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## **The meanings of 1989. The Right Wing Discourse in Post-Communist Poland**

### ***1. The outline of the problem***

“As every experienced researcher knows, the most difficult task for the social anthropologist during his field work is to determine the meaning of a few key – words, understanding of which affects the outcomes of the scrutiny”<sup>1</sup>. Similarly is in the case of the analysis of discourse, striving to reconstruct the specific meanings social actors inscribe in categories they use to communicate. Such an effort is necessary to establish precise content of the representation of reality typical for a specific epistemic or interpretive community<sup>2</sup>. In order to trace key – words one does not necessarily need to employ quantitative approaches, which are not always able to reflect the meaning or significance of the particular categories within a text<sup>3</sup>. Sometimes the detailed and systematic reading of the empirical data is enough to reveal an internal structure of discourse with the certain categories around which the meaning is constructed. First, it may turn out during analysis, that political subjects perceive certain X category as significant and crucial for the appropriate perception of the status quo. The X might be responsible for the shape of reality, it may also be the source of causality or may determine the structure of reality. Secondly, all the key political actors are not indifferent to this category. It may provoke positive or negative reactions, expressed either explicitly or implicitly in the utterances of the politicians. Thirdly, it is not restricted to one issue, appearing in the multifarious contexts. It may refer to different topics, relate to various issues and hence be used in many different functions. As to the latter it can be the basis for the words construction and serve as a prominent element of narration. Moreover, the X may be used to positive self – legitimation and negative othering, proving its usefulness in the political struggle.

One does not have to follow very carefully Polish political life to trace that events and phenomena which took place in the 1989 has become crucial points of reference and constitutive

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<sup>1</sup> E.Evans – Pritchard, *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*, New York 1962, quotation after: S.B.Ortner, *O symbolach kardynalnych*, w: *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej*, red. M.Kempny, E.Nowicka, Warszawa 2003, p.106.

<sup>2</sup> S.Fish, *Interpretacja, retoryka, polityka*, Kraków 2002.

<sup>3</sup> R.Markowski, *Propozycja „Manifesto Research Group”: metody, wyniki, problemy – komentarz*, in: *System partyjny i zachowania wyborcze*, red. tenże, Warszawa 2002, p.294 – 296.

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elements of the political discourse, including right wing one. Despite the prevalent view of the 1989 in Poland as a peaceful, negotiated way of extrication from the communism, the meaning of 1989 events has been one of the most divisive issues. The complaints about the lack of revolutionary moment in the Polish politics were lodged already in the early 90. before presidential and parliamentary elections, respectively, in 1990 and 1991<sup>4</sup>. The harsh criticism of the 1989 and the idea of “the betrayed revolution” appeared within the circles of the extra-parliamentary right after elections of 1993 and 1995 when postcommunists took the parliamentary and presidential seats. Not surprisingly in the run up to parliamentary elections of 1997 the right wing groupings coined a slogans of completing the revolution of 1989, implying the critical assessment of events (revolution was not brought to an end) which took place at that time<sup>5</sup>. The implied or explicit critical reference to 1989 proved its relevance also in 2005 parliamentary elections, when two populist parties were able to secure a significant number of seats through outspoken criticism of the allegedly oligarchic system born at the Round Table<sup>6</sup>.

Not surprisingly, „The Round Table has become a key word, often used in media texts and utterances of the right wing politicians”<sup>7</sup>. The Round Table is intimately connected with two other categories: the Magdalenka and the thick line. All of them appeared frequently in the discourse. Moreover, all were the elements used to make an assessment on the Poland’s situation after 1989. Right wing politicians have been struggling over them, imbuing them with different meanings, deeming them considerable and rarely avoiding any occasion to refer to them. The Round Table, the Magdalenka and the thick line can serve as particularly good examples for the discourse theory, or more widely, the interpretive approaches which try to overcome the division between realism and idealism. According to these approaches the existence of material reality can not be detached from the discourse. On the contrary, as the discourse carries meaning, the reality is always already rooted in language structures providing the conditions for its social existence. Without discourse the reality would have been the unintelligible chain of undifferentiated and senseless acts. To put it differently, all these three categories constitute a lexical condensation of certain events or processes of the contemporary history of Poland and as such denote certain factuality. This factuality, however, can not be grasped as an extra – discursive fact. It is not possible to access reality in itself and evade specific meanings related to the perspective from which every

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<sup>4</sup> P. Śpiewak, *Wojna na górze*, „Przegląd Polityczny” 2000, Nr 46/47.

