rogulski's and staff's consent to my participation, for which I, in return, contributed my time to the Network's projects. In my participant observations, I especially paid attention to which historical memories were being remembered and which forgotten and how they were recollected, reinterpreted, evaluated and then represented across national/transnational contexts (see Table 1 in the Appendix for a catalogue of all major primary sources collected during field work in the years 2014-2016).

Finally, I examine data from 30 semi-structured expert interviews with Members of the European Parliament and foreign policy advisors to some of the major political groups in the EP. These interviews were conducted primarily to answer the question, What makes the transnational European memory field different from national memory fields? Dissecting political as well as national and regional cleavages in mnemonic contests over Communism, the data from these interviews allow me to answer, How, when and why do political and regional cleavages over Communism remembrance intertwine and how do mnemonic actors explain these overlaps? And, When are processes of renationalization most likely to stymie reconciliation? The European Parliament, a space for debate and deliberation, has been identified as the EU institution where the most heated debates over memory take place (Closa 2010). I did not conduct a random sampling of MEPs to get a representative sample. Instead, I chose MEPs that have been involved

with historical memory policy. I started with members of the Reconciliation of European Histories group, an informal group of MEPS who believe that "reunification of Europe requires reconciliation of the dominant historical narratives in different parts of the Continent" (Reconciliation of European Histories website) and then searched for others who sponsored resolutions or participated in debates having to do with historical memories and anniversaries related to Communism. These interviews were conducted in Brussels between February and April 2015 in the respondent's office or a nearby location. They lasted on average 25-45 minutes, were recorded with the respondent's permission, and were conducted in English or Polish depending on which of these two languages was the respondent's proffered language (see Table 2 in the Appendix for details on all interviews conducted). The interview guide was designed to get at six general themes; general state of European remembrance; memories of Communism specifically; EU memory policies; role of memory entrepreneurs; the Nazism and Communism historical comparison; and personal experiences with Communism or its remembrance. While questions were designed to elicit information about these themes, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to pursue other themes that the respondent brought up during the interview that I had not previously considered or that proved to be relevant to the understanding of a given topic. I then coded the transcribed interviews according to a grounded theory approach that (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967) starts from the empirical data and through a back-and-forth process between data and theory leads to theoretical building. The qualitative content analysis relied on two thorough readings and codings of the transcripts and an iterative process of comparing and contrasting the interviews to each other in the process of sorting through the data and writing the final product. During the first open coding process, I read the transcripts with attention to any and all data points that might be useful to the topic, while at the same time

paying attention to reoccurring themes. Second, I reread the transcripts with the purpose of systematizing the codes into broader concepts, while keeping the original six guiding themes from the interview guide in mind. For example, specific national memories of Communism or statements about communist crimes or communist ideology were given a conceptual label like "Polish national memories of Communism" or "Romanian national memories of Communism" or "Communism as essentially evil" or "Communism as good and bad." Statements about whether or not (and how) the Nazi/Communism comparison should be made were grouped under conceptual themes of "should equalize Nazism/Communism" and "should not equalize Nazism/Communism." Statements regarding the general state of European remembrance were labeled as "need more recognition for Communism" and "do not need more recognition for Communism" etc. Given the theoretical importance of regional and political cleavages to the story of transnational historical memory, I also cross-labeled each code with whether or not it involved a regional or political cleavage. For example, if a respondent was discussing how we should not equalize Nazism and Communism and within that same discussion mentioned that Eastern Europeans tend to do this more than Western Europeans, then I would label this, "E/W differences; should not equalize N/C." I discuss this data and its limitations in more detail in Chapter 5.

## Chapter Overview

The chapters that follow attempt to answer the research questions and to develop the theoretical arguments laid out in the introduction. Chapter 2 discusses the questions, Is there a European transnational culture of historical remembrance? And if so, what does it look like and how has it changed in the 21st century? The chapter draws on a cornucopia of new historical memory policy resolutions and debates that indicate that indeed a European memory field is

taking shape. From this analysis we see that the movement from "Europeanization of Holocaust" to "Europeanization of totalitarianism" is marked not only by a shift in the particular substantive memories that are remembered (from Holocaust to Nazism & Communism) but also by a new transnational norm that specifies the *mode* in which memories may be remembered moving away from master narrative toward "dialogue," thus institutionalizing what I call the dialogic imperative. Theoretically, this amounts to a shift from what Bernhard and Kubik call a unified memory field, one based on the Holocaust, to the introduction of a new memory regime of Communism from CEE leading to the eventual pillarization of the European memory field. While the Europeanization of totalitarianism is gaining ground, it has not replaced the important commemorative place of the Holocaust in the EU mnemonic field, but it now supplements it as *one of* the recognizable and legitimate interpretative frameworks of the past in the EU.

Chapters 3 and 4 follow by asking, Who is driving this shift at the civil society level? More specifically, what does current transnational historical memory activism in CEE look like? Who are these agents and what are they doing and why? Which memory entrepreneurs are successful and which are not in the European public space? Chapter 3 discusses the victimhood regionalism strategy of the Platform for European Memory and Conscience in Prague and its incompatibility with the EU's dialogic imperative. Chapter 4 provides a comparative case of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity in Warsaw. Working on the same topic within the same time, place and transnational expert milieu, the Network choose a very different mnemonic strategy—reconciliatory regionalism. This strategy is more congruent with the EU's dialogic imperative, which allows the Network to diffuse its historical memories into the mainstream of the European memory field while the Platform fails to garner European support. The goal of these chapters is to bring more attention to how the mode of mnemonic

communication, (besides the memories themselves or their motivational framing) in any given memory field condition which memories will diffuse transnationally and which will not.

Finally, Chapter 5 relies primarily on MEP interviews, which give us a closer look at the political and regional cleavages in European mnemonic contests over Communism. What makes the transnational European memory field different from what we know about national memory fields? While political divisions remain at the transnational level, much like at the national level, they take on new meanings as they cross-cut regional identities. Consequently, I ask, How, when and why do political and regional cleavages over Communism remembrance intertwine and how do mnemonic actors explain these overlaps? Understanding that nationalism still plays a role in the transnational memory field, I also ask, When are processes of renationalization most likely to stymie reconciliation? I argue that what is new about transnational memory fields is that they create a space where national memories are confronted directly whether participants in transnational institutions like the EU want them to be or not. Regional, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic cleavages are amplified and existing political cleavages take on new meaning. While national mnemonic frameworks remain strong, historical memories now operate within a repertoire of new narratives that rely on uniquely *European* values, traditions, and identity that overlap with but cannot be reduced to the national. Chapter 6 concludes with a brief overview of the findings, policy implications, and research recommendations for the future of the social memory field.

## **Chapter 2: European Debates and Policies: Europeanizing Totalitarianism**

Is there a European transnational culture of historical remembrance? This chapter argues that there is a burgeoning European memory culture that is becoming increasingly institutionalized through a sudden flurry of official resolutions, commemorations, and policy prescriptions. This institutionalized official sphere of remembering can be conceptualized, following Bernhard and Kubik (2014), as a memory field populated by as many regimes as there are collective memories. Recall that Bernhard and Kubik define a memory regime as "an organized way of remembering a specific issue, event, or process at a given moment or period" (2014:16). They go on to explain that an "ensemble of memory regimes, understood as the organized way of remembering all salient issues" can be referred to as a memory field. The 1990s and the early 2000s saw a proliferation of official mnemonic practices associated with the remembering of the Holocaust in the EU (see also Sierp 2014; Levy and Sznajder 2006). I recount some of these resolutions here and characterize this process of transnational memory diffusion as the Europeanization of the Holocaust. As this process over time became progressively institutionalized, we could start to think of it as a unified memory regime of the Holocaust. A unified memory regime does not mean that it is consensual, but it is coherent enough to form a broad base of identification with it. The European memory field then was dominated by this Holocaust memory regime as the central founding myth of the EU, providing the EU with a source of legitimacy and a sense of progress. This is not to say that other memory regimes, for example those of colonialism, authoritarianism or peaceful treaties, did not exist. Together, they do comprise the European memory field, but they were not nearly as dominant as that of the Holocaust.

How has the European memory field changed in the 21st century? In the aftermath of the 2004 "external shock" of the Big Bang Expansion of the EU, some mnemonic warriors from

CEE entered the EU and challenged this "Europeanization of the Holocaust" memory regime by adding a new memory regime—the memory regime of Communism.<sup>16</sup> At the post-2004 EU level then, the relative power of pluralists and abnegators from Western Europe diminished as the presence of popular, vocal memory warriors from Eastern Europe increased. In this chapter, I describe how the presence of memory warriors from CEE moved the European mnemonic field from a unified one—based on the Holocaust—to a pillarized one—based on Nazism *and* Communism. The memory field is short of being fractured however because while the mnemonic warriors made some in-roads in getting their memory regime of Communism recognized, they did not succeed in completely breaking up the consensus around the Europeanization of the Holocaust. Additionally, while the EU officially accepted commemorative forms of Communism remembrance, it rejected the criminalization of Communism, which mnemonic warriors from CEE were advocating. I call this transnational diffusion of Communism memories the Europeanization of totalitarianism. In fact, the term "totalitarianism" became so popular in EU circles precisely because it was a form of compromise; we will not replace the central Holocaust memory regime with the Communism memory regime—we will instead remember *both* Nazism and Communism and refer to both simultaneously via the term "totalitarianism." The result then is that the mainstream of the EP is comprised largely of pluralists who still recognize the fundamental role of the Holocaust in EU integration but also allow for a different interpretation of the past based on totalitarianisms other than Nazism, namely Communism.

As a response to the increased mnemonic practices around Communism remembrance and the forceful support behind this new memory regime that some saw as antithetical to the then

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<sup>16</sup> This memory regime is itself fractured and filled with some very vocal warriors and many less vocal pluralists and abnegators.



dominant Holocaust memory regime, European institutions decided to institutionalize the *mode* by which remembrance should take place in Europe. This preferred mode of remembrance is dialogue rather than the imposition of another hegemonic historical narrative that would dominate the EU memory field. This opens up the memory field to a larger variety of memory regimes that should all be more or less equally debated and respected, thus potentially displacing the central position of the Holocaust memory regime. At the same time, the dialogue imperative mandates that remembering must take place in an open, inclusive, and conversational way, thus memory regimes that seek to impose a single ideology or worldview will necessarily be marginalized in the European memory field.

The following chapter then briefly chronicles the institutionalization of the Europeanization of the Holocaust. It then describes in detail the back and forth between the proponents and opponents of the Europeanization of totalitarianism from 2005 when the EU first officially recognized the Communist past in the new Europe to 2009 when it first officially condemned Communist crimes to 2010 when it decidedly rejected the criminalization of Communism (see Table 5 in Appendix for chronology of key events). Finally, the chapter describes the EU's 2013 official position that remembrance must be conducted through dialogue and chronicles the evolution of the Europe for Citizens Program, which is Europe's main remembrance funding tool that seeks to support that dialogue.

### **Europeanization of the Holocaust**

Before 2006, the major EU resolutions dealing with historical memory were centered around Holocaust remembrance and congruent with the dominant European memory regime stemming from the 1980s. It placed WWII at the center of European experience and was characterized by a "Europeanization of the Holocaust" which refers to the process of each

country taking responsibility for the Holocaust and making it a part of national memory and European memory at large (Closa 2011; see also Banke 2010; Leggewie 2009). Aleida Assmann in her 2006 lecture to the German Historical Institute discusses examples of the process of critical reassessment of WWII in Western Europe in line with the increasingly demanding imperative of apology and regret.

We could witness how these defensive strategies began to crumble in Western Europe in the 1980s. After a period of extremely stylized and standardized images of the past, many European nations were finally confronting conflicting, painful, and shameful memories. As the protective shields and myths collapsed, they gave way to controversy and more complex representations. In France the acknowledgement of Vichy's collaboration shattered the national 'myth of the resistance'; in post-Waldheim Austria the official version of Austria as 'Hitler's first victim' became problematic, and even Switzerland, the neutral state and haven for so many refugees, was confronted with its own 'sites of memory' in the form of its banks and its border. (16)

Yet even though each country began to critically assess its history, the dominant memory regime still remained anchored around WWII and the Holocaust. In the 1990s, we see this spilling over into the transnational EU level where the memory regime of the Holocaust comes to dominate the European memory field.

Like at no point in the period 1950-1989, the 1990s saw a sudden proliferation of resolutions, events and speeches given by EU leaders regarding the historical memory of the Holocaust as the universal foundational event of EU integration<sup>17</sup> (Sierp 2014). The 2000s were no different. In the year 2000, European leaders met at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust generating a lot of publicity about the need for Holocaust remembrance in Europe

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<sup>17</sup> It is beyond the scope of this work to delineate the specific mnemonic actors that took place in the Europeanization of the Holocaust in the 1990s and 2000s. Suffice it to say, that by the end of the 2000s the memory regime that dominated the EU memory field was one based on the Holocaust. Until about 2004-6 it was a unified memory regime, without much mnemonic conflict, based on the unique and fundamental negation of humanity that was the Holocaust serving as a touchstone for universal human rights itself reaching an essentialized, nonnegotiable, mythical past, geographically unbounded and sometimes even removed from historical facts.

(Sierp 2014: 123). The Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum declared the Shoah as an event that "fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization" and that it will "always hold *universal* meaning" [emphasis mine]. The Stockholm Declaration then formed the basis of the mandate of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the premiere international organization dealing with the memory and legacy of the Holocaust. In the same year, on December 29, 2000<sup>18</sup> a European Parliament Resolution<sup>19</sup> on countering racism and xenophobia in the European Union (European Parliament 2000) and another resolution for candidate countries were ratified. The former resolution requested that the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia monitor, evaluate, report and advise on actions in response to developments concerning racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and encouraged member states and EU institutions to mark Shoah Day as January 27 (anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945) and International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism as November 9 (anniversary of Kristallnacht in 1938) (European Parliament 2000:373-4). The latter resolution chided the Commission for not devising an appropriate "juridical strategy" against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism by "promoting adequate legislation in candidate countries" (373). It also urged member and candidate states to revise textbooks that may incite racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and called "for constant political and social vigilance towards, and more severe penalties for, the unremitting expressions of anti-Semitism in a number of candidate states," (380) while admitting that this resolution by no means implies that these problems do not exist in member states (379). But even the resolution that addresses existing EU member states addresses

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<sup>18</sup> Resolutions on racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism passed before 2000 include those from October 27, 1994; April 27, 1995; October 26, 1995; January 30, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> EU resolutions are non-binding; they merely indicate a political desire to act in a given policy area.

prospective CEE member states exposing a regional East/West divide in perceptions about the appropriate levels of response to the Holocaust. This resolution, having "regard to the Copenhagen criteria concerning accession by the countries of central and eastern Europe," finds the need to stress "respect of minority rights" in EU external policy, "*especially* in Central and Eastern Europe" [emphasis mine]. Thus already in the year 2000, four years before accession, we see the welding together of minority rights/anti-discrimination policy, a fundamental EU value, with the historical memory of the Holocaust, and therefore the perceived lack of respect of minority rights *and* Holocaust remembrance/commemoration in CEE. This was then interpreted by CEE as a unidirectional reprimand without sufficient attention given to local histories and circumstances.

These two resolutions were succeeded by the European Parliament's signing of the Declaration<sup>20</sup> on the remembrance of the Holocaust on April 24, 2001. This declaration contends that the Holocaust "must be *forever* seared in the collective memory of *all* peoples" [emphasis mine] and calls on the Council and Commission to "strengthen the efforts to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust," open all Holocaust-related archives and mark a European Day of Holocaust Remembrance (European Parliament 2001: 503). Four years later, on January 27, 2005, the Parliament approved a Resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism, where we see from the resolution's title the growing confluence of anti-discrimination policies and memories of the Holocaust. This resolution calls on EU institutions, member states and all political parties to condemn all acts of racial hatred, specifically anti-Semitism, and reaffirms the "conviction that remembrance and education are vital components of the effort to make intolerance, discrimination and racism a thing of the past"

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<sup>20</sup> Like EU resolutions, EU declarations are non-binding; they are non-legal acts.

(39) while acknowledging that Jews in Europe are experiencing increased levels of discrimination and insecurity as extremist political parties are on the rise and gaining popular support. Specifically, Holocaust remembrance should be encouraged by commemorating January 27 the European Holocaust Memorial Day, reinforcing Holocaust education through the use of Holocaust memorial institutions, and ensuring the public school teaching of WWII with the "utmost historical rigour" (39). Moreover the resolution is motivated by the conviction that "Europe must not forget its own history: the concentration and extermination camps built by the Nazis are among the most shameful and painful pages of the history of our continent; whereas the crimes committed at Auschwitz must live on in the memory of future generations, as a warning against genocide of this kind, rooted in contempt for other human beings, hatred, anti-Semitism, racism and totalitarianism" (38). The inclusion of "totalitarianism" is significant because it foreshadows the coming debates around Nazism and Communism as constituting two sides of the same totalitarian coin. Moreover, the reference to rising extremist groups will soon be used to justify giving equal attention to Communist memory as the EU does to Holocaust remembrance.

In the debate over this 2005 Resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism, the radical left-wing party, European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) proposed an EU-wide criminalization of the use of Nazi symbols,<sup>21</sup> which did not make it into the final resolution (European Parliament 2005d). On the other side of the political spectrum, the radical right-wing group, Independence/Democracy, (mostly made up of UKIP), and some independent MEPs took issue with the parts of the resolution that discuss the current-

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<sup>21</sup> A European-wide ban on Nazi symbols would later be proposed in the debates over the Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia, but would be rejected for fears of limiting freedom of speech, even though some member states like Austria have such legislation.

day "rise of extremist and xenophobic parties" as the motivation behind the resolution.<sup>22</sup> The resolution did not include other genocides like Armenia or Rwanda like some wished, nor were the concerns over Islamophobia (Greens) on the one hand and "radical Islamist" anti-Semitism (EPP) on the other mentioned. Likewise the language of the European Party of Socialists of "anti-fascists," "anti-fascist resistance fighters" and "Socialist and Communist anti-fascists" was not used. Thus the resolution was truly a compromise of all the parties.<sup>23</sup> Despite some political differences, there was at the time of CEE accession to the EU, a generally consensual unified European memory field that relied primarily on the Holocaust memory regime. In other words, this was the dominant collective memory legitimizing continued European integration and the fundamental values that characterize the EU.

### **From a Europeanization of the Holocaust to the Europeanization of Totalitarianism: The First Official Recognition of the Communist Past in a Unified Europe, 2005**

The Resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism was quickly followed by another on May 12, 2005, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII on May 8, 1945.<sup>24</sup> Here we finally see the first attempt to Europeanize Communism through the language of "totalitarianism" (European Parliament 2005b). As Stan and Vancea put

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<sup>22</sup> The Independent MEP, hailing from the Flemish right-wing populist *Vlaams Belang* party, said he was not surprised that "traditional parties" played such "cheap political games" since the "resolution was submitted by the Communist group," by which he actually meant the mainstream Party of European Socialists.

<sup>23</sup> The debates did lead to a single change that everyone could agree on. The revision, voiced by radical right and center-right Polish MEPs who objected to the phrase "the Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland" used in the original draft, was changed to "Nazi Germany's death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau."

<sup>24</sup> At the global level, the Holocaust was also becoming institutionalized as the memory regime that underpins the modern universal human rights framework. In November 2005, a United Nations General Assembly resolution marking January 27 as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day was passed. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the Holocaust Remembrance (A/RES/60/7, 1 November 2005).

it, "In recent years, remembrance of the totalitarian past became a landmark of Europeanization, of founding a new Europe" (2015: 30). Despite marking the anniversary of the end of WWII, this resolution is no longer just about the Holocaust or even Nazism in particular. Rather it is aimed at recognizing the ten newly joined and joining states from Central and Eastern Europe and their struggle and eventual success in overthrowing "Soviet domination or occupation or other Communist dictatorships" which were the effects of WWII (European Parliament 2005b). It is an opportunity for older member states to welcome the "ever closer union" of all 25 member states and to "share and combine our remembrances on the way to a *truly common European memory* and an opportunity to prevent recurrences of nationalism and totalitarian rule" [emphasis mine]. Thus there is recognition of "Communist dictatorships" and "totalitarianism"; the resolution states that the EU must "united stand against all totalitarian rule *of whatever ideological persuasion*" [emphasis mine]. The resolution "highlights the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there cannot be reconciliation without truth and remembrance" although it is unclear amongst whom this reconciliation is to take place; within individual CEE countries? Among them? Between CEE and Russia? Or between Western and Eastern Europe? While the West takes no responsibility for the rising of the Iron Curtain, it does acknowledge that, while "freedom and democracy" was re-established in most of the West, for "some nations at the end of World War II it meant renewed tyranny inflicted by the Stalinist Soviet Union." The resolution recognizes "the magnitude of the suffering, injustice and long-term social, political and economic degradation endured by the captive nations," praises them for re-establishing "rule of law," "respect for human rights" after "liberating themselves" from "tyranny" while recognizing its victims.

The resolution, tabled by all the major EP political groups (EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, Greens/ALE, IND/DEM and UEN) found overwhelming support (463:49:33) except from a handful of radical MEPs from GUE/NGL, the Greens/European Free Alliance, Independents and UKIP's Nigel Farage. The dominant criticism<sup>25</sup> coming from this group revolved largely around the issue that the Soviet Union is not sufficiently recognized for the liberation of Europe and that the resolution is a backdoor for proponents of equating Communism with Nazism to "surreptitiously" revise European historical memory in that direction. As Giusto Catania, an Italian MEP from GUE/NGL put it:

That page of history is, unfortunately, all too often subjected to revisionist plunder and attacks, and even this debate is marred by an unmistakable revisionist impetus. By indistinctly muddling 8 May 1945 with the crimes of Stalinism, we do a disservice to the commemoration of the Liberation of Europe. I should like to be clear on that point: in terms of political beliefs, personal data and cultural development, myself and my group have no problem in firmly condemning the horrors of Stalinism; however, in this debate, people are seeking to surreptitiously bring to life the theories of Nolte, which equate Nazism with Communism, and not only with Stalinism. (European Parliament 2005c)

A French member from the Greens/Free Alliance Group, Francis Wurtz, arguing that the resolution is a "revision of history," said, "a number of Europeans, when confronted with various demonstrations of nostalgia for the Third Reich, would without doubt have also hoped to hear us say that excusing the Nazi atrocities by pointing the finger at Stalinist crimes is unacceptable." Thus to Wurtz pointing out Stalinist crimes is automatically, and especially at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise, excusing Nazi atrocities. He ties the debate to the on-going process of ratifying the European Constitution, essentially blaming CEE members for turning Western European voters off to the idea of a European Constitution because they do not acknowledge the

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<sup>25</sup> The other dominant criticism came from Euro-skeptic MEPs who criticized not the content of the resolution but that a resolution aiming to establish a common historical memory based on common values in order to forge a common European identity was being proposed at all. Coincidentally, this was the same year that the EU was trying to ratify the (failed) European Constitution.



uniqueness of Nazism; "At a time when the European Union is consulting its citizens on a draft Constitution, how will these citizens interpret the concept of an enlarged Europe that starts by questioning the cornerstone of the vision of Europe and the world, *born* on 8 May 1945, namely that Nazism was neither a dictatorship nor a tyranny like any other, but rather the complete break with society as a whole?" [emphasis mine].

Despite such radical viewpoints that preclude any other historical reading of 20th century European history that does not mark the birth of Europe on V Day, Jean-Claude Juncker (PPE), then President of the Luxembourgish Presidency at the time and now President of the European Commission, spoke eloquently about how Western Europe was liberated after WWII and Eastern Europe not:

The restored freedom at the start of May 1945, however, was not enjoyed in equal measure throughout Europe. Comfortably installed in our old democracies, we were able to live in freedom in Western Europe after the Second World War, and in a state of restored freedom whose price we well know. Those who lived in Central and Eastern Europe, however, did not experience the same level of freedom that we have experienced for 50 years. (European Parliament 2005c)

Juncker even discussed the Yalta Agreement, which is to this day an extremely sore point for many from CEE. "There was the free part of Europe and the part of Europe that was paralysed by the disastrous historical decree, the Yalta Agreement, which sought to divide Europe into two forever." Overall, however, his message was very optimistic. Regarding reconciliation mentioned in the resolution, interpreted as being between the East and West, Juncker concluded that it has already been achieved:

In the face of the refusal by the Soviet Union to allow the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe to take part either in the Marshall Plan or in the creation of the Council of Europe, the great Churchill declared with his own prophetic offering: 'We are beginning in the West a job which we will complete in the East.' Ladies and gentlemen, let us take pride in having achieved that. (European Parliament 2005c)

But for some MEPs these kinds of acknowledgments did not go far enough and the triumphalism rang hollow—they wanted to see the West take responsibility for Yalta. Polish MEP, Maciej Marian Giertych, on behalf of the Eurosceptic IND/DEM Group, stated, "our Western allies in the fight against Germany were also allies of the Soviet Union, and gave their consent to our enslavement in Yalta." Others like József Szájer (PPE) from Hungary claimed that really, "the last step was taken May 1, 2004, marking the ending of the Yalta world order. In reality, the Second World War ended on May 1, 2004." The resentment was palpable in Szájer's speech:

Our nations rose up against such dictatorship from the Bolshevik Parties many times: 1956 in Berlin, October 1956 in Hungary and Poznań, 1968 in Czechoslovakia and 1980 in Poland. The West welcomed our revolutions, sympathised with us, then tolerated it when the Soviet Union quashed and bloodily stamped out these expressions of desire for freedom. Dear colleagues, our history is your history too. Nevertheless, we, the nations freed from Soviet occupation a decade ago, find no compassion when it comes to our recent history. (European Parliament 2005c)

Moreover, he clearly tied historical memory to the challenges of CEE's accession to the EU:

After the war, Western Europe proudly straightened itself up and started to prosper in peace. Although it was not our fault, we got left out of this process. This gives ground to the current situation, in which there are people on the luckier side of Europe and even here in Parliament, who want to generate capital for themselves by frightening their own population with the cheap citizens of the new Member States, with people, whose country fell into an economic crisis because of the ineffectual socialist economy forced on them. (European Parliament 2005c)

Clearly when discussing the Communist effects of the end of WWII, some Eastern Europeans voiced continued unhappiness with the state of recognition of their region's fate after WWII. Moreover, this convenient forgetting, for them, is directly tied to contemporary politics of European integration and the economic power imbalance. Beyond internal European politics, the historical memories of the effects of WWII spill over into Europe's relationship with external states, predominantly Russia.

When it comes to reconciliation with Russia, the mainstream party representatives from the West acknowledged Soviet occupation, domination and Stalinist crimes but they also

expressed interest in reconciling with Russia. Hans-Gert Pöttering (PPE), President of the EP (2007-09), said, "A great deal of progress has been made in terms of internal reconciliation—reconciling the peoples and states of Europe with one another. We want—as we must—to complete this work of internal reconciliation, as we also wish to be reconciled with the people of Russia and the peoples in the Russian Federation." Others also wanted to reconcile with Russia but had some conditions. Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit, known for being tough on Russia, on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group, said, "We have to talk to the Russians, but we also have to talk about Chechnya." On the other end of the political spectrum are echoes of a similar sentiment as Giertych proclaims, "We wish to be reconciled with the Russian people and state, but we expect them to distance themselves unequivocally from their Communist legacy." MEP Wojciech Roszkowski elaborates just how Russia remembers this Communist legacy:

Unfortunately, Russia is reluctant nowadays to acknowledge the ambiguous role played by the USSR during the war. President Putin has reverted to a Stalinist interpretation of the Second World War and its aftermath, and claimed that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a normal international treaty. Russia has officially denied that Stalin attacked Poland in 1939, that genocide was committed in Katyn and that the USSR occupied the Baltic States. It has even said that the Yalta Conference brought democracy to Poland. (European Parliament 2005c)

Striking perhaps the most pessimistic tone in the whole debate about East/West reconciliation, Roszkowski signaled that he is actually worried about Germany and Russia reconciling to the point where they might become so close that they would want to invade Poland all over again like in September 1939. He said, "What the [EP] needs to understand is that we in Poland and Central Europe feel too cramped for comfort whenever the superpowers of Western Europe and Russia shake hands over our heads" (European Parliament 2005c).

Some observers saw this resolution as an important moment in the coming together of the historical memories of Western and Eastern Europe. Onken (2009) writes that, "In any future analysis of European memory politics, the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World

War will certainly have to be considered as a watershed that pushed the critical public and political debates on existing perceptions on the past forward and might have marked the beginning of a new European historical consciousness" (49). But as we would see later, despite overwhelming support for this lowest-common-denominator commemorative resolution, this progress did not satisfy memory entrepreneurs from CEE. Taking a negative read on this resolution, in a debate four years later a Czech MEP would say, "In 2005, we adopted a resolution on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We discovered that the European Parliament and the EU lacked the political will to pursue a common understanding and evaluation of European history" (European Parliament 2009a).

### **Diffusion of Eastern European Memories: How Discrete National Memories Become Transnationalized**

As memories of Communism as such entered the European memory field post-2004, what was it exactly that was being remembered and how exactly were national memories becoming *transnationalized*? Immediately post-accession we see the diffusion of a variety of national historical memories of CEE into the European memory field having to do with Communism in general. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Polish pro-democratic movement Solidarity<sup>26</sup> of the 1980s were included as memories worth commemorating across all of Europe.

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<sup>26</sup> While widely acknowledged as deserving of commemoration, the specific language of what to call the Solidarity movement produced some controversy. Was it a social movement or specifically a labor movement? Can we classify it as a revolution and should we? For example, Łukasz Kamiński, President of IPN, prefers to refer to it as an "anti-Communist revolution" rather than "democratic revolution" "capitalist" or "liberal" because, according to him, the participants did not at the time know what these terms mean (European Commission 2014e).

The 2005 resolution on the "25th Anniversary of Solidarity and its message for Europe" in detail recalls the events of the Solidarity movement (European Parliament 2005a). For example, "the strike under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, which took place between 14 and 31 August 1980 in the shipyard of Gdańsk" glorifies *national* courage; it "was conducted with extraordinary bravery and determination." Simultaneously however it inserts the national memory into the European values framework and a transnational culture of remembrance "in the name of fundamental European values" which "opened a new chapter in the European fight for 'bread and freedom'" concluding that "Solidarność was one of the most important moments in the formation of a *European* public space." Note that the fight for bread and freedom and a public space was not an Eastern European or Central European fight but simply a *European* fight. Further Europeanizing the memory of Solidarity, the resolution goes on that the, "Polish motto 'there is no liberty without Solidarity' is important for the *whole of Europe*" and the "historic events of August 1980 were significant for the *whole of Europe*" while explicitly reaffirming that "Solidarność is part of *European* education and culture." The resolution states that, "in order to commemorate this effort and to place it in the *collective memory of Europe*, 31 August is to be celebrated as the Day of Freedom and Solidarity" [emphasis mine]. However, this historical memory has not been institutionalized in practice beyond the dried ink on paper. This day is little known in Western and Eastern Europe, although it is a national working holiday in Poland, and is not commemorated at any high level.

Moving from Poland to Hungary, in 2006, the European Parliament passes the resolution on the "50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its historical meaning for Europe" (European Parliament 2006). The resolution in the exact same words of "courage and determination" recalls the "courage and determination of Hungarians who took to the streets in

protest against the dictatorial rule of the Communist Party on 23 October 1956." "Esteem" for Hungarians' "perseverance" is expressed despite the "lack of any military help from the West and the intervention and overwhelming military preponderance of the Soviet Union" thus simultaneously placing blame on the USSR and on the West for not coming to Hungary's aid. Unlike the Solidarity resolution, this resolution salutes the "victims of the Revolution—2170 killed in the fighting—and those of the cruel retaliation—228 executed between 1956 and 1961, 20 000 taken into custody and imprisoned between 1956 and 1958, and thousands discriminated against for decades after the Revolution." The Hungarian Revolution is now written into the European integration narrative as an "historic attempt at the reunification of a divided Europe, and as such remains a cornerstone of our *common European* historical heritage" [emphasis mine]. Moreover, the "Hungarian Revolution contributed to the strengthening of cohesion in the democratic world and to the eventual founding of the European Communities in 1957." The mention of the founding of the European Communities, the precursor to the EU, is noteworthy because the history of the former Eastern bloc is not usually included in the mainstream histories of early post-war European integration. And finally, the resolution actually bears a rather radical point—a call to the "democratic community [to] unequivocally reject the repressive and undemocratic Communist ideology." At this time, the Council of Europe<sup>27</sup> was debating the condemnation of Communist *ideology*, beyond condemning just Communist *crimes* (more on this in next section), but the major EP resolution on totalitarian Communism will not even do that.

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<sup>27</sup> The Council of Europe is not an EU institution and is not to be confused with the European Council, which is an EU institution that brings together the heads of government of all member states.

The Europeanization of Central and Eastern European glory and tragedy did not stop at the EU's borders. In 2008, the EP passed a resolution "on the commemoration of the Holodomor, the Ukraine artificial famine (1932-1933)" (European Parliament 2008). It directs its sympathy to the Ukrainian people and especially the Holodomor survivors and their families. It recognizes that the artificial famine was orchestrated purposefully against the Ukrainian people by the Soviet Union in its attempts to collectivize agriculture. It calls the "mass annihilation" an "appalling crime against humanity" but stops short of calling it a genocide.

While memory activists in the EU welcomed the commemoration of particular historical events of Poland and Hungary, those particularly from Poland and the Baltic States were seeking a more radical universal and unequivocal condemnation of Communist crimes and Communist ideology as such. Meanwhile, in the Council of Europe exactly this debate was raging on.

### **First Transnational Condemnation of Totalitarian Communism: The 2006 Council of Europe Resolution**

The first moves toward condemning Communist history and ideology at the European level came from outside of EU institutions. After Bulgaria approved a Law for Declaring the Communist Regime as Criminal in 2000, members of the ruling party at the European People's Party<sup>28</sup> (EPP) in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) ordered an investigation of Communist crimes that resulted in a 2004 report calling for the need for "international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes." In response, on

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<sup>28</sup> The EPP is the largest party in the EP, encompassing over 70-member parties from 40 countries. A center-right party, founded in 1976, the EPP "strives for a democratic, transparent and efficient Europe that is close to its citizens." It promotes a "free market economy with a social consciousness." The EPP traces its "roots" to the "history and civilisation of the European continent" claiming to have "pioneered the European project from its inception" (<http://www.epp.eu/who-are-we>).

January 25, 2006, PACE passed resolution No. 1481, condemning the repressive Communist system established by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe after World War II (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006b). The resolutions starts by recognizing that CEE countries ruled by "totalitarian Communist regimes" have experienced "massive violations of human rights," although these did vary according to "culture, country and the historical period." After listing the various types of human rights violations, the resolution goes on to explain that these were "justified in the name of the class struggle theory and the principle of dictatorship of the proletariat" thereby condemning Communist ideology as such. Compromising with the various Communist parties in Europe (that sit on the PACE<sup>29</sup>), the resolution acknowledges "in spite of the crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes, some European Communist parties have made contributions to achieving democracy." The resolution goes on to compare the response to these crimes with those of Nazi crimes after the war:

These crimes have not been brought to trial by the international community, as was the case with the horrible crimes committed by National Socialism. [...] Consequently, public awareness of crimes committed by totalitarian Communist regimes is very poor. Communist parties are legal and active in some countries, even if in some cases they have not distanced themselves from the crimes committed by totalitarian Communist regimes in the past.

As the European international human rights watchdog, the Council of Europe's resolution goes on to say that despite "the debates and condemnations, which have taken place so far at national level in some Council of Europe member states, cannot give dispensation to the international community from taking a clear position on the crimes committed by the totalitarian Communist regimes."

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<sup>29</sup> As of 2016, these were, for example, Party of the Communists of the Republic of Moldova, Communist Party of Greece, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Portuguese Communist Party. Part of the United European Left (UEL) Group, these Communist and socialist parties, as of 2016, held 5% of the seats.



What is important to note is that the key goal of the resolution was to condemn Communist ideology as such, in addition to Communist crimes. The resolution's explanatory note written by Göran Lindblad, the Political Affairs Committee's Rapporteur, is worth quoting at length:

So far, however, neither the Council of Europe nor any other international intergovernmental organisation has undertaken the task of general evaluation of Communist rules, serious discussion on the crimes committed in their name, and their public condemnation. Indeed, however difficult it is to understand, there has been no serious, in-depth debate on the ideology, which was at the root of widespread terror, massive human rights violations, death of many millions of individuals, and the plight of whole nations. Whereas another totalitarian regime of the 20th century, namely Nazism, has been investigated, internationally condemned and the perpetrators have been brought to trial, similar crimes committed in the name of Communism have neither been investigated nor received any international condemnation. The absence of international condemnation may be partly explained by the existence of countries whose rules are still based on Communist ideology. The wish to maintain good relations with some of them may prevent certain politicians from dealing with this difficult subject. Furthermore, many politicians still active today have supported in one way or another former Communist regimes. For obvious reasons they would prefer not to deal with the question of responsibility. In many European countries there are Communist parties, which have not formally condemned the crimes of Communism. Last but not least, different elements of Communist ideology such as equality or social justice still seduce many politicians who fear that condemnation of Communist crimes would be identified with the condemnation of Communist ideology.

More to the point, Lindblad writes, "Personally, I do not share the position of some colleagues that a clear distinction should be made between ideology and practice. The latter drives from the former and sooner or later the initial good intentions are overtaken by the totalitarian one party system and its abuses." Condemning Communist ideology as such was of course a controversial but intentional move. Lindblad recalls, "I changed the report from being very...from condemning the Communist crimes to being more ideological. I changed it to being, to condemning Communist ideology as such. And this led to some kind of trouble but we got the resolution through" (personal communication 2014). Lindblad's report included recommendations that were eventually voted down, like setting up a committee that would be responsible for a variety of tasks like "collecting and assessing information and legislation related to violations of human

rights under different totalitarian Communist regimes," urging members states to open their state security archives and carrying out an international public awareness campaign. The report's resolution passed with a simple majority but proponents of the recommendations could not muster a 2/3 majority that recommendations require to be accepted. Lindblad recalls, "British Labor and others tried to stop the report. Russians didn't want the report. There was a lot of discussion about the name. The name was changed several times from the 'Communist' to 'Communist crimes.' Finally the compromise was 'totalitarian Communist regimes.' And I had no problems with that because there had never been any Communist regimes that were not totalitarian. They're all totalitarian, that's automatic" (personal communication 2014).

The heated debates reflected the deep controversy over the resolution that stemmed from political and regional historical differences. The main issue came down to the distinction between Communist crimes and Communist ideology. Support for the report split down party lines with The European Democrats Group (the conservatives) and the European People's Party (center-right) supporting the report and the Socialist Group and the United European Left Group rejecting it. Both of the latter groups said they supported the condemnation of Communist crimes and human rights violations but objected to the conflation of Communist crimes with Communist ideology. The most seething critique of the report came from Mats Einarsson, Swedish member of the UEL Group:

The problem with the report, which makes it unacceptable, is that it uses the atrocities of the past as a tool to attack, marginalise and even pave the way for the criminalisation of an ideology and political current, the ideals of which are the opposite of these crimes. The report does not make the necessary distinction between violations of human rights committed by regimes labelled as Communist and Communism as a political movement, which aims at a society in which the "freedom of each and everyone is the precondition for the freedom of all," to quote the 1848 manifesto of the Communist Party. When one reads the explanatory memorandum, *it is clear that the confusion is intentional* [emphasis mine]. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

As Göran Lindblad indicated in his interview with me, the "confusion" was indeed intentional.

His goal was to condemn Communist ideology that, in his opinion, led directly and automatically, to the Communist crimes committed by the regimes. But Einarsson also reveals what he sees as the political motivations behind the resolution, which he describes as anti-Communist:

Communism can mean many things, some of them contradictory. However, anti-Communism is also a strange animal. It claims to be the advocate of freedom and democracy, but looking at history makes the picture quite different. Under the banner of anti-Communism, men and women struggling for democracy have been deprived of their democratic rights. Under the banner of anti-Communism, millions of men and women dreaming of and fighting for freedom have been jailed, tortured and killed. The truth is that the target of anti-Communism has never been dictatorship or violations of human rights. The target of anti-Communism has always been and remains the left, the labour movement and anyone who questions capitalism and imperialism. The anti-Communists of the 20th century opposed the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the Soviet Union not because it was a dictatorship but because it was of the proletariat. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

Next, Einarsson makes clear that not only the political and historical heritage of the Left and the Right is at stake, but also the reputation of the Left today which alone stands to defend liberal principles:

The report states "some Communist parties have made contributions to achieving democracy." How generous! Who died in Spain, defending the democratic republic in the 1930s? Who organised resistance against Nazi occupation? Who fought post-war Fascism in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Rhodesia and South Africa, regimes that the United States supported in the name of anti-Communism? Who today, in the "war on terror," defends liberal principles when attacked by liberals? Göran Lindblad knows the answer. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

While many members of the Socialist Group disapproved of the resolution, some supported it.

For example, Katrin Saks, an Estonian member of the Socialist Group, said:

I asked to speak to express my support for the draft resolution and to condemn the crimes of totalitarian Communism—and I do that, despite the fact that I was a member of the Communist Party of Estonia. It is not now important why that was the case, but I am not proud of it today, not least because it severely hurt the feelings of my parents, who suffered under the regime. [...] I hope that the efforts that I have made to terminate the regime and to build up democracy in Estonia have mitigated the harm that I did by being a member of the Communist Party. [...] this

draft resolution does not make me responsible for crimes that I did not commit. Any personal involvement in genocide or crimes against humanity can be judged only by a court. That is why I find absurd the claims made by some members of my political group that, by condemning totalitarian Communism, we also condemn people who are among us. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

Speaking directly to her Socialist colleagues, she said:

Dear comrades from the Socialist Group, last year the Estonian Social Democratic Party celebrated its 100th anniversary. For half of those years, our party was forbidden to exist, and members of our party were among the first victims of the Communist regime in 1940. It is now crucial for modern social democracy to draw a very clear line between crimes committed and the values that we treasure. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

A response from a Greek Communist to Saks was telling. Garyfallia Kanelli, known for her irreverent style, spoke forthrightly:

Anyone can say that they are sorry that they were a Communist when they were young, and regimes may change in particular countries. However, it is not acceptable to equate the word "Communist" with crime. My dear colleague from Sweden, Mr. Lindblad, is a cowboy who is taking ideological shots in the Council of Europe against invented ideological Indians, which is against the morals and ideals of the Council of Europe. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

Kanelli went on, "On 9 March, it will be 60 years since the anti-fascist, anti-Nazi human miracle in which Communists were the victims. [...] Communists shed a great deal of blood in my country. In 100 years my country has experienced two dictatorships and a civil war. [...] Communists were persecuted in Greece 60 years ago." Lindblad explains to me his interpretation of the different regional experiences of Communism that created some of the controversies over the resolution:

The French Communists had a representative in government for a while. But he was one person, or maybe two. But they never had absolute power. In Italy, the Communist party was also strong for a period, but they never had power on their own. In Eastern Europe they made a coup and they arranged things and they took over. That didn't happen in France, that didn't happen in Italy. It was very close to happening in Greece and they had a civil war. But it didn't happen. And the Greeks, and they are my colleagues, say that they are nicer and better, but there are no good Communists because if they take over power totally they take power totally and they kill those who are against them. Bad things will come out of a Communist takeover no matter what. But that's why the perspective is different. Because in those countries they were never in power and of course nothing bad happened. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

Along these same lines, voicing his support for the resolution, Giorgi Bokeria, one of the leaders of the Georgian center-right United National Movement said, "I do not wish to imply that anyone who says that he is a Communist is a criminal or is inclined to violence. The fact is, however, that wherever the Communists gained power their rule finished in bloodshed and terror. That cannot be a coincidence." But Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Russian delegation to PACE (and Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs<sup>30</sup>) blames Lindblad for turning a resolution about totalitarianism into one about Communism. Kosachev, of Vladimir Putin's United Russia party, which belongs to the conservative European Democrats Group said:

If the subject of the report had been limited to totalitarian regimes, as in the original proposal, everyone would have agreed. Members could have talked about the crimes of the Greek regime, of the Pinochet regime, which had learnt its methods from Stalin, and the unacceptability of a return to totalitarianism. The author of the report had artificially manipulated it in order to condemn only Communism. There was no answer in the report to the question whether all Communist regimes were necessarily totalitarian. The author seemed to think that the answer was yes. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

To that last point Kosachev did not agree, "That would be like saying that because all blood is red, everything that is red must be blood." He asked if the report seriously suggested that the current Moldovan Communist Party was a totalitarian Communist regime. In fact, the Russian delegation was nearly unanimously against the resolution. Ziuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation since 1993, a successor party of the Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, had a scathing critique of the resolution that highlighted its ambiguities and the criticized anti-Communist fervor. The transcript paraphrases him as saying:

Thomas Mann called anti-Communism the "basic stupidity of the 20th century." It was disappointing that the Parliamentary Assembly had engaged in such stupidity. [...] Former anti-Communists included Hitler and Goebbels, and the McCarthy-ites in the United States. Were these the role models to whom we wanted to aspire? Who was being judged here? Was it the 40

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<sup>30</sup> Since 2014, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on International Affairs.

million Russians who were members of the Communist Party? Was it Yuri Gagarin, a member of the Communist Party? Former leaders of France and Greece? Resistance leaders? The current Communist leader of India? [...] If anyone was to be judged, then the leaders of the colonial past should be judged for their atrocities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

He further argued that Fascism was a result of anti-Communism and he asked why the Assembly wanted to revert back to Fascism. Thus the Russian radical left (in the "opposition") and Putin's conservative party of power are both critical of the condemnation of Communism. It is only the very radical right that wishes to condemn Communism; for example, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, a fiercely anti-Communist and nationalist party, that nonetheless posed some opposition to Putin's growing authoritarian rule in the early 2000s. Zhirinovsky is known for his radically pan-Russian nationalist and imperialist views, and although nominally in the opposition, he too is often aligned with the Kremlin. He argued, "If there had been no pact between Hitler and Stalin, Hitler would have been removed from power in 1933. It was Stalin who had kept Hitler in power. Had Hitler not attacked the Soviet Union, the Communists and fascists would still be sipping champagne together across Europe." Known for his bombastic and confrontational style, he continued with the numbers game, "Why did Mr. Pangalos from Greece complain about the junta in his country? That was nothing; it had lasted for only a short period. The Communists had created a pandemic, killing millions."

Analogies to the Nazi period and Nazi crimes were numerous. Ivanov, a Bulgarian representative said, "the quantity and brutality of those crimes were similar to those under Nazism." Moreover, he argued, "The report would give a moral boost to researchers and non-governmental organisations investigating Communist crimes. It could have the same effect as the introduction of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre had had on those investigating Nazi crimes." A French member reiterated the same point, "Although Nazism and its followers had been brought

to trial and condemned, Communist perpetrators of human rights abuses had not. Communist crimes had been as bad as those of Nazism. Communism had been responsible for the extermination of millions of innocent people, but little mention had been made of that in school history syllabuses." Kastēns from Latvia said, "The crimes committed by totalitarian Communist regimes must be investigated and those who perpetrated them must be brought to trial, as happened with the horrible crimes committed by the Nazis." Yet some strongly disagreed. Kosachev put it plainly; it is "ridiculous to attempt to equate the ideology of the Nazis with that of the Communists."

Finally, there were debates over the implications of the report at the national level. Nadezhda Mikhailova (Bulgaria, EPP) said that this debate will "prove whether the newly named socialist parties of Central and Eastern Europe have cut the ties with their past." This is exactly what some members feared. Neven Mimica (Croatia, Socialist) raised his concerns:

The report inclines towards casting doubt on all left-wing political parties and even individuals, questioning the level of their denunciation of the Communist crimes and legacy, or implying that they are nostalgic for Communism. It would be much more appropriate to give more credit to all political parties on the left of the political spectrum in the post-Communist countries that played an important role in bringing down the heritage of Communism and promoting democratic values. If the report keeps advocating national political and not judicial investigations, it might easily become an instrument for ensuring advantages for right-wing political parties in the contemporary political arena instead of being a genuine quest for historical truth and justice. (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2006a)

Indeed one of the recommendations to member states of the Council of Europe was for them to "establish committees composed of independent experts with the task of collecting and assessing information on violations of human rights under the totalitarian Communist regime." If these were to be parliamentary committees, then indeed, their work would undoubtedly be politicized. But at the time of this debate many countries already had agencies or institutes that do exactly

this.<sup>31</sup> In the end, with the first official, international condemnation of Communism, the stage was set for action at the EU level in 2007.

### **EU Pushback to the Europeanization of Totalitarianism: The 2008 Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia Excludes Communist Crimes**

The first EU presidency to be led by a CEE country, Slovenia (January-June 2008), reinvigorated the push for dealing with the Communist past in 2008. CEE member states sought to force a tougher position on prosecuting past Communist crimes by attaching their cause to the campaign against racism and xenophobia by equalizing Communist crimes with Nazi crimes, which are the historical legitimator for resolutions that tackle issues of anti-discrimination, especially anti-Semitism. But this move was unsuccessful as the EU was not ready to treat Nazi and Communist crimes in the same evaluative framework. However, in part because Framework Decisions are not just declaratory documents, but binding legal documents, the EP was very careful to avoid any historical references, including to WWII, Nazism, or the Holocaust, to legitimate the FD in order to prevent any charges of politicization of history.

On April 19, 2007 the Justice and Home Affairs Council in the European Council (which means the justice and interior ministers of *all*<sup>32</sup> member states) agreed upon the major

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<sup>31</sup> For example, in Germany, The Agency of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records (BStU) (est. 1991), The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (est. 1992), the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) (est. 2000), and the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Romanian Exile (IICCMER) (est. 2005). Others would come soon after this resolution, the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (UINR) in 2006, the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR) in 2007 and the The Estonian Institute of Historical Memory (2008).

<sup>32</sup> For this to happen some concessions were made to England and Denmark who were concerned about freedom of speech; the FD will not have to modify their constitutional rules and fundamental principles relating to freedom of association, press and expression. Due to the conflict in Northern Ireland, Britain pressed for religious attacks to be explicitly motivated by xenophobia or racism to be punishable (Conference of European Churches 5/2007).



components of the Framework Decision<sup>33</sup> (FD) on Combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (hereafter Racism and Xenophobia FD) after six years of negotiations<sup>34</sup> (Council of the European Union 2008). It stipulated that the Commission would organize a public European hearing on crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by totalitarian regimes. This public hearing was held in Brussels on April 8, 2008 titled "Crimes committed by totalitarian regimes" and organized by the Slovenian Presidency and the European Commission by the initiative of Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini, presumably as consolation to CEE for excluding Communist crimes. It was the first European hearing on "totalitarianism" and was based around the themes of recognition and reconciliation. It called for a "common approach" to awareness and comprehension of totalitarian Communist regimes, the establishment of a permanent conference for investigating Communist crimes, and a European Foundation that would promote public awareness at the EU level and coordinate national research institutes specializing in totalitarianism (this Foundation would in 2011 become the Platform of European Memory and Conscience) (Jambrek 2008: 313). It also called for the establishment of a museum, memorial and commemorative day of totalitarianism, a need for transitional justice, and finally and perhaps most importantly the "equal treatment and non-discrimination of victims of all the totalitarian regimes" (314).

The "need for equal treatment of Nazi and Soviet crimes" especially was made loud and clear at the public hearing by MEPs and public figures from the Baltic States. For example, a

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<sup>33</sup> Unlike resolutions and declarations, framework decisions are binding.

<sup>34</sup> In 2005, "Luxembourg tried to use its EU presidency to push through Europe-wide anti-racism legislation, but it was blocked by the center-right government then in power in Italy on the grounds that it threatened freedom of speech. The proposed law was considered too politically difficult to pass until it was taken up by Germany, current holder of the EU's rotating presidency, which has called it a historical obligation and a moral imperative" (New York Times 4/19/07).

Lithuanian law professor claimed that the Racism and Xenophobia FD has "established criminal responsibility for public condoning, denial and gross trivialisation" of Nazi crimes at the European level but because the FD makes no mention of Communism, "victims of the Soviet totalitarian regime remain outside legal protection at the European level" (Žalimas 2008: 81). In less abstract terms, a Lithuanian MEP of the Group of the EPP, claimed that some people "think that a shot across the skull by a Nagan-gun in the hand of an NKVD–KGB executioner was less painful for the victim than that exercised by a Walter-gun in the hand of an SS man" (Landsbergis 2008: 86) to make the point that Nazi and Communist victims should be "treated equally." An MEP from Latvia, Kristovskis, responded to a common criticism, which will be heard repeatedly in the 2009 Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, that history should be left to the historians. "Some European politicians prefer to wash their hands of these issues and take the expedient line by saying—'let's leave history to the historians.' That is in complete contradiction to the stated aims of the Framework Decision, which imposes criminal responsibility for publicly condoning or grossly trivializing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes." He points out what he sees as a double standard that denial of Nazi crimes is punished but not Communist crimes. He says that the FD, in fact, explicitly states that it "does not cover crimes committed on other grounds e.g. by totalitarian regimes"<sup>35</sup> because he claims, citing a *New York Times* article, that some countries feared that the Baltic States would use this as historical revenge. The newspaper article read, "Fearing that the legislation could be hijacked by groups trying to right historical wrongs, a majority of EU countries rejected a demand by the formerly Communist Baltic countries that the law criminalize the denial of

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<sup>35</sup> This can be found in the FD general agreement of April 19, 2007 but not in the final adopted version of November 28, 2008.

atrocities committed by Stalin during Soviet times." (NYT 4/19/07). Kristovskis exclaims, "Such is the understanding of today's Europe! How should those people feel, who suffered under the Soviet totalitarian regime and who are still alive today? Today they too are inhabitants of EU Member States, and thus citizens of the European Union." Connecting the FD to memory politics, he concludes by saying, "Europe is still partly a hostage to that version of history, which was developed by the Soviet regime. How long will that last?"

The Racism and Xenophobia FD debates quickly became embroiled in partisan finger pointing. Sandra Kalniete, Latvian author, art historian, politician, diplomat and prominent activist in this area, discussed the reluctance of West and East socialists to condemn Communism, but added that those in the political right also forget the inconvenient truth of allying with the Soviet Union in WWII and providing aid to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Illustrating the East/West divide, Kalniete (2008) described the disappointment that followed the fall of the Iron Curtain for CEE and how it sparked the current movement toward justice:

In 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it seemed clear that there would be no further obstacle to the truth coming out about the crimes of Communism and to their condemnation. In fact, we, who in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, were subjected to the oppression of Communist totalitarianism, realised that the quest for justice, recognition of the truth and the condemnation of Communism was meeting resistance in the corridors of power of Western democracies, in academic circles and in society in general. However, debates on post-war European history were inevitable and today that history is the basis of much dissensions among Europeans. (247)

Discussing the collective memory of Europe, Kalniete historicizes East/West divisions and provides an alternative interpretation of the conclusion of WWII:

Until Enlargement, the post-war history of Europe was clear. To simplify, its concept was based on two mainstays—the Second World War [...] and Franco-German reconciliation [...]. The true implications of the Iron Curtain had no place in this carefully balanced history. After Enlargement, Europeans discovered with astonishment that for Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, 1945 was not a magical year. Indeed for us, the end of the war was not a liberation, but the beginning of another tyranny, the replacing of the Nazi totalitarian regime by the Soviet

totalitarian regime. [...] It is uncomfortable for Europeans to recognise that the building of the common European home was partly made possible by decisions taken at the Tehran Conference (1943) and the Yalta Conference (1945), when the victorious Allies accepted that the freedom of Eastern Europe and the Baltic States was to be sacrificed to the Soviet Union. The quasi-official version of post-war European history mentions but little about the ravages that followed these Allied decisions on the peoples and states left behind the Iron Curtain. (247)

Calling for increased research and education on Communism, Kalniete states that, "Today each pupil in the West knows that Nazism represents Evil. In exactly the same way, Europeans today should know about the crimes of the Soviet totalitarian regime: because they are also part of the common history of our continent" (247-8). In other words, "equal treatment" applies not only to discrimination law but also to equal recognition of both histories, in the West specifically. Yet, she concludes that there is a lack of political will among Western politicians to make their constituents aware of Communist crimes, which is precisely why such a public hearing was necessary.

The European Council finally approved the Racism and Xenophobia FD on November 28, 2008. The FD was ratified without the mention of Communist crimes, political crimes generally that Poland and the Baltic States requested (Kalniete 2008: 249) or any mention of the region at all. The stated objective of the FD was to ensure that "racist and xenophobic offences are sanctioned in all member states by at least a minimum level of effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal penalties" (European Council 2008: 56). Claiming "difficulties" regarding "judicial cooperation," the Council wanted to harmonize member states' criminal laws "to ensure the effective implementation of comprehensive and clear legislation to combat racism and xenophobia" including anti-Semitism (55). This FD concerned itself with only serious offences requiring a criminal legal response, while acknowledging that member states' "cultural and legal traditions" are different and that "full harmonisation of criminal laws is currently not possible" (55). However, it did suggest that member states could not achieve this objective sufficiently

alone because "such rules have to be common and compatible" (55) and therefore the European Union *may* adopt measures to aid in this process.

The Racism and Xenophobia FD ordered member states to submit to the European Council and Commission a report detailing national laws that attempt to implement the FD objectives by 2010. The Council promised that by 2013 it would assess to what extent member states have complied with the FD.<sup>36</sup> The FD made punishable "publicly inciting" or committing "violence or hatred against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin" with a maximum of at least 1 to 3 years (56). The decision also criminalized "publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes" against groups mentioned above in a "manner likely to incite to violence or hatred" against those groups (56). Thus for the first time negationism of other international crimes beyond the Holocaust became punishable by law. However, totalitarian regimes were not mentioned and political status was not enumerated among the protected groups<sup>37</sup> thus some mnemonic actors saw it as being tough on the negationism of the Holocaust but not Communist regimes. Due to pressure from Poland and the Baltic States, the Commission was asked to submit a report within two years of the FD's enforcement to assess whether additional measures should be put in force to cover these issues (The Commission Report is discussed in a later section).

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<sup>36</sup> It turns out that member states had a hard enough time complying to this minimalist framework decision on banning incitement to hatred and denial of genocide as few member states have adopted significant measures to execute this binding FD. See Report From The Commission To The European Parliament And The Council on the implementation of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (European Commission 2014a)

<sup>37</sup> Other historical events like the Armenian genocide would not be included under this FD.

To summarize, the 2008 Racism and Xenophobia FD sought to ensure that the same kinds of racist and xenophobic behaviors are punished in all the member states. In the end, it failed in actually enforcing this by allowing member states' laws to take precedence.<sup>38</sup> This was a lowest-common-denominator step in the "Europeanization" of norms about race and ethnicity, but it was a step in that direction nonetheless. However, it failed to appease many CEE politicians and constituents who lobbied for the explicit consideration of Communist crimes by introducing the concept of discrimination based on political identity. For example, the following year, in support of the 2009 Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, a Latvian MEP from the conservative UEN Group would say, "The framework decision on racism and xenophobia imposes criminal liability only for the gross trivialisation of Nazi crimes, but remains silent about the crimes of totalitarian Communism in Europe." (More on this in a subsequent subsection.)

### **Czech Leadership: The 2008 Prague Declaration**

While racism and xenophobia were being discussed in the EU in 2008, the Czech Republic in particular, was busy that same year galvanizing the CEE memory entrepreneurs. The first major event took place on June 3, 2008 when various politicians and public intellectuals signed the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, conceived at the international conference "European Conscience and Communism" held at the Czech Senate in Prague organized by Senator Martin Mejstřík in cooperation with Jana Hybášková, Member of the European Parliament (Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic 2008). Using the "equally criminal" framing (Closa 2011), the declaration signatories demanded, among other

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<sup>38</sup> Laws against denying the Holocaust exist in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Spain, and in many cases the national legislation goes much further than the new EU rules.

things, an "all-European understanding," a "common approach" and a definition of "common attitudes" when it comes to the recognition of Communist crimes. The Prague Declaration stressed that Communism must be recognized as an "integral and horrific part of Europe's common history" and that "equal treatment and non-discrimination" of all victims of totalitarianism must be ensured. When it comes to legal remedies, the Declaration called for the assessment of Communist crimes as crimes against humanity just like Nazi crimes were evaluated in the Nuremberg Trial. In addition, legislation should be introduced that would "enable courts of law to judge and sentence perpetrators of Communist crimes and to compensate victims of Communism ." The Declaration also called for the revision of European history textbooks, access to archives and the establishment of a European Institute of Memory and Conscience (to become the Platform). Moreover, it requested to mark August 23, "the day of signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, as a day of remembrance of the victims of both Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes, in the same way Europe remembers the victims of the Holocaust on January 27." The demand for "equal" responses to Communism as to Nazism is then central to the signatories of the declaration. Most of the founding signatories of the declaration included Czech MEPs, other CEE politicians and dissidents, as well as the famous Václav Havel, former dissident and President of Czechoslovakia, and Joachim Gauck, former Federal Commissioner for the German Stasi archives, and perhaps more surprisingly Tseten Samdup Chhoekyapa, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in Exile for Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition, in November 2008, through the joint initiative of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, the first preparatory workshop was held where the outline of the Platform of European

Memory and Conscience was decided among representatives of 18 European countries. This laid the groundwork for the official establishment of the Platform in 2011, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

### **Landmark Success in the Europeanization of Totalitarianism: EU Condemns Communism in the 2009 Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism**

The year 2009 proved to be a more productive year for CEE at the EU level. The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in cooperation with the Czech Government and a group of twelve MEPs from around Europe organized a public hearing called "European Conscience and Crimes of Totalitarian Communism: 20 Years After." It was held in the European Parliament on March 18, 2009 during the Czech EU Presidency. The participants discussed "Europe's reconciliation with its totalitarian past" and agreed that the "totalitarian past of many European countries forms an integral part of our common history" and it is crucial to the "promotion of human dignity, human rights, fundamental freedoms and other values that Europe is based on" (Conclusions of the Public Hearing). Stressing the importance of bringing CEE activism to the EU level, the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs of the Czech Republic Alexandr Vondra said:

In life one cannot have a good future without understanding and coming to terms with one's own past. The same applies to Europe and its common memory. This is not an exercise for just one generation or one country but a continuous need for the *whole of Europe*. Only thus will we be able to better understand each other. Symbols such as the Iron Curtain still have tremendous power. Knowing our past is also an essential tool to teach our children how to avoid intolerance, extremism and the recurrence of totalitarian rule in the future. [emphasis mine] (Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes 2009)

This quote suggests the need of a *transnational* organization that will address the European past for all of Europe, not just CEE countries. It maintains that far from being resolved, the problem of collective memory still has "tremendous power" and has immediate implications for Europe's



common future. Moreover, mutual recognition can only happen through symbiotic, not one-sided, efforts suggesting that Eastern and Western Europe must work together to reconcile their histories. Shortly after, at the debates over the 2009 Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, Vondra would reference this public hearing and repeat this sentiment that "The hearing last week [March 18] was presented jointly by the representatives of several similar institutions that exist at the national level and in my opinion there is a very urgent need to have such institutions at the pan-European level."

A week after the above public hearing, on March 25, 2009, the European Parliament held a plenary session on "European Conscience and Totalitarianism." Following these debates, on April 2, 2009, the Parliament adopted the "Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism" with a vote of 553:44:33 proposed as a joint resolution of the EPP, ALDE, UEN and Greens/ALE groups. The three major groups missing from the tabled resolution were the Party of European Socialists, the European United Left-Nordic Green Left and the Independence/Democracy Group, however most of the Socialists and Independence/Democracy in the end voted for the resolution while most of GUE/NGL voted against it. The only members of the EPP Group that did not vote for the resolution were from Greece. Although mostly representatives of CEE member states took part in this debate, this did become the first official acknowledgement of Communist crimes by the European Parliament.

Yet even this 2009 resolution would not fully satisfy CEE. The draft version of the resolution contained a reference to the 2008 Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, which was deleted in the adopted version. In other words, direct reference to CEE was removed while two other events were included that further globalized references to totalitarianism and other criminal regimes that in the eyes of CEE resolution supporters took

attention away from their region. These were "Truth and Justice Commissions all over the world that ease reconciliation for victims of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes" and "statements made by its the Spanish President and the political groups on July 4, 2006, 70 years after General Franco's coup d'état in Spain." While the "uniqueness of the Holocaust" is "acknowledged" the resolution admits that Central and Eastern European countries "experienced both Communism and Nazism" but that the West's "dominant historical experience" was Nazism. Therefore the resolution concludes that, "understanding has to be promoted in relation to the double legacy of dictatorship borne by these countries" (2).

This 2009 resolution did however call for the establishment of a Platform of European Memory and Conscience and finally made August 23 a European Day of Remembrance for victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The European Parliament also, remarkably in EU legislative history, weighs in on the role of historical memory itself; the resolution "underlines the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive because there can be no reconciliation without truth and remembrance" (3). The resolution stressed repeatedly that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance and to this end it explicitly recognized totalitarianism's victims' suffering. While it called on all member states to open up archives, including those of the secret police, it cautioned that, "steps must be taken to ensure that this process is not abused for political purposes" (3). Three additional points in the resolution addressed the political nature of history. Again this is noteworthy because this is the first time that the European Parliament so explicitly works out its views on what its role in historical memory policy-making should be. For example, the resolution stated that "historians agree that fully objective interpretations of historical facts are not possible and objective historical narratives do not exist; nevertheless, professional historians use scientific tools to study the past,

and try to be as impartial as possible" (1-2). It continued, "no political body or political party has a monopoly on interpreting history, and such bodies and parties cannot claim to be objective" and "official political interpretations of historical facts should not be imposed by means of majority decisions of parliaments"—"a parliament cannot legislate on the past" (2). Such cautions against using law to legislate a singular, truthful collective memory were simply not found in CEE proclamations.

Nevertheless, the 2009 resolution reasoned that the EU must be engaged in keeping "Europe's tragic past alive" (2-3) because it is intimately tied to the success of European integration and future peace. In order to further strengthen European integration, "appropriate preservation of historical memory" and a "comprehensive reassessment of European history and Europe-wide recognition of all historical aspects of modern Europe" is necessary (3). Three other points touted the achievement and potential of European integration in achieving peace and reconciliation already, thus exposing the direct connection between collective remembrance and integration. Noting where more progress could be made, the resolution called on the Council and Commission to "support and defend" NGOs studying the Stalinist period in particular, e.g. the Memorial in the Russian Federation.<sup>39</sup>

This discussion of history and the importance of remembrance defines the EU's approach on European collective remembrance and sets the foundation for the EU's approach to historical memory policy. The European Parliament claims that the 2009 resolution:

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<sup>39</sup> This voice of support came less than four months before award-winning Russian rights activist and board member of Memorial (the primary Russian NGO dedicated to promoting democracy and truth about totalitarian regimes), Natalya Estemirova, was abducted and murdered. Official investigators and human rights activists disagree on the cause and motivation of the murder. In October 2014 the Russian Ministry of Justice has called for the closing of Memorial (Sindelbar 2014).

presents the cornerstones of the European Parliament's view on the (political) role and main contents of European historical remembrance; a view which is largely in line with that of the European Commission and the Council. Expression of the inter-institutional convergence of interests towards the actual objectives of European historical memory is the absence of strong disagreement regarding the design of the Remembrance strand in the new Europe for Citizens Programme for 2014-2020 [discussed in later section]. This enables us to talk about a European Union remembrance policy, complemented by additional measures aimed at strengthening citizens' consciousness of a common European past. (*European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives*, 20-21)

This does not mean everyone felt entirely comfortable with the resolution. While the vast majority of the Socialists voted for the resolution, during the debates, some voiced their concerns. MEP Jan Marinus Wiersma (PSE, Netherlands), having eventually voted in favor of the resolution, said "leave it to historians to decide how precisely our history should be interpreted" and that the PSE Group "is not against the debate that is being held today per se, but we do have a great deal of difficulty with summarising the result of this debate in a resolution." A Polish Socialist member, Józef Pinior, added more firmly "We are opposed to the manipulation of that memory, and to the insulting of that memory, where it is used today in an ideological battle, in a party fight in the European political system." Both mention a booklet that will come out shortly published by the Socialist Group titled *The politics of the past, the use and abuse of history* edited by Wiersma himself and with a contribution from Pinior too (more on this booklet in Chapter 6). Other Socialists sought to broker a middle road. MEP Katrin Saks (PSE, Estonia) defended the Socialists in that they understand and acknowledge Communist crimes, but that the right is using this issue to make them look bad before the elections a month ahead in May 2009. "In the context of the already ongoing election struggle, some are pointing their fingers at the social democrats, claiming that we do not understand the criminality of these events." Despite this, she diverges from Wiersma and is more supportive of the resolution arguing that it is in the competency of the EP to discuss history. "Why is it necessary for us to

talk about this—not just for historians, but also for politicians? Because without giving a fair assessment of the past, we cannot be certain that we have done everything possible to prevent it from being repeated." Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE, Hungary) calls on the need for a common historical narrative without political bias:

It is difficult to write a common European history, since after World War II, the western and eastern halves of Europe lived through different histories. Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states were victims equally of both Nazi and the Soviet dictatorships, yet we cannot equate Nazism with Stalinism. [...] It would be good to acknowledge the past without politics, without present-day political bias, and to formulate a common historical narrative.

The most radical faction in the debate was the GUE/NGL Group. Vladimír Remek of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia dismissed the resolution as "political opportunism":

The efforts to assert that Communism equates to Nazism or Fascism and to create new so-called institutes or platforms for research smack of political opportunism. The radical right needs it also because of the forthcoming elections. It has nothing to do with objective, genuinely independent assessments. There are already enough historical institutes and centres dealing with that. [...] If someone does not want to see the difference between Communism and Nazism, between Communists in the past and Communists in the present, who like myself represent significant numbers of Communist voters here in Parliament after democratic elections, then they are perhaps simply trying to lump me together with the Nazis.

Józef Pinior (PSE, Poland) discussed the perceived wave of anti-Communism in the EU.

The escalation in the European Union's wretched anti-Communist strategy is a brazen insult to the people: with the counterfeiting of history, slander and lies, Fascism is being equated with Communism. [...] It is an insult to the memory of twenty million Soviets who sacrificed their lives to conquer Fascism. This vulgar anti-Communism is targeted not so much at the past; it is targeted mainly at the present and at the future. Its aim for today is to reduce grassroots resistance and to shift the burden of the capitalist crisis on to the workers and its aim for tomorrow is to anticipate the inevitable general challenge to and overthrow of the capitalist system.

In a response to the criticisms of the Left, turning around the frequent argument of trivializing Nazi crimes, MEP Wojciech Roszkowski (UEN, Poland) says, "It is, by the way, characteristic that while the European Right does not relativise Nazi crimes today, the European Left does relativise Communist crimes. This is abundantly clear from the attitude of the socialists and Communists to the draft resolution on the matter, which we have been negotiating today. In this

Chamber we are not voting on the truth about history, we are voting on the truth about ourselves, and about our moral judgments." This last line got some applause in the parliament and it underscores not only the tensions between politicizing or not politicizing history but also the difference between history and memory itself. The former should be truthful and objective and the latter is and even should be rooted in identity and some kind of moral framework. Thus the debate exposed a deeper disagreement between the right and left on the role of remembrance in politics.

For some, mostly the EPP Group (and UEN), this debate should have come sooner and was so evident as if not to require a debate at all. Tunne Kelam (EPP, Estonia) quoted Harry Truman, who in 1948 said, "Now we are faced with exactly the same situation with which Britain and France were faced in 1939 in dealing with Hitler. A totalitarian state is no different, whether you call it Nazi, Fascist, Communist or Franco's Spain. The oligarchy in Russia is a Frankenstein dictatorship worse than any of the others, Hitler included."<sup>40</sup> He goes on:

So the question is why, 61 years later, we still have to argue about the same problems. I think that today what we need is not only the economic and political enlargement of Europe, but the enlargement of European awareness of the massive crimes against humanity which occurred everywhere in Europe in the 20th century. We need the integration of European historic perception—the integration of prejudices and different views of history—as only in this way can we proceed to the better Europe of the future.

This a good summary of the very general approach to reconciling histories that the 2009 Resolution was successful in establishing.

In its follow-up to the European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, the European Commission would indeed acknowledge exactly these points Kelam expressed above and that supporters of the 2009 Resolution wanted. The Commission (1) echoed the call for better knowledge of totalitarian crimes (2) because they are part of the EU's

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<sup>40</sup> To reference this quotation see Truman (1972:359-60).

common history (3) which is critical to future European integration (4) which is more than just an economic process. The report states, "The question of totalitarian crimes is part of a difficult but necessary process, since it is an important subject not only for better knowledge and understanding of the Union's shared history, but also for the future of the European integration process, which is more than a purely economic process" (European Commission 2009). Quickly eschewing anything that would seem like a pan-European, systematic way of dealing with this past though, the Commission added, "However, it is of course for the Member States to find their own way forward when it comes to dealing with victims and promoting reconciliation." Of course, as we have already seen, some participants in the debate wanted the EU to go even further and some thought it had already gone too far in integrating a response to 20th century totalitarianism.

Finally Vondra, the Czech President-in-Office, concludes by raising the need to have a continued discussion on this topic at the transnational level through institutions like the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. Vondra explains:

If it has been the first debate of its kind for a long time then that can only be a good thing and I think that the first conclusion is that we must lead the debate and we must continue with it. That is the aim of the Platform of Memory and Conscience. Why is it important to have such a platform at the European level? It is important as an instrument against forgetting. If we forget the past, of course, we create an opportunity for it to return through the back door in the future. This is also a chance to combat the relativisation of past crimes. Hitler and Stalin are two of a kind. [...] Any kind of relativisation, however—and I do not want to politicise here—any kind of relativisation is extremely dangerous.

Thus we see that the 2009 resolution was a landmark move in the Europeanization of totalitarianism. Five years after the 2004 CEE accessions, the European Parliament and the European Commission were inevitably forced into a debate over how to deal with CEE's Communist legacy even if the West did not entirely welcome these debates. For the first time the EU condemned Communism and established a commemorative day, August 23, to remember the

victims of Communism *and* Nazism. Moving away from the narrative of the Holocaust, we see the establishment of a new mainstream narrative that revolves around totalitarianism, which is to include Nazism and Communism. For some critics however, the word "totalitarianism" became just another way to talk only about Communism. We will shortly see that the commemorative gains made through this landmark resolution did not satisfy many of the active mnemonic activists from CEE; they will continue to demand the criminalization of Communism.

### **Europeanization of Totalitarianism Gains Traction in the EU and Beyond, 2009**

The year 2009 marked the 70th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and in the European Parliament a big conference was organized with the support of the EP's president. The conference titled, "Europe 70 years after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact" took place on October 15, 2009 and was organized by the Baltic States under the auspices of the President of the EP, Jerzy Buzek. Buzek recalled that in August 1939 *Time* had called the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact the "Communazi Pact" while reminding the audience that demands like, for example, reparations to be paid by Russia to the Baltic states are not (in theory at least) aimed against any one specific country, namely Russia. At the conference, a clear divide between Social Democrats and the European People's Party surfaced, with the latter of course more enthused about treating Nazi and Communist crimes on an equal footing (Euractiv.com 2009).

Wrapping up the year, on December 2009, the European Council adopted the Stockholm Programme—An Open and Secure Europe Serving and Protecting Citizens, which invited the Commission to inquire whether there is a need for "additional proposals covering publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes directed against a group of persons defined by reference to criteria *other than* race,



colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, such as social status or political convictions" (8) [emphasis mine]. Since the earliest human rights conventions following WWII, political identity, has been a controversial status that, in part because of the Cold War and Russia's (and China's) continuing power at the UN, has not been included as a protected status.<sup>41</sup> The Stockholm Programme essentially reinforced the 2008 Racism and Xenophobia FD's demand for the Commission to inspect the need for criminalizing denials of atrocities committed against social status and political conviction.

Beyond the EU, in 2009, on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) passed a resolution titled, *Divided Europe Reunited: Promoting Human Rights and Civil Liberties in the OSCE Region in the 21st Century*. Put forward by Lithuania and Slovenia, it passed with overwhelming majority. The resolution noted that "twentieth century European countries experienced two major totalitarian regimes, Nazi and Stalinist, which brought about genocide, violations of human rights and freedoms, war crimes and crimes against humanity." The next point is an acknowledgment of the "uniqueness of the Holocaust" and a reminder to all OSCE participating states of their duties to prevent "continued acts of anti-Semitism." Communism is mentioned only in the context of transitional countries stating that while democracy cannot take root "in one day" taking into account different "historical and cultural backgrounds" of each country, the latter cannot be used as an excuse to prevent democratic reform. It reiterates the European Parliament's decision that year to mark August 23rd as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Nazism and

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<sup>41</sup> The exception is the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which includes "membership of a particular social group or political opinion" as a protected status (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>). But, for example, the 1948 UN Genocide Convention does not (<http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cppcg/cppcg.html>).

Stalinism. The OSCE in this resolution also reconfirmed its stand against "all totalitarian rule from whatever ideological background" but singles out its "deep concern" mostly for extreme right movements in the form of "public demonstrations glorifying the Nazi or Stalinist past, as well as the possible spread and strengthening of various extremist movements and groups, including neo-Nazis and skinheads."

Perhaps predictably, Russia reacted most critically to the likening of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes under the same umbrella term of totalitarianism. Russian foreign ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko was quoted as saying, "We consider unacceptable the fact that in the OSCE's parliamentary assembly resolution there is an attempt to distort history with political goals. This does not contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust and cooperation between the member states of this body." Two Russian parliamentarians said the resolution is a "direct insult to the memory of millions" of Soviet soldiers who "gave their lives for the freedom of Europe from the fascist yoke" (*Deutsche Welle* 7/9/09). Stalin remains a hero for many Russians to this day for his role in liberating the Soviet Union from WWII and his war crimes and crimes against humanity against many nations and minority groups are forgotten by many. For example, in 2008 in the TV "Name of Russia" Russians voted by Internet, radio and television on their top historical personalities of 500 chosen by the Institute of Russian History. Stalin came in third place (after Alexander Nevsky—medieval defender of Russia and Pyotr Stolypin-Prime Minister under Tsar Nicholas II). Russia has been active in the area of historical memory too, largely in opposition to the trend of the Europeanization of totalitarianism. While Russia's historical policy deserves a book on its own, I will just mentioned two examples here from the year 2009. For example, President Medvedev ordered the formation of a commission to defend Russia from historical "falsifications" that would promote the state's official historical narrative of Russia as

purely a victim in WWII due to the huge loss of human life it sustained in the fight against Nazism. The government also proposed a bill that would criminalize the "rehabilitation" of Nazism with up to three years imprisonment, which could include for example denying the Soviet Union's role in defeating Germany in WWII (*Deutsche Welle* 7/9/09).

In other words, because the year 2009 marked the 70th anniversary of the beginning of WWII a flurry of commemorative acts took place in the European Parliament, the European Council, and beyond the EU. The year 2010 would see a pause in this Europeanization of Totalitarianism.

### **EU Pushback to the Europeanization of Totalitarianism: The 2010 European Commission Report**

In preparation for the 2010 report requested by the EP in the 2008 FD on racism and xenophobia, the European Commission in 2009 financed a study by an independent institute with the aim of providing a "factual overview of the methods used in member states to deal with issues relating to the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes." This "Study on how the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe is dealt with in the Member States" was written by Dr. Carlos Closa at the Institute for Public Goods and Policy, Centre of Human and Social Sciences in Madrid and sent to member states and the European Parliament in early 2010. Unremarkably, the study concluded that there is a "huge variety of methods and instruments" with which member states deal with the memory of totalitarian crimes as well as denial of those crimes. This study would then be included in the Commission's final report, which critics argued was written with the sole purpose of legitimizing EU's non-action on criminalizing Communist crimes.

In the meantime, CEE countries made their own assessment of how Communist crimes have been dealt with in their region. In February 2010, the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, hosted an international conference on "Crimes of Communism" where historians and legal experts discussed how Communist crimes have been addressed and what more can be done to pursue justice for victims. The conference organizers claimed that:

Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain and five years after the accession of post-Communist countries to the EU, a major issue of our common European legacy remains unresolved. Although Europe has gathered extensive experience in dealing with the Nazi dictatorship, starting with the trials of Nazi war crimes and culminating in detailed information on the crimes and on the Holocaust, very little has been done in order to come to terms with the crimes committed by the Communist dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe. (Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic and Office of the Government of the Czech Republic 2010)

Because so little has been done to achieve justice in CEE, the conference participants claimed that citizens have become disillusioned and lost trust in democratic institutions, which threatens European integration. Again employing the "equality" framing, it was assumed that "Communism and its legacy require a comparable approach as Nazism," thus the conference sought to assess Communist crimes "from a legal point of view" and subject them to "legal judgment" much like the Nuremberg Trial did for Nazi crimes.

On December 22, 2010 the long-awaited report from the Commission to the Parliament and Council titled, "The memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe" was submitted (European Commission). It concluded to reject a European-wide ban on the denial of Communist crimes, citing the Ciosa Study. It reasoned that it is up to each country to find its own way deal to with the memory of totalitarian crimes, meet the expectations of the victims and their descendants and achieve reconciliation. Thus using the evidence of the multiplicity of transitional justice/historical memory mechanisms in the EU that the Study outlined, rather than propose a harmonization of these methods, the Commission chose to reject any pan-European

reform thus pausing the "Europeanization of totalitarianism" wave. The Czech response in particular was critical.<sup>42</sup> In response to this report and in disagreement with it, on May 15, 2011, the Czech Senate sent a letter to the Commission asking the EU to create conditions for the punishment of crimes based on class or political hatred (*Prague Daily Monitor* 16/5/11). Despite this appeal, on June 9-10, 2011 at the 3096th Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, the European Council supported the conclusions of the Commission. It also reaffirmed the Commission's proposals to make EU funds available for private and public institutions for cultural and educational projects dealing with totalitarian history. It also encouraged the Commission to undertake more research on what Europeans know about totalitarian history. In response to this the EPP Group in the European Parliament hosted a public hearing titled, "The memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe" where Latvian MEP, Sandra Kalniete, again reiterated the group's dissatisfaction with the 2008 FD on racism and xenophobia because "it does not cover crimes committed by totalitarian regimes on other grounds such as social status or political convictions" and criticizes it for being a "document conceived to comply with the Council's decision." Losing the battle to force the EU to do more to criminalize Communist crimes, CEE countries were left to celebrate their commemorative concessions.

### **2011-2012: August 23 Commemorations, Limited Diffusion**

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<sup>42</sup> Discussing the Commission Report, Neela Winkelmann told me that the Closa study was commissioned just so that the Commission would have "evidence" that they don't need to extend the Framework against xenophobia to political identity. It was of "poor quality" because major institutions like USTR were not consulted. Furthermore, she said that the Commission still refers to Communism as socialism, whereas the Prague Declaration (one of the Platform's biggest achievement at the European level) established the use of the term Communism, which the European Parliament now uses. Moreover, the report does not explain its methods and was written by someone who knows little about the experience behind the Iron Curtain.

Denied by the European Commission and Council a European-level criminal-legal measure to deal with Communist crimes, CEE focused on concessions they did manage to extract from the EU, namely the commemorative August 23 Black Ribbon Day,<sup>43</sup> the establishment of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, and continued conferences in the European Parliament. Yet these events met with differentiated success in Eastern and Western Europe. The Black Ribbon Day commemorations were enthusiastically taken up in CEE, but the West seemed uninterested and aloof toward this new tradition. CEE countries continued to write declarations and organize conferences but these too saw few Western signatories or attendees.

The first Polish commemoration of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes in 2011 was significant for two reasons. First, Poland's EU presidency began the annual tradition of commemorating August 23rd as Black Ribbon Day. This was followed by the Hungarian presidency in 2012 and Lithuanian in 2013. In addition, on August 23, 2011, Ministers of Justice of several countries and the President of the EP, Jerzy Buzek, signed the Warsaw Declaration. Like the Prague Declaration, but in more muted language, the Warsaw Declaration framed all totalitarian regimes, irrespective of their geographical or ideological origins as responsible for the "most heinous acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes" of which the "holocaust is the most horrendous manifestation." It stresses that reconciliation requires justice—not just mere remembrance of the past—and that denial of totalitarian crimes can lead to the rebirth of totalitarian regimes, again stressing the need to criminalize such denials. It also declared support for the Platform. Signatory ministers

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<sup>43</sup> For the argument that Black Ribbon Day rather than EU memory law is the appropriate policy response to memory harmonization see, for example, Leggewie and Meier (2012).

from non-CEE countries included France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Malta and Sweden. Those from CEE included Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic.

Conferences by activists pushing for criminalization of Communism continued in the European Parliament. For example, on May 8, 2012, the EP hosted a conference of MEPs titled, "Occupation After Liberation" about Soviet occupation after WWII. It was hosted by the European People's Party (EPP) Group.<sup>44</sup> The conference was "organised with an aim to discuss the controversial end of the World War II and to talk about the crimes of the Communist regime. The speakers looked into the troublesome times in the Eastern and Central European countries after the Soviet victory in the WWII and analysed reasons why the West still avoids talking about them" (Reconciliation of European Histories website). Professor Inese Vaidere, MEP from Latvia, framed the current struggle for retributive and restorative justice as a war that is not yet over in the Baltics, "While the Soviet crimes have not been fully recognised and condemned, while the criminals have not been jailed and until the victims have not received at least moral compensation this war is not over for us" (Reconciliation of European Histories website). These center and center-right European political leaders then are voicing their discontent with not only the inadequacy of the measures taken thus far to guarantee justice for "Communist victims," but even the West's lack of recognition of suffering in the East. In the next section, I describe how

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<sup>44</sup> The EPP Group is different from the EPP because the former is made up of representatives from member states of the EU only, whereas the latter is an umbrella party for all national-level parties across the continent of Europe that wish to join the EPP. The EPP Group currently "the largest political force in the European Parliament" and was the "first-ever transnational political party to be formed at European level." It describes itself as "centre and centre-right pro-European" (EEP Group website).

the European Parliament addresses historical memory policy head on as a response to the numerous commemorations and conferences at the European level.

### **The European Parliament's Policy on Historical Memory and Remembrance, 2013**

With so much memory entrepreneurship at the European level, the European Parliament was forced to react and address the issue directly by drafting the EP's position on the new policy area of "historical memory" (European Parliament 2013). This is the document in which the EU primarily and explicitly sets out its dialogic imperative, in other words, the rules of mnemonic communication in the European memory field. In short the dialogic imperative can be identified by three tenets (1) a move from a heroic victimhood/perpetrator model<sup>45</sup> to one of self-critical apology/regret and taking responsibility for wrongdoing, (2) a move from objective historical truth to a self-critical recognition of subjective histories based on historical facts and (3) a commitment to the idea, distilled from the German experience, that nationalism is normatively bad.

The September 2013 document titled, "European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges And Perspectives" argues that a "critical 'culture of remembrance' needs to be developed" which would require "increased efforts for nation states to come to terms with their own respective pasts in an unbiased way, yet at the same time embracing common European principles and values" (European Parliament 2013: 3). The policy brief explains that the challenge with historical memory is that it is not meant to represent objective reality but rather picks out events that positively represent a nation's history thereby making it more accessible but also eliding complexities. Historical memory is used for community building and especially

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<sup>45</sup> A focus on victimhood is acceptable as long as it pursues restorative rather than retributive justice. For example, seeking recognition, reconciliation and apology is permissible but criminal prosecution or criminalization of symbols or ideologies is not.



nation building and therefore tends to glorify a nation's past into a "sacred object" (5).

Moreover, the versions of historical memory at the national level are many depending on cultural and social divisions within society. At the supranational level, the problems of defining a collective memory "get multiplied" (6). The European Parliament acknowledges that its memory policies are aimed at "foster[ing] a 'European historical memory' in order to add legitimacy to the European project and foster European identity" (6). The shift from the Europeanization of the Holocaust to the Europeanization of totalitarianism is described explicitly as the path that European historical policy has taken:

While traditional reference points had been European 'heritage' in a broad sense of the word, the Second World War as the trigger for European integration, and the achievements of integration *per se*, a new and more concrete focus has powerfully emerged over the last years, which puts the remembrance of 20th-century totalitarianisms—notably National Socialism and Stalinism—in its centre. Preceded by initiatives since the 1990s especially of the European Parliament to increase awareness for the Holocaust and, since the Eastern Enlargement, also Stalinist crimes, efforts to keep history alive are supported in particular by the Europe for Citizens Programme launched in 2006. The emphasis of European historical remembrance on totalitarianism is perpetuated in the on-going negotiations for a renewed Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020, in which the remembrance strand has taken on greater significance, reflected in the considerable increase of funds that have been earmarked for actions in this field. (6) [emphasis mine]

The document goes on to specify the nature of the ruptures in European memory policy, "there is still palpable competition between two, at least partly, competing memory frames: the 'uniqueness of the Holocaust', that has shaped Western European post-war culture, and the 'National Socialism and Stalinism as equally evil', that suits the needs of Eastern European nations to come to terms with their respective Communist past." These interpretations of the past differ along "the political spectrum, but also between different Member States" (6).

Thus the EU is warning against the replacement of one master narrative, based on the Holocaust, for another, based on dual totalitarianisms, where Nazism and Stalinism are treated as equal for several reasons. First, building a collective identity on a negative foundational myth

such as the Holocaust or Nazism and Stalinism has the tendency to simplify the past and the present. The "dark past" is contrasted with the "bright present," thus painting the EU in an uncritically positive light that does not allow for critical engagement and improvement upon its many current deficiencies. Second, it reduces European history to the post-WWI period thus overshadowing the important phenomena that were colonialism and imperialism. Third, focus on Nazism and Stalinism and the Holocaust "runs the risk of evading the issue of shared European accountability for the past" (29) and instrumentalizing moral arguments<sup>46</sup> (e.g. German atrocities committed against Greece) for political gain or, more neutrally, legitimizing policy positions (e.g. Germany relieving Greece of its debt). Acknowledging that "guilt can and should certainly never be apportioned equally" the author asks "why does a German teenager have to feel more accountable for Nazi crimes committed half a century before he/she was born than his/her peers in Greece, Poland or Israel?" Thus the author argues that focusing on the memories of Nazism and Stalinism prohibits the Europeanization of guilt and responsibility.<sup>47</sup> Fourth, the author

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<sup>46</sup> The EU is also ambivalent about the relationship between memory and morality. While here the author calls to separate the two (as much as possible), in 2015, at the 5th networking meeting of memory organizations receiving Europe for Citizens grants the director of the program said that we are not just looking for common European memories but significant common European memories; "it is necessary to find a link to the moral issues which underscore remembrance" (European Commission 2015f). Recall that in a memory debate in the European Parliament, Polish MEP Roszkowski's comment "In this Chamber we are not voting on the truth about history, we are voting on the truth about ourselves, and about our moral judgments" received applause.

<sup>47</sup> But he seems to understate the extent to which building a post-WWII Europe on the basis of WWII remembrance and later in the 60s on the uniqueness of the Holocaust after about three decades led to a remarkable Europeanization of the Holocaust, with countries in the 80s and 90s increasingly taking responsibility for collaboration, war atrocities etc. thus taking on some of the burden that Germany had been carrying mid-century. Could not a current-day focus on the memories of Nazism and Stalinism in a couple of decades lead to a similar diffusion of responsibility with CEE countries taking on more responsibility for the killing of Jews and mass deportations of Germans than they have so far and similarly with Western European countries admitting that they could have done more to prevent the closing of the Iron Curtain? And could

argues that a "quasi decess" on which memories should be enshrined in Europeans' memory cannot withstand the flow of time and generational changes; for post-post-WWII generations memories other than the war like the Yugoslav wars or the Rwanda genocide may be more relevant.

The report argues that a better model is one that does not specify what to remember and how to evaluate what is being remembered. It argues for "a critical 'European culture of remembrance' rather than an imposed singular 'remembrance culture' with standardised views on and reference points of Europe's past." It is the job of member states to critically "rework" their past but to do so through the framework of "common European principles and values" (6). Thus the EP mainstream is encouraging a particular critical mode of remembrance through the framework of common European values rather than a laundry list of events and dates that must be commonly remembered and commemorated. The report then specifies what this European culture of remembrance would look like. It would require underpinning Europe's history with a "foundation of European core values, such as humanism, tolerance and democracy." It would also require "creating an open sphere of discussion" that fosters "mutual understanding and reconciliation" while allowing for a discussion of "uncomfortable segments of national histories." This critical culture of remembrance would be based on "historical facts" while simultaneously "renouncing the notion of 'historical truth'" and "acknowledging the potential risks in legislating for a specific view on or memory of the past" (6). Finally, the document concludes that the best way to foster this type of critical culture of remembrance is through education policies that focus on "European diversity in the past and present," that allow young

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not some of this effect spill over to Russia where Stalinist crimes and crimes against Eastern European countries would be acknowledged and apologized for?

people to "discuss" history and to promote "discursive teaching formats," and make them approach their own country's history "objectively" and "self-critical[ly]" (6).

With this policy brief, the EP officially sets out the parameters for European remembering. The overwhelming focus on dialogue and presenting multiple interpretations of the past rather than enforcing one master narrative sets out the EU's new historical policy agenda. The European memory field will not be predetermined by the EU in a top-down fashion by spelling out to Europeans what they must remember and what they must forget. Rather the EU will guide the conversation by providing and encouraging safe, open space where dialogue can take place and hard truths can be voiced so that reconciliation within and between nations can take root. The memories themselves matter little, rather it is the mode in which the memories are remembered that matters. This mode is characterized as remembrance that fits into the common European values of "human dignity, tolerance, freedom and equality, solidarity and democracy" (31); it fosters open and critical public debate; it rejects historical truth (but simultaneously does not fall into crude historical revisionism) and is highly skeptical of legal solutions to memory conflicts; and it promotes the "politics of regret" approach to self-critical national historical awareness.<sup>48</sup> The best tool for promoting this kind of culture of remembrance, the report concludes, is updating history teaching in all member states so that history be examined in "transnational dimensions and repercussions" with the "the voice of 'others'" included and "teacher training should hence put emphasis on European and global rather than national histories." Thus the trend is toward a "Europeanisation of memory *practices*" (33) [emphasis mine] and away from the Europeanization of memories. The EU intends to foster this

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<sup>48</sup> One potential weakness of such a culture of remembrance is exactly what the report mentions, that without specific mnemonic content to this culture it may become too abstract and vague to serve as a continued shared reference point.

type of culture of remembrance by throwing the ball back into the member states' court.

Although promising to dedicate more attention and money to support remembrance projects and international exchanges, the report concludes, as most EU reports do, that the ultimate responsibility for action lies with member states—"at a time when the nation is still the overriding reference point of collective identities, coming to terms with the past remains first and foremost a task to be performed at the level of the nation state; something which 'Europe' cannot do for or instead of them" (33). Let us take a look at how European remembrance projects are financed.

### **Europe for Citizens Program: Active European Remembrance**

The Europe for Citizens Program was developed in 2006 after the European integration crisis that was the failed ratification of the European Constitution in 2005. It also followed the Big Bang expansion of the EU to include 10 new member states from Central and Eastern Europe posing "new challenges to European integration" implied by the "inclusion of additional cultures, traditions, and heritage" (European Commission 2015a: 18). Sensing a need to foster a stronger sense of solidarity, community and common identity among Europeans, the EU institutions set in motion a funding instrument to do just that by reaching out directly to European citizens. The first installment of the program was for the period 2007-2013 (European Commission 2011). The objectives of the program overall "included bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experience, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future; fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture; bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past; and encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society

organisations from all participating countries, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity, with particular attention" to new member states (European Commission 2015c: 3). The program was split up into four "action" groups, with the fourth being "active European remembrance." This action dealt specifically with "commemorating the victims of mass extermination and deportations as well as for preserving remembrance sites, memorials and archives" (4). For the seven-year period, 215 million euros were dedicated to the program, of which 14,203,000 euro (about 4%) went exclusively to remembrance projects. In the Final Report evaluating the 2007-2013 program, we read that the funded projects contributed to "promoting fundamental values on which our European societies are based, such as peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity" (8). Moreover, the evaluation showed that:

Bringing together Europeans from different Member States to discuss and work together on issues of common concern increased their awareness of fundamental values, their degree of engagement in society and ultimately their involvement with the European Union. At the same time supporting activities promoting mutual understanding, diversity, dialogue and respect for others can help to develop a sense of belonging and a European identity, based on a shared understanding of European values, culture, history and heritage. These initiatives have the potential to create changes in the attitudes of participants towards other European citizens and to boost their involvement in democratic processes, as well as their knowledge and interest in the European Union, EU institutions and processes (8).

Although only 1,630 remembrance project applications were submitted (not much compared to the thousands of town-twinning and citizenship projects submitted) requests under this action strand did grow over the lifetime of the program. Over the seven years, about 500 organizations were involved in remembrance projects, reaching some 1.7 million individuals in the years 2011-2013 alone (European Commission 2015a; European Commission 2015b). A 2010 intermediary report showed that the available budget did not meet the demands of the remembrance action.

The ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 program reveals that the "Action 4: Active European Remembrance" strand divided projects up into two main categories, those concerning the commemoration of the victims of Nazism and those of Stalinism. Although data is unavailable for each action strand separately, overall the geographic spread of the funding received is varied, but not skewed toward older member states as some MEPs have suggested. Countries participating more than expected given their population were Hungary, Germany, France, Italy, Slovakia, Poland and Malta in that order. Those who participated the least were Luxembourg, Denmark, Portugal and the Netherlands. For whatever reason, four states had the largest acceptance rate of projects at 40%; Germany, Sweden, Poland and Malta. For 10 countries, largely from Southern and Eastern Europe the acceptance rate was 27% or less; Portugal Spain, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovenia. This may suggest regional bias or that the quality of proposed projects from the latter countries was not as high, which also begs the question of potential structural inequalities in access to EU institutions with the Commission pointing to the latter as explanation. The concrete recommendation for the remembrance action strand was "to look more towards the future: the case studies showed that remembrance projects tended to be more salient when they considered practical implications for the present and future, in addition to the past" (European Commission 2015a: 61).

There are common characteristics of projects that tend to receive funding. Those that score highly in their applications are projects that reach a variety of diverse audiences or hard to reach groups, including children; they address issues critical to the EU today like the rise of far-right movements and Euro-skeptic parties; they espouse EU values such as diversity, multiculturalism and human rights; and they bring citizens closer to EU institutions and policy

making. Of the four remembrance projects that the ex-post evaluation presented in its report as case studies, three dealt with the Holocaust and one with Stalinism, but all were highly creative and participatory. One was an exhibition/cabaret on the Roman Holocaust in Finland, the second documented the impact of Fascism/Nazism on women in Italy, the third was a crocus planting project in schools of nine member states in memory of children who perished in the Holocaust and the fourth a documentary film about the daughters of political prisoners under Stalinism in the Czech Republic.

For the 2014-2020 Europe for Citizens program, it was the European Parliament that pushed to increase funds for the remembrance strand. This edition of the program now has only two actions; "European remembrance" and "Democratic engagement and civic participation" giving European remembrance a more dominant role (Council of the European Union 2014). The funds for the program actually declined to 185.468 million euros (from the previous program's 215 million), but the remembrance strand now was given 20% of the budget or about 37 million compared to the 14 million budget of the previous program, thus more than doubling the funds available for remembrance projects (European Commission 2014c).

The 2014-2020 program also has more specific recommendations now. It requires remembrance projects to accomplish their goals at the transnational level or with an explicit European dimension that also importantly "stimulates debate, reflection and development of networks" (European Commission 2014c: 5). The Program Guide offers examples of ways in which projects can have a "transnational dimension." They can be organized by groups from different countries, address European audiences, or "tackle an issue from a European perspective or critically compare different national points of view" (6). Simultaneously, the project must have a strong local dimension thus making it relevant to citizens on the ground. The project must



be intercultural in nature, promoting "mutual understanding and tolerance" (6). The historical themes of the remembrance projects were broadened beyond just Nazism and Stalinism, although these are still the main focus. Recently, however, the Commission has become much more specific in guiding applicants to the kind of historical memories that should be commemorated and what specifically about totalitarianism should be remembered. For example, the historical events that would be prioritized for commemoration in 2014 were listed as the "100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I, the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 10 years of enlargement of the European Union to Central and Eastern Europe" (European Commission 2014d). For 2015, they were all related to the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII; "World War II and the associated rise of intolerance that enabled crimes against humanity; and the consequences of World War II for the post-war architecture of Europe: its division and the Cold War on the one hand, and the beginning of the European integration process following the Schuman Declaration in 1950 on the other hand" (European Commission 2015e). In 2016, the following events were prioritized; "the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, 1956 political and social mobilisation in central Europe, beginning of the Yugoslav Wars, and adoption of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in relation with the post WWII refugee situation in Europe" (European Commission 2016).

In 2016, there were three other specific points regarding what should be remembered besides anniversaries of important historical events. The first focused on "civic society and civic participation under totalitarian regimes" (European Commission 2016: 2). Specifically the aim is that recalling totalitarian experiences, "applicants shall develop a reflection on the misuses and hijacks of democratic rituals, notably by means of propaganda and official medias" focusing "on the differences between a fake and a real democracy" underlying the "benefits of a lively, strong

and independent civil society." The objective as stated by the Program Guide is to "show that civil society organisations are an indispensable link between citizens and authorities; that they play indeed an important role in democratic regimes to reach out to citizens and make their concerns known and relayed at the political level" (3). The third point concerns "ostracism and loss of citizenship under totalitarian regimes" (3). Prioritized questions under this theme include, "When can we consider that a category of the population is being ostracised? How to recognise a 'scapegoat' and to deconstruct the discourse leading to its seclusion and marginalisation? How can we cope with political discourses that use fears, prejudices and hatred against certain categories of the population, and how can we build counter-narratives? How to struggle against hate speech propagated through social medias and internet? What are the educational tools and legal instruments at EU and national levels to fight racism and xenophobia (such as anti-Semitism, anti-Roma, anti-Muslim feelings etc.), as well as homophobia and ostracism against other minorities?" (3). And finally, the third issue is "democratic transition and accession to the EU" analyzing "how the EU accession perspective influenced democratic standards and practices of previous dictatorships or authoritarian regimes" and how transition took place and what more needs to be done (3). It is evident then that the European Commission is trying to steer historical remembering in a particular way, that is in a way that recognizes and celebrates diversity while engaging citizens directly in democracy. This is different from the 2007-2013 program that did not give any specific guidelines beyond "active remembering" and supporting European fundamental values. Thus much like in the EP's historical memory policy brief, we see the Commission being more deliberate about *how* remembering should take place. Remembering, as we will see in the next chapter, can be practiced in ways that elide historical complexity, that deny the validity for multiple interpretations of the past, that pit one group against another, that

encourage exclusivity rather than inclusion and diversity, and that impose a single worldview instead of supporting an open dialogue on a variety of ideologies and viewpoints. By honing their guidelines for potential grantees, the EU hopes to create a memory field that is fundamentally rooted in dialogue so that reconciliation and integration can flourish.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have witnessed how the European memory field has changed since Eastern European accession to the EU in 2004. Once unified by the dominant and dominating memory regime of the Holocaust since the 1990s, the memory field now is now pillarized into two strong memory regimes, that of the Holocaust and that of totalitarianism. The two memory regimes are able to coexist without fracturing the memory field by on the one hand recognizing the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its ascribed centrality to European integration and on the other hand allowing space for the experiences of Communist victimization. By agreeing to condemn totalitarianism more broadly, EU institutions were able to negotiate a compromise that allows the memories of Nazism and Communism to coexist albeit very precariously. EU institutions recognized Communism officially through commemorative acts like passing resolutions, holding conferences and commemorating anniversaries and the August 23rd remembrance day. However, they stopped short of reaching for criminal-legal tools like criminalizing the denial of Communist crimes, the use of Communist symbols, and Communist ideology as such. In response to these hotly contested debates, the EU established the preferred mode in which remembering should take place—dialogue rather than the imposition of a single master narrative.

The following two chapters turn to the unofficial field of remembrance and explore the ways in which mnemonic activists and entrepreneurs are leveraging civil society to diffuse their own interpretations of the Communist past. The chapters ask, What does current unofficial transnational historical memory activism in CEE look like? Who are these mnemonic agents and what are they doing and why? Which memory entrepreneurs are successful and which are not in the European public space? I take a look at two such organizations that address the historical memory of Communism with an effort to Europeanize these historical memories—the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in Prague (Chapter 3) and the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity in Warsaw (Chapter 4).

### Chapter 3: Victimhood Regionalism: Platform of European Memory and Conscience

This chapter and Chapter 4 continue to rely on Bernhard and Kubik's concept of mnemonic warriors and mnemonic pluralists in order to differentiate between two very different strategies of remembering ostensibly the same memory—Communism. In order to make this differentiation, I focus my analysis on three of Bernhard and Kubik's dominant strategies of mnemonic actors—the *Who*, *What* and *How*.<sup>49</sup> Given that both the Platform and the Network are dealing with the same history and are working in the same region at the same time, how do they come up with strategies that are so radically different? The Platform focuses exclusively on victimhood and wants to see anything to do with Communism criminalized and the Network focuses on recognition of Eastern Europe's unique past and reconciliation through dialogue. The

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<sup>49</sup> Recall that Bernhard and Kubik's model also includes a *When* and *Why*. I eschew these in my analysis because the *When* is too similar to the *What* and like I discuss in the introductory chapter the *Why*, based on claims to power is less relevant to civil society actors that are motivated more by conviction than winning elections.

answer lies in the *Who* and *What* which then determines the *How*. Borrowing from Snow and Benford (1988), we can treat the *Who* and *What* as part of "diagnostic framing" or the identification of the problem. What do these organizations see as being the problem that motivates them to action? The *Who* and *What* for the Platform and the Network turn out to be very different. Recall from Chapter 1 that the Platform sees the *Who* in memory politics as a contest of us *versus* them. There are only two groups of contestants—us and everyone else who is against us. This leads to the definition of a clear enemy, which must be defeated at all costs. The "us" in victimhood regionalism is usually the victim group. Meanwhile, the Network sees the mnemonic contest as a game of us *and* them. While there are groups with differing interpretations of the past they also deserve to be in the memory field competing for their versions of the past to be heard. This leads to avoidance of defining anyone as the enemy because that a priori delegitimizes them from participating in the memory field. In reconciliatory regionalism, victimhood is not seen as the primary identity marker of "us" or "them." The *What* describes the temporal and geographic qualities of the memory that is contested. The Platform essentialized Communism by treating it an ahistorical object whose essence is constant over time and space. The Platform collapses Communist ideology with practice and erases all complexities and differences among Communisms in different time periods and different countries into a single idea, the essence of evil. Such a definition of what Communism is makes the crude equation of Communism with Nazism easier and seemingly more natural.

The Network, on the other hand, avoids the essentializing of Communism by acknowledging historical and geographical complexities of Communism and therefore making the blunt comparison of Communism to Nazism feel less evident. To summarize, victimhood regionalism, the kind espoused by the mnemonic warriors at the Platform, relies on (1) defining

the enemy (the *Who*) and (2) essentializing the memory (the *What*). Reconciliatory regionalism, the kind practiced by the mnemonic pluralists at the Network, relies on (1) not defining an enemy (the *Who*) and (2) not essentializing the memory (the *What*).

These different diagnoses of *Who* the contest is between and *What* it is over lead to a very different "prognostic framing" or the *How*. Because the Platform sees its version of history as the only correct one, it also believes that it cannot compromise because it alone is in the right and everyone else is wrong. Because only one version of history can win "ours" or "theirs," the Platform must defeat its enemies (and their interpretations of history) without compromising. The Platform must impose its memory regime of Communism on the entire memory field or otherwise it has lost. Thus by advocating for the condemnation of Communism everywhere and in all historical periods and by criminalizing any sign of Communism, the Platform wishes to ensure that only its memory of Communism will dominate the memory field—there is no room for multiple competing memory regimes to populate the memory field at the same time. The Network, on the other hand, seeks to engage in dialogue. It too thinks that they are right, but they acknowledge that others have a right to voice their interpretations of history too and on an equal playing field in the memory field. This leads to a more reconciliatory posture, one where negotiation is possible and compromise has the potential at least to be experienced as success. This prevents the Network from pursuing such radical retributive measures and eschewing criminalization in preference for dialogue and education.

The third basic framing task, according to Snow and Benford (1988), is "motivational framing." Interestingly, the Platform and Network's motivational framing for those who do not care about Communism at all is in fact quite similar. Both appeal to European audiences and grant makers in the same language of European fundamental values like democracy, freedom,

peace, justice, reconciliation and human rights. In other words, they frame their mission of diffusing their Communism memories in the language of European values to appeal to audiences that may not be interested in Communism or history but who do care about European democracy and human rights. Whether this motivational framing is accurate or not, this is exactly what European audiences and grant-making institutions like the European Commission want to hear. In Chapter 2 we saw constant references to these values in EU historical policy-making. For example, from the debate over the 2005 EP Resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism, Mr. Frattini, Vice-President of the Commission, said, "It is fair to say that remembrance can make our values stronger." And these values are very clearly enumerated, for example, in the 2005 Resolution on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945. They are "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights" on which "Europe was founded."<sup>50</sup> Yet we have also seen, in the EP policy brief on historical memory and remembrance, for example, the newfound imperative for dialogue, diversity and respect for multiple reinterpretations of the past. The EU hopes to create a space where multiple and often conflicting versions of historical experience can be included and debated rather than continuing with the old strategy of imposing

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<sup>50</sup> This dominant myth of the positive foundations of the EU allow the Holocaust (the negative foundational myth) to be presented as a short-term and unique aberration. Mr. Schmit, leader of the French Presidency of the EU in the debates over the 2005 Resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism, exemplifies this in saying that, "The Shoah will always remain a break, a fracture, in European history" (European Parliament 2005e). This makes difficult equating the Communist regimes with the Nazi regime, the primary executor of the Shoah, because the Communist systems of CEE were not short-term "breaks" in history; they were European history. Recall Wurtz's comments during the 2005 Resolution on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, when he accused CEE of "questioning the cornerstone of the vision of Europe and the world, born on 8 May 1945, namely that Nazism was neither a dictatorship nor a tyranny like any other, but rather the complete break with society as a whole."

a top-down hegemonic historical narrative. This places the Network at an advantage not only in attracting EU funds for its projects but also at being more successful in having its historical memories heard, recognized and formally institutionalized. By that same token, it places the Platform at an obvious disadvantage. The Network is in fact more successful in applying for EU financial support and will most likely continue to be as it develops. The Platform will have to look to other sources or moderate its victimhood strategy. Of course just because the dialogue imperative is in place now at the EU, does not necessarily mean that it will continue this way indefinitely if political conditions in Europe change. If the dialogue imperative turns into a truth imperative then the tables will turn (for a summary of these arguments see Table 3 and Table 4).

Finally, what does it matter if an organization adopts a victimhood regionalism strategy or a reconciliatory regionalism strategy beyond how well each group does? These two concepts are useful in that they help us pinpoint how mnemonic actors identify mnemonic problems (the *Who* and *What*) and therefore the solutions (*How*) that they propose to solve them. More than that, they help us sift through the motivational framing that all mnemonic actors use to convince others of the righteousness of their cause. These concepts allow us to figure out which groups actually might contribute to the values of democracy, justice and reconciliation that they all espouse. Later, in Chapter 5, I show how a victimhood strategy is more likely to exacerbate political and national/regional cleavages (leading to a renationalization of memory that stymies reconciliation) while a reconciliatory strategy is more likely to lead to negotiation, compromise and therefore mutual understanding. Moreover, entire regional identities are at stake. Just like mnemonic entrepreneurship at the national level leads to national-identity building so mnemonic action at the regional level leads to regional-identity building. How a region chooses to define itself will determine how it relates to other regions around them.



For now, let us consider in more detail the victimhood strategy of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience in Prague. I begin with a short outline of the contemporary historical memory debates and policies in the Czech Republic to give a backdrop of the national context in which the Platform operates. I then give a background on the establishment of the Platform and explore in detail its victimhood regionalism strategy.

### **Czech Historical Memory Debates and Policies**

In the Czech Republic, as in Poland, the post-Communist coming to terms with the past has been guided by a "thick line" policy (Tyszka 2016). This strategy aims to draw a solid demarcation between the past and the future; the atrocities, crimes, pain and indiscretions of the past should remain in the past for the greater good of securing a safe, united, prosperous future. The Czech Republic in particular had a strong decommunization effort, more similar to East German than Poland, making the thick line not that thick at all. The Czech government used a string of policies like lustration, rehabilitation of victims, and restitution to come to actively terms with the Communist past during the transition and they came earlier and were more stringent than in Poland. Lavinia Stan (2009) explains that the Czech Republic's 1991 lustration law was the most severe; high Communist officials implicated by state files were banned from political and top academic and managerial posts in state-owned companies, whereas in Poland one had to voluntarily confess one's collaboration and then one could serve in public office. But the Czech Republic was criticized internationally for instituting collective guilt by banning from office all former Communist officials and secret agents, whether or not they personally committed human rights abuses. Then in 1993, the Czech Republic passed a law on the illegality of the Communist regime and the Communist party as a criminal organization. It also eliminated the statute of limitations for crimes committed under Communism. But the Czech Republic tried

only two top officials: Miroslav Stepan for suppressing student demonstrations in 1989 (served 2 years) and former Prime Minister Lubormir Strougal for killing three people in 1949 (acquitted for abuse of power) (Nedelsky 2004). Finally, in 1996, the Czech Republic opened archives for victims to see their own files. It expanded access in 2002 by allowing to see StB agents' files. Files that could harm national interest, endanger lives, or endanger foreign agents remain closed. Files are closed to foreign citizens, including Slovaks who used to have Czechoslovak citizenship.<sup>51</sup>

This decommunization period of the 1990s took place under the right-wing Prime Minister Václav Klaus, although he actually had moderate views on how to deal with the Communist past. Rupnik (2001) explains that Klaus did not believe in a blanket condemnation or criminalization of whole swaths of societies in order to come to terms with Communism. He quotes him as saying in 1997 that, "I do not believe that a coming to terms with the past can be achieved by an abstract entity called society, nor that it is correct to speak of some national guilt which therefore would have to be collective. The solution of the problem cannot be reached by some simple act of the state or a declaration of a public figure, a scientist, or an artist. In substance, this is a private matter for each of us..." Rupnik faults political maneuvering for his taking a stronger stance on Communism. The Civic Forum Party (1989-1991) fell apart and produced two successors, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) led by Klaus and the Civic Movement (OH) led by ex-dissidents. Rupnik argues that for Kalus lustration made it possible "to clarify who stands where, who really wants consequential change for our society, our

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<sup>51</sup> It is beyond the scope of this section to discuss the competing explanations for why some countries like the Czech Republic instituted more stringent transitional justice measures than others. Here, I simply aim to sketch the historical memory environment of the Czech Republic leading up to the time of the establishment of the Platform.

economy, and who, on the other hand, wants to draw us into new experiments carried out by the old experimenters we know so well." Rupnik explains that the "'old experimenters' was a reference to the 1968 reformers associated with 'socialism with a human face' some of whom later joined the dissident movement and were members of OH. So the man who a year earlier did not want to distinguish between Communists and non-Communists now wanted to clarify the issues going back to 1968."

Despite these relatively robust decommunization measures, there were some critics of the thick line who wanted to see more retribution for Communist crimes. Tyszka quotes Czech historian Muriel Blaive as complaining about the impediment that the thick line has been to a true public discussion about the role of Czechs in "compromising" themselves by either supporting or not actively rejecting Communism. Conservative politicians in Czech Republic, like in Poland, often argue that by not making all perpetrators of Communist crimes pay for them it teaches younger generations poor moral habits. And while the decommunization efforts were relatively the strongest in Central and Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic is the only country in CEE with an unreformed Communist Party, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>52</sup> Few political leaders resigned when their collaborationsist pasts were made public and few perpetrators were tried and sentenced making "the criminal nature of the Communist regime ring more hollow than ever" (Rupnik 2001).

In 2006, under the right-wing Civic Democrat Party (ODS), the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes was established as the successor to The Office for the Documentation and

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<sup>52</sup> Its membership is small; about 43,000 members and 33/200 seats in the Czech Chamber of Deputies, 2/81 seats in the Senate and 3/21 in the European Parliament as of 2016. But every so often Czech Senators like Štětina and Mejstřík try to ban the Communist Party to prevent the Social Democratic Party from attempting to incorporate it into its own ranks and forming a strong coalition.

the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism, which was established in 1995 in the Ministry of Justice. It was incorporated into the police system, and so it had national jurisdiction. The Institute launches investigations, archives and digitizes security files and makes them available to authorities and the public, and undertakes educational campaigns, including publishing historical books and periodicals.

The 1993 law criminalizing the entire period from 1948 to 1989 with no distinction between party members or public servants and its leaders has led to an official historical memory of Communism that is contested in public debates. Rupnik (2001) describes the two most important contestations of this official memory; that the average party member should not be compared to party leaders and that each period during the Communist era should be treated distinctly. For example, the Stalinist period filled with widespread terror should be differentiated from the post-1953 period of subsequent thawing, which should be differentiated from the post-1968 period when there was a crack-down on civil liberties by a new hardline government trying to normalize the post-Prague Spring situation.

Thus while there are discussions about the historical memories of Communism in the Czech Republic they are not as heated nor as partisan. Ondřej Matějka, First Deputy Director of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, explains that "our political spectrum is not as divided as in Poland or Slovakia" and generally describes the public interest in these debates, unlike in Poland, as low. "First, the [lustration] regulation was for 5 years and the law is still in effect. There is very low support in the public anymore for this law. [The] Minister of Finance [Babis] was elected even though everyone knew he collaborated. Nobody cares! Because it was 25 years ago." Yet the debates rail on, and it is within context that the Platform's life slowly comes into existence in the mid-2000s.

## Background

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience is an international NGO, established in 2011 and based in Prague, with twenty founding members and the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes as its patron organization. The then-Czech Prime Minister Petr Nečas described it as a "cooperation between institutions that deal with the research of the totalitarian past" whose main task is to "coordinate research and projects regarding the coming to terms with the totalitarian past on the European level" (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic 2011). As of 2016, it is made up of 56 member organizations from thirteen EU Member States (most of which are from Central/Eastern Europe except for two from Sweden and the Netherlands) as well as Albania, Ukraine, Moldova, Iceland, Canada and the United States. Countries with the most members are the Czech Republic and Germany. Members include Communist victim associations like the Confederation of Political Prisoners of the Czech Republic, memorial sites and museums like the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial or the Hungarian House of Terror Museum, groups that are trying to build memorials like the American Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation or to destroy them like the Bulgarian Citizens' Initiative for Dismantling the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia, national memory institutes like the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, and other NGOs like the Czech Post Bellum, a group of Czech historians and journalists who collects memories of witnesses of important 20th century historical events and shares them with the public (See Table 6 in the Appendix for a full list of members).

The Platform was born out of a Czech initiative but thanks to an international network of elite activists in the area of Communism remembrance. The idea for an organization like the Platform started in 2008 through a series of conferences and public hearings held in Brussels

during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU (2008) followed by the Czech Presidency (2009).

The impetus came from Czech Senator Martin Mejstřík and his assistant Neela Winkelmann as well as the newly formed Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague. Major support for the Platform came from major international documents that came out of these conferences like the 2008 Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism and the 2009 European Parliament Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism. The Czechs organized a working group by 2010 and in 2011, with a four-year grant from the International Visegrad Fund, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience was officially established in 2011.

The Platform's President, Göran Lindblad, recalls,

I was the Rapporteur [on crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes] in the Council of Europe in the Parliamentary Assembly [PACE]. And then I was invited to different events. One event was the first of May speech in Prague [May 1, 2007]. That was the first time I had ever spoken on the first of May. But the organization of the survivors, the political prisoners, [Confederation of Czech Political Prisoners] they invited me. They had an event [forum entitled "Against Communist, Against Fascism, Against Totalitarianism"] at the Letna field where the Communists had the first of May parade. [...] There was this initiative my Senator Mejstřík and then the Prague Declaration. And the Prague Declaration was in the process. Neela Winkelmann was involved in it very much. She worked for him. I was involved in the drafting of it. Part of the Declaration is based on my report [PACE report]. Part of it is based on something else. But I was there. We signed it. The first signatory is Vaclav Havel, the second is Gauck and the third is myself. And after that it was the resolution 2009 in the European Parliament that we need a platform for this and that and based on the Prague Declaration and the decision of the European Parliament we started to call it the European Platform of Memory and Conscience. (personal communication 2014)

I discuss the international context out of which the Platform was born in further detail in Chapter 5.

The Platform got off the ground thanks to the International Visegrad Foundation grant and office space in the already existing Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR) in Prague. Some of its projects like its school reader and travelling exhibition have been funded from the European Commission's "Europe for Citizens" 2007-2013 program (although the

applicant was USTR not the Platform), but also through private grants like from the Konrad Adenauer Institute, which is a German-based conservative think tank. In 2014, the Platform received a large operating grant from the Hungarian Orbán government.

The Platform is not a research institute, rather it focuses on awareness raising and lobbying efforts to criminalize Communism. It distributes materials like secondary school readers on the victims of Nazism and Communism and tours a travelling exhibition on the victims of totalitarianism that reaches expert and lay audiences alike from Tusnád, Romania to Strasbourg, Toronto and Washington D.C. It hosts numerous international conferences throughout Europe to bring together academics, politicians, public figures and others to discuss issues surrounding Communism remembrance and commemoration as well as criminal-legal solutions to unmet needs for retributive justice. The Platform organizes and participates in numerous commemorative events, especially on August 23rd, the European Day for the Remembrance of Victims of Stalinism and Nazism. It bestows freedom fighters with its annual award for people who defend human rights. At the same time, it has also started what it calls the "Justice Project" through which it hopes to establish an international criminal court to try Communist crimes (I discuss this project in more detail in a subsequent section.) Thus the Platform engages in a two-pronged strategy of reaching out to lay people through grassroots activities through tools such as secondary school visits, publicly accessible exhibitions, and public concerts, as well as elites and leaders who potentially have the power to alter the official historical narrative of Communism remembrance.

Everyday activities and planning of the Platform are conducted by the Managing Director, Neela Winkelmann. The Platform is governed by a Council of Members, composed of a representative of each member institution, which meets once a year to make decisions

regarding membership and budget. It also elects the President, Managing Director, Executive Board, Supervisory Board and the Board of Trustees. The Executive Board is made up of four representatives holding two-year terms (and need not be members of the Council of Members) who govern the activities of the Platform in the period in between meetings of the Council of Members. The Supervisory Board consists of three members of the Council of Members who provide review and oversight for the Platform. Finally, the Board of Trustees, is formed by at least five people from public life and at least three countries who are not members of the Council of Members. Currently, the Board of Trustees includes prominent figures like MEPs including Sandra Kalniete, VP of the EPP Group, Vytautas Landsbergis former president of Lithuania, former dissidents like László Tóké, Werner Schulz, and Wojciech Roszkowski, and authors like Stéphane Courtois and Anne Applebaum.

### **Victimhood Regionalism Strategy**

Recall that the Platform's victimhood regionalism strategy relies on (1) essentializing the memory (the *What*) and (2) defining the enemy (the *Who*). Essentializing Communism into a fundamentally evil object leads to its oversimplification, which facilitates the moral equation of Communism with Nazism, if not its elevation as the greater evil. Defining the enemy in terms of "us" versus "them" leads to the dogged adherence to a singular truth—one's own truth—and the denial of other possible interpretations of history. This victimhood regionalism strategy of the Platform encourages it to prognosticate the criminalization of Communism as the only solution to the problem of the legacy of Communism. More importantly, this strategy is out of step with the EU's dialogic imperative and thus holds the Platform back from accessing EU funds and diffusing its historical memories more widely across Europe. Despite the Platform's good-faith



commitment to reconciliation, the victimhood regionalism strategy may do more to exacerbate political and regional cleavages than to heal historic wounds.

### Essentializing Communism

The Platform essentializes Communism into a sacred object—it comes to stand in for the ultimate universal evil hard to pinpoint or define. The word "Communism" comes to collapse within itself Communist ideology, Communist thinkers, Communist parties and organizations, Communist sympathizers, and the lived experiences of Communism across time and geography. The term becomes omnipotent and all encompassing. Boiling down all these facets of Communism to the essence of evil makes the concept purely symbolic, mythical and almost untouchable. This is problematic from, not only a historical perspective but also a reconciliation perspective, because it erases all the nuances and diversity of experiences of Communism across the globe, stymieing dialogue rather than encouraging it. Evaluating Communism definitively in such a singular way excludes other voices from the conversation that have had different ideas about Communism or divergent experiences of it. By painting Communism with such a broad brush, how might people from Venezuela, Italy, the Czech Republic, and China possibly come to any mutual understanding regarding Communism?

According to Ondřej Matějka, the First Deputy Director of the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, the Platform is the perfect example of a group that takes the "anti-Communism" position. He explains that the term "anti-Communism" is used as a way to identify a group of people who in the Communist history debate take the position of focusing on Communist crimes and "individual perpetrators and victims, and who try to teach young people that Communism was all bad, that there was nothing good about it" [interview]. In his point of view, this strong moral stance actually halts debate rather than fosters it. The term "anti-

Communism" itself suggests a dichotomous debate, either you are anti-Communist or pro-Communist, with no space in between. Jaroslav Müller, a retired Czech professor, translator, and member of a member group<sup>53</sup> of the Platform, does not shy away from the "anti-Communist" label because he likens it to being anti-Nazi, which is morally respectable. Müller says that "being anti-Communist and anti-Nazi are variants on the same thing—both systems are evil" (personal communication 2014). This is, I argue, precisely the effect of victimhood regionalism that relies on essentializing historical memories—it prevents reconciliation because it stymies an open exchange of ideas and points of view by people who have had very different experiences of Communism. It narrows the debate down to two possible positions; you either see Communism as something bad or as something good.

The strategy however may seem as an attractive one because, at least on the face of it, it simplifies what is a historically complex set of ideologies, movements and political systems. It provides a very simple moral compass; Communism was evil therefore anti-Communism must be good. But that still leaves the problem of how to convince others that how we remember Communism matters for those living today and struggling with pressing issues like unemployment or poverty. By essentializing Communism and distilling into a singular evil, the Platform gives Communism more agency; it makes something of the past seem even more potent and ever-more alive and present in today's world. That is precisely what allows the Platform today to make far-reaching and overgeneralized claims about the legacies of Communism in CEE and Europe as a whole. For example, the Platform's slogan is "Democracy matters." That is hard to argue with, but the Platform argues that democracy in Europe today is in crisis

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<sup>53</sup> This group is the Union of Auxiliary Technical Units, which were a system of forced labor military camps between 1950-54 in the Czech Republic and other Eastern bloc countries, liquidated shortly after Stalin's death. Prof. Muller was forced to labor in one of these camps.

predominantly because of the undealt legacies of Communism. For example, in a June, 2014 letter to all 28 EU governments, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Presidency of the EU Council and the Council of Europe, titled, "Wake up call to Europe: democracy is in a crisis," the Platform seems to blame Communism for everything that is troublesome in contemporary Europe (Platform of European Memory and Conscience 2014a, 2014b). The Platform correctly identifies a litany of contemporary social problems in Eastern Europe—high levels of corruption, low trust in politicians and the mainstream media—and Europe in general like the rising tide of "extremist, nationalist and xenophobic parties both on the right and the left." But the take-away from the letter is that all of these problems are the result of an insufficient reconciliation with the Communist past. European leaders need to "learn from the totalitarian past" and to "deal with the suffering of victims of totalitarianism as well as with the crimes of the perpetrators." The message is that if we continue prosecuting remaining Communist criminals, compensating their victims and commemorating fallen and living dissidents (but only true dissidents, not those tainted with complacency or collaboration), then all of these problems will disappear. If we do not do that, we are bound to repeat European history and fall victim again to totalitarian regimes bent on destroying democracy. By distilling Communism into an other-worldly and ultimate evil, the Platform is able to ascribe indefinite potency to it and present it as a danger lurking just around the corner if we do not prosecute more Communist criminals and remove from public life anyone who has ever been associated with former or existing Communist parties.

Because the mnemonic contest is not just over how we should evaluate the Communist past but also about what that Communist past was, the struggle over terminology is an intense one for mnemonic actors of all stripes. Winkelmann points out that Communist regimes

themselves referred to their political systems as "socialism" and not "Communism," which remains a problem today because it creates confusion between the two terms with socialism conjuring up Western European ideals of social democracy. She points out that the European Commission still uses the term socialism, while thanks to the Platform's efforts and the Prague Declaration, the European Parliament now refers to Communism. The Platform prefers to use the term Communism over socialism because the former conveys the totalitarian severity and control with which these regimes ruled CEE while the latter refers to a more benign and egalitarian system more compatible with democracy. But because the Platform treats Communism as the ultimate evil, it condemns any ideology or movement, like socialism or even social democracy, as tainted by Communism and therefore deems it illegitimate.

Another struggle over terminology revolves around the use of the term "totalitarianism" to identify Communism (and Nazism). Recall the heated debates over terminology surrounding the 2006 Council of Europe Resolution No. 1481 when Communism was condemned internationally for the first time as described in Chapter 2. The leader behind that resolution and the current president of the Platform, Göran Lindblad, holds the view that all forms of Communism no matter when or where were totalitarian. Thus the Platform makes sure to portray Communism as one monolithic, unchanging object that can be evaluated in only a single way as something uniformly evil. In fact, the Platform would prefer the reference to be simply to Communism, but totalitarianism has become the accepted term of reference at the European level. On its website, where the Platform lists its official goals, the term "Communism" is not even used once, rather the term "totalitarianism"<sup>54</sup> is used because it better fits into the

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<sup>54</sup> Stan and Vancea (2015) discuss the "Europeanization" of the memory of totalitarianism, but the term has a long historiography in public discourse and academics. Engerman describes the

vocabulary of the European institutions. In fact, no totalitarian regimes are named by name, leaving one to wonder what regimes the Platform is really concerned with. By cloaking its message within the language of totalitarianism, the Platform can escape the charge of radical anti-Communism. In fact, the totalitarian label can be seen as a boon to the anti-Communism cause because it unambiguously marks Communism as something that is morally wrong and undesirable. At one of the Platform's lobbying meetings at the European Parliament, a Latvian MEP mentioned that, "we've made progress because since 2009 Communism has been

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term first being coined by Mussolini with regard to the total control of Italy by his Fascist Party. By the 1930s it was "lumped in" with Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia (Stan and Vancea 2015: 204). In academics having started out in the left-wing Frankfurt School, it moved to the anti-Soviet left discourse in the US after the war. The term entered mainstream discourse with Truman's 1947 Doctrine when he said that, "totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace" (206). In US scholarship, it traces back to the rise in the discipline/area study of Sovietology. A seminal work that describes the Stalinist system as totalitarian was written by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski in *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956) enumerating six characteristics of totalitarian states: official ideology; single party system; monopolies on violence and communication; police control; and total control over the economy. The concept encompassed, for example, interwar Germany, Italy and the USSR. In fact Friedrich wanted to do a comparative analysis of Nazism and Stalinism, which the outbreak of WWII interrupted. But already in the 50s, some like George Kennan were critical of such an all-encompassing term arguing that Nazism and Stalinism are two "highly disparate things" (207) and doubting the existence of a generic totalitarianism at all. But by the early 60s the term lost relevance to most social scientists as the USSR evolved under the leadership of Khrushchev. As Engerman writes, "the term still remained an accepted part of public discussion about the USSR, leading Frederick Barghoorn [historian] to complain that the word was suitable only for 'politicians and journalists,' who used the term 'imprecisely [and] all too emotionally'" (222). Engerman writes that sociologist Alex Inkeles, for example, "argued that the totalitarian model 'had a great deal to say' at one point, but changes in the USSR since Stalin's death made it 'less relevant'" (223). Friedrich's concept of static totalitarianism, by the 60s was vehemently challenged by political scientists, who following Robert Dahl, were tracing the political development of the USSR in terms of its industrialization, bureaucratization and modernizing society. Yet some USSR analysts like Brzezinski, while conceding to social scientists the changing nature of the Soviet system, dropped the totalitarian model but held on to one of its key features, namely the notion of party control which resolved the "power" question so central to sociological analyses. By the 1960s, it was accepted to understand totalitarianism as a "stage in the evolution of the Soviet Union" (225).

recognized as totalitarianism." The language of totalitarianism is also used to get more supporters on board. A German MEP said, "we need to tell Western Europe that totalitarianism is not only an issue of Central and Eastern Europe. In Southern Europe particularly (Portugal, Spain and Italy) there were totalitarian regimes too. It's a 'common problem.'" This is a fine line to walk because although it may seem attractive to frame totalitarianism as a broader phenomenon than just Nazism and Communism so that it resonates with a broader audience, there is the potential for "frame extension" (Benford and Snow 2000: 625). The danger is that the extension goes to far and the meaning of the term totalitarianism becomes overstretched and thereby less potent. The Southern European regimes are usually referred to as authoritarian and not totalitarian. The Platform would prefer to reserve "totalitarianism" for specifically Nazism and Communism so that Communism does not end up being compared to every other "minor" anti-democratic regime in history. The Platform wants the main reference point to be Nazism, the ultimate evil regime, so that its message of Communism as essentially evil is loud and clear.

Essentializing Communism makes the concealing of historical complexities easier, which makes the strategy of equalizing Communism with Nazism more plausible and attractive. If Communism is so evil, what is a more sensible ideology/regime to compare it to than Nazism? What system of rule in 20th century Europe would be more appropriate to compare Communism to if not Nazism? As we will see in the next chapter where I discuss the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, this strategy of equalizing Communism and Nazism is not self-apparent or automatic. It is because the Platform essentializes Communism (the *What* of the mnemonic contest) that the equalizing tactic makes so much sense to them and their supporters. In what follows, I describe just how this tactic is operationalized.

Although in the Platform's statute the organization notes the "exceptionality and uniqueness of the Holocaust," most of its projects aim at an explicit comparison of Nazism and Communism. Specifically, two of the Platform's major projects rely explicitly on forwarding the version of historical memory that *equates* Nazism and Communism sometimes slipping into the argument that Communism was *worse* than Nazism. One of these is a secondary school reader titled, *Lest We Forget. Memory of Totalitarianism in Europe*,<sup>55</sup> which has been published in five languages—English, German, French, Czech and Ukrainian<sup>56</sup> (Purves 2013). The Platform received funding for this project from the Europe for Citizens program, the Visegrad Fund and the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian regimes. The front cover has a picture of a bird perched atop a barbed wire fence, evoking the possibility of hope and transcendence of the divisions wrought by the walls of Nazi concentration camps and the Iron Curtain. On the front cover we read that this reader is aimed toward older secondary school students *anywhere in Europe*. Thus the aim of the reader is to transnationalize the memories of Communism that it holds within. The reader is composed of 30 short biographies of heroes and victims of totalitarian regimes organized by nationality across 16 countries. Opening the book, we see a map of Europe with the names of the individuals and the country they come from. Quickly one notices that most of the figures are from Central and Eastern Europe. No Southern European countries are included, nor Yugoslavia, and neither is most of Western Europe. The only Western countries that are included are Sweden, the Netherlands and Austria, which have one biography each. Every other country has two, and Ukraine has three. Thus pretty quickly in the book the reader

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<sup>55</sup> ENRS advertises the reader on its website.

<sup>56</sup> The Platform distributes the reader widely. For example, in 2014, the Platform sent the reader to every American Congressman in partnership with its American member organization, the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

gets the impression that despite the title, the book is not really about "totalitarianism in Europe" but rather Communism in Central and Eastern Europe.

The aim of the project, the book states, is to "rouse the interest of today's young Europeans in the recent history of Europe, which was forcibly divided until just a generation ago." The Platform and its partners hope that the reader will "contribute toward furthering the respect and understanding among European citizens across the former East-West divide and toward deepening the integration of a free and democratic Europe." The reader hopes to teach students about the "horrors of totalitarianism and about the essential importance of promoting democracy, human rights, European values and the rule of law in all of Europe." The book includes a timeline<sup>57</sup> of the 20th century that shows the length of each non-democratic regime in each country, including "Communist regimes," "Nazi regime/occupation," and "fascist/authoritarian regime." Thus even though the book is about totalitarianism, Fascism and authoritarianism are included, yet countries like Italy, Spain or Greece are not included. Evidently, the Platform understands totalitarianism to be the two regimes that most concern Central and Eastern Europe—Nazism and Communism.

The book's introduction is titled, "The Tragic Memory of Europe's Totalitarian Regimes," written by Stéphane Courtois, the infamous author of the *Black Book of Communism*. The introduction explains that the 1920s in Europe "saw the emergence of a political phenomenon unprecedented in history: totalitarianism, which led to the greatest tragedy that Europe had ever known and whose memory today still leaves deep traces in each of our countries." We learn that

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<sup>57</sup> While very helpful in placing the biographies on a historical timeline, this also serves as a very evocative depiction of the fact that Communist regimes in most of these national cases lasted much longer than the Nazi/fascist/authoritarian regimes. This point is often brought up by people who argue that Communist regimes were more destructive simply because they lasted longer.



"totalitarianism was born in Russia following the putsch organised in Saint Petersburg on 7 November 1917 by the Bolsheviks, an extremist revolutionary party led by Vladimir Lenin." We learn about the "triple monopoly" of the totalitarian system over the economic, political and social spheres. We learn about Stalin "reinvigorating totalitarian dynamics" which led to what "Ukrainians call the Holodomor, a term equivalent to the Shoah for the Jews." We learn that Stalin created the "vast system of concentration camps called the Gulag" and launched the Great Terror in 1936-38, killing "more than 700,000 people." We then read on that, the "Communist totalitarian model was rapidly copied by two other totalitarian leaders: Benito Mussolini in Italy starting in 1922 and Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933." Thus, in this short introduction, we see an attempt to draw a narrative that shows the pure evil of totalitarianism as stemming from Nazi Germany in the 1930s but from Russia in the 1920s. Russian Communism then is the foundation of the evil that came in WWII. The first Holocaust is the Holodomor and not the Shoah. The first concentration camps are not Nazi ones but Soviet ones. It is Mussolini and Hitler who learned from Lenin and Stalin, and not the other way around or even through at the very least mutual exchange and borrowing.<sup>58</sup>

Following four paragraphs on the War itself, we get to the memory of this history. I quote this section at length because it gets to the heart of what motivates this reader and the Platform's work in general:

Of course, the military defeat of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and the public and official condemnation of the Nazi regime and its crimes at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945-1946 permitted the tragic memory of the victims to be expressed and mourning to take place. [...] the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the mass crime and recognizing the unique nature of the Shoah. Today, with the exception of a few deniers and marginal neo-Nazi groups, nobody in Europe upholds a glorious memory of Nazism or Fascism. In contrast, since the pre-war times

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<sup>58</sup> The extent to which these four leaders learned from each other and modeled each other's policies could be the topic of a whole other book.

and mainly from 1945 to the 1980s, Europe has known a powerful glorifying memory of Communism...

Thus we see the explicit juxtaposition of how the two systems have been reconciled and how they are remembered. The author takes issue with what he perceives as a negative memory of Nazism and a positive memory of Communism. Courtois goes on to explain why these two diverging memory regimes exist. This divergence is "based on the significant contribution of the Red Army to the defeat of Nazi Germany, on the Communist parties' participation in the anti-Fascist resistance after 22 June 1941, and finally on the myth of the Soviet 'liberation' of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1944-1945." He goes on to explain that this "liberation" was imposed on previously independent countries by the Soviet Union. Continuing, he writes, "After 1945, a powerful glorifying memory of Communism developed in the USSR and in the various 'people's democracies', as well as in Western Europe under the influence of powerful Communist parties—in particular France and Italy—deftly mixing the victory over Nazism and the triumph of the Communist political and social model." Courtois explains that it was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall that the "glorious memory of Communism start[ed] withering away" because of the "regained freedom of speech of innumerable victims of the Communist regimes, the opening of the Communist archives, and the work of historians" such as himself. He claims that the publication of the *Black Book of Communism* "promoted the public exposure of the tragic memory of Communism. On this occasion everyone was able to judge the distance that separated the memories of the 20th century in Western Europe and Eastern Europe, the halves of Europe separated by the Iron Curtain since 1945-1946, which have *begun* to reunite since 1989-1991" [emphasis mine].

This is precisely the departure point for this reader and the Platform—the two memories have "begun" to reunite but have not yet successfully reunited into a single collective memory of

20th century totalitarianism. The attempt of this secondary school reader then is to bring these two memories into unison by imposing the equally evil narrative. Courtois explains that, "one would think that the fall of Communism and the reunification of Europe would favor a common endeavor regarding the history and memory of 'our Europe' and 'the other Europe'." However, more than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe is confronted by the persistences of *three very distinct forms of memory of Communism*, in particular regarding World War II." He then describes these memory regimes with the first being in a "large part of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular the Baltic states and the western part of Ukraine" where they "preserve a tragic memory of Communism, marked by the invasion of the Red Army, mass terror and forty-five years of dictatorship, censorship and imprisonment. In contrast, Western Europe, which has enjoyed peace and prosperity since 1945 thanks to American protection, often cultivates a glorious memory of Communism based on the memory of what François Furet has called the 'universal appeal of the October revolution', on the anti-Fascism of the 1930s (the Popular Front, the Spanish Civil War etc.) and on the active participation of Communists in the resistance to the Nazi and Fascist occupations after 22 June 1941." Thus Courtois recognizes the role of the Red Army and Communist factions in general in defeating Nazi forces, but he seems to think that these memories are privileged over others that deserve equal attention. Thus he writes, "For half a century, powerful Communist propaganda has worked to install an exaggerated memory of anti-Fascism for which the Communist claimed a monopoly, as well as an amnesia of the Soviet-Nazi alliance and more generally of the totalitarian dimension of the Communist regimes." The third memory regime that Courtois describes is that of Russia. He characterizes Russia as being "caught in a torn memory, tragic and glorious at the same time." He claims that the memory of terror affects all of Russian society, including the victims, the

perpetrators and those who simultaneously fall into both of these categories. Yet in post-Communist Russia, the government is concentrated on building a "Russian identity based on the memory of the 'Great Patriotic War'" while concealing Communist crimes and presenting occupation as liberation. Despite playing such a central role in the history of totalitarianism as Courtois himself outlines and representing one of the three major memory regimes of Communism, biographies of Russian heroes resisting Nazism and Communism do not make it into the reader. There seems to be an aversion to say anything positive at all about the Soviet Union, Russia or Russians. In this way, the reader and the Platform more broadly, excise Russia from the European community and understandably elicit accusations of russophobia from their critics. However, the Platform does have plans to translate the reader into Russian and distribute it in Russia through the human rights NGO, Memorial Society.

Next, Courtois goes through the "important step[s] on the road to reunifying memories" such as the PACE resolution condemning communist crimes and the 2009 EP resolution commemorating the victims of totalitarianism, and the October 14, 2009 EP conference on the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. Concluding he writes, "Today, most European countries have been politically, legally and economically reunified in the bosom of the European Union. But we are still far away from a *common European memory which would include to the same extent the tragedies caused by the two great totalitarian systems—Nazi and Communist*" [emphasis mine]. This is precisely the kind of transnational memory that the Platform wants to build. It sees that mission as a prerequisite to protecting the European values that the reader's heroes fought for: "tolerance, freedom of thought, rejection of extremism, and the culture of democracy and parliamentary government." The Platform is extremely concerned with the repetition of history and the resurgence of totalitarian or totalitarian-like regimes as evidenced by admonition to

young people such as the one that concludes Courtois's introduction; "Young generations must be made aware of the privilege which their grandparents did not benefit from: life in a reunified, peaceful and democratic Europe. They must understand that preserving this privilege implies a daily struggle. Nothing can ever be taken for granted." This strong emphasis on the return of some form of mass violence similar to what Europe has seen in the past is what animates much of the Platform's work. Lest we remember and condemn our violent past, we will relive it. If we can change our memories of the past, we can also change the future. Thus the battle over historical memory is also a battle over the future of Europe.

The Platform's reader, moreover, makes the moral equation between Communism and Nazism explicit, in part, by the historical figures it chooses to present. The reader personalities that the Platform thinks are worthy of remembering almost all have been in one way or another "double victims" of Nazism and Communism. For example, from the Czech case study, we learn about Milada Horáková. She was born in 1901 to parents highly involved in Czech public life. She finished her law degree from Charles University in 1926 and got involved in local politics in Prague. During WWII, she was "arrested by the Gestapo in 1940 and sentenced to death for 'agitation' against the regime, but was pardoned." After the war, she dove into many civic causes like leading the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners, the Council of Czechoslovak Women and becoming a deputy for Edvard Beneš's National Socialist Party in the Czech National Assembly. After the Communist coup in 1948, with twelve other people she was arrested by the Communist authorities and in a show trial sentenced to death by hanging for "conspiracy against the republic." As an elite member of Czech society of the interwar period, and a victim of both the Nazi and Communist regimes, in many ways Milada Horáková has become the perfect symbol of suffering for the whole Czech nation first victimized by Nazis and then Communists, traversing

the political spectrum. There exists today an active Milada Horáková Club, an association dedicated to her legacy. The memorial day to the victims of Communism in the Czech Republic is on June 27th, the day when in 1950 Horáková was hanged in Prague for allegedly attempting to overthrow the Communist regime. Every year politicians, former political prisoners, and members of the community honor her death at a memorial near her grave in the Vyšehrad Cemetery in Prague.

Although Horáková is unifying memory, that does not mean that there are no controversies over how, where and who has the right to represent the memory of Horáková. In 2009, a memorial for her was erected near where she was killed. The Czech Confederation of Political Prisoners protested the unveiling of the memorial after learning that members of the current-day Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (a successor party of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) contributed financially to the memorial. Rather than taking this as a sign of apology or contrition, some survivors of Communist repression saw it as a cynical public relations move for politicians to absolve themselves of their party's crimes. František Šedivý, deputy head of the Confederation of Political Prisoners, said, "You cannot get absolution from what happened by paying some 20,000 crowns to the memorial of a victim you destroyed" ([www.radio.cz](http://www.radio.cz)). Negotiations are underway by the Milada Horáková Club, the Platform and others over building another memorial to Horáková.

Another hero we read about in the reader is a Polish military captain named Witold Pilecki. Like Horáková, he was born in 1901, and as a young boy got involved in boy scouts. Toward the end of WWI, he fought for the underground Polish Military Organization in defending Vilnius against German occupation and Bolshevik intervention. During WWII, Pilecki fought the Germans as a cavalry officer and then in 1940 "he volunteered for an assignment to

infiltrate the Auschwitz concentration camp to gather information and organise a Polish resistance movement there." Escaping in 1943, he delivered information about the camp to the Polish Home Army in Warsaw and tried to convince the Army to attack the camp and liberate the prisoners to no avail. Following the War, in 1947, he was arrested by the Polish Communist secret police, and sentenced to death in a show trial for alleged espionage. We read that "the memory of Captain Witold Pilecki did not die despite many efforts of the Communists" and since 1989 "many towns and cities in Poland named their schools, streets, housing estates and parks in honour" of the "volunteer to Auschwitz." In 1990, he was exonerated and in 2006 President Kaczyński awarded him the Order of the White Eagle. In 2008, the Polish Senate passed a resolution to "re-establish popular memory of the heroic Captain Witold Pilecki in Poland."

The memory of Captain Pilecki, whether through this international reader or other international mnemonic activities,<sup>59</sup> is no longer contained within Polish borders. Polish MEPs in the European Parliament have consistently tried to diffuse the memory of this Polish hero and simultaneous victim of Nazis and Communists because it so powerfully mirrors Poland's historical self-image. Yet while the "double victim" framing is not controversial in Poland, it becomes controversial and unacceptable at the transnational level where Pilecki comes to stand in for the equation of Nazism and Communism. Ryszard Czarnecki, Polish MEP since 2004, member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group and currently one of the Vice Presidents of the EP, explains that during the 2009 Resolution debates Poles tried to designate

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<sup>59</sup> On a promotional postcard for the commemorative day, August 23rd, ENRS shows the faces of various victims of Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet Gulag. Captain Pilecki is among them. At the ENRS office, we can find a poster of a young, handsome, and shirtless Pilecki adorning the wall of a room occupied mostly by female staff.

Pilecki as the honorary patron of the August 23rd commemorative day. That initiative failed.

When I asked why Poles focused on Pilecki, Czarnecki responded that, "Pilecki is a person who fought two totalitarianisms, Nazi and Communist. Moreover, rare is a person so ideologically committed, who reports as a volunteer to a concentration camp, risking death..." (personal communication 2015). When I probed about why the EP resisted, he said, "there were different reasons, that he's particular etc., but that's rubbish. Maybe, for example, the Germans did not care to remember someone who fought not only with Communism (*z komuna*), that's later, but first he fought against the Germans. It's as if in his life is concentrated, like in a lens, the fight against two totalitarianisms, because frequently it was thanks to the participation of Central-East European nations [that Germans were defeated], but if for example some nations collaborated with the Germans, then I don't absolve them, on the contrary, condemn them. But maybe they collaborated precisely because they were running away from this Communist totalitarianism. That could have been for the Hungarians for example..." (personal communication 2015). Thus Czarnecki makes it clear that the reason Pilecki's memory is so important to Poland is that it represents the experience of Poland, and other CEE nations, who suffered under two totalitarian regimes back to back.

However, this juxtaposition of the two regimes is highly controversial at the transnational level, as we have seen in Chapter 2, where a multitude of different experiences of Nazism and Communism coexist. The memory embodied in Pilecki conflicts with the mainstream memory regime of WWII and the Holocaust as the founding myths of the EU, where the memory of the Holocaust as a unique event is sacrosanct. The fear, on the part of many Europeans, especially in Western Europe, is that equating these two regimes will turn attention away from Nazi atrocities and Nazi collaboration. As we saw in the quotation above, Czarnecki quickly becomes defensive



when equating the experience of the two regimes, reassuring me that he does not absolve Nazi collaborators but rather tries to understand why some nations, like Hungary, may have collaborated. Of course there are many reasons why the Hungarians collaborated, wanting to appease Germany to protect territory and privileges, Empire nostalgia, ambivalence about the fate of Jews, radical anti-Semitism etc. But the narrative that some CEE countries collaborated with the Nazis because they feared Communism, very widespread in the Baltic States for example, is a new and controversial narrative in the transnational memory field and it does not sit well with Western Europeans.

If the Platform's secondary school reader was about heroes who opposed Nazism and Communism and were victimized by both regimes, then its second major educational mnemonic tool, the *Totalitarianism in Europe* travelling exhibition, is about the perpetrators. The exhibition is made up of eleven panels, one for each country of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>60</sup> One side of each panel discusses "Communism" and the other side "Nazism." At the top of each panel there is a description of how the regime came to power and the "totalitarian power structure" that was responsible for the "war crimes and/or crimes against humanity." In the center of each panel there is a rap sheet of sorts with the "categories of civilian victims," the "number of members of the ruling totalitarian party," and the "number of members of the secret police." At the bottom of each panel there is a square box that looks like a post-it where the number of perpetrators prosecuted after the end of the regime is enumerated. Along the sides of each panel are headshots of the perpetrators along with their name, birth and death dates and some of their most important

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<sup>60</sup> One panel is for the Czech Republic on one side and Slovakia on the other side. Another panel has Czechoslovakia on one side and the Netherlands on the other. The choice of Netherlands is strange since it is not a CEE country and Croatia (a CEE country and EU member state) was omitted. A panel for Ukraine was added later.

positions within the respective totalitarian regime. Along the edge of each panel runs a timeline from 1905 to 1995 and the colored background of each panel (red for Communism and brown for Nazism) indicates the length of time that each regime lasted, which, while historically helpful, aims to draw our attention, much like the reader, to the fact that the Communist totalitarian regimes lasted much longer than the Nazi and Fascist ones.

A typical panel looks like the one for Latvia. On the "Communism" side we read that "Communist rule came to Latvia during Soviet military occupation, beginning on 17 June 1940 as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pacts of 1939. Interrupted by Nazi German occupation a year later, it continued when the USSR reoccupied Latvia in 1944/45, to 1991, when independence was regained. After Stalin eliminated old-guard Latvian Communists in 1937/38, the Latvian Communist Party never had a Latvian majority. Latvian proxies obeyed Moscow decrees mandating mass deportations, arrests, imprisonment in the Gulag and political murders." Under "totalitarian power structure responsible for war crimes and/or crimes against humanity" we read "First Soviet occupation (1940/41), Second Soviet occupation (1944/45 - 1991), Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Communist Party of Latvia." Then we see a long list of "categories of civilian victims":

- "mass killings" 369
- "mass deportations" 61,035 of which 11,305 were killed or died
- "prisons and forced labour camps, Gulag" of which 119,445 were "deported and imprisoned in detention camps"; 2,548 were "fighters of the resistance [who were] killed or died in combat"; 47,218 were "sentenced in political trials"; and 180,000 "escaped the country"

Below that we have a list of the authorities responsible for these crimes. Under "number of members of the ruling totalitarian party," we have 2,798 "at the beginning of the totalitarian rule" and 170,764 at the end. Under "number of members of the secret police" we have 1,600 "at the beginning of the totalitarian rule" and 1,000 at the end. Finally, on the "prosecution of

perpetrators after the end of the regime" post-it, we have "10 charged and tried in court," "4 sentenced to suspended sentences" and "6 sentenced to unsuspended sentences." Up and down the panel are six photos of people who are meant to be the individuals behind the war crimes and crimes against humanity. Because there is no Russia panel,<sup>61</sup> on Latvia's we have Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) "First General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1922-1953), Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (1941-1953)." The other personalities are Lavrentiy Beria from the NKVD; Viktor Abakumov, head of the USSR's counterespionage; Semion Shustin, Commissar of the State Security; Alfons Noviks, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Latvian SSR; and Vilis Lācis, Prime Minister of the Latvian SSR.

On the "Nazism" side we read that, "Nazi German rule was imposed by military occupation on Latvia in Jun-early July 1941 and lasted to 1944/45. The Nazis suppressed Latvian nationalists and permitted no independent governing activities outside their control. They recruited and used native proxies to carry out the murder of Latvian Jews, to arrest and imprison Latvian citizens in their concentration camps, and to recruit forced labourers." The responsible totalitarian power structures were "Nazi German occupation (1941-1944/45), German military and civilian administration; SS and secret police including Einsatzgruppe A, its Einsatzkommandos and Latvian auxiliaries charged with carrying out the Holocaust; directors of the self-administration of the land with severely limited authority." Under the "categories of

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<sup>61</sup> This fact is striking because the major perpetrator nation of Communist crimes was the USSR and Russians comprise the biggest national group of victims of Communism. Moreover, for the Nazi side, Germany as the perpetrator nation is included. This ostracism of Russia as the ultimate "Other" runs so deep, that the Platform refuses to dignify Russia as a member of the European family of nations and give it a voice in the form of its own exhibition panel. Instead it is constantly referred to but never allowed to speak on its own.

civilian victims" we have a subcategory for "Holocaust, genocide" with "appr. 70,000 Jews" and "appr. 2,000 Roma." Under "mass killings" we have 2,372 that were "mentally ill" and approximately 430 listed under "other local inhabitants." Under "concentration camps, forced labour" 28,000 were "deported" of which "several thousand" were "killed or died," and approximately 5,000 were "executed for political reasons." Under the "number of members of the secret police" we have "appr. 900 at the beginning of the totalitarian rule" and approximately 2,000 at the end. On the post-it at the bottom we find out that 32,000 perpetrators were "charged and tried in court." The six perpetrators whose pictures flank the sides of the panel are Walter Stahlecker, Commander of Einsatzgruppe A; Friedrich Jeckeln, SS Obergruppenfuhrer; Rudolf Lange, Commander of the German Security Police in Latvia; Viktors Arājs, Commander of the Latvian Auxiliary Security; Hinrich Lohse, SA Gruppenfuhrer; and Otto Heinrich Drechsler also SA Gruppenfuhrer.

Thus the exhibition in general portrays Central and Eastern Europe as a victim of two seemingly equally evil totalitarianisms—Nazism and Communism—by mirroring the categories of crimes, victims and perpetrators on either side of each exhibition panel. It does not completely obfuscate Nazi collaboration in the region but it does whitewash it.<sup>62</sup> For example, Polish collaboration with the Nazis in events like Jedwabne—one of the most important war time events in Jewish-Polish relations—is not mentioned on the Polish panel. While for Slovakia and Romania the panels on the Nazi side read "Pro-Nazi Regime," the panel for Bulgaria, which joined the Axis powers in March, 1941 simply reads "World War II"<sup>63</sup> although its joining the

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<sup>62</sup> For the one Western European panel of the Netherlands, regarding collaboration the panel reads, "There was significant Dutch collaboration with the German Nazis, as well as a resistance movement."

<sup>63</sup> And for some reason Adolf Hitler appears on Bulgaria's panel, as well as Germany's.

Axis is mentioned on the panel. For Hungary, which joined the Axis powers in November 1940, the panel also simply reads "Nazism." Echoing Czarnecki's discussion of Hungary, we read that "Hungary joined the Axis fearing the Soviets and in order to partially regain territories after WWI." Hungarian Jews are not mentioned at all except in the general category of "victims of Holocaust and genocide appr. 500,000." The footnote to this figure mentions a Swedish envoy who saved tens of thousands of Jews from Hungary only to be killed by the Soviets in the Lubyanka prison in 1947. Which genocide is meant by "and genocide" is unclear throughout the exhibition. Thus even on the "Nazism" side of the panel, the focus still seems to be, not so much on Jews as the victims of the Holocaust, but on the relentless message that Soviets killed war heroes, such as those who tried to rescue Jews. Similarly, on the Slovenian panel the only mention of Jews is in three footnotes. For example, from the 8,841 of those who were killed or died in labor camps, a footnote explains that 504 were Jews. The reason there is a need for footnotes is that the categorization of "civilian victims of Slovenian nationality" is meant to be the same for the "Fascism/Nazism" side of the panel as the "Communism" side, literally giving the impression of two sides of the same coin. Thus according to this organization, Jews as a religious or ethnic category necessarily have to be subsumed within the larger national group. This kind of layout shifts attention away from the radically different ideologies of the two totalitarian systems and to the similarities in the kinds of crimes and number of crimes they committed, giving primacy to national identity over religious or ethnic. That Nazism targeted primarily Jews and Communism primarily did not<sup>64</sup> gets washed out in this exhibition. Thus the primary victims become, in this stance, "Slovenian nationals" and Jewish victims are relegated to

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<sup>64</sup> Of course there have been many Jewish victims of Communism during the War and long after, as in the expulsion of many Jews from Poland by the Communist Party in 1968.

a footnote. The Slovenian nation then and the other CEE nations are presented as the primary victims of the two totalitarian regimes suffering the same kinds of war crimes and crimes against humanity, even if collaboration or "proxies" under Nazism are acknowledged and mass killings and deportations of Germans under Communism in Czechoslovakia, for example, are too. The exhibition presents WWII and its aftermath in a nationalist way, with a focus on victims and perpetrators and nothing in between. The Platform could have just as easily chosen to focus on themes of WWII and Communism that had to do with different kinds of experiences of this period like the underground, everyday life, the front, children and families, resistance, or post-war elections. Since the exhibition is "dedicated to the memory of the human lives and ethnic and cultural diversity of 20th century Europe lost to totalitarianism," the story could have been told from the point of view of different ethnic communities like Jews, Roma, Catholics, Orthodox, Volksdeutsche, the Sudetenland, Romanians living in Hungary, *bordeland (kresy)* Poles in Eastern Europe after the war etc. Or it could have traced the kinds of fates that met different social groups like disabled people, the mentally disabled, gay people, orphans, rich groups, poor groups, middle-class groups, farmers, city dwellers, soldiers, civilians etc.

One merely needs to read the introduction to the exhibition to understand the motivations behind the exhibition. Written by the Platform's Managing Director, Neela Winkelmann, the introduction reminds us that, "there still exists a difference between the common perception of the Fascist and Nazi dictatorships on the one side and the Communist dictatorship on the other. The first two are held responsible for graves crimes" and their "international condemnation" was enabled by the Nuremberg Trials "set up by the victorious Allied forces. [...] The justice done has been a precondition for the moral restitution of the victims and reconciliation within society." The next paragraph continues with, "In contrast, it has not yet become part of public knowledge

that Communist totalitarianism, during the course of its rule [...] is responsible for much larger losses in human lives than World War II. The main reasons for this lack of awareness are that the Communist dictatorships committed the majority of their atrocities against their own subjects during peacetime and that the collapse of the Communist bloc [...] was not followed by any significant process of legal condemnation of the perpetrators responsible for the gravest crimes on the national, let alone the international level." First, the author paints a much rosier picture of coming to terms with the Nazi past and ensuring justice for its victims than is the case.<sup>65</sup> That is done intentionally to paint a starker "contrast" with the insufficient ways in which the crimes of Communism have been dealt with. Second, the point of the exhibition is not just to present the victims of Nazism and Communism, but to make the case that Communism was worse because more people suffered under Communism. Nowhere in the exhibition are the total victim numbers tallied up, but glancing at the "rap sheets" the viewer quickly understands that there were at least just as many victims of Communism as Nazism. In fact, Winkelmann, expounds the take-away lessons from this exhibition. First, "the totalitarian regimes committed practically the same categories of international crimes." Second, "there is a clear historical connection between Nazism and Communism" at the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact nexus for example. Third, "Communist totalitarianism in Europe continued to perpetrate international crimes throughout the Cold War, until the very end of its existence" leaving us to correct the popular notion that people fell prey to crimes of Communism only during the Stalinist period. Fourth, "there was armed resistance by courageous people against the totalitarian regimes

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<sup>65</sup> Struggles for justice by Jewish victims of Nazi crimes are ongoing. For example, in July, 2016, the Polish Constitutional Court upheld a law that would make it virtually impossible for people who owned property in Poland before the war, many of whom are Jews who suffered in the Holocaust, to get it back or be compensated.

practically in every country" and so while Communism was homegrown in some countries more than others there was resistance across the board nonetheless. And finally, "the impact of totalitarian rule on society is devastating" and includes the "depletion of democratic elites, widespread corruption and malfunctioning democratic institutions," thus the legacy of Communism haunts us to this day making this exhibition all the more relevant.

### Us versus Them

The second strand of the victimhood regionalism strategy is identifying the participants of the mnemonic contest. The Platform draws clear distinctions between us and them, but it does this on at least three different axes. On the broadest level, there are the anti-Communists, whether they identify this way or not, like the Platform itself and its supporters. Thus "us" is defined as everyone who believes in "our" definition of what Communism was and how it should be remembered. If one disagrees in any way, he or she is relegated to "them," those who are pro-Communist because they do not agree with our anti-Communist position. In short, the enemy is anyone who does not agree with us and because of this the "them" group becomes very large.

Essentializing the memories of Communism, as described in the previous section, makes it easier to condemn anyone who ever had anything to do with Communist parties, institutions and systems from the highest political position to the lowest post, e.g security guard at an embassy. The Platform demands an impossibly high standard of political purity that is enshrined in its ethics code. The Platform statute includes an ethics code that each member institution must agree to and comply with. The two major stipulations are that no member institution employs former Communist functionaries or collaborators nor does it support in any way non-democratic entities. Thus the ethics code reads, "The Members does not knowingly employ former members or collaborators of repressive forces of totalitarian regimes or former functionaries with paid



political jobs in totalitarian political structures, in paid or unpaid functions." More broadly, "the Member is not connected with, does not and shall not support, in any form, be it financial, personal or material, non-democratic political structures or persons affiliated with such structures or organisations promoting, supporting or tolerant to racial, nationalist or religious and social hatred or totalitarian rule or anti-democratic movement." Moreover, this ethics code is in fact enforced. Suspecting new members of the Council of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes to be former Communists, the Platform asked the Institute prove that it is not violating the ethics code that it signed when becoming a founding member institution of the Platform. In a 2013 press release, President Lindblad said, "It is unacceptable to appoint former Communists to the scientific council of the Institute and to let those Communists evaluate the work of the Institute's employees. It is like recruiting former Nazis to evaluate the work in a Holocaust memorial." In 2014, USTR's membership was suspended because USTR refused to reveal any private information related to the people in question. "It is painful to suspend the membership of one of the founding members of the Platform; however the Institute has been infiltrated by Communist collaborators, and it is therefore our duty to act firmly," said Lindblad. As of 2016, USTR's membership has been annulled.<sup>66</sup> So attuned to the permeating legacy of Communism

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<sup>66</sup> In its letters to USTR, the Platform never enumerated the concrete accusations against the Council members beyond referring to them as "former Communists" and "Communist collaborators" and referencing its ethics code which includes very broad categories like participation in "repressive forces of totalitarian regimes" or "totalitarian political structures." Conceivably, this could include large segments of Czech society during the Communist period like all teachers, bureaucrats or police officers. It is probable that the Platform was motivated to end its relationship with USTR by a number of factors including genuine suspicions of Communist collaboration of the Council members, widely acknowledged allegations against the Director of embezzling, internal politics relating to overhauling the digitization process in the secret security archives, and political convictions (the Council members were chose by a Czech Senate dominated by the left-wing Social Democratic Party although the Director was associated with the conservative Civic Democratic Party).

and Communists, the Platform decided to remove its founding member organization on the presumptive allegations of former Communist ties of some of its employees.

More specifically, besides this anti-Communist/pro-Communist divide, the groups standing in the way of the Platform's cause can be summarized as Jews, Russians and the Left. Within the realm of remembering, we have already seen in the previous section how the Platform's mnemonic products such as the travelling exhibition de-emphasize the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazis and the elide the Jewish victims of those policies in order to mold the memory of Nazis so that its more comparable to that of Communism in an attempt to diffuse the recognition of Communist crimes and its victims. Within the context of mnemonic politics, Jewish organizations become the competitive "them" over the competition for material resources. At an EU lobbying meeting, one MEP from Latvia said, "we've been facing resistance to our cause from the very beginning since entering the EU. Since 2004, Jewish foundations have been on the defensive about sharing EU funds..." There seems to be a conflict over limited EU funds for the Holocaust remembrance community and the Communism remembrance community. Another Romanian MEP said that, "We began campaigning in 1990 to equalize Western and Eastern Europe, and since then the Jewish lobby has protested." The Platform's supporters, rather than seeking us and them collaborative opportunities, define the *Who* in this mnemonic contest over resources as "us" representatives of the victims of Communism and "them" representatives of the Jewish victims of Nazism.

The national axis is yet another line of division between us versus them. "We" are defined by the nations of Central and Eastern Europe—Czechs, Poles, Hungarians etc.—while "they" are defined by the European "Other"—Russia. As we saw in the previous section, the Platform's secondary school reader, in its introduction, presents Russia as the sole originator of

totalitarianism, which seemingly directly led to WWII, the "greatest tragedy that Europe had ever known" almost insinuating that Russia started WWII and was solely responsible for European Nazism. In the reader, like in the travelling exhibition, no mention is made of Russian victims of Communism or its heroic dissidents. Russia is never presented as a full-fledged member of the European community and therefore its history never stands on its own. It is constantly invoked as the "Other" but never allowed to speak for itself with dignity. Presented as the source of all European evil, Russia comes to stand in for all that went wrong in European 20th century history, and becomes the ultimate outsider enemy, "them." This contrast allows for the Platform to represent its region, Central and Eastern Europe, as the ultimate, innocent victim fallen prey to the all-powerful perpetrator to its Eastern border.

Finally, the third axis of division is political. "We" are the Right and they are the Left. The Platform is officially non-partisan but its strongest allies in the European Parliament all come from the right-wing and center-right parties. This does not mean that the Platform does not wish to work with the European Social Democrats; it knows that it must do so if it wants to be successful, but it views them with skepticism because of the historical associations of socialists with Communist ideology and movements and present-day affinities of socialists with egalitarian ideals that Communist regimes appropriated. I discuss this political cleavage in more detail in Chapter 5.

Finally, and inadvertently, the effect of the Platform's victimhood regionalism strategy is that it defines Central and Eastern Europe as a region of victims. At the European level, its myopic concentration on victimhood, gives the impression that Eastern Europeans think of themselves exclusively in terms of historical victimhood. If that is the case, then the perpetrators must be found outside the region, in Russia as we have already seen, but also in Western

Europe—the other "them." As we will see in more depth in Chapter 5, this is precisely the narrative that anti-Communist mnemonic warriors in the European Parliament try to diffuse. While these mnemonic activists think very carefully about history and would surely not agree to such a simplistic classification of the East as victim and West as perpetrator when it comes to Communist history, their facility in essentializing Communism and defining memory politics in terms of "us versus them," lends itself quite comfortably to exactly such interpretations that would make reconciliation, even with its closest neighbors and allies, only more difficult.

### Effect of Victimhood Regionalism: Retribution

The ways that the Platform defines the *What* and the *Who* of the mnemonic contest over Communism that I described above determines the *How*, the solution or the prognostic framing of the problem. The solution is retribution—a complete criminalization of Communism and justice for its victims. In order to achieve this end goal, the Platform is centrally focused on the criminality of Communism and the victims of those crimes. Thus one of the Platform's goals is to "increase public awareness about European history and the *crimes* committed by totalitarian regimes and to encourage a broad, European-wide discussion about the causes and consequences of totalitarian rule" [emphasis mine], another is to "contribute to the education of young Europeans about the totalitarian regimes" and to "share and exchange knowledge, know-how and experience with institutions and organisations pursuing analogous goals in other parts of the world." So while "public awareness," "discussion," "education" and "sharing and exchange [of] knowledge" are included in the Platform's goals, what is to be discussed and shared is the criminal nature of Communism and the fate of its victims. For example, the Platform wants to "work toward creating a pan-European documentation centre/memorial for *victims* of all totalitarian regimes, with the aim of commemorating the *victims* and raising awareness of the

*crimes* committed by those regimes" [emphasis mine]. Using the language of international law, the Platform wants to "support initiatives at the European level with a view to giving indiscriminate treatment to all *crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity* and *war crimes*, as well as to their *victims*" [emphasis mine]. It wants to pursue an "honest and open *appraisal* of Europe's common totalitarian legacy" [emphasis mine].

In fact, criminal legal action is central to the Platform's existence and the ultimate goal is the prosecution of "Communist criminals." Winkelmann has told me that the Czech Confederation of Political Prisoners has thanked her for her work at the Platform but she responded that she "hasn't really done anything" because the Platform has not brought any new Communist criminals to court yet. It is thus clear that a top priority for the Platform is the prosecution and successful conviction of Communist criminals and for this reason it has started a new project, what it calls "JUSTICE 2.0 – International Justice for the Imprescriptible Crimes of Communism." The idea is to establish a new international criminal court to prosecute Communist crimes. Although the establishment of such a court is highly improbable, the Platform has moved ahead by identifying cases of living victims and witnesses of Communist crimes whose perpetrators are also still alive and whose crimes could be tried as crimes against humanity. They have made a video featuring these witnesses and they screen the film and organize discussion seminars to bring attention to this issue. The stated purpose of the project is to "raise international awareness about the issue of unpunished international crimes of Communism and to contribute to finding ways to achieving international justice for these crimes." For example, the first public presentation of the film happened in May 2015 at the European Parliament in Brussels accompanied by the unveiling of an art installation by a Czech artist group Pode Bal. The conference explaining the JUSTICE 2.0 project was sponsored by the

largest political group in the European Parliament, the EPP Group. The film has also been screened at venues like the Faculty of Law at Charles University in Prague, the Slovenian Parliament, and at the Max-Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law in Freiburg. The film features, for example, the case of Hartmut Tautz, an eighteen-year-old man who died after being attacked by Czechoslovak police dogs for crossing the Czech-Austrian border. His mother tells his story. The Platform has in fact filed a criminal complaint with the German Federal Prosecutor General "directed against 67 persons of Czech and Slovak nationality covering the entire chain of command who are responsible for 5 cases of killings of German victims at the Iron Curtain which separated former Czechoslovakia from Western Europe." It claims that among those responsible for these crimes that are still living are the three last living members of the Politburo of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia—Secretary General of the Communist Party Milouš Jakeš, Czech Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal and Slovak Prime Minister Peter Colotka. "They have never been sentenced for any of their deeds committed during the dictatorship." In addition to a criminal case that will most likely not materialize, the Platform supported the unveiling of a memorial to Hartmut Tautz in Bratislava-Petržalka (few meters from the Austrian border where he was killed) and composed an open letter to 21 still living representatives of Communist Czechoslovakia to publicly apologize for border killings like Hartmut's.

It is not inaccurate to say that many perpetrators of Communist crimes were not met with justice. When I asked Dr. Kalous, a historian at USTR, whether in his opinion justice has been served in the former Czechoslovakia, he responds with a definitive no:

No, I don't think so. In the case of Czechoslovakia there were attempts to publicly name and punish perpetrators of Communist crimes from the Communist period 1948 until 1989. But when it comes to the actual criminal prosecution and meting of punishments there have been only a few individuals who were criminally prosecuted and were actually brought to trial and proved guilty

of participation in specific crimes. The most important Communist official who was convicted of criminal activities was a member of the Central Committee, Karl Hoffman, however he spent just a few months in jail. Other than him, the people who were criminally prosecuted and tried were members of the lower echelons of the security apparatus at the time when the trials were going on their names may have been known, but today no one recalls their names. (personal communication 2014)

He then lists several examples of existing living perpetrators:

Yes there are still perpetrators of Communist crimes living in the Czech Republic although there are less of them because some of them have already died. For example, one of the best known of them is a certain Ludwig Hlavecka, who we know for certain that he personally participated in torture by using electric current. He was prosecuted but he was not convicted. He died in peace in 2006. Or another person, Karol Koscal, one of the architects of the 1950s political trials. He has never been prosecuted. He even published two volumes of memoirs in the 1990s no one went after him. Or for that matter Milos Jankes, the Secretary General of the Communist Party since Dec. 1987 who was responsible for what the regime was doing. And there were attempts to bring him to justice but they were not fruitful. (personal communication 2014)

But when asked about the prospect of a establishing a new international tribunal to prosecute

Communist crimes specifically, he is extremely skeptical:

If you are thinking about the kind of international tribunal that would be based on the example of the post-WWII tribunals the Nuremberg or Tokyo ones. Yeah, this could be a very useful step, but it would have to be taken immediately in the 1990s and not today 25 years later. Actually, I'm thinking about it in the early 1990s, I think it was 1991/2, there was an attempt to organize some legal tribunal that would deal with crimes of Communism in Russia [...] but it did not lead to anything in the end. But if we are thinking about an international, pan-European tribunal, yeah, it would have been a good idea but 25 years ago—today it would not make sense. (personal communication 2014)

The JUSTICE 2.0 project is ingrained in the idea of the Nuremberg Trials for Nazi criminals after WWII. It also explicitly relies on the Nazism/Communism comparison. When a former Czech Communist General was given a funeral by the Czech Ministry of Defense, as is customary for any General, the Platform wrote a letter of protest. The Ministry responded that, "The deceased Mr. Šádek, responsible for the death of at least 17 fleeing civilians killed under his command between 1969-1982, was a former general, so a general's funeral was organised for him by the Ministry. Mr. Šádek was never sentenced by a Czech court." The Platform's President relied on a Nazi comparison to accentuate how offensive this act was. "It would be unacceptable

for any country to provide an official funeral for a retired Nazi general. [...] Our CALL FOR JUSTICE 2.0 to the international community is extremely important – we need to finally sentence the surviving Communist perpetrators using international law."

Other activities center around presumed or identified victims of Communism that perished during WWII or the Communist regime. In December 2014, the Platform wrote a letter to the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka to open up and investigate mass graves of "victims of totalitarianism." The letter explains that at a site at a cemetery in Prague-Ďáblice there are at least 2,800 people buried in a mass grave, which include "members of the anti-Nazi and anti-Communist resistance and victims tortured to death or executed by the Nazis and the Communists between 1943-1961." Although the Platform claims that of that number, only 100 were "political prisoners of Communism" and 90 were victims "who died in Communist prisons." A year later the Czech Senate organized a public hearing with historians, forensic scientists, groups of victims' associations and memory institute leaders to discuss what to do with the mass grave. Winkelmann sees these efforts as well as criminal justice as crucially important to democracy itself. "In post-Communist Europe, we are still counting the people killed by the totalitarian dictatorships. Next, we need to redeem from oblivion the names, faces and life stories of those who died for the values, which democratic Europe is enjoying today. We also need to pursue criminal prosecution where perpetrators are still alive. It is a necessary process, which will lead to healing and strengthening democracy internationally."

The Platform says it seeks reconciliation, but its singular focus on victimhood and retributive justice does not make space for dialogue, a critical analysis of historical truths, and mutual understanding. For example, in November 2015, at an organizational meeting in Wrocław which provided the opportunity to reflect on the 50th anniversary of when Polish



bishops addressed their German counterparts in order to "forgive and ask for forgiveness."

Inspired by these events, the Platform adopted a resolution of reconciliation that acknowledges that "dialogue [is] based on the historical truth is a condition for peaceful coexistence of nations" and that "reconciliation based on truth" can help heal wounds and create an "order based on the truth and forgiveness." Yet the resolution does not mention the complexity of historical interpretation, the fact that dialogue requires compromise and that sometimes identifying victims and criminals through criminal legal definitions is counter-productive to "truth and forgiveness" and "healing." Moreover, it is interesting to note what is missing in the Platform's stated goals, even those advocating "discussion" and "education." There is no discussion of multiple viewpoints, varied perspectives or evaluations of the totalitarian past. There is no mention of respect for the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of various national, ethnic or religious communities. There is no acknowledgment that there are conflicting memories of history that are still very raw and that care must be taken to be sensitive and inclusive. Rather the assumption through the use of the term "totalitarianism" and "totalitarian regimes" is that these are obviously evil and undesirable systems, which is something that everyone ostensibly agrees on, and if not, then one does not belong to the European mainstream. In effect, when it comes to the evaluation of totalitarian regimes and their different or similar characteristics, causes and effects, there is no room for discussion.

The Platform dresses its goals in a motivational framing that resonates with European fundamental values to increase its chances of success at the European level. One of the Platform's stated goals is "deepening the integration of all European citizens, furthering the respect and understanding of the essential importance of democracy, human rights, European values and the rule of law in all of Europe." Thus the Platform believes in the values that animate

European politics and understands that it needs to insert its goals within the motivational framing of the established European values framework of democracy, human rights and rule of law in order to be relevant and successful. Believing firmly in the power of the past to shape the future, the Platform is very concerned with "prevent[ing] intolerance, extremism, anti-democratic movements and the recurrence of any totalitarian rule in the future" and "avoiding future threats to democracy." At the same time, the Platform is uncompromising in the kinds of threats it is concerned about—Communist—and the kinds of victims it cares about—victims of Communism. Its victimhood regionalism strategy of defining Communism as essentially evil and the mnemonic competitors as "us"—anti-Communists and victims of Communism—versus "them"—pro-Communists and perpetrators prevents it from being successful at the European level. Although the Platform successfully applied for Europe for Citizens funds for specific projects—the reader and travelling exhibition—it was not granted an more long-term operational support grant. While European institutions have institutionalized the commemorative goals of the Platform like condemning Communist crimes they have not and do not seem likely any time soon to fulfill the Platform's end goals of criminalizing Communism and establishing an international criminal court to prosecute Communist crimes.

## Conclusion

Through its various initiatives we see that the Platform employs a strategy of victimhood regionalism in order to process and diffuse the historical memories of Central and Eastern Europe beyond the region's borders. Its victimhood regionalism strategy essentializes the memory of Communism by freezing it into an uncontested, unproblematic, thing distilled of all of its complexity, while defining the mnemonic contest in terms of "us" versus "them." This stance leads it to legitimate its proposals on behalf of its victim group of concern—victims of

Communism—by comparing them to a highly resonant and visible group of victims of Nazism in Europe. The prognostic effect of this victimhood regionalism strategy is that the Platform sees retribution and the imposition of a new hegemonic memory regime based on the equation of Communism with Nazism as the only way to deal with the legacies of Communism.

In Chapter 4, we will see that this victimhood regionalism strategy distinguishes it from the Network's reconciliatory regionalism strategy. The Platform's victimhood regionalism framework for interpreting the historical memories of Communism prevents it from engaging in more dialogic exchanges between different groups, generations, and nations. It excludes groups that do not primarily identify as victims of Communism or place all importance on that aspect of Communism and thus it limits the diversity of its stakeholders. This prevents the Platform from engaging in Communism remembrance from the perspective of negotiation and thus makes it more difficult to attract EU funding that requires such organizations to present multiple viewpoints, provide safe spaces for open discussion and critical dialogue and propose policies and models for bridging differences in an ever-more diverse Europe. The Platform realizes that it needs to overcome the image that it is past-focused rather than future-oriented. But that is hard to do when one of its major projects seeks to bring restitution to the victims of Iron Curtain border killings while sidelining the *contemporary* issue of, for example, thousands of migrants from the Middle East and Africa dying at Europe's Southern border. The Platform has a hard time taking its slogan—"Democracy Matters."—into the 21st century and applying specific policy recommendations to contemporary threats to European democracies like corruption, economic inequality or youth unemployment. We will see in Chapter 4 that the Network provides a more realistic model of dialogue that could be scaled up and translated to other relevant social problems and policies. For now, the Network sticks to international dialogue surrounding

historical memory without making alarmist claims that a lack of retributive justice for Communist crimes will endanger democracy. I explain their reconciliatory regionalism strategy in detail in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Reconciliatory Regionalism: European Network Remembrance and Solidarity**

In this Chapter, I explain how the Network's work differs from the Platform's. Despite the fact that both groups treat the same general topic—Communism—and operate in the same region, at the same time, within the same transnational network of mnemonic actors, they employ vastly different strategies to diffuse their memories of Communism. While the Platform's victimhood strategy essentializes Communism and defines enemies, the Network's reconciliatory strategy does not. I show just how the Network's reconciliatory strategy jives with the EU's dialogic imperative, which is what makes it more likely to succeed at the EU level in terms of attracting funds and diffusing its historical memories. I argue that the Network's memories are more likely to diffuse transnationally than the Platform's because what determines transnational mnemonic diffusion is, with all else held constant, not so much the substance of the memories because both hold very similar views, nor the values that their memories purport to represent because both use similar motivational framing. Rather it is the mode within which the memories are communicated—the Network's mode of mnemonic delivery matches that of the mode set out by the EU. Moreover, the Network's strategy is more likely than the Platform's to lead to reconciliation between nations in the region but also between regions within Europe, specifically the East and West. However, much like the Platform, the Network represents a unique regional memory regime rooted in the dual totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism that it is unlikely

to negotiate away for the sake of a unified memory field. Despite its reconciliatory strategy, I show that the Network is still committed to national and regional identities as fundamental building blocks of European identity.

### Polish Historical Memory Debates and Policies

Since about the year 2000, historical memory in Poland became a hotly debated topic in the public sphere and captured much attention in mass media often overshadowing other social, political, or economic issues (Mark 2010). Paweł Machcewicz, former director of the Department of Public Education of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) was a key interlocutor in these public debates over historical memory. He recounts the evolution of these public contestations over historical memory in his 2012 book titled, *Conflicts Over History: 2000-2011* (Spory o historię 2000-2011), on which the following analysis largely relies.

The topic of Communism (and Poland's role in WWII) and decommunization policies—changing street names, removing some memorials, revising textbooks and even lustration—did not cause the kind of hot debates just after 1989 as one might expect given how raw and fresh that lived history still was immediately after the transition Machcewicz argues. There was a general consensus of a negative attitude toward Communism; the old system was bad, and the attitude of the elites was that we need to quickly move toward democratization and marketization before the window of opportunity to do so closes. There were various actions in the 1990s that were controversial like attempting to hold General Wojciech Jaruzelski responsible for martial law; trying functionaries of the Communist security apparatus; and holding responsible those who ordered the military to fire on protesting workers on the coast in 1970 and in the "Wujek"

mine in 1981 as well as the murder of the high school student Grzegorz Przemysk<sup>67</sup> in 1983.

Yet none of these issues elicited the kind of heated debates that would come to demarcate new political and ideological divisions that penetrated the civic sphere on a regular basis since 2000.

After 2000, long debates would rage over historical events relating to both WWII and Communism.<sup>68</sup> Machcewicz argues that Poles took a sudden interest in historical memory a decade after the transition because the deep transformations that were taking place in the 1990s preoccupied people's attention and that the nature of the transformation—peaceful and evolutionary where the opposition and government had to work together rather than bloody and revolutionary—necessarily made it impossible for far-reaching decommunization attempts. Moreover, Machcewicz explains that the distance with which these historical issues were initially handled started to disappear toward the late 1990s leading up to the 21st century. He cites, for example, the 1997 lustration law, which the Sejm passed after the Prime Minister Józef Oleksy was accused of collaborating with Soviet intelligence services. Lustration significantly raised the profile of "Communist collaboration," turned the public's attention toward the past, and necessarily created a historical narrative straightjacketed by the binary categories of guilt and innocence, collaboration and non-collaboration. Because the management of Communist archives by the government<sup>69</sup> led to situations where politicians could easily be accused of

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<sup>67</sup> Przemysk was beaten to death by police officers while celebrating high school graduation in the Old Town of Warsaw.

<sup>68</sup> Some of these included Jedwabne (where Poles in the presence of Nazi soldiers killed hundreds of their Jewish neighbors in the village of Jedwabne), Wildstein's list (a list of over 100,000 alleged collaborators with the Communist security services as catalogued by IPN that was made public by a journalist), Father Hejmo (a Polish priest publically accused by IPN of having been an informant for the security services), and Lech Wałęsa's putative collaboration with the secret police still being investigated by the IPN.

<sup>69</sup> The archives were managed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of State Protection, responsible for intelligence and counterintelligence.

collaborating with security services but could not be easily verified, the idea for a separate institution gained traction. Work on this institution began in 1997 with the winning center-right coalition of Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza "Solidarność" AWS) and Freedom Union (Unia Wolności). In 2000, the Institute of National Remembrance<sup>70</sup> (IPN) was finally established, delayed due to the veto of the post-Communist President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the search for a director of the institute that could garner 3/5 of the Sejm vote. The IPN was modeled after the first national memory institute of its kind meant to archive and make available Communist documents and try Communist crimes as well as conduct research and educational outreach established as early as 1991 in Germany, known colloquially as the Gauck Institute after its first director. Others like in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria came after 2000 and were in large part modeled after the Polish IPN, although they lack prosecutorial powers.

The Polish IPN was a controversial proposal from the very beginning. The post-Communist left accused the post-solidarity right (and much of the post-solidarity left) that they were doing this as an attempt to instrumentalize the archival material for political purposes against them, and that it is inappropriate to try to build national memory through the dubious documentation (whose veracity could never be proven even in court) left behind by a totalitarian system. Machcewicz (2012) recounts how Janusz Pałubicki, the rapporteur for the bill from the ASW faction, called President Kwaśniewski the "president of all UB-ists" (*ubeków*) (an UB-ist is a functionary of the Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, or the Office of Security). This kind of incendiary language, Machcewicz writes, led up to the post-2000 debates that would only get more heated. Supporters of IPN had great hopes in its prosecutorial capabilities, but none of the over 200 trials

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<sup>70</sup> The full name of the institute is the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*).

since 2000 were as significant as the ones that already took place in the 1990s (in part because of the difficulty of gathering admissible evidence and prosecutorial will). The big successes however were making the Communist security documents open to the public and large-scale historical education campaign and projects thanks to the national character of the institution and its large budget that exceeded even those of universities or the Polish Academy of Sciences.

What contributed to the heated nature of the debates, Machcewicz argues, was the output of reports and books by IPN starting around 2002 that showed that 1) democratic opposition activism was actually more prevalent and stronger than assumed before; 2) repression in late Communism (70s and 80s) was more prevalent and harsher than assumed before;<sup>71</sup> and 3) there were over 100,000 secret informants of the security services by the late 80s, which is more than during the Stalinist period. And as these names were made public, through lustration processes or leaks, it turned out that many of them were famous public figures in positions of importance before and even after 1989. Machcewicz, although biased because of his involvement with IPN, credits the prolific activities of IPN in raising awareness and interest in the Communist past among the general public whether or not one believes this to be a good or bad thing.

Although not directly related to Communism, in order to describe the entirety of the historical memory landscape of the 2000s leading up to the establishment of the Network, it is important to discuss two World War II memories made public by the groundbreaking work of Polish-American sociologist and historian Jan Gross at Princeton University and the activism of

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<sup>71</sup> This especially put the first democratically elected Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki's "thick line" policy on how to deal with Communists to the test signaling that maybe it was time to revisit this policy that dictated that former Communists are given amnesty for their sins in return for guaranteeing a peaceful transition to democracy.



the controversial leader of a group of German war expellees, Erika Steinbach. Jan Gross' publication of *Neighbors* in May 2000 and Erika Steinbach's Federation of Expellees bring attention not only to the atrocities committed by Poles on Jews but also by Poles on German civilians just after WWII respectively. Gross in his book documents how Polish villagers burned a group of Jews alive in a nearby barn. Steinbach demanded reparations for the thousands of German civilians that were forcefully expelled from Polish territories as its Western border shifted West into Germany. It is not that there was no work being done on these topics in Poland.<sup>72</sup> However, these two episodes brought these issues to the forefront of popular imagination and public debate, in part because they were made by "outsiders." It was easy for Poles to react defensively; "they" are trying to incriminate "us." Although Polish-born, Gross was attacked as an outsider because he lives and works in the United States (although he speaks Polish fluently and has spent years doing research in Poland) and therefore could not possibly understand Polish historical realities of which he writes. And Steinbach was reviled in the Polish mass media as the reincarnation of Hitler himself.<sup>73</sup>

In response to these two episodes, the "affirmative" faction of historical memory proponents in Poland emerged, inaugurated by the conservative historian Andrzej Nowak's article from August 2001 in the daily, conservative-leaning *Rzeczpospolita*, titled "Westerplatte or Jedwabne?" It was a reaction to the group of Polish and foreign intellectuals who were seen by

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<sup>72</sup> For example, in the 1990s, Poles did write about Polish atrocities against Germans including the killing of tens of German civilians in the small towns of Aleksandrowe Kujawskie and Nieszawa at the beginning of 1945. They also wrote about atrocities committed against Ukrainians, namely the "Vistula" operation that expelled Ukrainians from southeastern Poland (despite the lack of attention by Ukrainians to the atrocities they committed on Poles in Wołyń and East Galicia in 1943-44).

<sup>73</sup> For example, the Polish weekly magazine *Wprost* in 2003 ran a cover of Erika Steinbach photoshopped into an SS uniform.

this group as bent on pointing out only the critical aspects of Polish history for self-serving or otherwise malicious purposes. This affirmative faction dubbed the other side the "critical" faction.<sup>74</sup> As Nowak's title suggests, he poses the question of how Poland should craft its historical image for external (and internal) publics. Presenting a false zero-sum game, Nowak asks should historians, politicians, teachers and activists focus on the good parts of Polish history of which Poles can be proud, like the heroic albeit unsuccessful defensive at Westerplatte, or on the bad parts of Polish history of which Poles should be ashamed, like the burning alive of hundreds of Jews in the village of Jedwabne. Nowak argues that Poles should advertise the Westerplatte version of Polish history. This would become the manifesto of the conservative faction of the historical policy debate. Machcewicz argues<sup>75</sup> that this became the ideological basis of the conservative political faction of Poland as epitomized in the PiS party that came to power in 2005 and regained power in 2015. But while the characterization of the historical

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<sup>74</sup> The Network's Director describes this conflict between the affirmative and critical factions of Polish historical policy debates in terms of historical contextualization. He says that the critical faction "was more concerned with finding in our history our negative, shameful deeds. And they rather focus on that and on this relativization of the blame of others [as compared to] the blame of Poles like the Kielce Pogrom or Jedwabne. And then this narration that it was Poles who murdered their own neighbors was contrasted to a narration that did not deny that Polish neighbors and Polish residents of Jedwabne killed their own Jewish neighbors, but rather it showed the context of this event. [...] The critical side primarily underscored, used this kind of simplification saying, among other things, that it is Poles who are responsible for this without entertaining the details. Whereas the [IPN] investigation was carried out on many levels and of those people who thought that we have to take a deeper look at this event and not in this simple way draw blame on Poles for who happened there, they also researched the influence of Germans, German soldiers of course occupying this area on the behavior of the Polish side, rousing Poles to act themselves in the way they did...the point was to show how German through Polish hands brought about such tragedies like the one in Jedwabne" (personal communication 2016).

<sup>75</sup> Machcewicz would respond to Nowak's question, "Westerplatte and Jedwabne," meaning that both the heroic and shameful memories should be kept alive (for more on this exchange see Polonsky and Michlic 2004).

memory debates along these two factions—affirmative and critical—is useful, it is not meant to overlook other strains of historical remembrance that spring from local, peripheral, and ethnically/religiously diverse communities that also contribute to these national debates. Ochman attributes this post-2000 turn toward "fragmentation and decentralisation of memory production" to the "diversification of social interests" within Poland after the democratic transition as well as the international "cross-cultural fertilisation" and "cosmopolitanisation of memory" resulting from deeper European integration (2013: 5-8).

An eminent project of this "affirmative" intellectual milieu, which has been met with great success, was the establishment of the Rising Museum in Warsaw in 2004. It was supported by Lech Kaczyński, but also thousands of Polish volunteers who were in some way involved in the project. Although the museum's exhibition sits safely in the "heroic-martyrological" variety of history telling, it revealed to politicians of all stripes just how effective harnessing historical memory can be for political purposes. Shortly thereafter, in 2005, Kaczyński's PiS party won the parliamentary elections. In 2004, we also see the resurgence of the Katyń debate, which was prompted by the conclusion of the Russian prosecutorial investigation of Katyń. Russia refused to hand over the materials that it gathered during the investigation, which Machcewicz argues, was a step backwards when it comes to the transparency of the late Gorbachev and Yeltsin years. Yet at this time the Katyń issue gave way to a spectrum of historical memory debates regarding the Soviet Union. These included the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Soviet attack on Poland on September 17, 1939 and the Yalta Conference of February 1945, although these have long been staples of Polish historical memory since WWII percolating underground during the Communist period. Thus in the public debates over history, the memories of WWII and Communism quickly overlapped; Poles came to comparing explicitly Soviet and Nazi aggression against Poland and

drawing uncanny similarities between the Soviet and Nazi regimes (which of course was met with vehement Russian opposition).

And finally it is important to discuss the terminology that is used to refer to historical memory debates at all. In the Polish language "polityka historyczna" can be translated into English in two ways as "historical policy" or "historical politics."<sup>76</sup> Generally, it is used as some combination of both. However, the genealogy of the term in Polish political debate is different than that from the American or European setting. As Machcewicz (2012) describes it, in Poland, the term first appears as part of the conservative lexicon of intellectuals and elites. It becomes "policy" in the sense that it is one of the key tools of the right-wing PiS government as it becomes the ruling party in 2005-2007. In fact it makes its first debut in PiS's electoral program of 2005 in response to Jedwabne, the persistent use of the term "Polish concentration camps" and the Auschwitz "war of the crosses"<sup>77</sup> (Ochman 2013:22-25). No longer on the fringes of political debate, "polityka historyczna" enters the political mainstream. Despite being in the mainstream, the term retains its association with conservative values and objectives. Thus leftists could argue that Poland does not need or desire a historical policy at all; that it is just a political tool of propaganda and historical revisionism if not outright falsification of history. In the European lexicon, historical policy does not have associations with any one political project, and it is widely accepted that some sort of historical policy is necessary, or even that European institutions institute historical policy even if they do not categorize it as such. From the Polish political right, the idea of "polityka historyczna" was that it would serve as a tool to revitalize

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<sup>76</sup> For example, Ewa Ochman translates it as "politics of history" (2013: 22).

<sup>77</sup> For a deep analysis of the controversy over crosses being planted at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum see Geneviève Zubrzycki's *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (2006).

and unite Polish society in solidarity, strengthen the Polish nation by instilling pride and self-confidence, and bring disaffected citizens closer to the state. Machcewicz argues that in effect it became instrumentalized as a tool to further conservative political interests while delegitimizing opponents. It sharpened political and societal cleavages rather than bringing people together, defined political opponents as not belonging to the nation, delineating good patriotism and differentiating it from those who practice bad patriotism, and finally politicized and devalued the role of historians and other intellectuals. From this point onward, the debate would be dominated by conservative intellectuals rather than the post-Communist left. This intense conservative-affirmative versus liberal-critical split continues to this day and is the environment within which the Network began its work.

In fact, one Network employee gives a concise overview of how historical remembrance of Communism conditions Poles' current-day political identities. He explains that the political divide in Poland is over those who were critical of Communism, participated in Solidarity and had leadership roles post-89 and those who didn't who saw those elites as selling out to the Communists. They are the right, and because of their experiences, they believe in the need to conserve Polish traditional values because those are what keeps the nation strong and able to protect itself from real or imagined external ideological (or physical) sabotage. Speaking of the political right-wing, he says,

The main line along which everyone [in the right] clearly [distinguishes themselves from the left] is by this very clearly critical attitude to the times of PRL [the Polish People's Republic] and to the role of Russia in PRL, and the role of elites that especially say from the mid-70s, but primarily the role of elites that arose in the 80s and later were active actors in the transition in the early 90s, that is the main thing that characterizes them [the right], and that is the nucleus of the right [...] from this there are many additional implications like we need to conserve traditional values because it can serve as protection from a factual or imagined ideological sabotage, which has the goal of dismantling not only state institutions but also this societal consciousness that in the past was something that protected the Polish nation. [For example] you have partitions but the nation functions because there are schools, because there are traditional values...That there is no

state but it does exist because it has its own memories, tradition, certain commonalities. If this culture is lacking and if you dilute this culture with other competing value systems ones more identified with the idea of a European society you efface you was the perpetrator who was the victim, who attacked whom, if you make that unobvious then these people think that that is a danger because it makes us less identifiable as a nation. (personal communication A3: 2016)

Norman Davies, in an interview in 2009 for the European Parliament's S&D Group booklet on historical memory, discusses Solidarity, IPN, the Kaczyński twins and their historical politics.

He describes as the ENRS staff member above, the right's theory that the Solidarity negotiations sold out the true dissidents like the Kaczyńskis for Communist to keep their privileges. He shares his mixed views about the IPN, which does good historical work, but also goes after the opposition and even its former leaders like Wałęsa:

The dispute in Poland is about Solidarność. These appalling identical twins, the Kaczyński brothers, play a very questionable role in the debate. It is not a dispute between government and opposition, but a dispute between the government and a group of people who are out to obstruct by any means possible what is going on. In particular, the Kaczyńskis have developed a historical theory that Solidarność was seduced by Wałęsa and by the Communist secret police. The transition of 1989, according to that theory, was a compromise, an orchestrated arrangement whereby Communists would essentially maintain power and privileges behind the scenes. The Communists and their friends would take over big business and the banks and Wałęsa would become president. Honest Poles like Kaczyński, who were fighting for the freedom of Poland, were led astray by Wałęsa and would be sidelined. It's a load of total rubbish. The Kaczyńskis controlled the public media for a time and pursued a very active policy they called historical politics, making out that they were the true heroes and trying to undermine Wałęsa. [...] The Kaczyńskis set up the Institute of National Memory. They have been using this institute for their campaign. It has a mixed record, in fact. They are very professional historians and some of the things they do are necessary and very praiseworthy. They have done a lot of good work documenting the killings that went on after the war: judicial murders in which a lot of émigré Poles who returned were killed. That's all very good, but this same Institute of National Memory is also being used to dig dirt on Wałęsa in a very scurrilous way. (55-56)

It is this highly partisan, national memory field that is the backdrop for the establishment of the Network.

## Background

The European Network Remembrance Solidarity is a half public, half private organization based in Warsaw that deals with 20th century European history. It was created by

the Ministers of Culture of Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia and since 2014 includes Romania. In contrast to the Platform, its members are states, not organizations. Because it is governed like a public institution and receives public funds (ENRS has set up an affiliate private Foundation so that it can accept private and public funds from other countries) its activities and message are necessarily more limited and moderate than that of the Platform's, which is a private organization and is therefore not tempered by government oversight.

ENRS grew out of strains in the Polish-German relationship and a felt need to defend Poland from what were seen as slanderous and historically revisionist attempts by Germany to reinterpret post-WWII history. In 1999, the German Federation of Expellees, led by Erika Steinbach, proposed to build a museum that would depict the experience of German expellees from Eastern Europe after the war. The Polish side protested fearing that if Steinbach, known in Poland for voting against recognizing the current-day Polish/German border and her objections to Poland's EU membership, is put on the museum board, the museum will depict a biased anti-Polish story. The museum never materialized. Instead, in response to this initiative, in 2005 with multipartisan support, the Federal Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation was founded, whose purpose is to "keep alive, in the *spirit of reconciliation*, the memory and commemoration of flight and expulsion in the twentieth century *in the historical context of World War Two, National Socialist expansionism and extermination policy and their consequences*" [emphasis mine] (website). This was a more moderate proposal, and Steinbach did not become its Director.

Thus the organization started in response to a traditional bilateral conflict, but it quickly evolved into a regional organization in order to foster dialogue and reconciliation. As ENRS describes on its website, "This [Steinbach affair] inspired governments of a number of Central European states to seek a new form of dialogue regarding the tragic events of the 20th century.

This was the first step in creating an international network of 'remembrance workshops.'" In April 2004, after two years of discussions and consultation, official negotiations began between the culture ministers and experts from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. On February 2, 2005, all the Ministers of Culture except Austria signed a declaration establishing the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. But because conservative governments took over in both Poland and Germany the project of reconciliation was put on hold. Once the Polish PiS-led conservative government failed in 2007, a new possibility arose to renew the ENRS project. Finally, in 2008, the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity began its first activities under the guidance of Andrzej Przewoźnik. Activities were shortly thereafter interrupted due to the April 2010 plane crash in Smoleńsk, in which nearly 100 Polish politicians and public figures including Przewoźnik and Tomasz Merta, another founding leader, were killed. Activity ramped up that year when the Polish Minister of Culture gave ENRS an office in the National Center for Culture, under which it would be governed. But this bore severe limitations for the kinds of activities that ENRS wanted to do; the National Center for Culture's mission was not aligned with that of ENRS. The Center focused exclusively on Polish history for a Polish audience. It was not internationally minded. There existed language barriers because ENRS' working language is English while the National Center for Culture of course operates in Polish. Finally, in 2014, ENRS became independent and moved into its own office space. That was a big milestone for ENRS because that is when it launched many of its signature projects, which I will later discuss.

ENRS is a Central European initiative but it does target audiences in Western Europe. The leadership is divided on whether or not to expand membership to Western European states in order to broaden the scope of the organization. ENRS gets most of its funds, including its



operational budget, from the Polish Ministry of Culture, followed by contributions from Germany, then Hungary then others. It has three governing bodies. The Steering Committee, which is made up of a single representative from each member country chose by his/her respective Minister of Culture, makes all the decisions regarding strategy and projects by consensus. The Advisory Board includes academics and politicians from member countries and observer countries (Austria, Latvia, Albania) and is responsible for the overall direction of the organization and its medium to long-term development. Finally, the Academic Council is made up of academics from the member countries and is responsible for ensuring the quality of historical education projects and conferences. Although these bodies are important, the ideas for projects and how they will be executed all come from the Secretariat that is based in Warsaw. This includes the director of ENRS, Rafał Rogulski, and a team of about 15-20 part-time and full-time employees. They are for the most part young, educated, energetic people with expertise in areas like anthropology, religious studies, art history, foreign languages, international affairs, cultural management, and public relations. They come up with project ideas, apply for funding from external grant institutions like the European Union, execute and promote the projects. ENRS's general budget is just over 1 million euro, substantially larger than the Platform's.

### **Reconciliatory Regionalism Strategy**

Recall that the Network's reconciliatory strategy relies on (1) not essentializing the memory (the *What*) and (2) not defining the enemy (the *Who*). Providing multiple possible evaluations of Communism leads to the elucidation of historical complexities rather than its elision. Defining the mnemonic contest in terms of "us" *and* "them" leads to a pluralistic posture that is conducive to discussion and negotiation over historical memories with those who hold different interpretations of history within widely-agreed upon bounds of intellectual integrity and

public discourse civility. This reconciliatory regionalism strategy of the Network encourages it to prognosticate dialogue about Communism as the principal solution to the problem of the legacy of Communism. More importantly, this strategy is in lockstep with the EU's dialogic imperative and thus places the Network at an advantage for accessing EU funds and diffusing its historical memories more widely across Europe. The Network's victimhood regionalism strategy may, but not necessarily, help to overcome political and regional cleavages and to heal historic wounds.

### Not Essentializing Communism

One of the Network's most successful historical education projects, The Freedom Express, is composed of a travelling<sup>78</sup> exhibition titled "Roads to 1989. East-Central Europe 1939-1989" and a youth study trip that takes students to multiple sites associated in one way or another with Communism in the region. Let us begin with the travelling exhibition. It was designed by historians associated with ENRS and "documents the *complicated process* through which this part of Europe regained its freedom from Communist dictatorship" [emphasis mine] (website). The exhibition focuses on "the various ways in which civil liberties were limited in the former Communist bloc and on *attempts made to regain them*" [emphasis mine] (website). These freedoms include the Freedom of Nations, Freedom of Travel, Freedom of Speech and Expression, Freedom of Religions and Belief, Economic Freedom with a section on New Forms of Opposition and Civil Society. And finally, the exhibition "focuses especially on the question of what *connects and divides* remembrance of the events that preceded the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern European" [emphasis mine] (website).

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<sup>78</sup> So far the exhibition has been displayed in public squares in Kraków, Budapest, Vienna, Bucharest, Berlin, Brussels, Warsaw and Wrocław receiving tens of thousands of viewers.

Already we see a stark contrast with the Platform's travelling exhibition. Communism here is presented as dictatorship that limited freedoms, but not as a regime that committed mass atrocities like genocide and crimes against humanity. Instead of organizing the exhibition by nationality, it is cleverly organized by the kinds of freedoms that were suppressed under Communism. This framing gives the project a certain relevance to contemporary social problems that still revolve around issues like freedom of speech and religion. Rather than focusing on the Eastern European victims of Communism, this exhibition focuses on the dissidents and freedom fighters that sought to overthrow Communism to regain national sovereignty and democratic freedoms, while acknowledging that this was a "complex process." This presents the region as one that has made great contributions to European democracy, rather than just a place that has been dually victimized. The exhibition explores what "connects and divides remembrance" across the different experiences of Communism across countries, but also across time from the end of WWII to 1989. The exhibition conveys a sense of time through which processual changes occurred and led to the complex development of different incarnations of Communist rules and eventual transition to democracy over time. By contrast, the Platform's exhibition gives very little sense of time, except to compare how long each Communist regime in each country existed. This gives the impression that the Communist regimes were static and unchanging, distilling them down to its essence, which was its criminality (since that is the only facet of Communism that the Platform's exhibition portrays). The Network's objective then is to uncover what is similar and different about the Communist periods in different CEE countries and how they are remembered. Meanwhile, the Platform's objective in its exhibition, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was to cover up complexities and difference and giving the impression that Communist was all evil, everywhere equally.

The Freedom Express project also had a participatory historical education component. In September, 2014, students were chosen, in an international competition, to participate in a two-week study trip that would take them to six countries in the region to search for "traces of the 1989 transitions." The program included meetings with dissidents, historical and artistic workshops and visits to sites of memory. The group was in search of the "traces of that fight to freedom" and included art, history and journalism students from the region and as far away as the UK and Costa Rica.

The Freedom Express study trip for students shows how the Network tries to focus not solely on victimhood but also on the contributions that dissidents and regular people made to pro-democratic movements, although victimhood still plays a role in this story. It presents a multidimensional version of Communism. The group started out in the Gdańsk Shipyard and the European Solidarity Centre. Students met with Andrzej Bujak one of the Polish opposition leaders in the 1980s who recounted some of his experiences. The students visited Warsaw, where they toured Rakowiecka Prison where SB tortured political prisoners. In Budapest, they visited Memento Park and met with four Hungarian parliamentarians, witnesses of the peaceful revolution in Hungary. In Timisoara, they met in church with Laszlo Tokes, former Romanian dissident. He talked about the human chain of people on December 15 of multiple faiths to prevent eviction from the church by the Communist authorities. In Sopron, they met with Laszlo Magas, former dissident, one of the organizers of the Pan-European Picnic in 1989. In Slovakia, they meet with dissidents and witness a border crossing reenactment. Through such a study trip it is impossible to teach students that Communism was universally about victimhood and oppression. It was also about opposition and agency. Summarizing the trip, one student concludes, "I will remember the fall of the Berlin Wall, the crowd at Brandenburg Gate, Lech

Walesa at the gates of the shipyard, Imre Nagy's funeral on the streets of Budapest more than 30 years after his death, Vaclav Havel on the balcony of the Wenceslas Palace at the heart of the Velvet Revolution. I will also remember the small church at Timisoara where the Romanian revolution started" (Freedom Express video).

Besides dissidents, the students also met with less prominent activists like a bus driver, who, when asked about his memories of Gdańsk and the events of 1989, recounted how he and his friends were doused with paint for refusing to attend a May 1st parade. But he adds, "It is true that under Communism the social support was better. For families, for children. Nursery schools were subsidised, there were the holiday resorts. Now, this is gone, right?" Through such unscripted encounters, students are encouraged to approach the Communist period *and* the present era critically, rather than being forced to accept anti-Communist ideology. For example, in Prague, participants talk to a bartender in a pub and ask about the economic situation today. One student asked is not good that we have all of these "possibilities" now and the bartender asked what he means by "possibilities." The student responded that now they have the possibility to travel and the bartender quipped, "Will that feed you?" He went on to explain that he does think it is better now that we are not persecuted by the police but life opportunities for children are not what they used to be. In Berlin, among other stops, students met with a bakery owner in the center of Berlin. The older woman explained that once the center was an important place for families and even under the DDR things were good despite what some people say now. Our district "has gone to shit now. All we have is 'High Fidelity' and everything has to be 'trendy.' But we're not able to have a simple chat with people." Confronting older generations, students are exposed to a Communism nostalgia that spurs memories of better times and positive youthful experiences. It challenges a simplistic understanding of Communism according to an anti-

Communist ideology that sees Communism only in black and white terms, as promoted by the Platform. Rogulski, the director of the Network, explains that Communism itself needs to be accurately presented with all of its nuances, "Of course the very telling of Communism has to be nuanced across many different periods which looked different in the immediate post-war years from 1953 to 1956 and differently later. In different countries it looked differently. For the Czechs, their history before 1948, and their history after 1948, that is their method of narration, it is not identical, for example, to that of Poles, because for us the caesura was the year 1944/45" (personal communication 2016).

Thus the key historical memories in this study trip are of resistance to Communism and the steps on the road to freedom, questioning the concept of freedom itself (rather than prescribing it as a necessarily anti-Communist, capitalist and democratic future). If the Platform were to organize this trip, it would have looked very differently. The focus would have been on the victims of Communism, prisons, mass graves, disappearances, Communist crimes and the lack of justice for them. The focus would not have been on well-known heroic personalities like Lech Wałęsa (who as described previously according to Polish right-wingers was a Communist collaborator<sup>79</sup>) and Václav Havel (who similarly according to Czech right-wingers also seemed

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<sup>79</sup> The Platform picked up on the story of troves of documents exposed by the late General Kiszczak's wife that supposedly provide evidence of Wałęsa's collaboration with the security services in the 1970s. Enthusiastically pursued by the right-wing leadership at the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, this investigation is used by Wałęsa's opponents, the current-ruling right-wing PiS party to denigrate the post-Communist transition in Poland. The Platform points to this story as evidence that "justice for the crimes of Communism in post-Communist Europe was hampered" despite the dubious authenticity and accuracy of the documents. Even if Wałęsa's collaboration is true, the Platform does not question but rather insinuates that he should be tried for some vague "Communist crimes" despite his unquestionably decisive role in bringing about a political transition that brought that very system to its knees. A steadfast commitment to essentializing Communism as evil leads the Platform to see anyone in any way connected to or tainted by Communism as evil too.

weak in the transition negotiations and forgot about the victims of Communism) but rather on Milada Horáková (executed by Communists for treason), Jan Palach (Czech student who self-immolated in protest of the Prague Warsaw Pact invasion), Ryszard Siwiec (Polish Home Army resistor, self-immolated in protest of the Prague Warsaw Pact invasion), or Jerzy Popiełuszko (Polish priest killed by security services).

The Freedom Express project was so successful, that this model was used to plan another historical education project called *In Between?* which took students and young professionals (ages 18-25) from all over Europe to towns and villages in Central and Eastern Europe that have diverse cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic communities due to frequent historical border changes. These areas for example include Bukovina (Ukraine), Transylvania (Romania), Lubuskie (Poland), and Banska Bystrica and Hrusov (Slovakia). Students travelling to these borderland regions interviewed and met with locals who shared their family histories of war, migration, Communist oppression, as well as the beauty of the diversity of local art, faith, language, heritage and culture. It shows that while there were periods of conflict, there were also long periods of intercultural sharing and understanding and a celebration of multiculturalism. Thus while this project does not focus explicitly on Communist history (although it inevitably exposes students to their interlocutors' experiences and memories of living under Communism after the war), it seeks to recover and bring to light what was in large part destroyed by the two totalitarian periods, including Communism, namely European diversity. This project was financed by the Europe for Citizens program because it perfectly fits into the EU's mission of building European identity based on the core European values of inclusion and diversity focusing on underrepresented regions. Such a project helps to build a transnational community of people who identify themselves not only as victims of war and regional totalitarianism but also as a

diverse community that has contributed greatly to the region's and thereby Europe's rich cultural, religious, linguistic and artistic heritage. The Platform's commitment to building a transnational community based primarily on victimhood requires a more rigid understanding of who the victims were and who the perpetrators were and defines the region based on that binary relationship between us and them.

A similar Network project called the *Sound in the Silence* engages youth to critically assess historical memories and how they impact today's societies but through art. This is an annual historical education project for middle school and high school aged youth financed in large part through successful grant applications from the EU Europe for Citizens Program. Its goal is to bring history and art together in an interactive and experiential way. The Network describes it as "an intercultural and international remembrance project. It is a way to reach young people through the use of various artistic forms." The goal is to stimulate students to "find new ways of looking at the history of Europe, of our nations, states, regions and of transferring the past into our present lives" (website). The project got off the ground in 2011 when Polish and German students visited the concentration camp memorial Neuengamme near Hamburg for a week and in the end developed an artistic performance based on their experiences. In 2012, the same students spent some time exploring Borne Sulinowo, a town in Poland, that since WWI served as a German military training ground. During WWII, Germans held Polish, French and Soviet prisoners of war there, and after the Red Army liberated the site it became a Soviet military garrison until 1992. In 2013, students presented their performances in the US. The projects try to bring together students from more than one country to explore emotionally-charged sites of memory that also have transnational pasts and are shaped by more than one historical period, often capturing both the Nazi and Communist periods. The 2015 Sound in the



Silence project took place in Gdańsk focusing simultaneously on the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII (Westerplatte) and August Agreements of 1980 and the Solidarity movement (Gdańsk Shipyard). Interestingly this project also pushes students to think about how history meets the present. The 1989 socioeconomic changes were discussed and students interviewed Gdańsk inhabitants who played a major role in history but have now felt excluded from the new economic realities of the 25 years since the democratic transition. Thus ENRS historical education projects allow young people to question the complexity of the Communist period and what it meant for different groups of people and bringing that kind of critical thinking into the present.

Finally, the Network's conferences for experts, much like their projects for youth, also attempt to uncover the complexities of Communism while investigating the ways in which memories of that period make themselves known in Central and Eastern Europe and the continent today. The two major annual conferences are the Genealogies of Memory Conference, aimed at academics and the European Remembrance Symposium, aimed at practitioners. Unlike the Platform, rather than demanding that Communism should be evaluated in strictly negative terms and that the only solution to the still existing "problem" of the Communist legacy is retributive justice, the Network tries to carve out a space for dialogue about the Communist past. No doubt, many researchers and practitioners, especially from CEE, have starkly negative interpretations of Communism. But a variety of viewpoints and analyses is always presented at these conferences.

The major goals of the Genealogies of Memory Conference series are two-fold; to promote understanding of CEE as a region in the international academic community, and to facilitate academic exchange and networking among CEE scholars while giving them a voice in

the global memory studies arena. The first conference, held in 2011 in Warsaw, looked at the theories and methods used to study historical memory in Europe and asked specifically whether tools developed by French, German, and Anglo-Saxon academic communities apply to CEE and other regions. Important memory scholars from all over the world are invited to these conferences. Those who have attended in the past have included Jeffrey Olick, Jan Kubik, Michael Bernhard, Ann Rigney, and Michael Rothberg among others. Each conference focuses on certain aspects of historical memory like regionalism (2012), legal frames (2013) or oral history (2014), but all of them aim to explore CEE historical memory through a variety of perspectives. From these first conferences, Małgorzata Pakier and Joanna Wawrzyniak, two Polish memory scholars, put together a volume titled *Memory and Change in Europe: Eastern Perspectives* (2016) in order to show that CEE experiences of history are unique to some extent, but not only unique, wanting to overcome the cliché of regional exceptionalism and the Western stereotype of Eastern European revisionism and nationalism.

The goal of European Remembrance Symposium, initiated in 2012, is to "exchange experiences and establish methods and forms of cooperation between institutions from different countries" (website). Unlike the Genealogies of Memory Conference, this one is aimed at history and memory practitioners rather than scholars and academics. These conferences tend to address questions like, "Does a common European culture of remembrance exist? Is it possible to build a common historical narrative in 21st-century Europe?" (website). Since 2012, the conference has grown in panels and participants and each year focuses on some anniversary of an important historical European event that anchors the theme of the conference. In 2015, it was the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII focusing on individual memories of survivors with the subtitle "Winners, Losers, Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders." In 2016, the conference took place in

Budapest and revolved around the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising but highlighting more generally CEE's struggle for freedom from Soviet oppression. But the conference is keen to speak to a Western European audience too and to never treat the Eastern region in isolation from its Western partners. So the conference addressed questions like, "How was the thaw and its consequences perceived in Western Europe? What kind of communication and reciprocal influence existed between 'East' and 'West'?" The conference addressed "U.S. foreign policy, Western Communist parties, the effects and the perception of dissidents and emigrants from East Central Europe, and finally the Holy See's Eastern Bloc policy" (website). These conferences tend to attract more than 200 attendees from over 20 European countries, as well as others like Israel and the United States, representing over 100 institutions dealing with historical memory.

Both the Genealogies of Memory Conference and the European Remembrance Symposium provide a space to discuss a variety of viewpoints and analyses of Communism as well as methods of historical inquiry itself. They also engage in a broad enough spectrum of historical topics and historical memories thereby situating Communism in a relational context rather than the Platform's more myopic focus strictly on Communism that borders on fetishization. It also allows the consideration of a model of regional identity building based not only on victimhood but also on the positive contributions of the region's dissidents, intellectuals, artists and religious leaders. While the Platform certainly also venerates the region through a commitment to patriotic nationalism its general framework of victimhood regionalism prohibits it from addressing the constructive ways in which the region has contributed to European history and culture and therefore the constructive ways in which it may still do so.

Because the Network does not essentialize Communism the way the Platform does, it does not forcefully equate the Communist and Nazi regimes in every one of its projects. Often, however, that comparison remains latent. Much like the Platform's mnemonic activists, the Network's too believe that CEE is marked by a historical legacy of dual totalitarianisms—Nazism and Communism. That is what makes the region's historical experiences different from Western Europe's. And both organizations see more similarities between the two regimes than differences, treating them as equally evil sides of the same coin. Yet the Network stops short of essentializing Communism in the way that the Platform does, making the explicit equation of Nazism and Communism less of an automatic and convincing framing.

For example, in the Freedom Express travelling exhibition, there is no attempt to directly compare the limits on civil liberties under Communism with those under Nazism. However, that although principally about Communism, the WWII period of 1939-45 is included. One Network employee says:

The exhibition Freedom Express is something that was dedicated to the topic of liberation from the communist regime and the trip of young people across Europe following the traces of these acts of resistance, these revolutionary things that were happening at the time was a very important theme. Also all of this is intertwined. That trip and exhibition tell of course about the anniversary of '89 but *in a certain context*. The exhibition shows the cause; it is called ["Roads to 1989. East-Central Europe] 1939-1989. [emphasis mine] (personal communication A1: 2016)

That "context" of the revolutionary year of 1989 is WWII, without which there would be no totalitarian communist regime to overthrow. Director Rogulski expands a bit more on the reason 1939 was included in the Freedom Express exhibition focusing again on the "wider context":

[It is a] project related to the anniversary of 1989 but with such an approach to commemorating that year 1989 which shows the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s in a *wider historical context*. And this is really archetypical in general for the way we function, this context, *showing certain historical events in a wider context* because only then there is a chance for understanding them. To truly understand what for societies of Central-Eastern Europe was the year 1989 and the following years it is necessary to return to the year 1939 to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, to the division of this part of Europe between the Soviet Union and Hitlerite Germany of the Third Reich. And really only in this context one can try to understand what happened in the year 1989.

Without this context it is not at all anchored in anything. It is not that we have 25 years of freedom in the year 2014 but where did it come from and why is important. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2016)

Describing the Freedom Express study trip for students, Director Rogulski explains that the two totalitarianisms are both presented to students very consciously:

With the totally symbolic beginning of August 31, 2014, this group of 20 young people from 10 different countries, whom we chose through a competition, first in Gdańsk took part in the opening of the European Solidarity Centre at the time of the anniversary of the signing of the August Agreements in 1980, the Act that entered world history. And a few hours later on September 1st at around 4am, in the hour of the first salvos of the beginning of the Second World War marked by the attack of a Polish unit at Westerplatte by Schleswig-Holstein, they took part in the commemorations of the outbreak of the Second World War. So in a way they immediately had contact with one and the other, with two very important facts of this history that we wanted to show them. (personal communication 2016)

Additionally, recall that the Sound in the Silence project, also often combines both memories of Communism and Nazism. For example, the 2015 edition took students to the sites of memory of WWII (at Westerplatte) and Communism (at the Gdańsk Shipyard). Asked whether the Network tries to separate the historical periods of WWII and Communism from each other, the Director responds:

Separate, no, no. On the contrary. Most of the Network's projects connect the two totalitarianisms because this is specific to this part of Europe, especially Poland. Not only Poland because a part of Germany also has the experience of both totalitarianisms. The other countries, the Baltic States, parts of Central Europe, also has to different degrees some experience, different experiences of both totalitarianisms. Therefore, in the foundations of the establishment of the Network, in this [founding] declaration, we talk already of both totalitarianisms. So this is a typical method, a characteristic method for us of thinking about history [...] The fact that, these totalitarianisms not only fought with each other but also in a sense collaborated with each other. And that this lay at the foundation of this whole drama, first World War II and the domination of black totalitarianism and later passing of the baton to red totalitarianism. So of course this whole context has for us great significance and in every project in which this has some justification both issues are... It is not that every project of the Network must necessarily concern both totalitarianisms, but if it concerns some aspect of the one case then, of course not necessarily but generally, it is always significant for us to show these events in context. (personal communication 2016)

Thus even if a project is chiefly about Communism, the history of Nazism as a precursor to that remains latent in the background. On the one hand, the Network does not force the comparison

of Communism with Nazism in every project, and on the other hand, it does not deliberately try to keep the two apart, "It seems to me that we do not talk about Communism, and only Communism, or only the Nazi regime" (A1). Rather, when appropriate, the Network's projects do highlight this unique historical experience of CEE. The two regimes are not compared or equated, rather Communism is given "context" or the "the two thing strongly intertwine" (A1). Another Network employee corroborates this approach, explaining how the Network deals with the "problem" of how to balance memories of Communism and Nazism. The Network does not "induce" this problem, like the Platform, but neither does it "disassociate" itself from it since it is such a central part of the region's history:

This [balance between Nazism and Communism] is troublesome every time, therefore, because this is not the first time we are struggling with this problem knowing that this problem to a certain degree is insoluble, we adopted certain assumptions. Firstly, that we *do not confront directly both of these memories*. When there are projects, they rather talk about one or the other. We have January 27th and August 23rd. [...] We rather do not confront these two memories with each other. But when it is in some way necessary to illustrate some topic [or] problem, then *we do not avoid this problem* and we do not disassociate ourselves from it. We do not try to forcefully induce this problem, but we also...and here to some extent there is a consensus with the German side, that [juxtaposing both totalitarianisms] does not pose significant problems. [emphasis mine] (personal communication A3: 2016)

This is a very different approach from the Platform, where the *objective* of every project, whether it is historically appropriate or not, is to convey the message that Communism was just as evil as Nazism, if not worse.

A Network project where the memories of Nazism and Communism are "confronted" explicitly revolves around commemorating August 23rd as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes. For the Network, much like the Platform, the memory of this day is very important. On its website, ENRS explains the meaning of August 23rd and why it is worth commemorating:

On 23 August, on the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes is observed. It was on that day in 1939 that an

agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union opened a road towards the tragedy of the second world war and its consequences: concentration camps, gulags, Holocaust, crematoria, labour camps, and many years of the cold war and further criminal regimes. On 23 August, all those are remembered whose deaths were a consequence of the crimes perpetrated by Nazism and Stalinism. ([www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu))

The Network designed and produced a small lapel pin, much like other campaigns, for example, the pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness use. It is a grey circular pin with a black band and the inscription "Remember. August 23." By sharing and wearing this pin on August 23rd, ENRS encourages everyone to remember the victims of both Nazism and Stalinism. The pins get handed out in public squares in ENRS member countries, although work with Germany is particularly problematic. From internal ENRS documents, it becomes evident that the Network is hesitant to hand out the pins in Germany where it is controversial to equate Nazism with other forms of totalitarianism:

As every year, we discussed whether to promote the campaign 'Remember. August 23' in Germany, where the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes is controversial due to the lack of acceptance for equating Nazi crimes with the crimes of Stalinism. Finally, we ended up collaborating only with the favorably oriented to the project Hubertus Knabe, director of the Memorial Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.<sup>80</sup>

In addition, there is uncertainty as to what to call the commemorative day—the European Day of Remembrance of Totalitarian Regimes or the European Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism. This uncertainty reflects the ambiguity that was present when the Resolution on August 23rd was being drawn up in the European Parliament as discussed in Chapter 2. The Network's internal documents make it evident that:

It was hard to decide which version is valid; Europe still uses the two terms: European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism and the European Day of Remembrance for

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<sup>80</sup> Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial is an independent foundation funded by the state and tasked with researching the history of the Hohenschönhausen Stasi detention prison between 1945 and 1989 and maintaining the grounds as a public memorial. Hubertus Knabe is a German historian and was appointed the scientific director of the Memorial in 2001. He is outspoken about the need for Germany to come to terms with its Communist past as it has with its Nazi past. This organization is also a member organization of the Platform.

the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes [...] [ENRS] decided finally for the first time this year to use the more universal term, which does not mention the names of the totalitarianisms, especially since the very term 'victims of Stalinism' does not apply to victims of all Communist crimes (e.g. those that took place after death Stalin).

Thus using the term "totalitarian regimes" avoids the controversial and explicit

Nazism/Communism comparison because it suggests that other totalitarian systems may be included, but it also allows for a broader definition of who the victims of Communism were. One

Network employee describes the project as:

An informational campaign about the fact that between the two camps—between Hitlerism and Communism—was the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, that they came to an agreement already then. Not everyone realizes that and frequently this fact is under appreciated. This fact is important, most of all, for those countries which simply suffered and were once under the first [totalitarian regime] and once under the second, so for Poland, for Ukraine, for the Baltic States, for others maybe this is less salient. (personal communication A1: 2016)

The Network participates in many of the same events as the Platform, especially those related to August 23rd commemorations. For example, both Rogulski and Winkelmann visited Tallinn in 2015 for the annual August 23rd commemorations, participating in flower-laying ceremonies (at the Freedom Monument) and even speaking on the same panel on the prevention of the "rise of Communism and Nazism in the future" at the associated conference.<sup>81</sup> Yet, the Network is more open-minded about the Nazism/Communism comparison. For example, that same year at the Network's 2015 European Remembrance Symposium, there was a panel where historians discussed "different ways to remember totalitarian regimes in Europe" dedicating an entire conversation to the question of "how to talk about the crimes of the 20th century totalitarian regimes in Europe without equating them?" It is evident that ENRS is more

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<sup>81</sup> Both the Platform and Network were also present at the 2014 August 23rd commemorations and conference in Riga. In 2016, both organizations attended the ceremony on August 22nd in Bratislava at the Gate of Freedom monument at Devin Castle and on the 23rd attended the associated conference. Dr. Wineklmann moderated a session on justice for totalitarian crimes at which Professor Jan Rydel, chairman of the ENRS Steering Committee, was a speaker.



concerned about dialogue than the Platform. The Platform demands that we equate the two systems, while the Network questions whether, when and how we should; it does not offer clear answers, even if many of its staff and historians associated with ENRS would be comfortable equating the two.

In addition, the Network in 2016 started commemorating January 27th—International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It tries to cooperate with and establish working relationships with institutions like Yad Vashem, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Thus while issues of Polish-German relations and Communism remembrance were always central for the Network, the organization is expanding in other substantive memory areas like the Holocaust. The Platform, on the other hand, has no intention of working with Holocaust research and remembrance institutions instead treating them as competitors for public funds and attention, as already discussed in the previous chapter. One Network employee comments on how the Network deals with the Holocaust differently than the Platform:

We definitely do not want to, by talking about Communism, in some way, I don't know, devalue talking about the Holocaust. [...] Maybe those aren't the right words. However, we are decidedly more careful than the Platform [...] It seems to me that the Platform, its general tendency, anyway that is probably its genesis, that they are simply seeking toward one concrete thing that is the penalization communist crimes in the same spirit as it happened with the crimes of the Holocaust, with Nazism. So they have their own, I understand them in this way, that this is the leading theme that comes up. However, our activity is a little broader. We probably want to dialogue more instead of proving that it [history] was this way or that or to prove that for sure Communism is the same thing...We are more in some sort of dialogue, we show different sides, but we do not forget that here is Communism, and we do not forget that this is the experience that nevertheless greatly rescued us as countries and as societies and that also differentiates us from other European countries. But more from a posture of openness, dialogue, showing different points of view. (personal communication A1: 2016).

Thus we see a recognition here that the Network is more sensitive to historical interpretations that are sensitive for some groups even if they are not to them. They are more careful than the Platform in preventing exclusion or offending other groups. The Network is concerned about not

being seen as depreciating the Holocaust. The Network is more concerned with "openness" and is more dialogue-oriented than the Platform. The latter is convinced of the appropriateness of comparing Communism and Nazism and is primarily concerned about proselytizing this particular interpretation of history rather than "showing different points of view."

### Us and Them

Unlike the Platform, the Network does not conceive of memory politics as a zero-sum struggle between "us" versus "them." Instead it views the memory field as populated with a variety of legitimate groups of mnemonic actors who are all negotiating and competing for public attention for their interpretations of history. Because the Network does not see memory politics as a zero-sum game, it tolerates and appreciates a variety of historical viewpoints within the memory field, where "we" and "they" can peacefully and openly discuss history within some widely accepted rules of discourse.

At the broadest level of defining "us" and "them," unlike the Platform, the Network does not subscribe to a radical anti-Communist ideology and therefore does not see the mnemonic struggle between "us" the anti-Communists and "them" the pro-Communists. In part, for this reason, the Network is not concerned with the ideological purity of its employees or board members. Unlike the Platform, it does not have an ethics code that demands that anyone working with the Network have a record untarnished by any association with Communist regimes or ideas. Instead, very tellingly, the document that the Network *has* recently developed and adopted is a guideline for how memory politics generally should be carried out. Thus rather than policing the divide between "us" and "them," the Network is more concerned about creating a pluralist memory field within which "us" and "them" can voice their opinions openly according to a set of common rules of communication. For this reason, the Network has drafted a set of guidelines

that would help mnemonic actors engage in historical dialogue by establishing a standardized set of rules of mnemonic engagement. The Network sees itself as an institution that can provide an example to others on how to deal with historical memory and be the one to set out the rules for how the memory field operates. Indeed, one of the strategic objectives of the ENRS is to become a "standard-setting organisation, supporting and integrating other organisations active in the field of remembrance" (Strategy Document 2015: 63). One of the things that makes the organization unique within the broader European memory field is its international character. In an internal strategy document we read, "...there are specialized national institutions focusing on measures which implement national remembrance policies. Cooperation with such institutions is one of the bases for ENRS operation, yet competing with them is beyond the scope of Network's tasks" (Strategy Document 2015: 56). Instead "ENRS projects should focus on issues which are important for national histories in a *broader international context*" and by juxtaposing national historical memories "extracting and promoting the impact of those facts on *global* processes and events" [emphasis mine] (56).

With this in mind, at the 2015 assemblies meeting, ENRS board members approved this document titled, "Guidelines for international discourse on history and memory (see Table 7 in Appendix for full document). This document is worth quoting at length because it provides a window into the Network's reflection on historical memory in general:

Historical memory is one of the cornerstones in the identity and heritage of individuals and communities. It plays a fundamental role in shaping the relationships between countries and peoples, and may also be a source of tension and conflict.

Initiatives such as permanent and temporary museum exhibitions, monuments, literary works, documentaries and historical films, websites and other creative works aimed at directly or indirectly developing a historical view of one or more peoples and states, are tools in international historical discourse.

These types of activities, which are influenced by political factors, be it directly – through commissioning projects, or indirectly – for example through participation in project financing, become acts of international politics of memory.

Considering the promotion of peace and the development of international cooperation, alongside the strengthening of democracy and human rights, as the overriding goals of international policy in the 21st century, and in the firm belief that the criteria of objectivism, openness and tolerance are the best means of depicting reality, including historical reality, we formulate the following guidelines for international historical discourse and international politics of memory...

In other words, the Network recognizes that there are distinct social groups rooted in nationality or common heritage that in the international arena engage in international politics of memory. Historical discourse in the European memory field is inevitable because historical memory is a "cornerstone" of identity. Historical discourse is productive in that it builds "relationships between countries and peoples" but it can also cause "tension and conflict." This is a view of memory politics that see the enterprise itself as legitimate (e.g. it is not seen as a battle between those who instrumentalized history and those who do not, as mnemonic abnegators would be prone to seeing it). The Network then, recognizing the fundamental values of the international arena such as human rights and democracy, and principles of "objectivism, openness and tolerance" sets out eight guidelines for how to conduct international historical discourse in a productive and not destructive manner. In other words, the memory field is defined by a contest of "us" *and* "them" rather than "us" *versus* "them." Nowhere in the Platform's activity does the organization reflect on its own role as a mnemonic actor or the mnemonic field in which it participates.

More specifically, we have seen how the Platform defines the enemy as Russia, Jewish organizations, and the political left. The Network does not think of its interlocutors as enemies, and certainly not along these identifications. First, Russia and the Soviet Union do not feature in the Network's projects as the ultimate sources of all the evil that plagued Europe in the 20th century—it is usually depicted with more historical complexity than that. For example, in the Freedom Express travelling exhibition, the USSR features prominently in the area where

freedom of nations is discussed. However, rather than generalizing about the advent of totalitarianism in Russia, the Network instead describes specific historical events that led to the subordination of CEE by the Soviet Union. For example, one panel reads:

Following the Second World War, the Soviet Union extended its hegemony throughout almost all of Central and Eastern Europe. On paper, the countries under Moscow's influence were sovereign. In reality, from 1948 (the German Democratic Republic from 1949) onwards they were all ruled by Communists, who were subordinated to the Soviet Union. Censorship, expropriations and economic central planning, as well as the elimination of the legal opposition, led to popular dissatisfaction and even protests, which under Stalinism were brutally crushed by the political police. After Stalin's death in 1953, national uprisings against Soviet domination erupted in the GDR in 1953, in Hungary in 1956. Both were suppressed by Soviet troops, as well as reform process in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

At the same time, the exhibition does not place all of the blame on the Soviet Union, noting variations in the levels of local support for communist ideology. For example, one panel reads, "When the Red Army marched into the territories of Central European countries, the level of support for the Communists and their ideology varied from one country to another. It was highest in Czechoslovakia and the GDR and lowest in Romania and Poland." In other words, while discussing the Red Army invasion, the Network makes it clear that some grassroots support for Communism existed to varying degrees throughout the region. The Platform's director is of course well aware of these historical facts but the Platform's projects rarely highlight this point, precisely in order to vilify Russia and to promote the viewpoint that if the Soviet Union had not invaded the region, Communism would have never taken off. The Network's exhibition twice credits Mikhail Gorbachev with liberalization of the Communist system and even the eventual 1989 breakthroughs, stemming from his statesmanship in improving relations between the East and West. The Platform rarely makes positive statements about the Soviet Union, Russia or Russians, and certainly not about Communist party leaders.

Second, when it comes to Jews and the Holocaust, certainly the Network sees "us" as the community of Communism remembrance and "them" as the community of Holocaust remembrance. This is because there is very little overlap between these two networks of mnemonic actors. Yet, importantly, the Network does not see these two groups as a case of "us" *versus* "them." On the contrary, the Network, as discussed in the previous section, has started to commemorate January 27th as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and is reaching out to groups that work on the historical memories of the Holocaust and Jewish heritage more broadly in order to work on projects cooperatively. However, the Network so far has not had much success with this outreach and one staff member explains why from their perspective that may be:

From organizations like Yad Vashem or IHRA we come upon a much more definitive position. Partly this is understandable for us but it is not something that we can incorporate into our daily work because of the fact that we have this impression that in effect for these institutions projects like August 23rd, which are fairly important to us, already position us as their enemy. Before it even comes to any discussion we already have to dig ourselves out of this undesired, in our opinion, conviction of theirs that we necessarily must be torpedoing what they are doing. (personal communication A3: 2016)

Thus there is substantial tension between organizations that focus on the Holocaust and those that focus on Communism, but the Network seems to be saying that they are open to working together or at least beginning to discuss their differences. From the above quote, we get the sense that, in fact, it is "them," the Holocaust remembrance community, that see the mnemonic contest as a battle between "us" versus "them" being so skeptical of the Communism remembrance community as to assume that their mnemonic work must necessarily be in automatic and direct conflict with theirs.

And finally, the Network does not see the left or any other political group as its enemy the way the Platform does. The Network, like the Platform, is a non-partisan, independent

organization. However, perhaps because the Network is an institution that depends on ruling governments for financial support and for designation of each country's decision-making representatives, it is more sensitive to the potential for the politicization of historical memory. At the same time it does not want to be seen as doing any one party's bidding in order to ensure its non-partisan image for when the ruling coalition changes. The Network frequently discusses the dangers of the politicization of memory. In its guidelines, it warns about the "political factors" that inevitably influence mnemonic practices whether directly or indirectly. The Network is also "aware that international discussions of such issues can fall prey to ideologies and can be used as political tools, bringing more harm than benefit to the cause of common reflection on Europe's past and on its future" ([www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu)). To avoid these dangers, the Network makes a point of taking "into account and respect[ing] different perspectives as well as national, ethnic, and social sensitivities in Europe's neighbourhood" ([www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu)). Its leadership and staff is clearly aware of the potential for politicization. When asked whether the danger exists of one political view coming to dominate the Network's projects, an employee responded:

Certainly there are dangers [of politicization]. Of course there is. I mean, it seems to me, that we do not have [this problem] yet in the Polish members of the assemblies because we have three new [representatives] and one from the previous [government] whose term is still ongoing. And Professor Rydel who also comes from the previous nomination. But yes, it is a danger. You're probably also suggesting that some country may want to force its own concrete viewpoint by organizing the assemblies' representatives in such a way that they will represent the point of view of one country. It is a danger. And it is a real danger at least for the reason that they [country representatives] are always nominated by governments, the ministries [of culture]. If a ministry from a given country wants to monopolize a certain method of talking about history that is close to them then it will nominate people that speak the same language. [...] However, it seems to me delegates of a given country coordinate [viewpoints] before [plenary meetings], they simply arrive and try to force that which is advantageous from their point of view. Some do these in a more organized way and some in a less organized way. (personal communication A1: 2016)

In other words, because some of the Network's key decision-makers are nominated by a given country's ruling government there is always the danger that a government may wish to appoint

representatives that subscribe to the ruling party's views on history. Indeed, the three new Polish representatives appointed to the Network's assemblies, mentioned in the quote above, all come from the same conservative party circles. Andrzej Nowak, the renowned but controversial historian, has actively and publicly taken the "affirmative" side of the historical memory debate in Poland, as discussed earlier. He simultaneously serves as the Head of the Section for Culture, National Identity and History Policy at the National Development Council (NRR) having been appointed by Polish President Andrzej Duda of the PiS party. Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski, a legal scholar and professor, is also an MEP with the ECR Group and served as Minister of Culture during the first PiS government in 2005-2007. Finally, Robert Kostro, has worked in Ujazdowski's Ministry of Culture as the head of his Political Cabinet and both worked on the founding of the Polish History Museum during the first PiS government. Moreover, Tomasz Merta, one of the co-founders of the Network, although a highly regarded historian who has served in the Polish Ministry of Culture under the governments of PiS and the Civic Platform, is a conservative thinker (see his posthumous collection of essays *The Irrevocability of Conservatism* 2012). Another scholar associated with the Network, Wojciech Roszkowski, is also highly regarded, but served as a Polish MEP from the PiS Party and has for a long time supported the Kaczyński brothers.

### **Effect of Reconciliatory Regionalism: Reconciliation**

The Network's reconciliatory regionalism strategy primes it to offer reconciliation and dialogue itself as the way to overcome the legacies of Communism. Unlike the Platform, the Network does not have a specific end goal like prosecuting and successfully convicting living Communist criminals. For the Network, dialogue that leads to reconciliation is the ultimate objective. For example, reading the Network's mission statement on its website, we see that the



Network wants to discuss not just what to remember but "*how* to remember and commemorate the recent past." In a commitment to pluralism it wants to "contribute to the creation of an international community of memory that will take in the *variety of experiences* of Europe's nations and states." Moreover, the Network is committed "to explor[ing] the experiences of others and to respect those who view the past differently, or have other ways of interpreting and experiencing it." The Network's aim is "to create opportunities for comparing and contrasting national images of history and for allowing them to *complement* each other. It does not intend to produce a uniform, normalised European interpretation of history. This way the Network helps to resolve misunderstandings on historical issues, and to abolish stereotypes through building mutual respect and improving understanding among Europeans" [emphasis mine]. Even if truly common and unified European memory field is too utopic even for these memory activists, then a reconciled or shared memory that includes multiple perspectives where different memories can come together and not erupt into violence. One ENRS staff member explains that the major goal of the Network is to find "compromise":

The Network is an attempt at compromise. In the sense that it unites countries living in the same region of Europe that have probably different views on historical events. And the Network, besides its statutory goals like networking etc., in my opinion, is a kind of attempt at looking for compromise in a vision of historical events formulated by all of us and not from a national perspective. And that's how I read most of our organization's activities, which to a large degree rely on discussion and the exchange of viewpoints and confronting viewpoints and on the basis of that formulating some historical propositions and also activities pertaining to the present. [...] The Network is a common effort to build dialogue within Europe's very scarred history. (personal communication A2: 2016)

Another Network employee uses similar language of "confronting" different historical memories while furthering "dialogue":

Historical education in an international dimension would seem like a reasonable solution [to the problem of what ENRS should focus its energies on] especially [education] that would confront different historical perspectives and e.g. in the spirit of confronting these different historical perspectives, and would strive to educate youth, I don't know, students, whoever [...] for whom it is obvious that there exists more than one perspective on the country in which they live day to

day. And in this more idealistic frame [...] it would lessen the probability of international tensions. [...] The second goal was to support dialogue, dialogue understood as a dialogue of experts, historians and politicians showing that there are many rights. (personal communication A3: 2016).

The Director expands on what he sees as the Network's goals. He explains that the West needs to understand how important CEE is to its identity and that the East needs to learn about the West too. The point is to learn how to talk about difficult issues, and not to relativize them, but rather but to respect each country's historical narratives even if we may not agree with them:

One of the [Network's future] directions [is] showing so-called Western Europeans what a hugely important element of their identity is Central-Eastern Europe's history. Of course vice-versa too. And we have a lot to learn about difficult Spanish history, French, Belgian, Italian. There is a lot to catch up on here also on our side. So there are almost too many topics for dialogue. But [our] direction should be rather the goal of mutually sensitizing each other [to our histories], but not in the way of relativizing crimes, those that formed the basis of the Second World War and later Communism. But *to learn how to talk* about them in such a way that respects the narration of each country. Clearly within individual countries, these narrations also tend to differ, here [at the national level] we also argue, and Germans argue with each other, and here in Poland we argue with each other, and in Hungary they argue with each other. This is natural, there is nothing wrong with that. It is important to talk with each other about these topics, to research, to conduct progressively better and more advanced research, to reach for new sources. And then at some point there in the end extracting some lessons for the future. That is the main goal of our work. Speaking most simply, we work so that this [history] does not repeat itself. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2016)

What is noteworthy in the understanding of the Director's goals for the Network is that ultimately it is about learning "how to talk" about difficult issues like Nazi and Communist crimes. He is not saying, like the Platform does, that the ultimate goal is to have everyone accept the thesis that Communism was just as bad as Nazism—certainly though the Network does not want to see Communist crimes "relativized" or diminished in comparison to Nazi crimes, nor would it stand for the reverse. Rather, the Network wishes to establish some sort of norms, rules, or guidelines that mnemonic actors can learn and assimilate so that they would in historical dialogue in ways that include and respect a variety of points of view. Finally, while the Platform and the Network are both motivated by preventing totalitarianism to resurface in Europe, the Network believes the

best way to do that is to engage in dialogue while the Platform believes the best way is to impose on everyone a single master narrative based on an anti-Communism ideology that holds little if any room for compromise. It is clear then that the Network's reconciliatory regionalism strategy, by not essentializing Communism or identifying enemies, is more prone to dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation.

However, this is not to overemphasize the Network's openness in negotiating historical memories. The Network holds steadfast to its own uniquely regional interpretation of 20th century history that it does not intend to renounce, even if it is amenable to making slight alterations. The Network motivates its existence through the following understanding of historical memory making:

The end of the Cold War and the post-1989 transformations in Europe swung open the doors for a new approach to history. Restrictions on the freedom of expression disappeared, official political interpretations of contemporary history were no longer enforced, and yesterday's taboos could now be discussed openly. This pluralistic framework has enabled more international exchange of historical ideas to take place than ever before. However, major differences in the interpretation of many events emerged, often leading to political misunderstandings. At the centre of this debate were, and continue to be, problems relating to the memory of the 20th century, a century so greatly marked by violence, its uses, its experiences and resistance against it. (www.enrs.eu)

In other words, the Network is stepping into a new international memory field that was made possible by the falling of the Iron Curtain. While a lot of progress in discussing 20th century history has been made since 1989, a great deal of misunderstandings remain, which require active work to overcome them. More specifically:

The legacy of totalitarian regimes and dictatorships in 20th-century Europe are [sic] still visible today. Many wounds have yet to heal. Legal actions have been taken to settle accounts, but the past still affects the political culture of many nations and the identity of communities. The legacies of history in Central and Eastern Europe still run very deep, which is why this is such an important area of interest for [the] European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. (www.enrs.edu)

In other words, the misunderstandings that remain stem from the different experiences of totalitarianism in Europe. One Network employee explains that the legacies that are central to CEE are of the dual totalitarianisms that afflicted the region.

There is one key [to these debates]. Even interesting. It is the looking at history through the prism of two totalitarianisms which made themselves present in a very intense way in this Europe, that is Nazism, earlier Prussia' imperialist approach, later Germany's Hitlerite Nazism and Communism. And these are like the main topics that we have to face because they to a large measure constituted Europe's 20th century history. First WWI, then 20 year break, a moment of growing tension before WWII, and later the division of Europe into two parts by the Iron Curtain, and this in some way was the historical common denominator of also the second half of the 20th century. And the Network touches the topics that define these problems. (personal communication A2: 2016).

Moreover, the need for an international organization that aims to reconcile European historical memory is evident in the assumption that the East and West had different experiences of 20th-century dictatorships and in part for that reason the same historical memories have different meanings in Eastern and Western Europe that lead to mutual misunderstandings and tensions that could potentially lead to conflict:

In Western Europe the word "Auschwitz" is synonymous with the Holocaust and denotes a turning point in history. By contrast, in Eastern Europe this is not the only defining element, as the region's identity was shaped by two experiences: Nazism, which led to the Holocaust, and Stalinism, which gave birth to the Gulag. Even if the post-Yalta world order was successfully overcome in political terms, differences in cultural remembrance between Eastern and Western Europe remain significant despite the passage of more than 20 years since the 1989 revolution. These differences in perception may cause misunderstandings and hamper efforts to bring about mutual understanding. ([www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu))

Importantly, the Network does not propose a new master narrative based on any one ideology of regional historical experience that it claims will resolve these misunderstandings and tensions.

Instead, in an effort to trigger dialogue, it asks questions:

Important questions remain: How to cope with the existing historical narratives concerning the causes and consequences of totalitarian regimes? How to create new more developed narratives? How to commemorate the victims of Nazism and Communism without trivialising them, pushing them aside or reducing them to simple statistics? (website)

However, reconciliation does not mean that the Network strives for some integrated, pan-European identity based on common historical memories. One Network employee, for example, rejects a unified European memory field model that builds towards mnemonic consensus:

For me, a cool European project is one of countries, nations united economically but directing their own politics, which are different and are really irreconcilable. A common building of a generally obligatory pan-European view on Europe is for me some leftist invention with which I completely do not agree. This is happening, there are attempts, but personally I don't like them. (personal communication A2: 2016)

The Director on the other hand is more optimistic about reconciliation that strives toward a deeper historical and cultural understanding of Europe based on historical facts but sees "political correctness" as standing in the way because it blocks discussions about difficult topics. International historical discourse must have a "deeper character:"

There will no longer be room, there cannot be room for silencing certain things, pretending that something was different than it was. The enemy of a sensible historical politics, one of the biggest enemies of historical politics, is, in my deep conviction, something that is called political correctness. That suddenly it is not polite to say some things. We cannot agree to something like this [...] In this regard I am optimistic when it comes to Poland and elsewhere. (personal communication 2016)

When asked to what extent Director Rogulski thought that Polish historical memories have been included into the European collective memory field since Poland's accession to the EU, he responded by taking issue with my assumption of there being some sort of common historical narrative or collective memory at all; "That is a question whether a common European historical memory exists." Asking whether he thinks one exists, he responds in the negative:

I am not under the impression that it exists. I don't know if it is at all possible. I don't know to what extent it is necessary. [...] I think, firstly, something like this does not exist, for now does not exist, there is no common narration of European history. Maybe there are attempts being undertaken to create the first elements of this common history like the House of European History. We will see its effect. (personal communication 2016)

It seemed strange to me that someone who is ostensibly in the business of advancing a common European historical narrative and identity seems skeptical of the possibility of that happening at all or even its desirability. When I asked about the Europe for Citizens funds that the Network takes advantage of and the fact that the whole program is aimed at strengthening a sense of common history and purpose of Europe, the Director responds that he is unsure whether these grants promote a *common* historical narration, as opposed to for example, local, regional or particular memories.

From this discussion, it is evident that the Network's vision of historical memory is a good fit with the EU's dialogic imperative, but it is not a perfect fit because the EU holds steadfast to a unified European memory field that would underpin European identity by strengthening European identification while *limiting* the hold of national identities. The Network does not necessarily subscribe to this project. While the Network engages in international projects on a European level, it by no means wishes to deemphasize national or regional identities. For example, from an internal progress report, we learn that the additional goals of the Freedom Express project are to promote the role of Central and Eastern Europe, especially during the democratization process in recent European history, and to promote the role of Poland in CEE in the period 1939-1989. The sense of national and regional identity is still very strong. For many at the Network, there is a commitment to enhance a sense of regional identity that simultaneously brings it closer to Western Europe but also brings Western Europe closer to Eastern Europe. All of my interviewees at the Network, when given the choice, identified primarily with either the local, national or regional level as opposed to the European. This is common for the majority of Europeans, but one might expect that for a group dealing with European history and identity, there may be a stronger sense of Europeaness. That is not to say

that for the Network European integration does not matter. Rather it sees that integration as perhaps taking a different route than the EU founding fathers in Western Europe imagined. Thus it is not so much a question of inserting the region's historical memories into the course of a European memory field established by Western Europeans for Western Europeans, but rather a question of contributing to and co-constituting the trajectory of European historical integration and its future. One Network employee eloquently expresses this sentiment:

The great mission of Central European nations is the *introduction into this narration determined by Western European nations of new themes and in a way proposing new questions* and explaining our history and our experiences which also explain some of our behavior [...] I don't think that currently this process has advanced much. I wonder, for example, how the Museum of European History will tell the history of Central Europe. [...] So I think that we still have a lot to say but this is a task in which time works to our advantage because we understand Western Europe more and more and we understand ourselves as a region more and more. On the other hand, Western European countries integrated, modern, strong economically...More and more this image of them as solid and stable wanes. This is a great opportunity for us [...] because in this region of Europe some interesting solutions [to Europe's problems] are being created which are not necessarily backwards or anachronistic, but maybe their understanding by Western Europe is too flat and shallow. If it were different, deeper, then maybe some of our solutions would be more readable or they would serve as inspiration that would push in some way these countries of Old Europe forward. [emphasis mine] (personal communication A3: 2016)

In other words, although skeptical about just how much understanding of Central Europe has diffused Westward since the end of the Cold War, the "mission" of this region should be to contribute something new to the constitution of a united Europe. Central Europe can use the opportunity that Western European models of integration and prosperity seem to be coming under stress from a number of internal and external challenges to propose solutions and ways of doing things that are uniquely Central European but just as modern and productive.

Finally, although the Network's general thematic priorities of "remembrance and commemoration genealogies," "region, culture, identity," "Holocaust remembrance,"<sup>82</sup> "resistance, opposition, objection," "society and family life under dictatorship," and

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<sup>82</sup> "Holocaust remembrance" substituted "different experiences of 20th-century dictatorships" only toward the end of the year 2016.

"consequences of totalitarianism and dictatorships" complement those of the EU, when we look closer, there is a distinct regional flavor to the memories that the Network wishes to promote compared to the ones the EU believes are most important. Predictably, the Network's thematic priorities focus on the CEE region and put equal emphasis on Nazism and Communism. The EU's thematic priorities include a geographically wider scope of events, and extend beyond the memories of the dual totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism. The difference in the anniversaries chosen by the EU and by the Network are telling precisely because they underscore the difficulties associated with integrating regional and national memories into a broader common European memory framework (see Table 8 in Appendix).

Indeed, as I argue at the beginning of this chapter, it is not necessarily the match between the content of historical memories between the Network and the EU that gives ENRS so much potential for success. It is the mode in which history is to be remembered that the Network has chosen. For example, the Network's guidelines for international discourse on history and memory use very similar language to the more cursory guidelines that the Europe for Citizens Program provides for its applicants. While the Europe for Citizens Program Guide calls for "critically comparing different national points of view" (Programme Guide 2014:6), the Network's first guideline is to "present varied viewpoints." The former demands that projects promote "mutual understanding and tolerance" (6) while ENRS believes that "openness and tolerance are the best means of depicting reality." The EU wants projects to "raise awareness on the richness of the cultural and linguistic environment in Europe" (6) while the Network's guidelines state that "affirmative presentation of totalitarian, racist and chauvinistic visions of the world and of history" that would endanger this rich intercultural environment is "unacceptable."



The match between the Network's reconciliatory strategy that primes it toward dialogue and the EU's dialogic imperative is critical to the Network's success.

## Conclusion

Through its various projects, discussed in this chapter, the Network addresses the historical memory of Communism through a framework of reconciliatory regionalism. This means that it does not essentialize Communism into a fetishized object that represents ultimate evil and it does not define the mnemonic contest in terms of "us" versus "them." Instead, the Network presents varied viewpoints on Communism, underscoring its complexities and differences across time and space. It sees the mnemonic contest as one in which a variety of groups legitimately engage to diffuse their own historical memories operating within a rule-bound memory field. This reconciliatory regionalism strategy prevents the Network from forcing an uncomfortable and intellectually questionable equation of Communism to Nazism at all costs. This reconciliatory regionalism strategy opens up opportunities for the Network to engage in more dialogic exchanges between different groups, generations, and nations. It makes it more inclusive and gives voice to a larger diversity of stakeholders. It makes the Network more competitive in attracting EU funding that requires civil society organizations dealing with historical memory to present multiple viewpoints, provide safe spaces for open discussion and critical dialogue and propose policies and models for bridging differences in an ever-more diverse Europe. It attempts to build a regional identity that is not based exclusively on victimhood, but rather mines CEE's history to find representations of the region as champions of civic protest, democracy, and political and cultural innovation with skills and traditions that could positively contribute to Europe's future. The Network's reconciliatory regionalism strategy

makes then makes it more likely than the Platform to actually achieve meaningful reconciliation between nations and regions.

To summarize the argument presented in this and the previous chapter, using these two case studies of the Platform and the Network, I showed that what determines whether or not mnemonic actors successfully diffuse their historical memories transnationally is not so much their content or the values within which they are framed, but the mode in which they are communicated. We have seen that the Platform and Network have been established and operate within the time frame, in the same region, within the same European memory field. They both hold on to a regional memory framework defined by the dual totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism and remember Communism in similar ways that distinguish their views from mainstream views in Western Europe. For example, they do not think that Communism had important positive contributions to global society; they do not focus on Communism's contributions to the struggles against Fascism; they do not privilege the memories of Allied liberation; they do not think about the Communist ideals of egalitarianism while lamenting the poor execution in practice of the ideals. They do however treat the dual totalitarianisms of Nazism and Communism as the foundational memories of their region; they do think that both were equally evil but maybe in slightly different ways; they both emphasize the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; they both emphasize Yalta; they both emphasize the USSR as an occupant not a liberator; they generally treat Communism as an external imposition rather than a homegrown grassroots movement; and they do believe that recognition of Communism and Communist crimes is lacking in Western Europe. With this common denominator, the substance of Communism remembrance is very similar. Both the Platform and the Network come from the same activist, intellectual milieu and are part of overlapping transnational networks. Yet even

though the Network's mnemonic entrepreneurs may think that Communism was essentially evil and that it was just as bad if not worse as Nazism, the Network (in part because it is publicly funded), communicates memories of Communism in a way that opens questions about Communism rather than imposing a single narrative about Communism that others must accept. The Platform does not do that. Ironically, this may in the end, make the Network more successful in diffusing its memories of Communism as equally abhorrent as Nazism (same as Platform's) across Europe and accepted within the European memory field because those ideas are presented in the acceptable dialogic way. I do not wish argue that the substance of memories does not matter at all. If a memory actor proposes that the Holocaust or the Gulag never happened, of course that interpretation of history will not even be considered within the European memory field for it falls so far from the mainstream of what is believable. However, short of such radical positions, it may be the mode by which memories are communicated, rather than their substance, that determines mnemonic diffusion and memory scholars should pay as much attention to how memories are communicated as they do to what is being communicated.

Finally, I do present the caveat that reconciliatory regionalism does not necessarily and automatically lead to reconciliation. Although open to dialogue, I note that the Network does hold a unique regional viewpoint based on dual totalitarianisms that it is unwilling to dispense with for the sake of compromise. It does after all see memory politics as a struggle between "us" and "them" where the "us" includes Central and Eastern European nations and "them" represents Western Europe, the target audience of the Network's memory diffusion activities. If not careful, the Network could slowly slip into a more uncompromising posture that could exacerbate political and regional/national polarization, leading to a process of renationalization of the

European memory field that is not congruent with reconciliation. I discuss these cleavages at the European level in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Regional and Political Cleavages in the European Parliament and Processes of Renationalization**

So far we have seen, in Chapter 2, how the accession of CEE countries with their different historical experiences of Communism has reshaped the European memory field by decentering the heretofore dominant memory regime of the Holocaust and incorporating the now legitimate memory regime of totalitarianism turning the European mnemonic field from a unified one to a pillarized one. We have seen that this included an acceptance of commemorative practices surrounding Communism but not its criminalization. Chapters 3 and 4 have described how transnational memory activists in CEE employ two very different strategies of diffusing Communism remembrance across Europe. The reconciliatory regionalism strategy is more successful than the victimhood strategy because fits with the demands of the EU's dialogic imperative.

What about the mnemonic activists in the European Parliament, the institution where the most heated debates over the historical memories of Communism take place and whom organizations like the Platform and the Network lobby for support? Are they satisfied with the various resolutions described in Chapter 2 that recognized and condemned Communist crimes? There exists in the EP a small but vocal group of mnemonic actors, many of whose voices are found in this chapter, that believe the EP (and the EU in general) has not done enough to criminalize Communism and that even the commemorative recognition of Communist crimes and their victims has not sufficiently permeated European societies. Thus this chapter

demonstrates the dissatisfaction of political mnemonic actors for whom the official resolutions have not gone far enough in correcting the European memory field's "imbalance" or the less than genuine recognition of their historical memories.

When thinking about what makes this transnational political space unique, we are immediately struck by the transnational memory field's potential to constitute new regional historical memories and identities distinct from national memories. After all, transnational memory fields create a space where national memories come together in close quarters and are confronted directly whether politicians want them to be or not. Regional, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic cleavages are amplified and existing political cleavages take on new meaning as the regional and political intersect in interesting ways.

This helps to crystalize new regional historical memory regimes and identities independent of the national. By dissecting political as well as national and regional cleavages in mnemonic contests over Communism, in this chapter, I try to answer, How, when and why do political and regional cleavages over Communism remembrance intertwine and how do mnemonic actors explain these overlaps? Understanding that both denationalization and renationalization processes mark the transnational memory field and that national identities in Europe remain strong, I ask, not if processes of renationalization stymie reconciliation, but rather, When and how do processes of renationalization stymie reconciliation? Not all renationalization attempts related to mnemonic activism create division and block reconciliation. I argue that mnemonic activists who employ a victimhood regionalism strategy are more likely to renationalize their historical memories in a way that is exclusionary and creates hereditary enemies that must be neutralized at all costs breeding eternal conflict rather than mutual reconciliation. We will see this very clearly with the role that Russia plays in Communism remembrance.

First, a more in-depth discussion of the research methods that I rely on in this chapter is in order. Through these expert interviews with MEPs I cannot and do not intend to capture the direct public opinion of the majority of Europeans on this topic (only indirectly in so far as MEPs represent their constituencies).<sup>83</sup> Nor is this a survey of a representative sample of the 751 MEPs that could tell us what proportion of MEPs think about a given issue related to Communism remembrance, although such research would be highly desirable. Instead, this chapter relies on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with MEPs, rather than surveys, in order to understand the often complex thinking that goes behind positions on Communism remembrance and commemoration. The interviews were semi-structured in order to probe a set of common themes like East/West differences in Communism remembrance and understanding; relevance of Communism remembrance to contemporary EU issues; extent of a common historical European memory; and political/ideological underpinnings of Communism remembrance. All of these constitute components of a new memory regime emerging from Central and Eastern Europe post-accession, which researchers are beginning to explore. At the same time, flexibility in digressing from the interview script allowed me to follow-up on interesting and sometimes surprising themes that MEPs brought up spontaneously. For example, I never asked specifically about the role of Russia in European Communism remembrance, but this topic came up incessantly. I also did not ask all the exact same questions of every respondent. Instead, I tailored each interview guide to the knowledge, expertise and background of each MEP. For example, if an MEP was heavily involved in the Reconciliation of European Histories group, I would ask more in-depth questions on that particular topic. Neither is the group of MEPs that I was able to

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<sup>83</sup> Neither the European Values Study nor Eurobarometer, the two major pan-European social surveys, ask about attitudes toward Communism or the Communist legacy per se.

interview representative of the national and political backgrounds of all 751 MEPs. It does however cut across the 5 major political groups<sup>84</sup> and 13 of the 28 member states (with 8 from Central and Eastern Europe and 5 from Western Europe). MEPs from Central and Eastern Europe and from center-right groups are overrepresented—a reflection of the low level of interest in this issue in Western Europe and on the left. I treat the reflections of the MEPs as political, and therefore always guarded, statements (even though some wear double hats as social scientists or historians) that reflect the individual's unique opinions, interpretations, perceptions and worldview rather than his or her country or political party necessarily. While of course highly subjective, these reflections offer insight into the thoughts, attitudes and processes of thinking and action regarding Communism among members of the European Parliament. I chose the European Parliament as the focal European institution rather than the European Commission or European Council, not only because as elected civil servants they are the easiest to access, but primarily because the European Parliament has been very active in historical policy-making (the European Commission too, but more in the form of providing funding for civic remembrance projects) as I have already described in Chapter 2. Because the EP has worked out positions on historical remembrance and commemoration through numerous debates, conferences, and resolutions, it is the best tableaux on which to visualize all the controversies and complexities of the politics of history in Europe. In addition, of course, the politics of history is political, and what better place to witness the complex partisan and regional cleavages of Communism remembrance than in a transnational parliamentary setting.

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<sup>84</sup> European People's Party (EPP), S&D (Socialists & Democrats), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the Greens/European Free Alliance, and the European Conservatives and Reformers (ECR).

## Transnationalization of Communist Memories: Regional Cleavages in Recognition and Evaluation of Communism

Despite the mitigated successes in the diffusion of Communism memories at the EU level since 2004 described in Chapter 2, EU officials acknowledge that a regionally pillarized European memory field exists with the West identifying most closely with the memory regime of the Holocaust and the East with the memory regime of totalitarianism—Nazism and Communism.

MEP Zdzisław Krasnodębski<sup>85</sup> (Poland, ECR) describes the successful yet limited way in which memories of Communism have transnationalized since the 2004 enlargement. He thinks that there are differences in how East and West remember Communism but that "probably that difference is smaller today than it was even twenty years ago, so I think, that simply participation of our region in the European Union, the mere fact of our presence here in the Parliament changes the consciousness and historical memory of those in the West too." He notes that evaluation of the Communist past has become more negative in the Parliament than before and that there is a general "anti-totalitarian consensus" forming in the EP. "We see of course that the condemnation of communism or memory of communism is accepted, everyone here agrees, there is a kind of anti-totalitarian consensus." This is not only because of the mere presence of CEE member states in the EU that hold more negative memories of communism but also because of external geopolitical factors, like, for example, the Ukraine crisis. Such external shocks have the power to reshape the memory field. In this case, the Ukraine crisis, helped to diffuse more

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<sup>85</sup> Krasnodębski is an Independent Polish MEP in the ECR Group although he ran on the Law and Justice Party (PiS) list for the European Parliament in 2014. He has loyally supported PiS since Lech Kaczyński's bid for president in 2005. He is also a sociologist and professor at the University of Bremen, specializing in social theory and international relations, including Polish-German relations.



negative memories of Communism because of the historical associations of Communism with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union's association with contemporary Russia:

This is of course somehow related to current politics that today it is easier to talk about Communism, Communist crimes [...] Today because of the conflict in Ukraine also this kind of idealization of Russia and therefore also in some way the Soviet Union, well that no longer has a place. So I think that these two factors changed this. That is the one—the presence of countries that are very present in historical politics in the Parliament like Lithuanians, Poles, Hungarians etc., and on the other hand that the geopolitical change also caused this [anti-totalitarian consensus]. (personal communication 2015)

The East/West divides that still remains Krasnodębski (Poland, ECR) attributes to differentiated regional experiences of Communism. "The experience of Communism divides Europeans inasmuch Eastern Europeans experienced Communist practices. Here the Communist parties were governing, they governed, they were responsible, they were even more Sovietized [than Western European Communist parties], while the French, the French Communist Party or the Italian Communist Party, big parties, were in the opposition." Yet, like most conservatives, he still feels that the Communist past is not condemned strongly enough:

There are no more defenders of Communism [who would defend it] directly. However, for example, it is still the case that a Communist past is not considered [politically] compromising. If we were to look at the biographies of many parliamentarians, we would see that many of them, and not only from Eastern Europe, were Communists and this is not really talked about, it is accepted, because if we talk about memory, memory also pertains to individuals. (personal communication 2016)

He then goes on to discuss specific politicians, across the political spectrum and nationality, who were involved in Communist party politics before the CEE transitions but whose Communist biographies are not scrutinized, concluding that, "There is like a general condemnation of Communism, it is of course much weaker than the condemnation of National Socialism." For example, he goes on, "the use of a Hitlerite symbol means the end of a political or public career. The use of a Communist symbol does not. If someone were to hang a hammer and sickle on the door here, there would be no consequences. And this shows that of course the differences are still

present." In short, although no one wholesale defends the Communist system publicly,<sup>86</sup>

Communism is still less severely condemned than Nazism; a Communist past does not disqualify one from politics but a Nazi past does. As much as Krasnodębski blames the West for not having condemned Communism more strongly, he also blames the East for not having done more and rather contenting itself with the "thick line" policy:

In Germany there exists a paradox where the general ascertainment that Communism was a negative phenomenon to which we do not want to return and which brought with it some victims in the form of the Gulag etc. is not followed by a will to settle [these crimes]. And this was always the case in the transformations of Eastern European countries, one can say that in some sense it is the politics of the thick line, only a symbolic one, the kind [Polish Prime Minister] Mazowiecki achieved, the kind achieved in our countries and essentially in Western Europe too. (personal communication 2015)

MEPs from CEE from the left side of the political spectrum have also expressed the idea that since EU enlargement, common mutual understanding has increased, although differences still remain. Some are more content with the convergence of Eastern and Western memories than others. Petras Auštrevičius, a Lithuanian MEP and Vice-Chair of the ALDE Group, recognizes some progress but remains unsatisfied with what he feels is a low level of sincerity in recognizing the region's suffering under Communism:

General awareness [about Communism] indeed increased, and it should be done on a constant basis because we can't be happy with or satisfied with only one-time event[s] or something. I mean, it should be long-standing, well-based informational campaign to approach both sides, East and West with the humanity crimes committed by the Communist regime. But as long as you see no monument for Communism victims erected on the Western side of Europe, *I don't believe that it's a sincere recognition*. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

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<sup>86</sup> This is not entirely the case. Even in the mainstream S&D Group, Belgian MEP Tarabella told me, "I don't think that Communism was bad. [...] the right of people to work in dignity, to have a pension right now, there's a lack of that. In Russia it's a jungle, the most rich people and the poorest people. [...] I prefer the former time in Soviet Union, sincerely, but of course I was not in the Communist system. I am in democracy of Europe, it's more easy to say that for me. [...] If I were a politician in Italy in the year 1970, I would probably not been in the Socialist party, but the Communist party" (2015).

Echoing Auštrevičius' claim that Western European's recognition of CEE's suffering is not "sincere," Polish MEP Saryusz-Wolski in the EPP Group since 2004 and former VP of the EP explains that what has changed in the last several years is merely the rhetoric. "They are ready to admit that that part of Europe suffered, that it went through an awful fate, that it shouldn't have been like that, etc. etc. However, this is not empathy. I mean there is a level of empathy but very small." Thus the empathy or recognition does not seem sufficiently deep or genuine—it seems superficial. He identifies the problem with poor historical education in the West. "Western European schools do not teach historical truth about that part of Europe. German or Hitlerite totalitarianism and Soviet or Stalinist totalitarianism are not treated on a equal footing."

Auštrevičius elaborates that since the accession of CEE to the EU, there has been a legitimate attempt by these countries to revise European collective memory and insert their own memories into this collective, but there remains a feeling of incompleteness. This sense of incompleteness is a way to describe the current pillarized state of the European memory field:

I feel that for many countries the officially accepted historical narrative or history as such is not complete, and the *sense of incomplete history* brings those countries to certain barrier, I mean at least some countries and some political forces and social groups still try to convey a different message. Let's look in a different way, I mean, let's see whole past of history, so here I see kind of attempt by some countries and some politicians to bring, probably, additional colors into the prevailing or existing historical pictures. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

He defends these actions against critics who dismiss it as historical revisionism.

It's not revisionism, it's not kind of trying to bring your own pain above that of others, I mean let's see things as they are, and, you know, a *sense of incompleteness* and misunderstanding on a broader level provokes those countries to some unsettled historical ambitions or, I don't know how to call this phenomenon, I mean, it's internal pain and indeed *competition for recognition*, historical recognition. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

Feelings of "incompleteness" and a desire for "recognition" are complemented by experiences of being looked down upon and treated as lesser partners rather than fully equal EU members. Ryszard Czarnecki, a British-born Polish MEP in the ECR Group, describes this

feeling very well, despite acknowledging that the West has increased its understanding of the

East:

There is still of course a great sense of superiority, arrogance [on the part of Western Europe]. Once a German europarlamentarian, former German diplomat, not knowing that he is being heard in the elevator by someone who speaks German, said: "What do these Poles still want? They received so much money, and they still want influence and the ability to make decisions." This shows the kind of thinking of someone who from a high [building] floor looks down on the ants walking down there. [...] But that is changing more and more and that Eastern Europe, like they say, they don't say Central-Eastern Europe, they say Eastern Europe, more and more is becoming a part of Europe not only in the formal-legal sense but in the sense of really looking through the prism of *complete history*. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

Similarly, György Schöpflin, a Hungarian MEP from the Fidesz Party (EPP Group), feels that the Western perspective is privileged when it comes to telling the history of Europe. Talking about Norman Davies, he says that he was "looking at the history of Europe from the perspective of Central Europe, Poland, to be honest. But it was almost a kind of radical paradigm shift for many people, 'goodness, we, Poland, yes, is it really that important?' And the answer is well, it [has never been] a way of looking at the history of Europe." Thus part of being a new member state of the EU on equal footing with the old is inserting one's own historical narrative and point of view into the European collective narrative thereby balancing historical narratives told from the point of view of the West.

The language of imbalance is precisely how some MEPs refer to the limited way in which memories of Communism have transnationalized across Europe. Tunne Kelam<sup>87</sup> is an Estonian MEP from the EPP Group since 2004 and has been very vocal about the historical memory of Communism in Estonia at the European level. He describes the current European

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<sup>87</sup> Born three years before WWII, Kelam survived the war and was later very active in the Estonian underground movement for independence from the Soviet Union since the 1970s and was persecuted for it by the KGB for many years. He is a member of the Reconciliation of European Histories group, frequently organized mnemonic activities regarding Communism in the European Parliament like screening movies, and eagerly supports the work and mission of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience.

mnemonic field in terms of pillars. The "Nazi-memories pillar" stands strong, but the "Communist-memories pillar" is missing, thus making the European collective memory field imbalanced:

It is, I would say, that present semi-official narrative of the European history is based on one pillar, that is defeat of Nazism, and it lacks a second pillar, because second pillar, the crimes of Communist regimes, are delegated to the subsidiary sphere. "It is up to every member state in EU to deal with this problem, it's not to us." But the Nazi crimes are the general basis of the general new peace of Europe as a whole. [...] There's still in practical terms, you can display portraits of Stalin, and nothing happens. Can you display a portrait of Hitler, and then survive in politics? It's impossible. So it is *lopsided*, the general approach to latest history, and *we need to balance it*. It is not revisionism, it's just, I would use a word "*balancing*" *the interpretation of history*, which has been very much *distorted* until now. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

Besides "incompleteness," "imbalance," or "lopsidedness" the reconciliation of European histories can also be described in more positive terms as a "peaceful coexistence." Paolo Bergamaschi, the foreign affairs advisor for The Greens/European Free Alliance Group, corroborates the feelings of many Eastern MEPs who claim that the West is not very interested in truly reconciling histories and building a common collective memory. He explains that Westerners are ambivalent toward Communist memory not regarding it as their own experience and therefore not putting much thought into it instead letting the East "deal" with it:

The responsibility is left and attributed to the Easterners, and that the Westerners tend to neglect, not to pay too much attention to that. They let them do, what they feel like doing, basically, so they don't want to enter into real debate, critical analysis, and so on. It's just a matter of, a choice of coexistence, you know? It's linked to you, to your past, so you deal with that, and we let you do it. So this is my feeling, I mean, I could be wrong but this is my feeling. There is no real will to come to a *synthesis* between the position in the East and the position in the West. It's a matter of *peaceful coexistence* in a group. Let's say, okay, this is a very sensitive issue for you, you take it, you do it. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

This language of an achieved "peaceful coexistence" stopping short of "synthesis" perfectly supports the argument that a unified European memory field has indeed become pillarized since the accession of CEE states with their own unique historical memories. When it comes to the European Parliament's historical memory policy-making, Bergamaschi says, "I think we are

managing more and more to overcome the old division between East and West, in the Parliament as well, more and more, but it's difficult because the sensitivity is different, the background is different, but we are moving in the right direction."

Milan Zver,<sup>88</sup> a Slovenian MEP from the EPP Group, echoes the lack of real synthesis reflecting on the EU accession process of Eastern countries. Zver admits that CEE countries need to consolidate their own Communist memories, but the barrier to building a common European memory is that the West simply does not care about the Communist past or its legacies in CEE:

I think that we should find some compromise between us, Central and Eastern countries, but I'm not so sure that the Western countries would support us. If you look at the list of members of this group of Reconciliation [of European Histories], or something, all of us are coming from the post-Communist countries, because we are aware of the problems in our countries, but sometimes our colleagues from Western Europe, they say, "this is past, this is not our problem." I try to inform my colleagues in the EPP group, in the EPP's parties, at the summit, what happened in Slovenia, I send every month the international information about the situation in Slovenia. There are problems from economy, education systems, banks because old mafia is ruling in the banks in Slovenia...

But the West's lack of interest in CEE is not new, argues Czarnecki (Poland, ECR). He describes to me how in the past, Eastern Europe was never figured in the collective imaginary of Western Europe. Since 2004, Czarnecki argues that historical policymaking in the EP has changed in a positive direction, recalling feelings of regional exclusion before the fall of the Iron Curtain:

Finally that "New Union" precipitated thinking in the category of the *whole, full* Europe. I remember when I was a young person, 22 years old, the year 1985, winter, trip to Rome, some young people from a country of Christian-Democratic views. And there I had a meeting with an Italian politician, who talked about Europe as if it ended on [the river] Elbe, on the border of the German Federal Republic, Western Germany. I brought attention to this, he apologized, but it was evident that this person in the sense of his mentality he represents the mentality of many people in the West. For them Europe ended on the border of the FRG, whereas the rest was like, I don't know, Asia, wild fields, something else, foreign, external. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

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<sup>88</sup> A vocal mnemonic activist, Zver is a member of the informal group Reconciliation of European Histories also takes part in activities of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience.

Even from Western Europe, we can hear an echo of this sentiment that the East is still, for older generations at least, an unknown and far away place, if not outright mystifying and frightening. Andrew Lewer is a British historian and a Euro-skeptic MEP from the UK Conservative Party in the ECR Group:

The concept still to me, and I think to most MEPs of going to Poland, or going to the Czech Republic is going somewhere else in a completely different way than going to Italy, or going to Holland is. And I find it difficult, and I have to work hard to remember that people who are ten years plus younger than me see that as history. They don't see it as a reality in the same ways as I do.

MEP Sandra Kalniete, a long-time Latvian activist on the historical memory of Communism at the European level and now one of the VPs of the EPP Group, much like Czarnecki, describes the attitudes and reactions of Western Europeans to CEE members' attempts at discussing the Communist past. Kalniete and her family were victims of Soviet crimes, including deportations to Siberia, which she describes in detail in her book, *With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows*, which has been translated into over a dozen languages. In the late 1980s she was one of the cofounders of the Latvian Popular Front, the main oppositionist movement. In the EP since 2009, Kalniete was one of the founding members of the Reconciliation of European Histories informal group in the European Parliament, which coordinates activities surrounding the historical memory of Communism. "The idea [of founding the Reconciliation of European Histories group] is really my idea. It came from a deep misunderstanding which reigned after enlargement in Europe," she told me. In a speech<sup>89</sup> she made in Leipzig in 2003, Kalniete recalls, and I quote her here at length:

[I] referred to Nazism and Communism as two criminal regimes, which committed crimes, but which are treated differently. [...] And it created controversy. I was accused of whatever, but the situation has changed [since then] in Europe because there were eight countries joining the

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<sup>89</sup> For more on this speech see Nowak (2010).

European Union [in 2008] having that common history, being under Communism and experiencing the totalitarian form of Communism. And then around 2005, there was discussion in the European Parliament, I was not a member at that time, on the end of II World War resolution. And again, it showed when Eastern Europeans' votes raised the issue about reference in that resolution to Stalinist crimes. It was received with just a very negative attitude, with incomprehension. In behind the scenes it was, let's say, by diplomatic channels and otherwise, it was communicated like "Guys, you are now in the club, just behave."<sup>90</sup> And of course, "move away," but we didn't, because when we were integrated in the Union, we tried several times to raise this issue but we understood that it's not the right moment and that our priority was to become full fledged members of the club, and then we would speak about historical justice and condemnation, memory and also satisfaction for the victims of the crimes. (personal communication 2015)

Schöpflin, with Kalniete, was also very involved in Communism remembrance initiatives in the European Parliament, but in the end, he says that the "different histories" have not "come together." The work of the Reconciliation of European Histories was largely a "failure." He recognizes that the regional lack of understanding is mutual, but recalling Kalniete's painful childhood experiences, he asks what do you do when others do not care to recognize your experience? He blames the West for not doing enough to lift the Iron Curtain, simultaneously acknowledging their difficult position:

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<sup>90</sup> Kalniete's "Guys you are now in the club, just behave" and Czarnecki's "What do these Poles still want?" is corroborated on the left too. Van de Water (S&D political strategist) echoes this sentiment, "And for some people coming from Western Europe, they were looking like 'What do they [CEE] want from us?'" What CEE wanted was genuine and empathetic recognition of their suffering under Communism to restore the region's sense of honor, dignity and humanness. What the West experienced as ungratefulness the East experienced as arrogance. Moreover, the West was projecting its model of coming to terms with WWII onto the East. Van de Water explains, "We [the West] tried after the failure of the system, after the Second World War, we tried to handle that in a way that it was not winners and losers, but that together we had a necessity to rebuild Europe, and that in sharp contradiction to the situation after the First World War. What you saw is that many did not have that same lesson after the Cold War, so that was a war that have ended with winners and losers, and that winners were there to celebrate, and condemn whatever the losers have done." The West then could not understand why the East did not learn and assimilate these important lessons, which were of course learned through a more difficult process of reconciliation than van de Water here describes. The East, however, never experienced this peaceful reconciliation post-WWII. The fall of the Iron Curtain precipitated the first context in the region's history since WWII where the region could in a free and democratic way finally come to terms with its own WWII (and Communist) history and its relationships with its neighbors. What the Easterners experienced as a painful lack of recognition by the West, the West experienced as the East's inability to learn important historical lessons.



But if you come from a Western country, whether it's Spain or Netherlands, or even Austria, you sense that there are countries to your East, which had a different history, which is very difficult for you to accept as being a part of European history because it's not a part of your history. Equally it's very difficult for, let's say my Hungarian colleagues to [recognize Western European history]. So there are different histories, which have not come together. So in the 2004 legislature, [we were] maybe four, five of us, we sat down from time to time, and said let's do something etc. So we started these conversations [which resulted in the Reconciliation of European Histories group]. [Vytautas] Landsbergis was one of them, Wojciech Roszkowski, we all came from central right groups [part of the EPP Group] as far as I recall, although Wojciech was from PiS [extreme right part of the ECR Group], and we don't really talk to each other. I think Kelam from Estonia came along fairly regularly... Anyway, and we had various discussions as to how to get the Westerners to come on board, and the answer is we failed. I came up with what I thought was absolutely brilliant idea that we actually examine the entire history of Europe, modern history of Europe through the prism of human rights, I thought it was the right track. No takers whatsoever, I think partly because the center right in new member states sees human rights as an instrument of the left. There is a certain left wing quality to human rights. [...] Nobody took this up, and to this day they don't take it up, now in the last legislature the work in a way was really taken over by Sandra Kalniete. Sandra is very hardworking. You may know that her own personal history is tragic. She was born in Siberia, and clearly she feels this, and understandably of course, this is very difficult. What on earth do you do when you have this particular history, and the West is sort of, tends to turn its back? Not completely, because the incorporation of the Baltic States was never fully recognized, but nobody was going to lift a finger. Just as they didn't in Hungary in '56 or Czechoslovakia in '68. [Would Western intervention have caused a] third world war? (personal communication 2015)

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (Poland, EPP) describes European collective historical memory as something that is in the "embryonic" state:

It is in an embryonic phase, meaning there are elements of common memory, national memories mutually butt up against each other. Generally speaking national memories dominate, meaning every nation, every country has its own memory of the past, among them of course are gaps or even conflicts and disputes. However, there are attempts being made to shape a common memory or at least to lead to some convergences starting from books on pan-European memory like Norman Davies' *Europa* or something that is forged in this daily dialogue in institutions like the European Parliament when we show in many resolutions, for example, the totalitarian past, the fight against Communism, and Westerners know nothing about it, but by the way they are learning, therefore there is this transfer of this perception or exchange of different points of view, so something is forming but as I said it is in the embryonic phase. (personal communication 2015)

Saryusz-Wolski reiterates the differences in the levels of understanding and knowledge about Communism between the East and West. When I asked him if differences exist between how the East and West of Europe understand and remember the Communist period, he answered, "Of course. For us it was a misfortune. For them it was blessed tranquility [...] They then had a

period of prosperity, security. I mean the Iron Curtain hurt us, troubled us, not them or to a very small degree and for a narrow circle of people, but generally we had a problem with the Iron Curtain, not they." When I asked him if Westerners, despite not having lived through Communism, at least understand our history, he responded rather grimly, "No, I mean it's changing slowly, but generally speaking the answer is no."

Thus again we hear the same feeling that, despite some official mnemonic successes in the European Parliament, generally speaking the West does not understand the East's historical experiences with Communism, nor does it care to understand them. For example, echoing Schöpflin "failure" to get "Westerners to come on board," Saryusz-Wolski continues:

To the meetings [of the Reconciliation of European Histories group] come only Poles, Czech and Estonians, I mean very rarely do we manage to, for example, we were doing a conference about Jan Karski,<sup>91</sup> we were able to get some to come but only those most sensitive to the fate of our part of Europe. However, the vast part of Western Europeans exhibits far-reaching ignorance and insensitivity.

Csaba Sógor, a Romanian MEP since 2009 in the EPP Group representing the Hungarian minority in Romania and an REH member, when discussing the REH group, also mentions that, "not too many Western European colleagues are members" of this group. When asked about the group's achievements he says, "It was not a big [achievement], but it was a good achievement to inform the colleagues to keep alive the memories, and to face the Western European member states' colleagues that Communism was almost solely in line with Fascism." Along these same lines, Schöpflin recalls, "I discovered various like-minded MEPs also from, we no longer call them that, but the new member states, and I realized straight away having partly British, partly

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<sup>91</sup> Jan Karski was a resistance fighter with the Polish underground during WWII reporting to the Polish government in exile on the situation in occupied Poland including the crushing of the Warsaw Ghetto and the vast network of Nazi concentration camps. He was later a professor at Georgetown University for many years teaching international affairs and passed away in Washington D.C. in 2000.

Hungarian identity that there are very, very serious problems in getting the Westerners to understand. And the answer is it's not that they can't, it's that they don't want to. They simply do not take it on board because it's inconvenient, there's a communicative closure actually."

Others argue that, at least in the past, it *was* difficult to understand what Communism was and how the system worked, so the unwillingness to understand CEE is in part an inability to understand it. It was difficult for many in CEE to comprehend the nature of Communism, let alone those who found themselves on the Western side of the Iron Curtain through which very little information about Communism flowed. Pavel Telicka, an American-born Czech MEP from the ALDE Group, gives an example of this from his own life:

And obviously after the fall of the Iron Curtain, a lot has been realized much more deeply, like I said, I was brought up in a certain environment, and I was not exposed to, I mean dissidents, I was not exposed, and lived a large part of my life outside Czechoslovakia, that's why [...] I was not aware of everything that was going on. So you can't expect the Westerners to have been aware of that, so I mean, you can always say, "okay you were a bit naïve, Telicka." And I have to admit, partly I may have been, but because I was brought up, it's extremely difficult to explain today, and understand by today's criteria, matters and so on of that time. But I mean I have to be as a person responsible for the fact that I was not aware of something but in my case it was not easy. I knew a lot but we were exposed to a daily propaganda, so I mean don't expect that everyone in Western Europe would have known what was going on behind the Iron Curtain. (personal communication 2015)

The "environment" that Telicka refers to is that Telicka's father was a Communist diplomat and in 1986 Telicka himself joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia. Thus Telicka argues that one's biography and one's familial, social and geographic environment conditions what we do and do not come to know. For this reason, he is not surprised that regional differences remain in what people do and do not know about Communism and therefore how they evaluate it. He charges Western Europe maybe with ignorance but not with an unwillingness to learn.

Sógor echoes Saryusz-Wolski and others who argue that for the West, Communism

was largely a positive phenomenon and for the East it was a source of evil:

That was one of the problems that for the Western world Communism was something different [than for the East], a political or an egalitarian system that failed like Jesus, you know? And secondly, because they never faced the real face of Communism. 1956 was a year when even those very, how should I say, idealistic leftists like Arthur Koestler or Sartre, they realized that Communism is a bloody thing. (personal communication 2015)

Reflecting on regional differences in the perception of Communism, Auštrevičius concludes that:

There is no one difference, there are many differences in how Western and Eastern members of the European Union perceive their, let's say, past, especially the Communism as such. For obvious reasons Easterners are more sensitive since they lived it and know exactly what does it mean, I mean socially and politically. For Westerners it remains as a kind of, I would call it a kind of recollection from Cold War, which is more military based concept, less social and economical, and that difference will remain. I don't see the gap closing up, perception is based on experience and history rather than theory-based and studies-based approach. (personal communication 2015)

On this question, Andrey Kovatchev, a Bulgarian MEP from the Citizens for European

Development of Bulgaria party in the EPP Group since 2009, said:

Yes, definitely there are differences in the interpretation of the history, and in the lack of information about what exactly happened between 1944 and 1989 on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. For many people in the West it was like a white hole, Communist countries who were, how to say it, which had limited sovereignty led by the Soviet Union, but there was no information about each country, what's happened, what is exactly the history, and lack of interest—that was opposite in the Communist countries, people had the interest to learn what is the development in the Western part but they got manipulated propaganda information about capitalism, imperialism and the enemy on the West. [...] But in the European Parliament it's still, not only between the East and West countries but also in political groups, some differentiated interpretations of the history. (personal communication 2015)

When asked whether he thinks there are differences between the East and West when it comes to how the Communist past is understood or how that story is narrated, Ivan Stefanec, a Slovakian

Independent MEP in the EPP Group responded:

Yes, there is a difference because, of course, we have real experience with the Communism, which is not the case with our colleagues coming from the Western Europe, so there is a difference in terms of perception of Communism. However in my view there is a common understanding about the substance, particularly because of, I would say, the pressure, or activities—exhibitions, seminars, discussions, and even some proposals for opinions and

declarations in the European Parliament—of most MEPs coming from Eastern European countries. (personal communication 2015)

Stefanec then is a little more sanguine about the level of understanding in Western Europe of CEE's past because of all the mnemonic work of Eastern European countries. The gap in "perception" of Communism results from different regional experiences of it, but it is slowly closing. He continues, by explaining that the common values of Eastern and Western Europe like human rights and democracy make it easier to come to a mutual understanding:

Our Western colleagues, they knew that it [Communism] was wrong, that it was not real democracy, but they could not imagine for example that we lived behind the Iron Curtain, we lived in a system, where it was not possible to travel, where it was not possible to have freedom of expression, where it was not possible to communicate in a normal way, to practice religion for example, and so on, and so on. So it is nothing against our Western colleagues, but I have to say they still try to understand more and more, and we have this common base for understanding of basic human rights, we have the common understanding of basic rules of market economy... (personal communication 2015)

Stefanec argues that it is only natural that the initiatives for Communism remembrance come from CEE because that is the region that lived through Communism. He is optimistic about European reconciliation because Western Europeans do not block these initiatives (they do block some) and they should not be *expected* to initiate them:

For example discussion about commemorating Communist times, which was recently raised by Ms. Kalniete, which was successful. But this is for example, there's difference because this pressure, or these ideas are coming from former Central and Eastern countries so, and it's all right, it's not coming from Western countries, it is coming from Central and Eastern countries, but at the end it is supported by majority so there is no block, or no border, or no pressure against, but there's no initiative from Western countries. Initiative must come from people who had this experience, which is all right. (personal communication 2015)

A small number of my interviewees expressed the notion that the East/West divide is no longer important, even with regard to Communism. A foreign affairs advisor to the ALDE Group admits that differences in how Communism is understood and narrated exist but that that historical memory is converging. "Of course there are some differences, but I think that they are less dramatic now than a couple of years ago. And I think that we still see differences but they

are kind of narrowing, also due to time passing on, and I think there is a convergence, somehow, how you look on history" (personal communication B1, 2015). But he is quick to point out that the East/West characterization of the debates over Communism in the European Parliament is too oversimplified and that we should start seeing EU member states beyond the East/West divide:

I don't even think there is the West anymore, and I start to think that these people [Easterners] *are* the West as well in a way, so that is a kind of, there is no East and West anymore here in this Union, I would say. What is interesting here [is] that unfortunately Europe's history is more complex, and sad, and tragic, and not only Hitler and Stalin are here by the way. And when we have a discussion like this, our Portuguese members bring up their dictatorship that lasted until 1975, the Spanish talk about Franco, and the Greeks are there talking about civil war and their military dictatorship as well. So I don't think that it is uniquely East/West kind of thing in a way. (personal communication B1: 2015)

Marju Lauristin, an MEP also from the left, the S&D Group, but from Estonia, echoes this opinion. "We're not East anymore. We're more North than East, and all those Romania, Bulgaria are the South of Europe, not East anymore, and at the same time Greece is now Europe's eastern border..." Thus new economic realities in the EU now have redrawn the "geographical" power dynamics of member states according to economic power rather than the legacies of Communism and the power differential resulting from that historical legacy.

To sum up, there is overwhelming evidence that for Eastern European mnemonic activists in the European Parliament, memories of Communism have not diffused throughout Europe sufficiently. There remains a substantial regional cleavage in how East and West understand and evaluate Communism. They acknowledge that progress has been made, but there still remains an "incompleteness" or "imbalance" pointing to the pillarized nature of the European memory field. Some believe that the recognition that has been made of Eastern European suffering under Communism is superficial or ingenuous and that some of this stems from a regional power differential where "Old" member states look down on the "New" ones not

treating them as full fledged EU members with equal status. Even some Western Europeans corroborate the feeling among Eastern Europeans that not only are most Westerners ignorant of Eastern European histories of Communism, but many of them are not interested to learn about the region. A few mnemonic actors see it as natural that most mnemonic initiatives regarding Communism are carried out by Easterners and that Westerners are not much interested because that was simply not their history. And when Westerners do recognize Communist history and Communism's legacies it is not in nearly as negative a way as many Easterners would like Communism to be recognized. Thus those who are the most ardent supporters of doing more to treat Communism in the same ways that Nazism, namely those in the Reconciliation of European Histories group, see their efforts in effect as a "failure" because although they managed to bring more attention to their cause the notion that Communism was as bad as Nazism has still not become hegemonic in the European memory field. There remain gaping differences in how each region evaluates Communism with many Eastern Europeans seeing it as evil and Westerners feeling generally ambivalent.

### **Regional and Political Cleavages Overlap**

Just because the mnemonic struggle over Communism at the transnational level is so dominated by regional cleavages does not mean that it is not politicized to the same degree that it tends to be at the national level. The national and regional divisions are simply additional, but important, axes of contestation that intersect with the political. They are significant at the transnational level in a way that they are not at the national because the national memory field presumes (even if that is not the case) a single national identity while the transnational memory field necessarily confronts multiple national identities. This section describes how regional cleavages intersect with political ones to create a pillarized European memory field where the

memory regime of the Holocaust and the memory regime of totalitarianism exist side by side in an uncomfortable state of contention.

When it comes to political identity, generally the right is quick to condemn Communism and the left is not. Much like views about Communism are generally more negative in the East than the West (see Table 9 in Appendix). While that is predictable, it is also not the whole story. The political divide is not that simple precisely because political orientation cross-cuts the regional differences discussed in the previous section (see Table 10 in Appendix). There are (1) regional differences within the left as (2) there are regional differences within the right and (3) political differences within the East.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, rather than asking whether political or regional identity is the best predictor of one's position on Communism remembrance, it behooves us to ask, How, when and why do these two identities overlap and intertwine? For example, when I asked whether regional or political cleavages are most salient when it comes to differences over Communism remembrance, Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) responded, "Of course there are partisan and national [differences]. It is not an alternative. It is a conjunction." Highlighting the importance of this conjunctive nature, MEP Kati Piri<sup>93</sup> (Netherlands, S&D) explains that she has more in common on this issue with a Dutch EPP member, than for example, a German and Romanian have in common in the S&D Group. In other words, when it comes to dealing with

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<sup>92</sup> There are political differences within the West too of course but there do not seem to be these passionate political cleavages as in the East because memories of Communism simply do not figure prominently in the Western political arena.

<sup>93</sup> Piri is Hungarian-born and she is involved in Eastern European policy participating in the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Cooperation Committee and the Delegation to Euronest. The Euronest Parliamentary Assembly is the inter-parliamentary forum for EU member states and Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and formerly Belarus, which was suspended after the 2010 falsified elections. It is part of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) mechanism.



memories of Communism (and as we will see even foreign, economic and EU policies related to the Communist legacy), Piri believes that regional cleavages can outweigh political differences.

### Regional Differences on the Left

When we take regional differences into account, we see the nuanced differences *within* party groups. For example, there is an East/West cleavage within the S&D Group when it comes to the evaluation of Communism because of the different historical experiences of each region.

Vincenzo Greco, an Italian foreign affairs advisor to the S&D Group, explains:

We can understand that certain countries, let's say, the old countries of the European Union, they developed a different path. And even though they had certain tendencies that were more Communist, in our group [S&D], I would say that they are more the euro-Communists, so coming from the tradition that was still believing in Europe as a European Union being, let's say, critical towards the Soviet Union, but still not too much. The Eastern part, their traditions are different, they were under the occupation of the Soviets. They were really thinking that this was something conditioning their independence, of course. And their parties can be more critical towards Communists, and also sometimes you see that they are adopting liberal approaches towards economy.

Greco here highlights differences on several policy areas (EU integration, foreign policy, economic policy) within the S&D Group because of the different experiences of Communism in each region with the West having Communist parties within democratic party systems (the "different path") and the East having Communist dictatorships. Thus Western Socialists are more pro-EU, less critical of the Soviet Union (and therefore Russia), and more trusting of socialist economic policies. The Eastern Socialists, because they had a very different experience of Communism, are more skeptical of centralized federative systems like the EU, are more critical towards the Soviet Union (and therefore Russia), which Greco understands because the USSR "conditioned their independence," and prefer more liberal market policies than their Socialist counterparts in Western Europe. Let us take a look at these policy differences one at a time.

When it comes to economic policy, MEP Tarabella (Belgium, S&D) elaborates on how regional divisions within the left affect support for cooperatives. For example, explains:

I was co-chair of the group on social economy for five years. When you speak about cooperative, here we as Socialists, we are in favor because the economy, cooperative sector in France, Italy, Spain, for example, then you speak about cooperative to Romanian or Polish colleague, and wow, they are afraid because, and I understand. And so there we have some differences, and of course division of Europe, it's difficult for East to understand exactly, precisely what we, when we speak about the concept, of course it's differently appreciated in a very different way following our origin in Europe. (personal communication 2015)

When it comes to European integration, Greco, a foreign affairs advisor for S&D illustrates how the experiences of Communist totalitarianism have conditioned Easterners' skepticism about European federalization, which much of the S&D Group supports:

You have a big number of ex-Soviet let's say, countries joining the EU, and of course they bring together all this memory. And one of the, let's say, debates that unofficially there are made around, it is that together with this accession of the countries there were coming also, let's say, more pro-American countries. They were more pro-Atlantic. [...] I'm coming basically also from a movement Young Federalists, and of course Young Federalists, they were basically a thing that Europe can be independent by itself, it can stand on its own feet. Some people say that after the accession, the last enlargement, the dream of federalism for Europe went backwards, basically, and lost its momentum. (personal communication 2015)

Krasnodębski actually corroborates this sentiment that some values like secularism and federalism that are greatly important for the left have a different dimension for Central and Eastern Europeans no matter what their political background. "We [CEE] for example believe that the fight against religion smacks a bit of totalitarianism. Excessive centralism, building of a super-nation may remind someone...Communist experiences different processed by us lead to different political conclusions."

When it comes to foreign policy, for example Ukraine policy, Ujazdowski explains that regional affiliation trumps political partisanship. "So in the group, please study its composition,

there is this informal group of friends of Ukraine<sup>94</sup> and there we see that we are engaged across political divisions. Mr. Auštrevičius [ALDE, Lithuania], Mr. Hamans [S&D, Netherlands], I am a member of this group [ECR, Poland], Mr. Landsbergis [EPP, Lithuania.]" Hamans<sup>95</sup> is the Western exception here, but he is very involved in CEE culture and life (he teaches linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland). Indeed, of the 47 members of this informal group, the vast majority come from Central and Eastern Europe, but more importantly, there are many more CEE members from the left than there are Western European leftists. In other words, in Eastern Europe, on the issue of Ukraine, regional identity overcomes partisanship, which is not the case for Western Europe. Krasnodębski gives another example of an Eastern Neighborhood policy where regional solidarity trumps political affiliation precisely because of Communist historical memory:

An hour ago I came from a meeting where we were discussing compromises regarding a report on the security of the Black Sea basin and the author of this report was a Romanian, who is a Socialist. And there were mostly Poles, Romanians, a German, but the only person that was opposing the condemnation of Russian aggression and expansion in this region, was a Spaniard, who I think is a liberal [ALDE Group]. So essentially everyone who was from the region [CEE], even this Socialist Romanian was in complete agreement with us Conservatives from Poland or the Christian-Democrat Party, so there is some [common regional] experience. Similarly we are always in agreement with the Balts, maybe less so with the Hungarians these days, rarely do we talk together about these topics, but it really is the case that [this regional experience] unites parliamentarians of these countries beyond political divisions. (personal communication 2015)

MEP Kovatchev (Bulgaria, EPP) explains that Easterners, when it comes to EaP policies like encouraging Eastern neighbors to open up their Communist security archives, have a "continuous and consequent approach to ask in all resolutions of candidate countries or

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<sup>94</sup> The group is officially called the "Informal Group of Friends of European Ukraine in the EP"

<sup>95</sup> Ironically, Hamans is also a co-author in the Socialists' booklet *Politics of the Past: Use and Abuse of History* warning against the dangers of politicizing history, while Ujazdowski is known for supporting radical historical memory policies in the EP, like the 2015 Yalta resolution, condemning the 1945 Yalta Conference that divided Europe, which failed before it even reached the first plenary reading.

countries, with whom we would like to sign association agreement, to open their archives on the repression services like KGB or UDBA in Yugoslavia." To probe just how much the historical memory of Communism affects this EaP policy, I asked whether older member states support the inclusion of such stipulations in the EaP initiatives. Kovatchev responded that they do, but he added that the West, and especially the Western left, often marginalize the memory of Communism. They simply "forget" about it:

[The West is] mostly supportive, and we had a quite big majority support in this recommendation for opening archives. It's difficult sometimes. What I see is that simply colleagues forget about this, it's very easy to forget about it. If they talk about dictatorship, especially from the left, from the Socialists in the West, they simply mention only National Socialism or Fascism, and I need to urge some colleagues "please, do not forget the victims of Communism." (personal communication 2015)

Sometimes however, the regional identity cleavage does not go in the way we might expect. For example, Indrek Tarand, Estonian MEP from the ALDE Group, gives an example of a division among the Greens where some Westerners are more vocally anti-Communist than some Easterners. In the Greens Group, Daniel Cohn-Bendit (French) and Rebecca Harms (German, President of the Greens since 2010) strongly condemn Communism, but for others this stance is "difficult to digest." Tarand explains, "For instance we have Tatjana Ždanoka [Greens] elected from Latvia, who thinks that the greatest human catastrophe was the collapse of the Soviet Union, so you can see we have very different people inside the group." While a Latvian citizen, born in Riga, Ždanoka is of Jewish-Russian origin. She was elected to the EP from Latvia's largest Russian-minority political party, the Latvian Russian Union (Latvijas Krievu savienība). She is prohibited by law from serving on local Latvian city councils or in the Latvian parliament because of her allegiance to the Latvian Communist Party *after* January 1991 when Soviet troops attacked Riga for having declared independence a year later. Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) points to a similar case in the ALDE Group:

In some political groups in the European Parliament there were parties manifestly pro-Russian. For example, in ALDE, there was Viktor Uspaskich's party,<sup>96</sup> a businessman with mediocre electoral results. And probably when a party like this is in the political group, then the political group tries to take their point of view into consideration, right?

In short, every Group on the mainstream left—S&D, the Greens, ALDE—has some internal regional divisions that complicate a consensual stance on Communism remembrance.

### Regional Differences on the Right

When it comes to policy areas like the economy, Eastern neighborhood policy and European integration there are less regional tensions on the right. However, that does not mean that the Western right sees eye to eye with the Eastern right on some issues directly related to Communism. For example, Sandra Kalniete (Latvia, EPP) recalls a parliamentary debate over the nomination of a Hungarian auditor who was convicted of being a security agent of the Hungarian Communist regime. She explains that when it comes to the issue of equalizing Nazism and Communism, the Western right is generally not on board:

The EPP lost [that debate on whether to confirm the Hungarian auditor], but also in EPP it was mostly Eastern European parties asking [for] that debate and saying, "We are not going to vote for that." And there was a clash in different countries, and I remember one of the vice-presidents of that time saying that "Let's live friendly." It's easy to say but we were really facing something fundamental, and I remember that I said it in front of our group of 275 members, I said "Could you imagine that you would accept a member of SS to become an auditor?" And that was like, and then somebody just raised and said, "It's not the same." (personal communication 2015)

On the extreme right there are regional divisions too. We might expect that much like the Eastern European extreme right (for example the Polish PiS members of the ECR Group) the Western right would be quick to condemn Communism, but this is not the case. Ujazdowski explains that this is because the far right hates CEE, "The far right, meaning Marie Le Pen and [Nigel] Farage, in my opinion, they disdain Eastern Europe, they disregard it." This is ironic

<sup>96</sup> Viktor Uspaskich is a Russian-born Lithuanian millionaire who made his fortune in the oil and gas industry. He founded his own centrist Labour Party in 2003 which gained 5 of Lithuania's 13 seats in the 2004 European Parliament. The party joined the ALDE Group.

because Nigel Farage was the former leader of UKIP, the sister party of PiS in the ECR Group. The regional split on the extreme right then could not be more stark. At the same time, presumably excluding PiS from the far right, Ujazdowski explains that on the issue of Communism remembrance the extreme left (GUE-NGL) and extreme right (the Le Pens and Farages) converge because both sides are pro-Russian:

These are parties [UKIP and National Front] that are ready to give this part of the world to Russia. The left, most of all GUE, [...] is definitely pro-Russian, anti-American, pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli. And this of course creates a very different point of view on historical politics. If someone is pro-Russian and anti-American, well, they will never say anything bad about Stalin, right? (personal communication 2015)

The European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) has only one party<sup>97</sup> from CEE, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. Thus what would seem like a clear partisan position—the extreme left is pro-Communist and the extreme right is anti-Communist—is actually a regional position. The extreme left is pro-Communist but it is made up nearly exclusively of Western parties. The extreme right is anti-Communist, but its large Western European portion (UKIP) is not.

### Political Differences in the East

Likewise this is not to say that there is blanket agreement between the left and right in Central and Eastern Europe on Communism remembrance. Andrew Lewer (UK, ECR) points to this political divide within the region:

Perhaps even more than that [regional differences], is a difference between elective members from the old Eastern Europe who come from the left as opposed to those who come from the right, in terms of how they choose to remember and interpret that period of the history.

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<sup>97</sup> The left and certainly the radical left is not strong in CEE in general. Sógor explains, "If you think of Poland, that's quite a normal country, that almost in the last 25 years there was no left party, or like in Romania, or Hungary, even when they deny it, there's a, how should I say, a continuous line between the communist party and the actual social-democrat parties."

Evoking these political cleavages in the East, Kovatchev explains that when it comes to support for opening up Communist archives in the EU's Eastern neighborhood, the left in CEE does not support its right-wing colleagues, "it's dependable on country. If the so-called party is a direct successor of the Communist party, like unfortunately in Bulgaria, these people are following old interpretation, their interpretation of history, the Communist interpretation of history based on falsification and mythology, and they don't, unfortunately, give up this read of the history." Lewer continues:

Certain amount of historical amnesia on the left [in CEE] I will suggest, and perhaps that's been necessary for some. I have for instance a colleague who was Communist, and she's now a Democratic Socialist. But that occasionally causes problems for those who were dissidents and in the opposition [because the Social Democrats'] statements about freedom and democracy, morality and so on, don't always settle well with those who remember that their historical memory, their personal memory is that people were involved in things that weren't at all in line with [those values], [but] wise people can evolve and change. (personal communication 2015)

Certainly there are these political tensions within CEE where post-Communists "over night" transformed themselves into democracy and human rights promoting Social Democrats while those who remember their pasts, including dissidents (many of which are on the right, but certainly not all), cringe at their ostensible opportunism and disingenuousness. At the same time, perhaps because this history is not personal for Lewer, he is quick to add that "wise people can evolve and change," meaning we should give these Communists turned Social Democrats a chance. Such a nuanced understanding of biographical change that acknowledges the evolving complexity of political identity is certainly not shared by Lewer's Polish ECR colleagues like Ujzdowski, Krasnodebski or Czarnecki. At the same time, in contrast to Eastern Europe, Lewer argues that the narrative about Communism is more uniform in the West, or more precisely in the UK:

It's maybe a particularly British perspective, but even on the left in the UK, there was a very strong and clear Cold War narrative, which leads to a generally similar outlook about what the

past was in the East before 1989, not very good. And there would be stronger and weaker versions of that within the UK right to left but nevertheless it's a fairly uniformed sort of outlook.

To sum up, just as there are regional cleavages within the political groupings, there are political cleavages within the regions.

### **MEPs Understand Regional and Political Cleavages through the Prism of Instrumentalization**

Now that we know how regional and political identities overlap, How do the left and right make sense of these cross-cutting cleavages? How do they explain them? Why do these cross-cutting cleavages exist and take the shape they do? What we see is that MEPs on the left and right mutually accuse each other of politicizing history for political gain of their political party as a whole or its individual members. The right argues that the left is unwilling to face up to its Socialist ideological roots which have strong affinities with criminal Communist systems and for that reason they are uncomfortable with the memory regime of totalitarianism. The left argues that the right is unwilling to admit its own ethnocentric, nationalist roots and thereby commit to the memory regime of the Holocaust. At the same time, the right points out that many in the left, and sometimes even the right, have Communist pasts and therefore do not wish to incriminate themselves or condemn their own past lives and those of their families. The left then argues that the victims of Communism (whether they really are or not) want to elevate their own moral status and to seek revenge. Both sides also point to age-old partisanship; if the right does something then the left does not want to cooperate and vice versa.<sup>98</sup> Let us take a look at how MEPs understand this politicization of history for the purpose of personal or political group interests.

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<sup>98</sup> This problem of course relates to every issue, not just historical memory, and if this were the case every time then there would no cross-partisan cooperation on historical memory at all which is clearly not the case as we have seen in Chapter 2.



## Personal Interests

When it comes to the left from Eastern Europe, Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) argues that they do not support the condemnation of Communism because nobody wants to condemn their own families:

We had a parliamentarian here [EP] from Lithuania whose father was even a premier of the Communist government of Lithuania. From the Polish representatives from the left there was [MEP] Marek Siwiec<sup>99</sup>, who was at one point the chief of the *People's Tribune*<sup>100</sup>, meaning once an organ of the Communist Party KC PZPR<sup>101</sup>, and then SLD<sup>102</sup>. It's difficult to expect from a Paleckis or a Siwiec or others that they would want to condemn Communism, condemn their own families, their own fathers, their own careers? (personal communication 2015)

Krasnodębski (Poland, ECR) gives an example of someone in the Greens with a Communist past as an inconvenient past:

For example, there is Mr. [Reinhard] Bütikofer, a Green, who was also a Maoist. This was called the Komunistyczny Bund Westdeutschland [Maoist Communist League of West Germany; Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland], KBW, a Communist party [...] And now if we were to recognize a Communist past as compromising, then Mr. Bütikofer would of course not be able to be a Member of the European Parliament. Does the Green party now want to recall its radical past? Generally no. (personal communication 2015)

MEP Stefanec (Slovakia, EPP) describes the fact that the S&D Group has many former Communists, and they see Communism remembrance as an affront to their own personal histories. He argues that mentally they are still Communists, like Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia. Fico joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1987. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989, and the collapse of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, Fico joined

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<sup>99</sup> Marek Siwiec was an MEP with the S&D Group in the period 2004-2014. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Tribune* (renamed from the *People's Tribune*) in 1990-1991. The *Tribune* ceased to exist in 2009.

<sup>100</sup> The People's Tribune was one of the largest papers and official media outlets of the Polish Communist party.

<sup>101</sup> Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (*Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej—KC PZPR*)

<sup>102</sup> The post-Communist party Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*)

the Party of the Democratic Left (SD), the post-Communist party of Slovakia. On Fico,

Stefanec says:

I can see it in my country, in Slovakia, for example now we have Prime Minister, who is now Socialist, Mr. Fico, and he voluntarily stepped in the Communist party, and he is still saying officially, which is a scandal in my view, but he is still stating officially that he didn't recognize changes in 1989, which is the most important change in my life and lives of many of counterparts, most of my counterparts. Unfortunately, he was democratically elected, and we respect it, but mentally he still remains Communist, and he's the member of Socialist structure right now, and there are more, this is just an example. (personal communication 2015)

But Stefanec acknowledges that there are former Communists in his own political group the EPP. "Honestly, I have to say some of them are in the EPP as well, in EPP there are people who have a Communist past as well, but most of them are in the Socialist group." Kalniete also offers the explanation that there are many former Communists, including people who may have committed crimes, in the S&D Group and that is why that group is more reticent to condemn Communism:

With them [the S&D Group] it's even more complicated because they have a very personal responsibility because many of them take roots in that regime, for instance in the first [European] Commission there was Kovács,<sup>103</sup> Hungarian commissioner. He was high functionary in a Communist party, and that would be difficult to imagine that high official of Nazi party could have such a responsibility. (personal communication 2015)

Presumably, the Western right or left, because it did not experience Communist regimes has no personal interests to protect nor any personal inconvenient pasts. That is not the case as some Easterners see it. Westerners, in the EPP especially, should unanimously condemn Communism because of the EPP's ideological Christian-Democratic roots. Yet Kalniete explains:

Even for the EPP it's not so simple. Because if we go back to the Soviet Union, beginning of the time when Lenin was Secretary Chairman of the Communist Party, there always have been groups of different entrepreneurs establishing contacts, and having profit from lucrative economic treaties, and it went through all history of Soviet Union, with periods lay lower-profile, higher-profile. [...] And if you would look in the last years of Soviet Union, that regime was kept alive

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<sup>103</sup> László Kovács was the European Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union (2004-2010). He joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in 1963, and subsequently held high positions in its Central Committee. He founded the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in 1989.

because of enormous money provided by Western countries. And for EPP that would mean also. But they bravely recognized it, also to look into their own past. (personal communication 2015)

So Kalniete makes it clear that in the history of her own political group, there were those from the center-right in Western Europe who did business with the Soviet Union with the implication being that they are to some extent indirectly responsible for supporting a regime that committed mass human rights violations. But Kalniete believes the EPP has sufficiently recognized its responsibility for this while the S&D has yet to do so.

The left, on the other hand, sees the Eastern European left and right especially as seeking revenge for the pain and humiliation they suffered under Communism. Because of this suffering, it is in their personal interest to settle old scores. For example, Bergamaschi, the Foreign Affairs advisor for the Greens says:

Even among the Eastern MEPs there were those trying to have a critical dialogue with Moscow, but critical, but there were a lot of those MEPs, especially those belonging to the central-right or the extreme right, [who] were simply using the EU as a revenge towards Moscow. That is, now we are much stronger, we are not left alone in the hands of Moscow, and now we can take our revenge on Moscow, and use the European Union, the strength, the economic and the political strength of the European Union, to compensate for all the deprivations and humiliation that we had in that period, in the Communist times. (personal communication 2015)

An ALDE foreign affairs advisor accuses Easterners of playing "this kind of blame game or accounts in a way, we have 2 millions in our mass graves, you only have 800 000, and you never suffered as much as us." While Rob van de Water, a Dutch political strategist for the S&D Group admonishes Easterners for thinking in terms of "winners and losers" where the losers are Communist ideology and the Soviet Union and Easterners and the Eastern European right especially are the winners who can now take revenge at the losing entities. He explains that it is in the interest of the victims of Communism, whether they really were victims or not, to present themselves as such, and especially compare themselves to other morally pure victims, because it

gives them moral superiority, "When you say both systems [Nazism and Communism] were equally bad, then the people, who survived the systems, are equally good. So when you tell people how bad the others were, the bad things you've seen...It's the situation [where] a girl who is not that beautiful likes to walk around with a girlfriend who's really ugly to make herself feel better. It's stupid, but the world is like that." In other words, the left believes that it is in the interest of right-wing Easterners to use Communism to seek revenge and cultivate righteous indignation as a bargaining chip.

### Political Group's Ideological Roots

The right argues that the Western left is not amenable to condemning Communism because of its own Communist traditions. MEP Saryusz-Wolski (Poland, EPP) explains that this is the case because of the Western left's Communist affinities, "Because the European left flirted with the Soviets, you have the French Communist Party of Georges Marchais. You have the Italian Communist Party, so-called Eurocommunism, and Socialists too." Krasnodębski too believes that today's left parties do not condemn Communism because they are either descendants of the Communist party in the case of Central and Eastern Europe and/or some part of their program is similar to that of the Communist system generally in Western Europe.

First of all, the left has some Communist or radical-leftist roots, or if it does not have these [Communist] roots or family [...] then it has some sympathies, maybe its [political] program is quite similar. So this would [require] a far-reaching self-critical reflection, for which these parties are not especially skilled.

MEP Auštrevičius (Lithuania, ALDE) too explains that the general reluctance of the left to condemn Communism lies in their ideological roots in historical Communism.

I think we still have mainly [an] untold story about Communist crimes and so-called "achievements" in a vast territory of Europe, but because those political forces, I mean the Socialists and extreme left, they feel it as their own ideology, as own, let's say basis of existence, definitely. I mean, they fight for a place under the sun and they see it as a possible blow for their ideals and values they've been fighting for.

The communist ideological roots of the CEE left are evident as they are usually post-communist parties. MEP Krasnodębski (Poland, ECR) says explains that, "That is pretty evident that in countries of Central-Eastern Europe all of these Social-Democratic parties for the most part have a Communist core. These are post-Communist parties and they belong to some European international." The Western left, for example the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), on the other hand, has always supported the Eastern post-Communist left and as Krasnodębski explains, it even had "roots in the radical youth movement of the 1960s, which regarded the Soviet Union in quite a friendly way."

Even from the Socialist perspective from CEE, echoing Kalniete's charge against the S&D that they have not come to terms with their party history, MEP Marju Lauristin (Estonia, S&D) tells us, "For them [conservatives] it is much more easy because in the Socialist side of political scale there's still in Western Europe parties who hadn't acknowledged their own, say, moment in the bad Stalinist days and so on, the kind of relations, or practices which were not very respectable." These practices may have been financial support to Communist parties or business ties with governments that did not respect democracy or human rights. Czarnecki (Poland, ECR), for example, describes the affinities between the Western left and Communism as a way to explain the "asymmetry" of condemning Nazism but remaining silent on Communism in the EP, especially before the passage of the 2009 Resolution:

The intellectual elites of Western Europe were Communizing (*komunizujące*). There is also strong anti-Americanism in Europe and precisely America was very clearly against Communism and the Soviet Union, and for these reasons Western intellectuals, journalists and politicians too looked the other way. (personal communication 2015)

These Western intellectuals would excuse Communism by saying that "mistakes" were made and that Stalinism was a "warping" of Communism but that Communism itself was legitimate. Sógor

echoes this sentiment, "for the Western World communism was something different, political or an egalitarian system that failed like Jesus, you know?" For this reason, Auštrevičius says, "Probably not by chance, there's a saying that Communists have always lived in Western Europe, not Eastern Europe." Lauristin explains why it hard for the S&D Group to accept the anti-Communist narrative that much of CEE is trying to craft:

In [the] Soviet Union, there were a lot of human rights narratives, democracy was repeated, human rights, equality [...] that the Communist rhetoric, the propaganda, was made in a way that they like have been putting themselves into the narratives, created by democratic left in the West, and then they used it as the cover for their absolute inhuman practices. And for us, who were there [...] kind of things, symbols, Soviet [...] we cannot use them because they were dirty and overused and really destroyed, the readings were destroyed by the Communist propaganda. (personal communication 2015)

Thus Lauristin tells us that the Soviet Union hijacked the rhetoric of democracy and human rights of the Western left. To this day, it is hard for East and West Social Democrats to understand each other sometimes because Easterners have different interpretations of some of these slogans and symbols. She extolls Eastern Social Democrats to be more critical of the Communist past even though Lauristin herself is the daughter of two prominent Estonian Communist politicians, Johannes Lauristin, the first head of government of the Estonian SSR in 1940-1941 and his wife Olga Lauristin.

From the Western European left we might expect a similar charge against the right's ideological connections to historical Nazi or Fascist parties just by virtue of guilt by association blurring the lines between historically far right parties and the contemporary right. For example, one of the points in the "resolution" in the S&D's booklet on the uses and abuses of history is that "political forces on the right in certain countries collaborated with the Nazi-regime and supported its ideology; nowadays right wing political forces in the same countries portray themselves as having always been victims, trying to create taboos concerning certain aspects of their country's

history" (162-163). At the same time, political historian Wim van Meurs can be found in the booklet as saying, "Western prejudices of alleged fascist sympathies and irrational anti-Russian sentiments in Eastern Europe" do exist. But he says that we must "counter" them by having a dialogue on the legacy of dual totalitarianisms in the new member states (24). It seems that while it does happen, the left is less quick to draw strict direct lines between historically totalitarian parties like Nazism or Fascists and today's political conservatives. It is true that while there are some post-Communists (politicians who were members of the Communist Party and served in its leadership) in the EP and other EU institutions, there are no post-Nazis or post-Fascists, in part because those regimes ceased to exist over 70 years ago. However, it would not be an exaggeration for the left to point out that the ultranationalism and xenophobia of some radical right-wing Eastern European parties like PiS and Fidesz have some ideological affinities with the ideologies of Nazism and Fascism.

### Partisanship

As with every policy, historical memory policy, is seen to be in the domain of one political side over another. MEP Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) explains that because historical memory has traditionally been in the right's domain, the left has no incentive to help the right by cooperating, "Generally it is a kind of politicking. Because, in a sense, this is the domain of right-wing parties. We will not help the right parties because that will be a success for them." Similarly MEP Tarand (Greens, Estonia) argues that it is all about partisanship. Even if "it's a good proposal, good idea, but it cuts from the wrong pie, either ignore it or block it. We don't really work in order to come to common terms about anything. It's like a game."

To conclude, the struggle over European historical memory of Communism since 2004 between East and West (and left and right) has resulted in a "peaceful coexistence" rather than a "synthesis" as Bergamaschi so evocatively described it precisely because of the overlapping regional and political cleavages that make it hard to reconcile and come to a mutual understanding of the past. As this section has demonstrated, however, it is a strong oversimplification to say that the East and the right are anti-Communist and the West and the left are if not pro-Communist then at least sympathetic or ambivalent. There are regional divisions within party groups as well as political divisions within regions (and of course within nations themselves but this is beyond the scope of the discussion here). Moreover, both the left and right see positions on whether to recognize Communism and to what extent to condemn it as being determined by either personal or political group interests. In other words, both sides see the other as instrumentalizing history for their present-day needs. I have already argued in the previous chapters that focusing only on who instrumentalizes history and to what extent does not help us understand why some historical memories diffuse and others do not. As we have seen here, the left and right both politicize history for their needs, which does not help us to explain why the contemporary European memory field looks the way it does. Let us zoom out from what the left and right think about Communism specifically and instead consider how each party thinks about different modes of mnemonic communication. That will help us understand these mutual misunderstandings over Communism remembrance beyond regional and political identification.

### **From Instrumentalization to Differentiated Modes of Mnemonic Communication: The Political Party Stance on European Remembrance**

In this section, I argue that the reason the left and right cannot agree on how to deal with historical memory is not because one politicizes or instrumentalizes history and the other does



not (as we saw in the previous section, both do). It is not so much the substance of the memories that matters but rather disagreement over the rules or mode of mnemonic communication that govern the European memory field. The EP's 2009 Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism and its 2013 Policy Brief on historical memory as well as the program guide of the Europe for Citizens Program (2014-2020) together lay out the EU's dialogic imperative that is meant to govern the rules of mnemonic communication within the European memory field. The dialogic imperative, while non-partisan, has affinities with some principles that are central to the left's ideology and its *raison d'être*. Thus for the left it is easier to play by the dialogic imperative rules set out by the EU because they already seem familiar and in harmony with the party's general worldview. Thus the mainstream left, for the most part, engages in mnemonic contests within the bounds of the rules of the European memory field. The right, however, does not identify with the rules of the game and shuns the dialogic imperative<sup>104</sup> engaging in mnemonic politics on its own terms. The ostensible incompatibility of the memory regime of the Holocaust and the memory regime of totalitarianism lead to such heated and protracted debates because both sides are operating in the European memory field according to their own rules and thus each cannot understand why the other does not agree with their point of view. For much of the right and many politicians from Central and Eastern Europe it is painfully obvious that Nazism and Communism were two sides of the same coin and that this must be

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<sup>104</sup> This is similar to how the Network's reconciliatory strategy is in line with the dialogic imperative and the Platform's victimhood strategy is not. This is not to suggest that the Platform is politically right leaning and the Network therefore has to be left leaning. In fact, as we have seen both are right leaning with the Network more willing to reach across the aisle than the Platform. Thus I do not mean to suggest that just because the dialogic imperative has affinities with the political left that they map on exactly and that conservative mnemonic activists are thereby automatically incapable of engaging in pluralistic dialogue. That is certainly not true, as the case of the Network suggests.

more widely recognized. For much of the left and many politicians from Western Europe it is so obvious that Nazism was different and that the Holocaust was singularly unique that it seems unreasonable for anyone to challenge that except for some self-serving political reasons.

Stepping back from the content of these two memory regimes to analyze how each side believes memories in general should be communicated can help us clarify this mutual misunderstanding and pave the way for more productive dialogue that may eventually lead to an earnest reconciliation between nations, regions and political groups.

By the late 2000s, the European Parliament had become so vigorously involved in debates over historical memory that the two major party groups—the EPP and the S&D—elaborated their positions on 20th century historical remembrance in their respective booklets. In 2007, a group of prominent MEPs from the EPP Group, mostly from CEE, wrote a booklet titled *The Reunification of Europe*, providing a profile of each Eastern European nation's heroic struggle for freedom in WWII and under Communism, and their eventual and triumphant return to Europe (European Peoples' Party and European Democrats 2007). In 2009, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament published a booklet titled *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History* through which it critiques what it sees as dangerous attempts to politicize history, legislate historical truth, and revise historical facts in a radical, revisionist, and nationalist way while simultaneously admitting that historical remembrance and learning from history are essential tasks of democratic polities (Socialist Group in the European Parliament 2009).

The Socialist booklet comes from the party's top ranks. It was edited by Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda (to become the Group's leader in 2012) and Dutch MEP Jan Marinus Wiersma (at the time a VP of the Socialist Group). It is comprised of reflections on the Cold War, Communism and Fascism/Nazism, as well as contemporary analyses of various "memory wars"

and reflections on the proper relationship between memory and history and between politicians and historians. They include interviews with historians like Norman Davies and former dissidents and public figures like Bronisław Geremek<sup>105</sup> and György Konrád.<sup>106</sup> In the preface of the book, President of the Socialist Group, Martin Schulz, explains that the Group was motivated to respond to what it saw as rampant abuse of history for political gain by members of the EPP Group and others from CEE, especially Poland and the Baltic States, who were aggressively proposing historical memory resolutions like the ones discussed in Chapter 2.

Speaking to these colleagues, Schulz writes in the preface:

Europe's tragic history did not end in 1945 with the defeat of the Nazi regime. I come across this everyday when I am talking with colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe who suffered under Communist dictatorships. We cannot walk away from our history, and today's politics are of course related to events that happened in the past. We should refrain, however, from abusing history for political gain. That is the reason why the Socialist Group has published this book and that is why we asked historians, not politicians, to take the lead. (7-8)

Thus unfortunately, the book, although well-meaning, boils down to an accusation that can easily be read as—We the left and the West recognize the importance of history but we are mature enough to refrain from abusing it, while you the right and the East abuse it for your own selfish, political goals. While the Socialist Group is self-reflexive about how it uses historical memory to legitimate its Group, it cannot refrain from hurling that same incrimination at the other side with the subtext, "but *they* do it so much worse!"

Instead of engaging in a blame game of who politicizes history more, let us instead examine the different mnemonic rules of engagement that each group tends to abide by when

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<sup>105</sup> Geremek was a well-known Polish historian. He joined the Polish United Workers Party in the 1950s, but withdrew his membership after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Prague in 1968, in which Poland took part. He was later very involved in the Solidarity movement. He was elected to the EP in 2004 with the ALDE Group.

<sup>106</sup> Konrád is a well-regarded Hungarian novelist. He participated in the 1956 Hungarian uprising against Soviet occupation and through his writings and activism supported the Hungarian underground democratic movement through the transition.

communicating historical memories transnationally. Recall the three tenets of the dialogic imperative that the EU has set out to govern mnemonic communication within the European memory field—(1) a move from a heroic victimhood/perpetrator model<sup>107</sup> to one of self-critical apology/regret and taking responsibility for wrongdoing, (2) a move from objective historical truth to a self-critical recognition of subjective histories based on historical facts and the implicit (3) commitment to the idea, distilled from the German experience, that nationalism is normatively bad. The Socialist Group's position on historical memory, as outlined in the booklet, has many affinities with this dialogic imperative. On the other hand, the EPP Group, we will later see, does not deem as automatically delegitimizing (1) heroic narratives glorifying positive memories (2) matter of fact narration claiming objectivity and singular truth (3) and nationalism. In other words, the EPP, does not treat the breaching of the rules of mnemonic communication governing the European memory field as necessarily disqualifying the mnemonic actor from the given mnemonic contest while the S&D does.

With regard to the first tenet, in the S&D booklet's "resolution" (which was never meant to become a formal resolution, since the Group does not believe in legislating history), the editors conclude that "right wing political forces [...] portray themselves as having always been victims, trying to create taboos concerning certain aspects of their country's history" (162). This is a direct rebuttal to the victimhood regionalism strategy I described in Chapter 3 that relies on a clear and hard distinction between "us" the victims and "them" the perpetrators. The dialogic imperative, however, requires mnemonic actors to refrain from such simplistic dichotomization

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<sup>107</sup> A focus on victimhood is acceptable as long as it pursues restorative rather than retributive justice. For example, seeking recognition, reconciliation and apology is permissible but criminal prosecution or criminalization of symbols or ideologies is not. On restorative justice see Liebmann (2007).

and demands that any time victimhood is invoked it must be complemented with a self-critical analysis of some kind of wrongdoing.

With regard to the second tenet, Schultz admits that there is no single objective history, "History is subjective and open to different interpretations" (7). This is something that historians and politicians should remember in order to prevent the imposition of memory regimes that are partial or exclusionary. At the same time, ironically, this is what makes history dangerous. If there is no one single truth, then it can all the more easily be manipulated for political purposes as Schultz warns, "Many politicians have used a partisan view of history to further their own ends" (7). The Socialist Group makes this point about the subjectivity of history many times over in a very self-reflexive way. In the booklet we read that the aim of the publication is to promote a discussion between the "tense and ambivalent relationship" between historians and politicians while recognizing "our own subjectivity" and that the book is not an "accurate or scholarly representation of the current debate" (13). Indeed, the authors demonstrate that they are aware that, ironically, the booklet is itself a product of the instrumentalization of history for political gain—"highlighting the role of social democracy in resisting totalitarian ideologies is also part of a political agenda" (89). Nonetheless, the book encourages Europeans to strive to agree to the "broadest possible consensus" while "accepting different interpretations *on the basis of empirical facts*" [emphasis mine] (160). Karl Duffek, Director of the Renner Institute<sup>108</sup> in Vienna and publisher of the booklet, writes, "The only way to tackle the repeated intrusion of the past in the political debate of today is to face it, to discuss it, to explain the myths each and every nation in Europe has developed and to confront them with the historical truth" (9). Thus for the Socialists

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<sup>108</sup> The Renner Institute is the political academy or think-tank of the Austrian Social Democratic Party.

there exists a differentiation between historical memory and myth on the one hand and truthful history on the other—even though there is no single, objective, historical truth. There are instead empirical and historical facts that should serve as guideposts to let us know when subjective histories turn into falsified memories or myths. For this reason the Socialist Group is very skeptical of "legislating history" in the form of commemorative resolutions because it worries that the historical interpretation of a given event in a given resolution will become the ultimate, singular, official version of history that everyone is obliged to believe because it comes from a legal, parliamentary body. So the editors stress that "political bodies and political parties have no monopoly on the interpretation of history" (159) and that "there are enormous dangers of misinterpretation when historical facts enter the realm of actual politics" (12). Yet just as the 2013 EP Policy Brief on historical memory admits and as the increased funds for Europe for Citizens remembrance projects indicates, the Socialist Group too believes that historical memory will always be a part of politics and that it even has some positive contributions to make, especially when it comes to building a common European identity that will keep the European project alive. For example, Schulz argues that, "Collective memory gives people a sense of belonging. History helps to explain the world. A shared view of history can motivate people to take action that changes the future" (7).

So how does the left want to create this sense of belonging without "legislating" history? Much like in the 2013 EP Policy Brief, here we get a sense of ambiguity between memory and morality. A common identity, much like every political claim whether related to history or not, is underpinned by some moral value(s). The Socialists do not want to offer official historical memories, but they do see the need to publicly commit to moral values that are common to the European community and that includes commemorating and condemning mass atrocities. In

other words, the Socialists do "legislate" history by supporting commemorative resolutions proposed by the EPP because of the moral imperative. But they are clearly uncomfortable with this. We see this ambiguity in the discussion of the 2008 Holodomor resolution, which acknowledged the Ukrainian "artificial famine" of 1932-33. The editors explain that the Socialist Group was "very hesitant" in supporting this resolution "not wanting to make official political interpretations of historical events" but in the end they did support it "out of sympathy for the people of Ukraine" and because hot-button words like "genocide" were removed (11). In a personal interview with Van de Water, who prepared the position for the S&D Group on the 2008 Holodomor resolution, he tells me that the issue of legislating history "was very fundamental, history and analyzing history is not political business. We are not going to say ten years later what is good and what is bad— that is a job for historians because a politician cannot, and I come back to a point I once mentioned before, a politician is not objective." He elaborates his reasoning for the Holodomor issue specifically:

Holodomor has been an awful thing...And even if quite some studies have been done, nobody can tell you how many people died because of that famine. They are estimating 3 to 15 million people that is not even close [...] Okay, let's get, if you want a statue for Holodomor, do it...But do not ask politicians to say this is the worst... (personal communication 2015)

We see the same ambiguity surrounding other historical memories, whether the historians disagree over the facts or not. For example, there is broad consensus among experts that the Armenian genocide was a genocide, which should make it easier for the Socialist Group to support resolutions on such events. In the case of the April 15, 2015 EP resolution on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, Greco says, "Well, our group [S&D] was broadly supporting Armenian genocide resolution, for example. This I know, but still, there is this approach in our group [...] this shouldn't be an issue for the Parliament to resolve. Let's leave the history for the historians" (personal communication 2015). In other words, the left finds itself

between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, it does not want to "legislate history," but on the other hand, it cannot be seen as callous to the suffering of millions of people. So it compromises by supporting mnemonic resolutions but in ways that avoid historical controversies, like whether an event was or was not a genocide.

Finally, returning to the booklet, the Socialists prove to be very sensitive to the third tenet of the dialogic imperative, the eschewing of nationalist forms of remembering. The Group believes that the EU was the "answer to decades if not centuries of national hatred" and that "widespread anti-Semitic and racist ideologies, ultranationalist attitudes in significant parts of the population lead to the involvement in the Holocaust of sectors of the societies of the Nazi-occupied countries" (161-62) as much in the West as in CEE. They claim that "forces [of the political right] are trying to monopolize the struggle for freedom on their side and to portray themselves as the true defenders of the 'national' interest while some of them even today openly defend the Spanish dictator Franco as the saviour of catholic religion from Communism and others revitalize ethnic conflicts of the twenties of the 20th century" (163). According to this viewpoint, the right is willing to overlook the criminality of right-wing dictatorships because they see the right as the true defenders of the nation, which often goes hand in hand with religion (on the religion-nationalism nexus see Kozłowska, Béland and Lecours 2016). In short, the Socialists find interpretations of history that extoll nationalism and national identity over other values like multiculturalism, civil rights or even democracy itself to be dangerous. To sum up, no matter what the historical memory, whether Communism, Nazism or the Holodomor, the left is clearly in line with the EU's rules on how to discuss these memories publicly; (1) the distinction between "us" the victims and "them" the perpetrators should never be reified (2) there is no singular, objective historical truth therefore remembering has to be accompanied by recognition



of subjectivity all the while relying on a range of historical facts and (3) remembrance primarily through a nationalist prism is dangerous. Now let us turn to the right's understanding of how memories should be communicated.

Around this same time, in 2007, the idea for a booklet of European historical memory was born on the other side of the aisle, the EPP Group. The originator of the project, Estonian MEP Tunne Kelam, very active in EP historical policy, explains that he thought of the idea when talking with a Slovakian colleague about their respective countries' experiences under totalitarianism and transitions to democracy when he realized that they knew very little about each other's mutual histories. Much like the S&D book, the entries are written by historians and politicians alike, but besides that, this booklet is drastically different. Kelam's foreword to the book goes on to explain the motivation behind it:

Sharing our countries' experiences of losing and regaining democracy with our friends, the older members of the European Union, is even more daunting. After four years in reunited Europe, it is clear that Europe's mental and historic integration has yet to be completed. This will require overcoming region-centred attitudes, comparing and integrating different historic perceptions, traditions, prejudices and even fears. This will require more than being just satisfied with political and economic equality. [...] Every member nation has a unique, enriching contribution to make to the continuing building of our common European home. (2)

Certainly, on the face of it, this statement is laudable. While editors of the Socialist booklet would most likely agree with it, the mode by which the EPP proposes to overcome these "mental and historic" barriers differs greatly from the dialogic imperative that the EU has set out.

First, the histories of "losing and regaining democracy" are told from a victim/perpetrator model where Communists are the evil-doers and anti-Communists are the heroes. More broadly, the nations themselves are victims of a Communist system designed to ruthlessly exterminate all vestiges of national life—religion, local languages, traditions—and especially national intellectual elites that are seen as the stewards of national culture. For example, the subtitle of the

booklet alone, *Anti-Totalitarian Courage and Political Renewal*, demonstrates that the historical narratives within tell a heroic tale of courageous deeds of good overcoming deeds of evil. Because the booklet for the most part covers only Communist history<sup>109</sup> (because as it claims, that is the part of history that is less known than the Nazi period) the term "anti-totalitarian" can easily be replaced with "anti-Communist" again giving the impression of a battle between two easily demarcated groups—the courageous anti-Communists and the evil pro-Communists.

Second, there is no attempt to move from objective historical truth to a self-critical recognition of subjective histories. There is no discussion of multiple perspectives or multiple possible interpretations of these histories. Likewise, there is no self-reflexive acknowledgment of the authors' own biases, positionality or political motivations. For example, much like the S&D

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<sup>109</sup> Where there is a brief discussion of the pre-WWII and WWII periods as precursors to the Communist regimes, there is scant mention of collaboration with Nazis or taking responsibility for the murder of Jews. The Latvian history makes one mention of this, "An absolute majority of Latvian Jews, almost 70,000 were killed during the Holocaust. A small part of the population of Latvia was involved in these crimes too, the so-called Aras commando" (166). Lithuanian's history merely mentions that Nazis "sought also a contribution of local collaborators" (219). As an axis power, Slovakia's history mentions the passing of the "Jewish Code" which limited the rights of Slovak Jews but says nothing of the Holocaust. Hungary's history only makes mention of how Jews were "protected by the Horthy regime" (128) and does not explain who the Arrow Cross were, except that along with the Nazis, they were expelled after the Soviet invasion in 1944, completely sidelining the hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews and Roma that died in the Holocaust. Hungary's national narrative completely elides the facts that the Kingdom of Hungary was a member of the Axis powers and the Arrow Cross Party was a fascist Hungarian party. Estonia's history makes no mention of its auxiliary and militia units that participated in the Holocaust, neither does Poland mention Jedwabne, where a group of townspeople corralled hundreds of Jewish men, women and children into a barn and burned them alive. While the focus of the book is on the post-WWII Communist period, the painting of national histories as victims of Communist crimes while eliding their roles as perpetrators of Nazi crimes is exactly the kind of conservative "revisionist" history that the S&D book was trying to challenge by pointing to the apprehension that exclusive attention to Communist victimhood will eclipse the region's role in WWII and the Holocaust.

focuses on the history of Social Democracy in opposing totalitarianisms, the EPP book also focuses "on the contribution of those men and women who founded, joined and shaped the Christian Democratic and conservative parties and movements" (12). Yet, unlike the Socialists, the Christian Democrats do not bother to include a caveat that their historical narrative then, even if indirectly, ultimately furthers the goals of their political group. Nor do the authors of the EPP book make any hint toward their biases in presenting these national histories, instead they do so as if they were objectively truthful narratives. For example, The EPP book gives a definitive definition of totalitarianism, "No matter the specific context of a country, the principal phenomenon was the same: Totalitarian rule in the name of a Communist ideology and executed through the structures of power and terror in a one-party state " (7). The EPP book does not trace the historiography of the concept of totalitarianism itself (like the S&D book does). Moreover, the Christian Democrats prefer to emphasize the similarities of totalitarian Communism across time and place (generalizing the concept rather than qualifying it), while the Socialists emphasize differences—they acknowledge that "no Communist regime was democratic" but they continue, "there are substantial differences in the use of the terms 'Stalinist', 'soviet' and 'Communist', that the character of the Soviet Union was different over time, and that there were differences between Communist regimes in other countries as it has been the case concerning Communist parties in Western European countries" (162).

Finally, because the booklet is organized by nation, it presents the histories of Communism through the national lens. At the top of each national chapter a map of the country in the local language is pictured and a short list of facts about that country is included. For example, for the Czech Republic, we see:

**Czech Republic** – Česká Republika  
**Area:** 78 866 square km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 10 209 600 (2007)  
**Capital city:** Prague  
**Official Language:** Czech  
**Currency:** Czech koruna (CZK)  
**Political system:** Parliamentary republic  
**EU accession:** 01.05.2004

Although there is ample discussion of democracy, rule of law and civil liberties such as freedom of speech or religion, the booklet nevertheless gives the impression that the nation itself is what was threatened by totalitarianism, and nationalism (in addition to democracy) is what is courageously saved and regained. Thus quite the opposite of the imperative to whenever possible deemphasize nationality, this historical narrative brings it to the fore and presents it in a morally unambiguous way. This has the potential to renationalize memories of Communism and resistance to it thereby glorifying nationalism as a sacred good rather than a potential danger. In other words, the right sees nothing wrong with (1) making clear distinctions between victims and perpetrators (in fact that is a laudable goal and that is why keeping memories alive is important), (2) discussing historical memories as if they simply recalled the ultimate, objective, historical truth and (3) remembering memories through a nationalist perspective. Having discussed the first two tenets of the EU's dialogic imperative in depth in Chapter 3 and 4, in the following section, I discuss the issue of renationalization in more depth.

## Renationalization

Any transnational union carries with it potential opportunities for overcoming historic national divisions in order to create a more peaceful, prosperous community based on some shared values that benefits more than one given nation. There are many ways to organize such a union, and the European Union is but one example. In the age of globalization, global civil societies, global governance and cosmopolitanism, many social theorists of nationalism have

predicted that over time the nation-state will cease to be the primary form through which societies organize and make meaning out of their existence (see e.g. Habermas's theory of the "postnational constellation"). In principle, the EU would make the perfect vehicle for the development of a transnational identity that might eventually supplant that of national identities, which historically have been repeatedly invoked to incite hatred and instigate war. Yet other social thinkers are more skeptical. Calhoun (2007), for example, argues that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not opposites, and in fact, seeing them as such actually inhibits the strengthening of democracy and transnational institutions.

When it comes to historical memory, we could interpret European integration as a process of denationalization. As national memories diffuse transnationally they shed their national coating and take on more universal values and meanings that can be shared by people living across many nations. It is therefore easy to see how the European memory field denationalizes historical memories by diffusing them across the continent as they come to stand in for European fundamental values such as freedom, human rights and democracy (as we saw with the case of Polish, Czech, Hungarian and even Ukrainian national memories in Chapter 2). We have also seen the limits of this diffusion; August 23rd commemorations are not paid much attention in Western Europe where the memories of Communist suffering do not resonate.

However, can the European memory field also be used to *renationalize* memories? I argue that, in fact, that is the case. The transnational European memory field is a new public space in which the very battle over *the extent to which* national memories should be denationalized takes place. In other words, nothing about denationalization at the transnational level is automatic. I do not, however, treat this battle as primarily between nation-states and their "interests" in preserving certain versions of their national memories at the European level. So to

the question of, Does the transnational represent something truly independent of the national or is it yet another space in which nations compete over their own national interpretations of history? I answer that it is both. Moreover, the processes of denationalization and renationalization are not mutually exclusive, just as Calhoun (2007) argues that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not opposites, and indeed, to treat them as such is counterproductive to reconciliation. For this reason, the EU's strong emphasis on eliding nationalism and national identity at all from the European memory field (the third tenet of the dialogic imperative that is often left implicit) is misguided and may indeed backfire by reigniting national passions. By strictly policing discussion of nationalism in the European memory field, this rule of mnemonic communication may have the effect of excluding mnemonic actors for raising issues of nationalism and national identity at all by labeling their views nationalist and therefore illegitimate. Rather than institutionalizing the mnemonic rule that nationalism is dangerous, the EU should promote a discussion about how to think of and deal with the complexities of nationalism and national identity. By labeling nationalism as bad, the EU simultaneously gives the impression that European is good, where European means denationalized, thus evacuating the European space of nationhood altogether. That is a radical posture that spurs fear and even anger in some mnemonic actors, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

Some mnemonic warriors argue that European fundamental values *are* compatible with nationalism. For example, MEP Schöpflin (Hungary, EPP) explains that the Hungarian right has bought into the fundamental values of the EU like human rights, but it refuses to buy into the thesis that nationalism is what is dangerous and has torn Europe apart historically. "I mean the Hungarian central right of course has committed to freedom, it accepts human rights, it accepts a particular reading of the European past. What it doesn't do is to say only the European dimension

counts." Krasnodębski's (Poland, ECR) discussion of nationalism and European integration is particularly insightful so I quote him at length in the following discussion:

Of course we live in times of incessant historical reinterpretation of history and this is very important element of politics in general. [...] Here [in Brussels] they are building the House of [European] History. Many of us parliamentarians here are concerned. Even a few times we requested information on what there will be...We are concerned because these different interpretations of history do not necessarily have to conform to *our* understanding of history. [...] For there to be a good interpretation of what European integration is, it depends on how one interprets that genesis, what ones sees, what is emphasized in history, what values. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

He then recognizes the nationalism is bad component of the EU's dialogic imperative by saying that the "classic heroic-national narration" is largely these days rejected. Krasnodębski goes on to explain what he believes now is the hegemonic theory of European integration that treats nationalism as the progenitor of totalitarianism in Germany and the peaceful European integration after the war as the outcome of overcoming nationalism:

In Poland now it frequently goes like this that there were terrible wars, they grew out of nationalism, then nationalism caused totalitarianism, now the European Union overcame them, and everything will be fine. But this is the kind of narration, which I would say, it formed, in my opinion, in Germany, for different reasons because German history was the way it was and today it is accepted. It is inn the same way that German economic hegemony is [accepted]. From economic hegemony follows some cultural influence, and that version of history, in which, for example, human suffering, expulsions are emphasized, in which, for example, universal European collaboration with National socialism is discussed...Now what place does Communism have in this? At any rate, that narration was once very typical for Germany, today it is universally accepted. (personal communication 2015)

Thus Krasnodębski see the EU's invocation of shared responsibility for historical atrocities that simultaneously casts nationalism as the culprit of these atrocities as ironically coming out of a nationally specific (German) narrative because of Germany's unique history. Now that model has become universalized and internalized at the EU level because of Germany's oversized power in the EU and to a lesser or greater extent in most countries, even Poland. Krasnodębski then explains why this imperative is difficult for CEE countries especially to accept:

This is unacceptable for Poles or Czech that for example, that it is said, in German it is said, that Europe was a continent which knew relative stability and peace until 1914 and this is the so-called primary catastrophe. Of course from the Polish point of view, as you might imagine, that Europe that was so great, peaceful, almost already integrated economically without Poles is unacceptable. And from WWI, which is a catastrophe described as resulting from nationalism, from state competition, from this results totalitarianism, both [Nazism and Communism]. [...] This all ends with a terrible division of Europe, which we now are overcoming. [But] Communism and National Socialism had totally different sources. Communism was anti-nationalist, in the same way anyway in some sense National Socialism was this universal, racist ideology, it had different sources. (personal communication 2015)

Thus Krasnodębski takes issue with the European narrative that competing nationalisms contributed to the breaking peace in 1914 and again in 1939 and that the EU will ensure peace forevermore by rooting out nationalism. The reason that he argues that Poland cannot or should not accept such a narrative is that, first of all, there was no peace for Poland before WWI because of the hundred-year-long partitions, which excluded Poland as an independent nation from the European community. Secondly, Poland was never an imperial power and in fact it frequently struggled for national independence throughout European history therefore it rarely used its own nationalism to start wars or dominate others. Finally, from the Polish perspective it was not nationalism that caused WWII and led to the division of Europe but rather an anti-nationalist universalizing Communist ideology and a National Socialist campaign based on racism not nationalism. Moreover, countries like Poland, routinely used their strong sense of nationalism to either fight against Nazism or help overcome Communism, thus using nationalism for good instead of evil. While this understanding of Polish and generally Eastern European history is problematic in many ways, what is evident, is that different national experiences of nationalism condition each nation's evaluation of nationalism. MEP Lauristin (S&D, Estonia) discusses in one of her published articles the regional nature of this aversion to nationalism. Quoting Habermas, she writes, "Habermas (2001) argues that a distinctive Europeanness is based on two cornerstones: the concept of the welfare society and the rejection of nationalism, which was



linked in the historical memory of West Europeans to the painful historical lessons of Nazism: 'It is the lasting memory of nationalist excess and moral abyss that lends to our present commitments the quality of a peculiar achievement' (Habermas, 2001: 18)." (Lauristin 2007: 403). It is precisely this German assumption about nationalism that CEE conservatives like Krasnodębski reject. He recalls discussing a text with his students where the author argued that there are two dominant memories in Hungary, that of the Trianon Treaty<sup>110</sup> and Communism on the one hand and that of the Holocaust and Hungary's role in it on the other. Krasnodębski explains that the author:

Contrasts this good memory, which must always be self-critical toward oneself, toward national tradition, and [...] this other memory [of the Holocaust], which for Hungarians is a [...] national stain. [...] I don't want to judge which is good and which is bad, but that in general there is this attempt to impose certain normative frameworks and say, "Yes, you should [remember in this way and not that way]." (personal communication 2015)

Krasnodębski then is critical of the rules of mnemonic communication itself. He points to two important facets of the EU's dialogic imperative that require memories to be self-critical and to condemn nationalism.<sup>111</sup> This is precisely what the right and much of Central and Eastern Europe rejects. Political historian Van Meurs explains:

European integration is supposed to remove the borders separating European nations and to reduce the importance of national identity. At the same time, the memory of what is perceived as fifty years of foreign occupation and Communist ideology made the reconfirmation of national identity a top priority in Romania, Slovakia or Estonia. For the countries of Western Europe that faced only one actual aggressor in the Second World War, no moral dilemma between democracy and the nation arose; or at least the dilemma could be contained by downplaying the role of Communist resistance during the Second World War. However, in societies that lived through both fascist and Communist occupation and dictatorship, the moral dilemma is more strenuous. In the military and geopolitical realities of the late 1930s and the war years, a righteous third option rarely existed for those who fought for the nation and national statehood. That circumstance made

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<sup>110</sup> This is the 1920 peace treaty between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Allies that regulated Hungary's status after its defeat in WWI. Hungary was left landlocked with 28% of the land mass and 36% of the population of pre-war Hungary.

<sup>111</sup> Krasnodębski's national lens prevents him, however, from separating out these two tenets of the dialogic imperative. One can be self-critical without condemning the whole nation but rather some aspect of it.

them take sides—be it with the Russian Communists or with the German fascists. (S&D booklet: 93)

In other words, for Western countries that experienced only Nazism/Fascism, the marking of democracy as good and nationalism as bad is unproblematic. For Eastern countries that additionally experienced Communism, nationalism also took on a positive role in so far as it was used to fight for democracy and independence. In other words, if the EU pays more attention to regional differences and historical complexity it will recognize why removing nationalism at all from the European memory field is problematic for a whole region. Nor should discussions of nationalism and national identity be censored altogether. It is easy to understand the frustrations of people like Ujazdowski, even if one may not agree with him on historical remembrance, who see national identity as an important historical marker that helps us to remember historical facts rather than obfuscate truths. Recall the EP's attempt to put to rest German culpability in the 2013 Policy Brief. Acknowledging that "guilt can and should certainly never be apportioned equally" the author nevertheless asks "why does a German teenager have to feel more accountable for Nazi crimes committed half a century before he/she was born than his/her peers in Greece, Poland or Israel?" Well certainly neither German nor Polish youth born decades after the atrocities of the war should be held accountable for atrocities that they did not commit. However, the memory of national guilt (or victimhood), according to Ujazdowski serves to remind future generations of some historical facts:

After the fight and the work of Polish MEPs [in the debates over the 2005 EP Resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism], the resolution used the formulation "German Nazi concentration camps"<sup>112</sup> and not "Nazi," some impersonal, without identity, "Nazi camp" and that's it. This was very important. As you know, in America there are idiots who say

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<sup>112</sup> The exact phrase used in the Resolution is "Nazi Germany's death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau." It is used once.

"Polish death camps" which of course has no relation to history, facts, but this nonsense is repeated in the USA and Europe. (personal communicatoin 2015)

Ujazdowski is explicit about his distaste for tendencies to denationalize memories of conflict in the European public sphere. He explains that in the European Parliament people say "Nazi crimes" and not "German Nazi crimes." He recalls opening the Belgian pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum with then Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (since 2009 MEP with ALDE) remembering that he "never once said 'German.' Somewhere there was a sort of evil nationalism of the 1930s taken generally. And here you go, French nationalists are as culpable as Germans."

What the nationalism-is-bad tenet of the EU's dialogic imperative tries to avoid is the kind of nationalism that legitimizes exclusionary or discriminatory practices. This is where the understanding of national identity as "us" and "them" turns into "us" versus "them." To expunge this kind of nationalism from the European memory field, the EU has gone a step too far and blocked any genuine discussion of nationalism altogether so that simply discussing groups of people in national terms becomes taboo. In other words, any process of renationalization in the European memory field becomes illegitimate. The EU treats European integration then as a process of denationalization that is incompatible with renationalization.

Much likes these MEPs, the Platform and the Network both reject this tenet of the dialogic imperative. To some extent they see nationalization and regionalization as necessary steps along the way to reconciliation. The European project should not be about denationalizing memories. I quote the Director of the Network at length because not only is his critique of the nationalism is bad tenet informative but it proposes a way out of this dilemma, a way to reinvent or reenvision nationalism in the European memory field:

From my observations from the work of the European Commission it seems that they prefer these dialogic forms of activity but I am doubtful about the extent to which this dialogue is or can be open. There [in the EP] occur totally curious attitudes toward Communism especially, because when it comes to Nazism there is a more or less consensus, although not always when it comes to language, it is often forgotten who these Nazis were. They lose their nationality, they weren't Germans, they weren't Austrians, they were some Nazis and there were some Nazi concentration camps. From this you later get, from this narration, which is nothing more than a form of either conscious disinformation or exactly what I was saying earlier, this so-called political correctness. [...] From this sooner or later, you get to a point where young people will not know what happened. Of course, you can counteract this, but these type of trends in these European institutions exist. You don't use the word Germans, for example in the context of Nazism, which is unnecessary, totally, totally unnecessary. No one will feel dishonored naming things for what they, especially since this is indisputable. (personal communication 2016)

In other words, for the Network the "trend" or "political correctness" of not naming perpetrators by their nationality is unnecessary because it merely reflects an "indisputable" historical fact—Nazis were Germans. Not speaking the obvious does everyone a disservice, especially future generations who will be confused about the facts.

When I respond that perhaps this tenet of the EU's dialogic imperative is about trying to avoid conflicts based on national identity, Director Rogulski responds that national identity is fundamental to European identity and trying to excise it from private or public life will lead to a "dead end":

But in my opinion that is a mistake because the identity of every person to a great degree thrives on where they are from. And this issue of nationality, I understand that not for every person but for a large group of people in every country where they come from, nation, nationality, language, these are things fundamental to identity. What's more is that they are also fundamental in general to something that we could call European identity. A European is always tied to some European country, always with some nation. Of course one can always find examples of the opposite, but in my opinion, that is marginal. So this running away from national identity seems to me to be a dead end. It will not lead to anything positive because building an identity based on one's sense of nationality does not in any case mean nationalism, it doesn't mean, it doesn't carry with it consequences related to National Socialism. That is a matter of confusing these concepts, this sort of pretending in some European politicians' circles that if you don't speak of certain things then they don't exist. (personal communication 2016)

In other words, Rogulski tries to distinguish between a "good" nationalism that serves as a positive tool of self-identity that gives communities and their members meaning and a "bad" nationalism that leads to political systems like Nazism. Rogulski warns us to not confuse the

concepts of national identity and even nationalism with Nazism. He sees the process of European integration and the European memory field as necessarily involving discussions that include national identity. To expunge nationalism from the European public debate would "not lead to anything positive" because for most people national identity is still "fundamental" to their self-identity and identity as Europeans. In other words, Europeanness and, for example, Polishness are not mutually exclusive. However, they emphasize different things. A European identity emphasizes that which is common to all European nationalities while national identity emphasizes that which distinguishes European nationalities. That may be alright as long as it does not become exclusionary.

There is some of this sentiment among the political left too. For example, a co-editor of the S&D booklet on the use and abuse of history MEP Wiersma (S&D, Netherlands) writes, "To be proud of past national achievements as such does not have to be negative; it can be a source of confidence. A lot depends on the manner in which past achievements are commemorated, for example, by including others or not" (S&D booklet: 20). Others also warn against exclusion that relies on turning other nationalities into hereditary enemies. On eliding the qualifier "German" in front of "German Nazism," Polish historian Pomian writes, "We must also try to change national identities by reducing or even eliminating the traditional picture of the enemy, often still an important element. Every European nation has incorporated in its identity an image of the hereditary enemy. This can change in the course of time—for the French, the British were replaced by the Germans—but it plays an important role in the image that a nation has of itself. We must learn to think of WWII not in national, but in ideological terms. We must learn to see it as a war of democracy against Nazi totalitarianism" (S&D booklet: 84). According to Pomian then the problem with overemphasis on nationalism is that it can harden the "us" and "them"

understanding of conflict into an "us" versus "them" understanding not only of the past, but of the present and future too. National identity relies on an in-group/out-group definition of "us" and "them" and when "they" are turned into timeless enemies, then nationalism becomes a problem because it is more likely to breed conflict than mutual understanding. The idea of the eternal reified enemy, or "hereditary enemy," as Pomian describes it, becomes problematic for the EU not only in regard to its internal members states but also with its external neighbors. In the case of Communism remembrance, Russia is marked as the obvious eternal "Other."

## Russia

### Regionally Differentiated Experiences of Communism Condition Regional Positions on Russia

Russia and the EU's position towards Russia are central to the debates over Communism remembrance at the transnational level. MEP Lauristin (S&D, Estonia) explains that whole debate about Communism remembrance, and especially the comparison between Nazism and Communism, is unambiguously about Russia:

In terms of political debate, it's all about Russia. This comparison is really very, let's say, natural for us, we're coming from this Communist regime, comparison between Nazism and Communism, Stalinist and Hitlerist regimes for us, and with this resolution [2009 Resolution] we got what we wanted, that the Western partners would acknowledge this link and similarity. [...] So now we see that this whole debate is much more connected with geopolitical development. (personal communication 2015)

Moreover, on the understanding of contemporary Russia there is a stark regional divide conditioned by differentiated regional memories of Communism. Besides the conservative Central and Eastern Europeans that tend to strongly condemn Russia, even CEE MEPs on the left hold similar positions. MEP Lauristin (S&D, Estonia) continues:

You see there were very obvious signs that Putin is becoming more and more, say, actively, revitalizing the practices of KGB, and so on. And then, when we say, "look, it is the same system, look, it's our experience which now is repeating itself in Ukraine," then it's an absolutely different narrative, it's different. (personal communication 2015)

Telicka (ALDE, Czech Republic) also for examples suggests that precisely because of their unique experience with Communism, CEE countries are better suited to understand Russia's tactics today:

I think that we can see today already on the question of Russia, Russia versus Ukraine, other issues, that some of the colleagues would be missing a few points, which is due to the fact that they have not lived through that period. I think that Poles, Czechs, others, we would be, I think, much faster in acknowledging what really Putin was up to, I mean we would be much better placed to distinguish at any stage what is really propaganda, what is really happening. I mean we would know the tools and the instruments of the propaganda, and the whole machinery of Kremlin. (personal communication 2015)

Regional differences are stark. MEP Tarabella (Belgium, S&D) explains:

Polish colleagues and others are more strongly against Russia than the most part of colleagues. Of course we understand that in the history the opposition with Russia is more important in Poland, in Hungary, in Romania than, you know, sanctions, when we speak about economic sanctions, in the Baltic countries also there is very sensitive, and of course we understand that our story, different stories after the World War II are very important to explain some behaviors, some proposals of amendments toward, for example, the foreign policy in Russia. (personal communication 2015)

Tarabella goes on to identify regional differences within the major political party groups when it comes to Russia policy and that "probably in the other groups also. EPP also, but in my group [S&D] yeah, we feel that" (personal communication 2015). When it comes to determining how to respond to Russia, MEP Stefanec (Slovakia, EPP) describes the regional divisions stemming from different historical memories of Communism:

I think it's necessary to commemorate the Communist history because it's a part of our history, we have to remember that, and it's a crucial learning for us also how to behave in order not to repeat the same mistakes, and also how to behave just in front of conflicts. You know, I am talking again about the war in Ukraine, about the Russian aggression, which is clear, which is black and white, and many people still, they don't have a very clear position to it. But people, who have the Communist past, and experienced the Communist past, they have very clear position on this. So this is just an example to how this is important, and this is very important to commemorate the Communist past because of learning, and because of just trying to avoid the same mistakes, and trying to position ourselves to current situation, and also to make right decisions for the future, that's the role primarily of the European Parliament to make right decisions for the future in Europe. (personal communication 2015)

When asked about why MEPs like Stefanec are so committed to commemorating the

Communist past, Tarabella (S&D, Belgium) immediately thinks about Russia:

It's a risky relation with Russia because the EPP colleagues from Central Europe, and I see it's a problem. Because I think, of course I don't share the politics of Putin, but I don't think useful to have a unilateral position, for example unfavorable to the Ukrainian government, or to Russia, because in the European government of the extreme right wing, I don't share those ideas. I would prefer if we had more balanced rule for the relationship between Ukraine and Europe, and Russia, it's important to maintain. Of course fight for democracy and all [...] but not unilaterally condemn Russia and say that Ukraine is correct, no. I don't think that, they are not all bad Russian and very beautiful Ukrainian, no, it's more complex than that. (personal communication 2015)

Stefanec would consider Tarabella someone who does not have a "very clear position on this" because he thinks we should have a "balanced" approach to Ukraine and Russia. According to Stefanec, the situation in Ukraine is not "complex"; Russia is the aggressor and Ukraine is the victim, plain and simple. A more "balanced" approach by the EU that would not "unilaterally condemn Russia and say that Ukraine is correct" that Tarabella favors looks to someone like Stefanec like a misunderstanding of who the aggressor and the victim are. Stefanec believes that someone like Tarabella cannot see that "which is clear, which is black and white" because he does not have the historical experiences of Communism that Stefanec and others in CEE had. Thus each thinks the other is wrong because of either an abundance of memories of Communism or a lack of memories of Communism.

However, the Ukraine crisis, has precipitated a slight convergence on the evaluation of Russia and its foreign policy. Russia is now also seen by the West as a threat. MEP Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) explains that, "the events that took place in the last few years, especially after Russian aggression against Ukraine, confirmed that it was us who was right" to be skeptical of the EU's partnership with Russia. Across the aisle, Paolo Bergamaschi, foreign affairs advisor for the Greens, echoes this conclusion. When asked if Westerners recognize the continuity between the Soviet Union and today's Russia as the East often does, he answered, "Until three years ago,



they didn't, but now they do. [...] There has been a shift in the EU global attitude towards Russia. They [the West] understand that the concerns of the Easterners are real, they are not just imagination" (personal communication 2015). MEP Saryusz-Wolski (Poland, EPP) and former Chair of the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee corroborates this claim too, explaining that not coming to terms with the Communist past had led the EU to make mistakes on Russia policy like the disarmament of NATO and helplessness vis-à-vis Putin's aggression. "At the moment, this is changing. [...] The change is for the better in the sense that our argumentation is now listened to differently, they [the West] look differently at our films or, I don't know, conferences on the Gulag etc." In other words, the West not only listens to the East more on what it thinks about Russia policy but also on what it thinks about Communism itself, thus showing just how intertwined the two are. He elaborates on how the work on Communist historical memory has paid off in the sense that now the West recognizes that CEE was right about Russia all along:

Until recently I was ready to say that this is Sisyphean work, reminding, commemorating, we did conferences on this topic, hearings, film screenings, everything [which was met with] benevolent ambivalence by others. However, despite this, this method of drilling a rock with water drops, has caused that today, unwillingly, by they [the West] admit that "You were right evaluating and warning about the true nature of Russian imperialism." Today it is these elements, these seeds of education that we sowed, from which not much grew, but still are very helpful because [now] they understand what we are talking about. If we are today talking about dictatorship, totalitarianism, Muscovite crimes from the past and that what is going on today is a continuum, then they now understand because for years...they warded us off like a buzzing fly and they thought that we are Russophobes, but they did not understand that that is not the same thing (personal communication 2015).

The EU's relationship with Russia inevitably bleeds into the EU's relationship with its eastern neighbors and regional differences due to the experience of Communism also affect the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy. MEP Tarand (Greens, Estonia) explains:

On some questions it doesn't depend so much on your political group but on your perhaps geographical background. And it is very funny right now, I'm a shadow [rapporteur] to the Romanian former defense minister, and he's reporting on the Black Sea, Crimea annexation, and it is actually scary how this debate is only had by Polish, Romanians, Lithuanians, and that's it, no French or British is present. (personal communication 2015)

Yet he acknowledges that for Eastern countries the problems of the Southern European countries seem far away too. "It matters to us, what happens in Libya because our friends in Italy are facing a problem. Then you go back to my home country, it's far away, look, Ukraine is problem, Russia is problem. It's hard to tell it to a Southern Marseillaise person, or to Spanish. 'Russia? Where is it? Look what's happening in the Mediterranean!'" MEP Stefanec (Slovakia, EPP) gives an example from his experience of travelling to the Eastern Partnership countries:

If we travel, that's my recent experience, travelling to Ukraine and to Armenia because of our Eastern Partnership programs, we put completely different questions to our counterparts because of our real experience, which is still in our minds, and this is something what is still part of our lives. We still lived a part of our lives in this system therefore we do understand much better our colleagues from Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, what they are talking about, and there, for example our colleagues from Western Europe, they try, we have the same [political] background, we have the same [political] platform, but because of different experience they are not so deeply involved in this. (personal communication 2015)

When discussing different levels of support of Communism remembrance within CEE, MEP Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) brings up countries' different relationships with Russia. Speaking about Bulgaria, he says, "Traditionally Russia defended them against Islam, against the Turks etc., so they are maybe less anti-Russian and because of that they are not as anti-Communist as others." In other words, when it comes to Russia, there is a general consensus about a strong condemnation of Russia's actions stemming from varied experiences of Communism and the historical relationship of each country to Russia. At the same time, it is surprising that the MEPs did not bring up the examples of Slovak Prime Minister Fico and Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán, both of whom, despite being on opposite poles of the political spectrum, have close relationships with President Putin. In short, historical memories of Communism certainly condition regionally differentiated Russia policies, but this regional unity is by no means unanimous.

## Equating Communism with Russia and Russia with Communism

The mutual regional disagreement over what Russia is today (and therefore disagreement over how to evaluate it and how to respond to it) comes from regionally differentiated memories of Communism which lead the Central and Eastern Europeans to emphasize the continuity between the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia and the Westerners to deemphasize these same continuities. Neither side of course says that Russia is exactly the same thing as the Soviet Union but each camp exaggerates the others claims. The West claims that the East equates Communism with Russia and Russia with Communism while the East claims that the East sees no continuities between the two thus completely abstracting Communism from Russia and Russia from Communism. Let us take each in turn. Czarnecki (Poland, ECR) explains to me how he thinks about the historically changing political and economic identity of Russia:

I often repeat that there was once a "White Russia," then there was a "Red Russia,"<sup>113</sup> now there is a "Tricolor Russia," the flag, right? "Putin's Russia," call it what you will, but really to a great degree the territory didn't change, the system changed, but to a great degree in the sense of mentality, in the sense of empire, imperial thinking, in the sense of the machinations of power, [...] it was the same Russia. (personal communication 2015)

Thus in some formal ways like the political system, the flag, and slight territorial remapping, Russia is different from the Soviet Union and Tsarist Russia. But in other ways like its "mentality," its "imperial thinking" its practices of power, it is the same.

Across the political aisle, a similar view. MEP Tarand (Estonia, Green) explains the tensions in the Armenian-Estonian relationship due to Armenia's warm relationship to Russia (resulting from its tense relationships with Turkey and Azerbaijan) and Estonia's antagonistic relationship with Russia, which stems from the period even before the USSR to that of the Russian Empire, "It bring us back to the issue of how Communism still affects, or Russian

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<sup>113</sup> White Russia is meant to describe Imperial Russia while Red Russia is meant to describe Soviet Russia.

imperialism, I would say, because Communism was continuation of Russian imperialism, under different slogans, but basically it was still the same thing" (personal communication 2015). Recall Lauristin's (Estonia S&D) earlier comparison of contemporary Russian aggression in Ukraine with the Soviet Union's occupation of Estonia, "Look, it is the same system, look, it's our experience which now is repeating itself in Ukraine." Recall also Saryusz-Wolski's conclusion that Russia's actions today are merely a "continuum" of the "dictatorship, totalitarianism, [and] Muscovite crimes" of the Soviet Union. In other words, continuity and similarity are stressed over rupture and difference, and often so much so that it makes no difference which historical period of Russia one wants to compare contemporary Russia to because "Russia" is boiled down to its symbolic essence. I pick up on this in a later section.

### **Abstracting Communism from Russia and Russia from Communism**

In Western Europe, and especially on the left, continuity and similarity between the Soviet Union is not emphasized. On the contrary, Communism's independence of Russia and vice versa is stressed. For example, Vincenzo Greco, the foreign affairs and Euronest advisor for the S&D Group, elaborates on this point very clearly:

Certain countries, they have really built their own, let's say, national identity on the contrast with the Russians, and therefore with Soviets. Sometimes the two things, they were coming together, even though *the identification is not obvious or necessary*, some people in their minds might be doing this. Basically, the Soviets, they were the Russians who were nuts, and then there is this kind of perception. Also certain policies that we have developed in the European Union as the Eastern Partnership Policy, I think it had a little bit in its roots also, this contrast against the Russians. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

The conflation of Russia with the Soviet Union, Greco argues, is neither "obvious or necessary." Moreover, he explains how the identification of the Soviet Union with Russia impacts the

European Neighborhood Policy<sup>114</sup> (ENP), and especially its Eastern Partnership (EaP). It

makes Eastern Europeans take a more aggressive and uncompromising stance with the ENP:

The S&D Group is in favor of strengthening [the EaP], *but* there are certain voices that would tell you that "Okay, we have to do that but without, basically, making this policy against Russia." And that the mistake was from the very beginning, that maybe people were using this policy [against Russia] and provoking this. Certain people would tell me that. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

When I asked what sort of people, Greco responded:

I told you, people from the "Old Europe," they might tell you this if you speak, let's say, openly with them. People from the East, they will not tell you this because, as I told you, there's this kind of difference. But the official policy, it is basically that we [S&D] are supporting [the EaP], but also in our resolutions you will see that we want still a way to work out solutions with Russia, and not to arrive to a new Cold War. I don't think it is in our interest. (personal communication 2015)

In other words the left "officially" supports the Eastern Partnership but really "Old Europe's" support for the EaP is lukewarm and conditioned on not worsening relations with Russia going so far as to see the EaP "provoking" Russian belligerence in the region. This explains the West's lack of involvement in policy-making regarding the Eastern Neighborhood, which dispirits their Eastern colleagues and provokes charges of ambivalence, insincerity, disinterestedness and superficiality. Greco explains that he believes that the historical memory of Communism has conditioned the East to perceive "continuity" between the Soviet Union and Russia even though "Russia today is not a Communist state":

For example, if you see in the ECR Group, maybe there you will see the influence [of historical memory of Communism] more strongly because of, let's say, Polish members or Eastern Europeans, you will see that their position might be becoming more strong on this aspect, and this comes also with certain proposals. This can be also reflecting when we speak about Russia in general or about the Ukrainian crisis as well. My perception is that this, even though, of course, *Russia today is not a Communist state, the perception is there is a kind of continuity*, and kind of fright of this, let's say, kind of imperialism. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

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<sup>114</sup> The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is the EU's foreign policy through which it engages the EU's Eastern and Southern neighbors to foster political association and economic integration while enforcing common EU values like democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion.

To underscore the point that Russia is not the Soviet Union, Greco brings up the example of Ukrainians toppling the Communist-era Lenin statues in Ukraine after the EuroMaidan protests:

When they are going [to] attack the symbols, what you see also in Ukraine for example, for a long time after the fall of the Soviet Union those symbols, they were there, and nobody basically was protesting. Why is that starting now, attacking it after the crisis? That's a question mark for me. Why? (personal communication 2015)

Greco tries to abstract Communism from Russia by severing the symbolic relationship between Lenin statues and contemporary Russia. When I try to propose an answer to his question that maybe in a country like Ukraine there is a strong parallel between the former Soviet Union and today's Russia because both have now tried to restrain Ukraine's sovereignty and self-determination, Greco responds, "But still, *if you see this objectively and analyze it*, you will not see, let's say a kind of...*Communism can exist and exists without Russia*" [emphasis mine]. In this exchange Greco implicitly highlights the importance of historical remembrance and the regional divide that exists when it comes to Communism, but unfortunately he conflates the abstraction of Communism from Russia with objectivity. Let us take another example. The Dutch S&D strategist, Van de Water, has a similar position to Greco. He explains:

What we have not mastered until today is to accept that *in Russia there are no longer Communists in power*. We think about Russia as bad as it were during the Cold War, but *what is lacking is the ideology*. We can see when you're in Moscow or wherever, Moscow is certainly not a Communist city anymore, it is like Catholicism in Chicago in 1930s, you know, hundred years ago. But still we are identifying them on the basis of Communism, and that is why it is so much easier to condemn what the Russians are doing today because we already condemned them 50 years ago, and *we are not really analyzing that if you, I think that in practical terms, communicably, etc.*, Putin is closer to Ted Cruz than he's to any Communist at the moment, so I spent three weeks in US. But the way of thinking, it is not about Communism, it is about an ability to condemn on the basis of what went wrong some time ago, and *not being completely able to analyze the real development today, so projecting the past on to the present*. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

Both Greco and van de Water exaggerate the other side's position. Of course Communists are no longer in power in contemporary Russia and Russia is no longer a Communist state with a

Communist Party that represents the vanguard of the working people. Like Greco, van de Water faults this point of view for "projecting the past on to the present" which blinds people from being able to "analyze" the "real development[s]." When I mentioned that many MEPs see continuity between the Soviet Union and Russia in the strategies that President Putin uses to intimidate Russia's neighbors and clamp down on civil freedoms at home, van de Water discusses the dangers of projecting historical memory onto contemporary policy issues *in general* thereby delegitimizing this argument of continuity because it follows a flawed, subjective logic of "projecting" history onto "current affairs":

It was very easy for Mr. Putin, look, to use some of the same language of the period gone. It was also some projecting that those, who were Fascists, that there were Fascists in Ukraine 70 years ago, and that it's still there, yeah? That is the problem with, if you say studying the history, that is very good, but when you're translating it, projecting on to current affairs, it may be very dangerous. I'm not saying that's bad when we do it, or that it is good when Putin does it [...] so Mr. Putin is making the same mistakes as some of our people. (personal communication 2015)

In other words, some in Europe call Russians Communists to discredit them, while Russians call Ukrainians and their supporters Fascists also to discredit them. According to van de Water both practices are equally bad because they project historical memories onto the present. While this claim of "projecting" does not carry with it the conscious and deliberate nature of "politicization" the more negative latter charge is not too distant. If the left takes its commitment to the respect for the multiplicity of subjective historical experiences seriously then it will understand the East's position as a perfectly "objective analysis" of contemporary Russia. A lack of a given historical experience does not automatically make one's analysis objective just as an abundance of a given historical experience does not necessarily make one smarter or more right. Greco's question of why Ukrainians toppled Lenin statues after the EuroMaidan protests will no longer be shrouded in mystery.

On the face of it, Greco and van de Water are of course correct. Communism has existed and does exist in plenty of other countries like China, Vietnam, Cuba, Ethiopia. And likewise, Russia has existed for centuries without Communism. However, when it comes to Eastern and Western Europe, the experiences of Communism are starkly different. In Italy, like in many Western European countries Communist parties, ideas and activism (although never Communist regimes) did exist "without Russia." In CEE, they never did.<sup>115</sup> Of course, theoretically, MEPs from CEE should be able to make a clear distinction between a political system like Communism and the nation in which such a system takes root, e.g. Russia. However, the different lived experience of Communism produced such a strong historical association of Communism with Russia for CEE that to this day the two are often become collapsed into one. In the case of Ukraine, it is not the case that all of a sudden after EuroMaidan people remembered the connection between Lenin and Soviet aggression, which looked a lot like contemporary Russian aggression. In fact, throughout the 21st century, Ukraine has been struggling with the Communist legacy attempting, for example, since 2002 to pass decommunization laws that would, for example, criminalize the use of Communist symbols. The mass protests for the first time made this a real possibility.<sup>116</sup> By focusing solely on this conceptual distinction between Communism and Russia, Greco misses the meaning of Communism for Ukrainians as a lived experience. Just like the Soviet Union tried to prevent

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<sup>115</sup> In each CEE country there are debates about the extent to which Communist parties were homegrown, and won fair elections, and the extent to which they were imposed by the Soviet Union. For example, in Poland support for Communism among the population was very low and the 1944 referendum which brought Polish Communists to power was rigged and dictated in large part by Moscow. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was the only country in the region to elect a Communist party without the presence of Soviet troops on its territory.

<sup>116</sup> President Poroshenko did sign into law on May 15, 2015 a set of Decommunisation Laws. However, these laws remain controversial, in part, because of their implications for freedom of speech.



Ukrainian independence in 1991, so now, in 2013, it tried to prevent Ukraine's closer ties with the EU by coercing President Yanukovich to pull out of EU association negotiations, annexing Crimea, and starting a war in Eastern Ukraine. Russian leadership today blends political tactics from Tsarist Russia, namely imperialism externally and nationalism internally, and Communist Russia, in effect dissolving the multi-party system, removing the checks and balances on the branches of power, subordinating government bureaucracies under a single autocratic ruler, relying heavily on state surveillance, and severely limiting freedom of speech and assembly. In this light, toppling statues of Lenin, a founding father of the Soviet system that perfected these practices that are now being used by President Putin to maintain control of Ukraine's destiny, seems to be a very rational activity following EuroMaidan, which was after all a movement for the freedom to national self-determination.

An avenue for advancing mutual regional understanding about what contemporary Russia is or is not is to move the conversation away from that question and toward a discussion of what Russia does. Acknowledging the continuity between Soviet and Russian practices may be a more productive way forward not only for understanding Russia but also crafting appropriate policy solutions. Indeed, Western recognition of the threat that Russia poses is already helping to move the conversation in that direction. MEP Stefanec (Slovakia, EPP) provides an example of this kind of analysis, which recognizes that Russia is not the Soviet Union but at the same time admits that its transition to democracy and Western values was superficial:

Yes, Russia is different, and Soviet Union is a different country, but using the *same method* for their neighbors, looking at Moldova, Georgia, Abkhazia and so on, looking at Crimea in Ukraine. [...] Russians [...] are very much, let's say, unhappy with the fall of Soviet Union, and they try to come back, but they cannot come back with the same method, even if they try. I just read recently quite interesting article in *Time* magazine [...] showing that now Russian secret service per capita is stronger than Soviet Union's KGB, so they have not changed, and we can now see in *hybrid*, or what they are doing particularly in Central and Eastern countries, checking internet activities, and so on. [emphasis mine] (personal communication 2015)

Stefanec recognizes that Russia is a "different country" from the Soviet Union and that Russian cannot "come back" to the USSR despite being "unhappy with the fall of the Soviet Union." Today's Russia then is a "hybrid" of an authoritarian capitalist system that borrows heavily not from Communist ideology but rather from Communist practices like state surveillance and regional subversion designed to maintain Russia's "traditional" sphere of influence.

What does the emphasis on continuity or discontinuity between the Soviet Union and Russia have to do European processes of renationalization? Communism remembrance that essentializes Communism into a historically and geographically universal evil and that tends to draw clear distinctions between "us" versus "them" has the potential to harden the national identities of not only internal EU members but its external neighbors and how they are viewed within the EU. For this reason it is worth to return to some of the concerns that Greco and van de Water pointed to earlier regarding nationalism. For example, Greco said that "certain countries" meaning CEE countries have "really built their own, let's say, national identity on the contrast with the Russians." And van de Water argues that "we are identifying them [Russians] on the basis of Communism, and that is why it is so much easier to condemn what the Russians are doing today because we already condemned them 50 years ago." In the section below I argue that Communism remembrance *if* practiced in a way that essentializes that memory and creates "us" versus "them" distinctions indeed has the potential to renationalize Communism remembrance in a way that turns Russia into a timeless hereditary enemy. It is this position that should engender real concerns over "Russophobia," a charge that is often all too liberally used by Westerners against Easterners to delegitimize their legitimate concerns about Russia as a danger based on their unique historical experiences. Promoting an understanding of Russia as a hereditary enemy is undesirable because it is more likely to breed division rather than reconciliation and it makes

all dialogue and policy solution proposals irrelevant because it *assumes* that Russia (and Europe) can never change.

### The Effect of Collapsing's Russia's Historical Timeline: Russia as the Hereditary Enemy

Mnemonic activists in the European Parliament that subscribe to a victimhood regionalism strategy (like the Platform) essentialize the memory of Communism and create bold and mutually exclusive distinctions between "us" versus "them." MEP Schöpflin is a member of the Hungarian Fidesz party and the Reconciliation of European Histories informal EP group, both groups that routinely offer blank condemnations of Communism as a universal evil equal to Nazism that clearly demarcates the difference between "us" the victims of Communism and "them" the perpetrators of Communist crimes. When I ask Schöpflin if the reason that the EU does not do more to commemorate Communism because it is afraid of provoking Russia, he answers, that it is not so much that as it is a naïve but unshakeable belief held by the West that Russia can be reformed and brought back to the Western fold of liberal democracies:

In the early 90s, it looked like with a little bit more effort we will turn Russia into a country like ourselves. And this was very, very strongly held, also on official levels, maybe still now in some places that, well, maybe it's only Putin...About a year ago [...] they were saying "we must give Putin an opportunity to sit down and negotiate," there was this phrase around, it's dead now, "off ramp," he must get off the ramp somehow. [...] And I stood up and made myself very unpopular, I wasn't alone in it, this is an illusion. Russia doesn't want to get off the ramp. Russia knows perfectly, the Russian leadership, they're fully aware of what they're doing, and I think part of what I'm talking about is this inability to understand that actually there can't be a culture, a cultural field, which is completely different from your own. It's very, very difficult, especially in here I'm treading on it delicately, on that ground. There's a simplistic explanation but I think it has traction, that we can recognize the Chinese or Japanese are different, because they look different, which is not the same as us. In other words, there's a racial element in it. And fairly typically they look like us, they can't be that different than us. Why not? And it's very, very difficult to get that. Through the reconciliation of histories as a portal, well, that's rather step-by-step. Personally the fact that we've been doing it for more over 10 years, and I accept some formal successes, but in terms of cultural shift, the answer is no. (personal communication 2015)

Schöpflin here argues that Russian can *never* change by reifying an ethno-cultural distinction between "us" Europeans and "them" Russians. He explains that the West thought that Russia is

culturally and politically like "us" because they are white. He believes that this is simplistic because evidently Russia is very different from "us" *despite* being racially similar. Yet Schöpflin seems to be making the argument that Russians are so culturally different from current EU member states that they have not become like "us" in the 1990s, they have not under Putin, and they never will because "there can't be a culture which is completely different from your own" within the same political and economic community. Thus Russia will never be a part of the "Western club" and he claims that the West has still not come to understand that.

Schöpflin's reasoning clearly explains just how Russia becomes externalized into the eternal European enemy by those who subscribe to a victimhood regionalism strategy. The victimhood regionalism strategy of Communism remembrance reinforces this idea of Russia as the perennial evil enemy because it assumes:

If Communism = evil

And "us" = anti-Communists therefore "us" = good

Then "them" = pro-Communists and therefore "them" = bad

When seen through a national lens, this *renationalized* victimhood regionalism strategy quickly becomes:

If "us" = anti-Communists = Central and Eastern Europe = good

Then "them" = pro-Communists = Russia = bad = hereditary enemy

The Dutch S&D strategist, van de Water, argues that by blaming Communism all on Russia, it absolves your own country of any responsibility and feeds into nationalism:

To concentrate all of that [blame] on Russia makes it that you didn't have that many people in your own country... that practically your own country was good, and it was Russians who did it. And that is I think not completely fair [...] A good contribution to positive nationalism. (personal communication 2015)

It is Schöpflin's kind of reasoning that elicits criticisms of "Russophobia" or bias based on national or ethnic identity. MEP Czarnecki (Poland, ECR), when asked how Western countries respond to, for example, Poland and Baltic States' Communism remembrance activism, he says that:

I have this impression, that some part of europarlamentarians from Western countries could have mistakenly thought that we are anti-Russian or we have an anti-Russian obsession and that we only turn in the direction of history, that this is unpragmatic. (personal communication 2015)

It is not difficult to understand how a victimhood regionalism strategy could be interpreted as stoking ethnic or national biases or even hatred. When I asked someone like Saryusz-Wolski, who has served five years in the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (2004-2009), about how he would respond to the charge of "Russophobia," he says, "No that is a false narration because real friends of Russia are those who support Nemstov,<sup>117</sup> Sakharov,<sup>118</sup> Solzhenitsyn,<sup>119</sup> Kovalyov<sup>120</sup> etc. That is the sign of pro-Russianness and not supporting the successors of the executioners of the Russian nation." Thus he implicitly here distinguishes between the Russian state and its leadership that is a "successor" to the Soviet Union and the regular people, activists and dissidents, who were and are fighting against the totalitarian/authoritarian Russian state for freedom and democracy. Further to the left we have a more nuanced distinction between condemning the Russian state and the Russian

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<sup>117</sup> Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov (1959-2015) was assassinated, most likely by Putin's orders, in the city center of Moscow on February 27, 2015 a month before my interview with Saryusz-Wolski took place. The European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the murder and calling for its investigation. Recalling his meeting with Nemtsov in Moscow in 2009, President Obama praised his "courageous dedication" to Russia (The White House 2015).

<sup>118</sup> Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989) was a Russian nuclear physicist and dissident for whom the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is dedicated. The prize was established in 1988 by the EP and honors activists who fight for freedom.

<sup>119</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) was a Russian historian and novelist, author of *The Gulag Archipelago*, which in part recounts his experiences as a labor camp prisoner.

<sup>120</sup> Sergei Kovalyov (1930-) is a Russian human rights activist, politician and former dissident and political prisoner.

people as a whole. Telicka (Czech Republic, ALDE) is very careful not to conflate the two and that is why he supports dialogue with Russia as opposed to those who wish to cut dialogue off:

He [Putin] is splitting the EU. Suddenly he's ready to wave the sanctions on Hungary, Greece and Cyprus. Why? Because they show much warmer attitude. So he's splitting us, why shouldn't we be splitting Russia? To say clearly that there's Kremlin, there's policy, which is unacceptable, but we still have to have a dialogue with them [the people]. But we should have more of a dialogue with the Russian society. We should see how we can integrate Russian scientists, researchers, how we can do business with SMEs, how we can facilitate the studies of Russian students in the EU. What about visas? Can we facilitate visa regime and so on? Because why should we punish the Russian population? Why should we not be splitting Kremlin from the population, at least to some extent? So I believe that we need a dialogue. (personal communication 2015)

In order to support the Russian people in their fight for democracy and freedom we should dialogue as much as we can directly with Russian society cutting out the Kremlin as the intermediary. Recall that Telicka subscribes to what could be called the reconciliatory regionalism strategy. He repeatedly acknowledges the moral complexity of Communism and its legacy (thus not essentializing Communism) as well as people's role in it (thus avoiding a victim/perpetrator dichotomization). When this reconciliatory regionalism strategy is applied to issues of national identity it is less likely to *renationalize* conflict—it is less likely to turn any one nation into a hereditary enemy because of its national identity. Zelicka's understanding of "us" and "them" as evidence above does not create a scenario where "Europeans" must fight against "Russians" because only one is good and only one can win. Zelicka's understanding of "us" and "them" recognizes differences but also builds bridges based on other identities like "democracy supporters" or "freedom fighters." National identity does not become the only or primary distinguishing factor demarcating the impossible to cross line between "us" versus "them." In other words, Zelicka's reconciliatory regionalism strategy remembers Communism in such a way that is unlikely to *renationalize* these memories thereby creating national conflict

rather than reconciliation. His remembrance strategy should be lauded and a in this case a blanket charge of "Russophobia" just because Zelicka supports Communism remembrance at all is unwarranted, insulting and counterproductive.

As regional and political identities overlap, we see very different positions on Russia policy and the way toward agreement is through not a blanket rejection of national identity but rather a more open and frank conversation about what kind of nationalisms lead to peaceful reconciliation and what kind obstruct mutual understanding and create divisions. The third tenet of the EU's dialogic imperative—that nationalism has a priori a negative normative valence—should be reexamined. Without agreement on the rules of mnemonic communication regarding the "us"/"them" division along national lines, the EU will be unlikely to improve relations with Russia or promote closer internal integration. On the Eastern European right we have a victimhood regionalism strategy that sharpens the "us" versus "them" understanding of the mnemonic contest over Communism remembrance. This is accomplished by collapsing all variations in Russia's political history into a single mythical Russia that has always been, is, and always will be Europe's enemy no matter its economic or political system (just as Eastern Europe has been its perpetual victim). It is aided by an ethnocentric understanding of Russia that equates the Russian state with Russian society and sees that society through a purely ethnonationalist rather than civic lens. More moderate, pluralist views from Eastern and Western Europe, more akin to a reconciliatory regionalism strategy, see "us" Europe and "them" Russia as distinct cultural and political entities but they open up space for dialogue by not treating Russia as the perpetual enemy. These mnemonic pluralists are able to weigh the similarities and differences between Russia's various historical stages and they are careful to distinguish the Russian state from the Russian people. As I have argued in Chapters 3 and 4, a reconciliatory regionalism

strategy rather than a victimhood strategy is more likely to lead to positive reconciliation among European nations, and so in this case, the former is more likely to precipitate a peaceful and productive relationship between the EU and its neighbors, including Russia.

## Conclusion

This chapter has made it evident that the official commemorative resolutions passed in the 2000s by the European Parliament regarding Communism specifically and the increased commitment of the European Commission to historical remembrance in general have not satisfied some mnemonic activists in the European Parliament. This dissatisfaction revolves around feelings that Communism remembrance is still not taken seriously in Western Europe or that European regulation has not gone far enough in outright criminalizing Communism or both. We have seen how disagreements over how to come to terms with Communism, or even if such attempts are necessary, are conditioned by regional and political cleavages. Generally, the farther one moves East and right, the more dissatisfaction is voiced over how the EU has dealt with Communism. Yet, we have also seen that political orientation alone is not sufficient in predicting a mnemonic activist's position on Communism remembrance. There exist regional divisions within party groups as well as cross-party alliances where regional identity trumps political orientation. Moreover, this varies not only by policy issue area but also as external geopolitical conditions shift.

In this chapter, I have also addressed the issue of the renationalization of the European memory field. I have argued that the processes of denationalization and renationalization of historical memories of Communism happen simultaneously in the transnational sphere. They are not mutually exclusive processes. I focused in on one of the three tenets of the EU's dialogic imperative—the one that labels nationalism as necessarily morally dangerous. In an effort to



exclude the use of nationalism *in discriminatory or exclusionary ways*, the EU has inadvertently created a general taboo on discussions of nationalism altogether. A complete de-emphasis of nationalism overlooks the still lasting and important ways in which European communities identify with their nation and how they understand their own history, including that of Communism, through a national lens. A way out of this implicitly EU mandated nationalism-is-bad principle is to revise that aspect of the dialogic imperative by instead distinguishing between the kind of nationalisms that incite hatred, harm, exclusion, discrimination and disintegration and those that do not. The former is common in the fundamentalist victimhood regionalism strategy where the differences between "us" versus "them" are frequently identified through an ethnocentric nationalism that reifies a timeless victim group in contrast to the perpetrator-enemy group. For the purposes of internal EU reconciliation and external EU-neighbor reconciliation this victimhood regionalism strategy should be avoided when debating Communism or any other painful historical memories. A reconciliatory regionalism strategy is preferable. This *allows* for the definition of "us" and "them" in national terms, *but* it treats nationalism through a civic lens (distinguishing between the state and the people) and sees it as something historically variable and mutable. In short, this chapter has argued that fair rules of mnemonic communication and agreement on these rules can lead to reconciliation *despite* intractable regional and political differences stemming from different lived experiences.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

In the 21st century, the EU has taken a more hands-on approach to memory policies as it struggles to develop and maintain a common European identity to support the European political project. The period post-EU enlargement saw numerous impassioned debates over whether and

how to incorporate Central and Eastern Europe's complicated historical memories of Communism. Through a number of resolutions like the 2009 Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, we see a shift in the European memory field from a unified one based on the hegemonic memory regime of the Holocaust to a pillarized one where a new memory regime based on totalitarianism—Nazism and Communism—uncomfortably juxtaposes the former. There are many ways to institutionalize a memory regime of Communism and the EU chose to do it in a commemorative way that condemns the crimes of Communism and recognizes its victims. However, it did not go further, as some mnemonic warriors from CEE wished, by criminalizing Communist symbols or the denial of Communist crimes, condemning Communist ideology as such, and establishing a new international criminal court that would prosecute still living "Communist criminals." In fact, responding to these heated debates over historical memories, the EU outlined a policy that dictates the rules of proper mnemonic communication—the dialogic imperative. This requires (1) a move beyond the victim/perpetrator model that makes everyone take responsibility for some historical wrongdoing (2) a move from singular, objective historical truth to a self-critical recognition of subjective histories all the while based on historical facts and (3) the implicit understanding that nationalism is normatively undesirable.

Civil society groups that promote Communism remembrance are continuing their work of diffusing memories of Communism and pushing for more widespread recognition and even criminalization of Communism. This project has identified two dominant ways of doing that—a victimhood regionalism strategy and a reconciliatory regionalism strategy. The Platform of European Memory and Conscience practices the former, essentializing the memoirs of Communism and defining the mnemonic contest in term of a strict binary understanding of "us" versus the enemy "them." The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity practices

reconciliatory regionalism that does not essentialize memories of Communism and does not require the identification of enemies. These different strategies condition the kind of prognostic response that each sees fit for how to deal with the legacies of Communism. The Platform believes criminalization of Communism is the only acceptable way forward, while the Network focuses on dialogue itself as the end goal. Because the Network's reconciliatory regionalism strategy complements the EU's dialogic imperative the Network is more successful in garnering EU funds and diffusing its version of historical memory across Europe. And more indirectly, these strategies have impacts on the kind of regional identities that are being forged of Central and Eastern Europe. The victimhood regionalism strategy presents an image of CEE as primarily and eternally a victim of outside forces, while the reconciliatory regionalism strategy while acknowledging victimhood also stresses agency, innovation and unique contributions that the region has made to European politics and culture.

Much like these circles of civil society, a small but vocal group of Members of the European Parliament is also unsatisfied with the level of inclusion of CEE history in the European memory field. We see that, much as at the national level, political identity still plays a heavy role in determining attitudes about Communism remembrance. However, at the transnational level, regional identity matters too. Due to the regional differences in the experiences of Communism and therefore its remembrance, the East and West understand what Communism was differently. This also means they have different ideas about how it impacts contemporary life and what to do about it. The political and regional cleavages then overlap to make Communism remembrance more complicated than a simple partisan issue—regional divisions within political groups as well as political divisions within regions condition particular policy positions, whether it is in the area of foreign policy, the economy or European integration.

And finally, lest we think that the transnational memory field automatically denationalizes national historical memories, we see efforts in the EP to interpret Communism through a nationalist lens that understands the anti-Communist struggle as a *national* (independence) struggle. Renationalizing memories of Communism in the European memory field, just as at the national level, may breed more divisions and stymie reconciliation if done in a way that reifies nations into timeless and ethnocentric groups of "us" versus "them" where some are always victims and others are always enemies. In an effort to prevent this, the EU has mistakenly gone too far in the other direction by implicitly establishing a rule of mnemonic communication that makes any discussion of nationalism or national identity a taboo. This limits the space for dialogue on nationalism itself, which in contemporary Europe would be very productive. The EU should be discussing how certain forms of nationalism are counterproductive to reconciliation while others may actually have salutary effects by recognizing collective pain and suffering.

Future sociological research on social memory should pay closer attention to transnational memory and identity building in general. Researchers should continue determining the degree to which historical memories are preserved or altered to serve contemporary political needs, but we should propel our analysis beyond questions of who instrumentalizes memories and who does not, or who does it more than others. Sociologists should not overly rely on the assumption that historical memories are consciously instrumentalized as part of a cynical political strategy or necessarily serve national interests that are incongruent with transnational interests. A more interesting avenue of research may be to take a look at the memories themselves and how they are differently communicated. What kind of mode of mnemonic communication dominates a given memory field and how that conditions which memories diffuse or where roadblocks lead to intractable misunderstandings. A mnemonic actor does not

only "twist" history into memories that legitimate his or her political position. He also analyzes *What* the mnemonic contest is about and *Who* the players are and thereby determines the best way to communicate and deal with given memories of pain or trauma. This research also suggests that the transnational memory field may have its own framework of values and processes (that don't necessarily overlap with national ones) that allow some national interpretations of the past to be accepted and others rejected. This research dealt primarily with historical memories of Communism, but how might mnemonic regionalism strategies cause differences over how to remember other transnational memories of trauma like slavery, colonization, drug trafficking violence or war atrocities? How might different strategies determine which memories of these events get diffused transnationally and which do not? What other mnemonic rules of engagement exist in other transnational memory fields, beyond a dialogic imperative, and what happens when these rules shift over time? This research focused on the transnational level, but because these transnational processes are still relatively new, future research should continue exploring the interrelationship between the international, national and subnational. Moreover, sociologists would do well to inspect how transnational memory cultures affect transnational identity building. What are the effects of changing memory fields on group identity? And how do historical memories condition policy choices and preferences on any given issue? The better we understand the role that the past plays in our world today, the better chance we have of understanding where the future may take us.

Finally, better understanding what we remember, how we remember it, and why we remember it will help us to illuminate who we are and who we aspire to be. At the time of this writing, European identity is challenged more than ever by internal and external forces. Europe is facing a belligerent neighbor to its East, humanitarian crises to its East and South, and growing

populist factions all across Europe and the United States. The EU is facing a massive democratic deficit with EU citizens lacking trust or confidence in the EU to solve their economic and social problems. The transatlantic relationship post-2016 American elections has never been so strained since the end of World War II. Indeed, it seems as if Western liberal democracies are struggling to catch a breath and the post-Cold War international order is teetering on the verge of collapse. At such a challenging time, how can we redefine European identity so that it speaks to more people of diverse national, social and economic backgrounds? How can we critically begin to examine our own historical narratives—individual, familial, social or national—so that we can find points of common interest with those who have very different stories from our own? How can we repair old bridges and build new ones across diverse mnemonic communities to prevent a repeated sundering of the world—a world that we worked so hard to put together after 1945?

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## Appendix

**Table 1. Catalogue of Key Primary Sources Collected During Field Work 2014-2016**

<b>Prague, Czech Republic: June - August 2014</b>		
<b>Data point</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Source</b>
Field Notes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant observation at the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, June-August 2014</li> </ul>
Interviews	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USTR historian, USTR deputy director, former political prisoner, Platform president</li> </ul>
Survey	Web survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey Report</li> </ul>
Meetings/Conferences	KPV meeting agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda for meeting of the Confederation of Political Prisoners, June 24, 2014 (in Czech)</li> <li>Field notes</li> </ul>
	"25 Years after: The Baltic Way and the collapse of totalitarian Communism" Conference in Riga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda (physical copy)</li> <li>Field notes</li> <li>KGB Building newsletter published by the Riga 2014 Foundation set up for Riga as the European Capital of Culture 2014 (physical copy)</li> </ul>
	"European Day of Remembrance for Victims of the Totalitarian Regimes Conference: Molotov-Ribbentrop 75: Echoes Today." Riga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda (physical and electronic copy)</li> <li>Field notes</li> <li>Remember. August 23 card given out by ENRS</li> </ul>
Platform-produced materials	Press Releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electronic copies</li> </ul>
	Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electronic copies</li> </ul>
	<i>Lest We Forget: Memory of Totalitarianism in Europe;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A reader for older secondary school students anywhere in Europe, edited by Gillian Purves</li> </ul>
	<i>Totalitarianism in Europe: Fascism-Nazism-Communism exhibition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Packet of page-size, printed exhibition panels</li> </ul>

	Promotional flyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Platform's promotional brochure produced in Summer, 2014</li> </ul>
Additional physical publications collected	Olga Havlova exhibition catalogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Olga Havlova in the Memories of her Friends and in photographs by Bohdan Holomiczek" exhibition catalogue</li> </ul>
	Sighet (Platform member) booklet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance" Sighet 1993-2013</li> </ul>
	Booklet of Communism textbooks (published with support from Platform)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Teaching the History of Communism in Eastern Europe. Compendium of Good Practices."</li> </ul>
	Book of the Museum of Communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Legacy" by David Borek, Tomas Carba, Alexandr Korab</li> </ul>
<b>Brussels, Belgium: February - April 2015</b>		
<b>Data point</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Source</b>
Interviews	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEPs and political advisors</li> </ul>
Publications (all physical materials)	Book edited by MEP Milan Zver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Twenty Years of Independent Slovenia"</li> </ul>
	Booklet by MEP Philippe Juvin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"For a History of the European nation"</li> </ul>
	Study report by EP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Democratic Change in Central and Eastern Europe 1989-90"</li> </ul>
	Booklet by MEP Tunne Kelam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Estonia's way to freedom"</li> </ul>
Contextual meetings/conferences attended	European Parliament, Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Meeting Thursday 26 February 2015, 10.00-12.30, Brussels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Parliament, Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Meeting Thursday 26 February 2015, 10.00-12.30, Brussels</li> <li>Booklet "The Renaissance of the West: How Europe and America Can Shape Up in Confronting Putin's Russia" by Roland Freudenstein and Ulrich Speck published by the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies</li> <li>Field notes</li> </ul>
	EPP hearing on EU-Russia relations April 21, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field notes</li> </ul>
	AFET hearing on ENP Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AFET Hearing, Public Hearing On The Review Of The European Neighbourhood Policy, March 2, 2015</li> </ul>
<b>Warsaw, Poland: September 2015 - March 2016</b>		

<b>Data point</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Source</b>
ENRS documents	Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy document</li> </ul>
	Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Historical Policy Guidelines document</li> </ul>
	Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles by Assemblies' members on ENRS website</li> </ul>
ENRS projects	Sound in the Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blurbs on website</li> <li>• Activities Report (sprawozdanie merytoryczne)</li> </ul>
	Freedom Express tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film with booklet</li> </ul>
	Freedom Express travelling exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ENRS website</li> <li>• Activities report</li> </ul>
	Genealogies conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field notes from Genealogies conference December 7 and Assemblies meetings 8-9</li> <li>• Field notes from March 17-18</li> <li>• Memory and Change in Europe. Eastern Perspectives ed. by Pakier and Wawrzyniak (outcome of earlier conferences, foreword by Olick)</li> <li>• Recordings from (<a href="http://genealogies.enrs.eu/multimedia/">http://genealogies.enrs.eu/multimedia/</a>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conference 2014: Collective vs Collected Memories</li> <li>○ Conference 2013: Legal Frames of Memory. Transitional Justice in Central and Eastern Europe</li> <li>○ Conference 2012: Regions of Memory. A Comparative Perspective on Eastern Europe</li> <li>○ Conference 2011: Genealogies of Memory in Central and Eastern Europe. Theories and Methods</li> <li>○ Social Memory and Politics in Contemporary Russia Seminar</li> <li>○ “Remembering Katyn” Seminar</li> <li>○ French Memory Studies Seminar</li> <li>○ Nordic Memory Studies Seminar</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Activities Report</li> </ul>
	In Between?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snatyn, UA trip November, 2015</li> <li>• Activities Report</li> </ul>
	Focus Group Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities Report</li> <li>• FGI brief</li> </ul>
Symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website: description of 2012 with paper by Dr. Mork on the European House of History; description of 2013; description of 2014; video recording of 2015</li> <li>• Activities Report</li> </ul>	
August 23 campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual media: downloadable banner, postcard and badge</li> <li>• Website: descriptions/photos of victims;</li> </ul>	

		<p>descriptions/photos of commemoration of August 23 in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015; Troebst Studies article on genesis of August 23 commemorations (<a href="http://enrs.eu/august23">http://enrs.eu/august23</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities Report</li> <li>• Evaluation survey (ankieta ewaluacyjna)</li> </ul>
	January 17 campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2016</li> </ul>
	ENRS annual activities catalogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2011-2012</li> <li>• 2013-2014</li> </ul>
	<i>Remembrance and Solidarity Studies in 20th century European History journal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Genesis of Euroatlantic Day of Remembrance no. 1, December 2012</li> <li>• Consequences and Commemorations of 1989 in Central Europe no. 3, June 2014</li> </ul>
	Publishing Sandra Kalniete's book "W butach do tańca przez syberyjskie śniegi"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.polskieradio.pl/9/540/Artykul/1502046,Pojednanie-i-pamiec-bez-ktorych-nie-byloby-Unii-Europejskiej">http://www.polskieradio.pl/9/540/Artykul/1502046,Pojednanie-i-pamiec-bez-ktorych-nie-byloby-Unii-Europejskiej</a></li> </ul>
Field Notes	ENRS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant observation at the European network Remembrance and Solidarity, September 2015 - March 2016</li> </ul>
	Contextual conferences/events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Od nadziei do niepodleglosci, "NSSZ" Solidarność 1980 - 1989/90 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 15th anniversary of IPN calendar</li> </ul> </li> <li>• "Polska polityka zagraniczna w stosunku do Niemiec. Bilans i perspektywy" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Booklet on 70th anniversary of the Institute for Western Affairs</li> <li>○ Institute for Western Affairs Policy Papers nr. 14 (I) "Niemiecki system kształcenia obywatelskiego. Wnioski dla Polski."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Catalogue to the "2+4=1" outdoor exhibit</li> <li>• "Mapping Memories of Post-1989 Europe" in Vienna November 29 - December 1, 2015 hosted by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Field notes</li> <li>○ Physical and electronic programme</li> <li>○ Physical description of workshops and bios of speakers and list of conference attendees and list of projects in project market</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Interviews	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with Director and Staff</li> </ul>

Non-ENRS institutional visits and online resources	European Solidarity Centre (Europejskie Centrum Solidarności)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to permanent exhibition</li> </ul>
	Museum of WWII (under construction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent exhibition with focus on 3rd narrative "the war's long shadow"</li> </ul>
	Memory and Future Centre (Ośrodek Pamięci i Przyszłości)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibition "Reconciliation in progress... Catholic church and the German-Polish relations after 1945"</li> <li>• "Pojednanie narodów. Przeciw Jąlcie" - książka o Orędziu biskupów z 1965 r.</li> </ul>
	Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to permanent exhibition</li> </ul>
	POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to permanent exhibition</li> </ul>
	Warsaw Rising Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to permanent exhibition</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Interviews Conducted**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Language</b>
Kalniete, Sandra	MEP	March 24, 2015	Brussels	English
Kelam, Tune	MEP	March 17, 2015	Brussels	English
György Schöpflin	MEP	February 25, 2015	Brussels	English
Sógor, Csaba	MEP	March 19, 2015	Brussels	English
Saryusz-Wolski, Jacek	MEP	March 30, 2015	Brussels	Polish
Zver, Milan	MEP	March 18, 2015	Brussels	English
Juvin, Philippe	MEP	April 15, 2015	Brussels	English
Kariņš, Krišjānis	MEP	March 31, 2015	Phone	English
Kovatchev, Andrey	MEP	April 16, 2015	Brussels	English
Ungureanu, Traian	MEP	March 23, 2015	Brussels	English
Hamans, Camiel	Manager of the Dutch Labour Party delegation in the European Parliament 2000-2010	March 2, 2015	Skype	English
van de Water, Rob	Political Advisor to the S&D Group of the European Parliament 1991-2012	March 25, 2015	Skype	English
Piri, Kati	MEP	April 15, 2015	Brussels	English
Czarnecki, Ryszard	MEP	April 16, 2015	Brussels	Polish
Ujazdowski, Kazimierz Michał	MEP	March 26, 2015	Brussels	Polish
Šojdrová, Michaela	MEP	April 14, 2015	Brussels	English
Štefanec, Ivan	MEP	April 14, 2015	Brussels	English
Lauristin, Marju	MEP	April 23, 2015	Brussels	English
Tarabella, Marc	MEP	April 22, 2015	Brussels	English

Auštrevičius, Petras	MEP	April 1, 2015	Brussels	English
Radoš, Jozo	MEP	April 1, 2015	Brussels	English
Telička, Pavel	MEP	April 21, 2015	Brussels	English
Tarand, Indrek	MEP	April 23, 2015	Brussels	English
Anonymous (B1)	ALDE foreign affairs advisor	April 1, 2015	Brussels	English
Greco, Vincenzo	S&D foreign affairs advisor	April 20, 2015	Brussels	English
Zorrilla, José	Spanish Deputy Ambassador to Bolivia	April 15, 2015	Skype	English
Lewer, Andrew	MEP	April 21, 2015	Brussels	English
Bergamaschi, Paolo	The Greens/European Free Alliance foreign affairs advisor	April 16, 2015	Brussels	English
Krasnodębski, Zdzisław	MEP	April 22, 2015	Brussels	Polish
Anonymous (B2)	S&D foreign affairs advisor	April 20, 2015	Brussels	English
Kalous, Jan	Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes historian	August 12, 2014	Prague	Czech/English with professional interpreter
Lindblad, Göran	President of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience	August 22, 2014	Riga	English
Müller, Jaroslav	Chairman of the Prague Academic Club '48	August 28, 2014	Prague	Polish
Matějka, Ondřej	First Deputy Director of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes	August 29, 2014	Prague	English
Anonymous (A1)	European Network Remembrance and Solidarity staff member	February 2, 2016	Warsaw	Polish
Anonymous (A2)	European Network Remembrance and Solidarity staff member	February 16, 2016	Warsaw	Polish
Anonymous (A3)	European Network Remembrance and Solidarity staff member	February 1, 2016	Warsaw	Polish
Anonymous (A4)	European Network Remembrance and Solidarity staff member	February 8, 2016	Warsaw	Polish
Rogulski, Rafał	Director of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity	February 22-23, 2016	Warsaw	Polish



**Table 3. How Mnemonic Activists' Strategies Match Up to the EU's Dialogic Imperative**

	<b>Mnemonic Contest Strategy</b>		<b>EU's Dialogic Imperative</b>
	<b>Victimhood Regionalism (Platform)</b>	<b>Reconciliatory Regionalism (Network)</b>	
<b>Who</b>	"Us" versus "Them" Anti-Communists (victims) v. Pro-Communists (perpetrators and their sympathizers, e.g. Jews, Russia, the Left)	"Us" and "Them" Communism remembrance community and Holocaust remembrance community, Russia, Western Europe, and any other mnemonic actors with different historical memories	Inclusivity and manifold voices
<b>What</b>	Essentialized Memory (Communism essentially and universally evil, facilitates Nazi/Communism comparison) *Essentializing a memory means boiling it down to an intentionally ambiguous essence that, in the case of criminal historical events, usually has a negative moral valence. It means obscuring the memory's specificity across the temporal and spatial axes.	Differentiated Memory (Communism is complex and varied but for the most part bad, prevents direct Nazi/Communism comparison)	History from multiple viewpoints
<b>Effect: How</b> *This effect is necessary if you meet the What and Who conditions above.	Imposition of hegemonic memory regime and retribution (in this case through the criminalization of Communism)	Respect for multiple memory regimes and dialogue (in this case through historical education and conferences)	Dialogue
Long-term Effect	Division	Reconciliation	EU integration and solidarity
Long-term Effect on Regional Identity	Identity based on victimhood	Identity based on agency (which may include being a victim)	Identity based on diversity of historical experiences and

		but also a resister of victimhood and even a perpetrator)	fundamental EU values
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**Table 4. What Determines Whether Or Not Mnemonic Activists Diffuse Their Memories Transnationally?**

	<b>Platform</b>	<b>Network</b>
Does memory match dominant memory regime of the memory field?	No. Communism memories do not resonate with the dominant Holocaust memory regime.	No. Communism memories do not resonate with the dominant Holocaust memory regime.
What is the mnemonic problem?	Legacies of Communism are a problem: Communism is not sufficiently recognized or condemned	Legacies of Communism are a problem: Communism is not sufficiently recognized or condemned
Why important?	EU fundamental values	EU fundamental values
How to tackle problem? (What is the regional mnemonic strategy?)	<b>Victimhood Regionalism Strategy</b>	<b>Reconciliatory Regionalism Strategy</b>
Does strategy match dominant mode of mnemonic communication in the memory field?	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes, for the most part</b>
External Shocks	2004 Big Bang accession, Global victims-centric human rights imperative, Ukraine crisis	2004 Big Bang accession, global victims-centric human rights imperative, Ukraine crisis
Regional Electoral/Influence Power in Political Community	Low	Low
Success	<p><b>Moderate</b> (Less EU funding and its ultimate goal of criminalizing Communism not adopted by EU)</p> <p>Criminalizing Communist ideology (Council of Europe did this, but EU has not)</p> <p>Criminalizing Communist parties (not yet formally proposed)</p> <p>Criminalizing the denial of Communist crimes (EU rejected this)</p> <p>Criminalizing the use of Communist</p>	<p><b>High</b> (More EU funding and its goal of increasing the recognition and condemnation of Communism partially met by EU)</p> <p>Communist legacy recognized by EU, but not well known in West</p> <p>August 23rd officially recognized as EU commemorative day, but West doesn't commemorate it</p> <p>Communism officially condemned, but unofficially still treated with disregard</p>

	<p>symbols (EU rejected this)</p> <p>Criminalizing discrimination based on political identity (EU rejected this)</p> <p>Establishing an international court to prosecute criminal crimes (No one is taking this up except Platform)</p>	<p>Region's overall history and contributions still not sufficiently respected in West</p>
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**Table 5. Chronology of Key European Collective Memory Events post-2004**

<b>Date</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>From the Perspective of Communism Remembrance Activists</b>
May 12, 2005	European Parliament resolution on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945	First recognition by the EU of European Communist past in the post-2004 enlarged EU	Successful Transnational Mnemonic Diffusion
January 25, 2006	PACE resolution No 1481. Condemnation of the repressive Communist system, established by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe after World War II.	First transnational condemnation of Communism	Successful Transnational Mnemonic Diffusion
June 3, 2008	Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism conceived and signed at the international conference "European Conscience and Communism" in the Czech Senate	Central and Eastern European memory warriors outline their program for recognition of victimhood and justice for Communist crimes	Successful (regional) Mnemonic Diffusion
November 28, 2008	The Council of the EU approved the Framework Decision (FD) on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law	The FD criminalizes the denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (but not the Holocaust or Nazism specifically). It criminalizes use of symbols that incite hatred based on race, color, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin but not political identity.	Setback
April 2, 2009	European Parliament adopts the "Resolution on European	First official acknowledgement of Communist crimes by	Successful Transnational Mnemonic

	Conscience and Totalitarianism" with overwhelming majority	the European Parliament	Diffusion
December 22, 2010	Report from the European Commission to the Parliament and Council, "The memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe."	European Commission rejects a European-wide ban on the denial of Communist crimes—"It is up to each country to find its own way to deal with the memory of totalitarian crimes, meet the expectations of the victims and their descendants and achieve reconciliation."	Setback
September, 2013	European Parliament releases policy brief "European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives"	First official outline of the EP's vision for a critical culture of remembrance based on what I call the dialogue imperative	Constraint or Opportunity Depending on the Mnemonic Activist's Regionalism Strategy
<p><b>Result of these Events:</b> Unified European memory field based on the hegemonic memory regime of the Holocaust is now pillarized into two memory regimes, one based on the Holocaust and one based on totalitarianism. The former is still dominant but now the latter is recognized and legitimized. The memory regime based on totalitarianism recognized Nazism and Communism as the two defining European totalitarianisms of the 20th century, but it stops short of equalizing the two—it is Nazism + Communism and not Nazism = Communism. Additionally, the memory regime of totalitarianism commemorates Communism, but it does not criminalize Communism, just like Nazism is itself not criminalized by the EU. The only EU legal limitations that define the memory regime of the Holocaust are the incitement to hatred based on race, color, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin and the public condoning, denial or gross trivialization of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes as defined by the Statute of the International Criminal Court and other crimes as defined by Nuremberg Tribunal—the Holocaust itself nor Nazism are ever enumerated.</p>			

**Table 6. Member Institutions of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Member Institution</b>
Albania	Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture
Bulgaria	Hannah Arendt Center – Sofia
	Citizens' Initiative for Dismantling the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia
Canada	Czech and Slovak Association of Canada
	Black Ribbon Day Foundation
Czech Republic	Centre for Documentation of Totalitarian Regimes
	Confederation of Political Prisoners of the Czech Republic
	Memory (Paměť)
	Political Prisoners.eu
	Post bellum
	Prague Academic Club 48
	Security Services Archive
	Union of Auxiliary Technical Units – Military Forced Labour Camps
	Traces of Memory association
Estonia	Estonian Institute of Historical Memory
	Kistler-Ritso Eesti Foundation. Museum of Occupations
	Unitas Foundation
Germany	Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial
	Hannah Arendt Society
	International Association of Former Political Prisoners and Victims of Communism
	Meetingpoint Music Messiaen
	Saxon Memorial Foundation for the Remembrance of Victims of Political Tyranny
	The Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR
	Union of the Associations of the Victims of Communist Tyranny (UOKG)
Hungary	Hungarian Committee of National Remembrance
	The Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society – House of Terror Museum
Iceland	Icelandic Research Centre for Innovation and Economic Growth
Latvia	Koknese Foundation
	The Occupation Museum Association of Latvia
	The Occupation of Latvia Research Society
Lithuania	Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania
	Secretariat of The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania
Moldova	Centre for the Study of Totalitarianism

Netherlands	Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their Victims
Poland	Institute of National Remembrance
	Polish History Museum
	Remembrance and Future Institute
	Warsaw Rising Museum
	Witold Pilecki Center for Totalitarian Studies
Romania	Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile
	The Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the AntiCommunist Resistance
	Timisoara Society
Slovakia	Inconspicuous Heroes
	Ján Langoš Foundation
	Truc sphérique
	Nation's Memory Institute
Slovenia	Nova slovenska zaveza
	Study Centre for National Reconciliation
Sweden	The Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism
Ukraine	Center for Research on the Liberation Movement
	Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People
	National museum "Holodomor Victims Memorial"
	Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance
	Foundation to Preserve the History of Maidan
United States of America	Joint Baltic American National Committee
	Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation



**Table 7. ENRS' Guidelines for International Discourse on History and Memory****1. Present varied viewpoints**

Those developing initiatives in international historical discourse and international politics of memory should strive to ensure such presentation of historical events that reliably takes into account the viewpoints, reasoning and arguments of all those involved in such events. Affirmative presentation of totalitarian, racist and chauvinistic visions of the world and of history is unacceptable.

**2. Avoid deterministic expressions**

Those developing the above initiatives should ensure that they avoid suggesting to audiences that there is an inevitable dependence between historical events and the current relations between peoples and states.

**3. Avoid generalisations**

The content of all international politics of memory initiatives should be commensurate with the nature and scope of the historical phenomena they concern. Individual facts with positive or negative significance, even if in themselves historically verified, should not be used to illustrate the attitudes and conduct of an entire community. Each such fact should be presented in a context reflecting its actual place in the history of a given community.

**4. Treat historical figures as individuals**

In order to avoid fostering and spreading stereotypes which could be applied to entire communities, when portraying both commendable historical actions and crimes, those developing international historical discourse and international politics of memory initiatives should make every effort to ensure that the persons behind such actions/perpetrators are identified as precisely as possible and presented in an individualised manner.

**5. Ensure a genuine historical basis**

The inclusion of completely fictional storylines in works about history poses the risk of consciously or unconsciously distorting presentation of the past. For this reason, those developing such works should make every effort to ensure that the figures and events presented correspond as closely as possible to the historical context.

**6. Clearly define the nature of each initiative**

In order to facilitate the audience's interpretation of international historical discourse and international politics of memory initiatives, those developing such initiatives should make every effort to clearly inform the audience of the work's position as historical documentation,

fiction, a historical work of fiction or other, depending on the relationship between the fictional storylines in their works and historical and documentary elements.

#### 7. Use academic knowledge as your source

With regard to historical context, each international historical discourse and international politics of memory initiative should be based on current academic findings applicable to its content. During development, the content of such initiatives should be discussed with recognised academic experts representing specialist knowledge on a given phenomenon. The extent of academic consultation should be adequate to the planned project and its budget. All those developing initiatives are required to confirm that academic consultation has taken place in a specific scope, and to include the name of the consultant in the information on a given initiative (e.g. opening/closing credits of a film, exhibition programme).

#### 8. Apply up-to-date didactical concepts and technical standards

When presenting texts, visual materials (images, films, maps), audio material or artifacts, try to apply didactical concepts that are state of the art and that enable the audience to experience varied viewpoints. Follow international standards and guidelines when indicating your sources and creating an adequate context environment for your material. Be aware of the implications that information in its digital form needs a specific hypertextual structure and a sustainable technological basis. In case there is too little expertise given the task that is planned, try to co-operate with experts on didactics and informatics.

**Table 8. Differences in Historical Memory Priorities Between the EU and ENRS**

Year	Europe for Citizens Program eligible commemorations	ENRS thematic priorities
2016	<p><b>1936</b> Beginning of the Spanish Civil War</p> <p><b>1956</b> Political and social mobilisation in central Europe</p> <p><b>1991</b> Beginning of the Yugoslav Wars</p> <p><b>1951</b> Adoption of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in relation with the post WWII refugee situation in Europe</p>	<p>The 60th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the Poznań June (and October) protests as well as Khrushchev's report (secret speech) and de-Stalinization</p> <p>The 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish civil war</p>
2017	<p><b>1917</b> The social and political revolutions, the fall of empires and their impact on Europe's political and historical landscape</p> <p><b>1957</b> The Treaty of Rome and the beginning of European Economic Community</p>	<p>The centenary of the collapse of Tsarist monarchy in Russia (February/March 1917) and the Bolshevik Revolution (October/November 1917)</p> <p>The 75th anniversary of the establishment of the <i>Żegota</i> Polish Council to Aid Jews</p>
2018	<p><b>1918</b> The end of the WWI – the rise of nation states and the failure to create a European cooperation and peaceful coexistence</p> <p><b>1938/1939</b> Beginning of WWII</p> <p><b>1948</b> Beginning of the Cold War</p> <p><b>1948</b> The Hague Congress and the integration of Europe</p> <p><b>1968</b> Protest and civil rights movements, invasion to Czechoslovakia, student protests and anti-Semitic campaign in Poland</p>	<p>The centenary of the end of the First World War and Poland's regaining of independence, as well as the emergence of independent Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and, inter alia, Yugoslavia (including Croatia)</p> <p>The 50th anniversary of the Polish March '68 political crisis and crushing of the Prague Spring (August), and student revolts in Western Europe, which gave rise to the generation of 1968</p> <p>The 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising</p> <p>The 80th anniversary of the <i>Kristallnacht</i> in Germany</p> <p>The 85th anniversary of the <i>Holodomor</i> in</p>

		Ukraine (November)
<b>2019</b>	<p><b>1979</b> European Parliament elections – also 40 years since the first directly elected EP in 1979</p> <p><b>1989</b> Democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin wall</p> <p><b>2004</b> 15 years of EU enlargement into central and Eastern Europe</p>	<p>The centenary of the Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919) and other treaties ending the Second World War (including the 1920 Treaties of Trianon and Sevres)</p> <p>The 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War</p> <p>The 30th anniversary of the fall of Communism</p>
<b>2020</b>	<p><b>1950</b> Robert Schuman Declaration</p> <p><b>1990</b> German reunification</p> <p><b>2000</b> Proclamation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights</p>	<p>The 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War</p> <p>The 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp</p> <p>The 80th anniversary of the Katyn massacre</p> <p>The centenary of the <i>Battle of Warsaw</i></p> <p>The 80th anniversary of the Third Reich's invasion on France</p> <p>The 50th anniversary of the December 1970 events, anti-Communist protests in Gdynia, Gdańsk, Szczecin and Elbląg</p> <p>The 40th anniversary of the August 1980 events and signing of the <i>Gdańsk Agreement</i></p>

**Table 9. General Political and Regional Orientation of Communism Remembrance**

Left		Right
	<----->	
West		East
No Support for Communism Remembrance and its Condemnation		Support for Communism Remembrance and its Condemnation

**Table 10. Cross-Cutting Nature of Political and Regional Cleavages in Debates Over Communism Remembrance**

	East	West
Left (Mainstream: S&D) (Mixed: ALDE, Greens) (Extreme: GUE/NGL)	Adequate recognition of Communism/ambivalence	Adequate recognition of Communism
	Sufficient condemnation of Communism/ambivalence	Sufficient (to excessive) condemnation of Communism
Right (Mainstream: EPP) (Extreme: ECR, EFD)	Inadequate recognition of Communism	Inadequate recognition of Communism/ambivalence
	Insufficient condemnation of Communism	Insufficient condemnation of Communism/ambivalence