<sup>5</sup> M. Wenzel, *Solidarity and Akcja Wyborcza “Solidarnosc”. An Attempt at Reviving the Legend*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies” 1998, Vol.31, No 2.

<sup>6</sup> The League of Polish Families and Self-Defence represented the Third Republic in the populist manner as the outcome of the deal between elites.

<sup>7</sup> D. Dabert, *Mowa kontrolowana. Szkice o języku publicznym w Polsce po 1989 roku*, Poznań 2003, p.29. Zob. także: I. Kamińska – Szmaj, *Słowa na wolności. Język polityki po 1989 r.*, Wrocław 200, p.78.

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social subject speaks<sup>8</sup>. The aim of the paper is to analyse the structure of meaning built around these three events denoted collectively by the 1989 category. Such an analysis shall reveal various meanings of 1989 associated with this year by parties as the key actors responsible for the political discourse production, reproduction and distribution.

## 2. The Polish context

As far as facts are concerned, one has to mention a few basic, relatively uncontested truths widely accepted not only among historians but politicians as well. For the first time The Round Table category was applied to describe talks between the representatives of the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) and Solidarity between 6 February and 5 April 1989 which led, among others, to the first semi-free elections in June<sup>9</sup>. The expression was used for the first time in June 1988 by general Wojciech Jaruzelski during 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the PUWP's Central Committee discussing the law on associations<sup>10</sup>. The Magdalenka is a category used after the name of the town where the residence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was located. That was the place where yet in 1988 the first contacts between the governing power and the opposition were initiated. It played a crucial role during Round Table negotiations, providing the platform for the first contacts between authorities and opposition. Whenever talks faced obstacles, the smaller group of negotiators were meeting in Magdalenka to work in narrower circle on the details of future agreements and strived to solve divisive issues. Once made, they were subsequently discussed at the plenary meetings of the Round Table<sup>11</sup>. No matter how helpful it was to meet in smaller groups to overcome the deadlocks both sides reached from time to time, the secret character of talks in the Magdalenka aroused suspicions of the secret deals between the negotiators<sup>12</sup>. The last from the distinguished categories, the thick line is connected with the policy speech of T.Mazowiecki given on

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<sup>8</sup> As D.Howarth writes: „theoretical objects are never given by the world of experience and facts, but constructed through the historically specific systems of knowledge”. See: D. Howarth, *Discourse*, Buckingham – Philadelphia 2000, p.133. See also: P.Dybel, *Humanistyka i prawda*, „Res Publica Nowa” 2005, Nr 1, p.85 – 86.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the Round Table and its outcomes see: A.Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988 – 1990*, Kraków 2004; K.Trembicka, *Okrągły Stół w Polsce: studium o porozumieniu politycznym*, Lublin 2003; A.Garlicki, *Karuzela. Rzecz o Okrągłym Stole*, Warszawa 2003; W.Frazik, *Bibliografia ważniejszych publikacji polskich dotyczących upadku komunizmu i transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce w latach 1986 – 1989*, w: *Polska 1986 – 1989: koniec systemu*, t.1, Warszawa 2002, p.235 – 256.

<sup>10</sup> A.Dudek, *Reglamentowana...op.cit.*, p.148.

<sup>11</sup> K.Dubiński, *Magdalenka. Transakcja epoki*, Warszawa 1990, p.3 – 16.

<sup>12</sup> A.Paczkowski, *Polska 1986 – 1989: od kooptacji do negocjacji*, w: tenże, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa do prawdziwej klęski. Szkice do portretu PRL*, Kraków 1999, p.169; J.A.Majcherek, *Pod znieczuleniem*, „Rzeczpospolita” 21I1996, Nr 1, p.5; P.Śpiewak, *Narodziny polskiej demokracji*, w: *Bitwa o Belweder*, red. M.Grabowska, I.Krzemiński, Warszawa 1991. The historians emphasize that so far historical source has been found which would allow to uphold the plot thesis. See: A.Dudek, *Kulisy III RP: „okrągły stół”*, „Wprost” 7III1999, Nr 6, p.36 – 37; *Mity polskie, rozmowa z A.Paczkowskim*, „Wprost” 27XII1998, Nr 52, p.21; K.Trembicka, *Okrągły Stół w Polsce – mity i stereotypy*, „Studia Polityczne” 2004, Nr 15, p.101; W.Roszkowski, *Kwadratura Okrągłego Stołu*, w: tenże, *Do horyzontu i z powrotem. Eseje o historii i współczesności*, Kraków 2000, p.132.

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24 August 1989 in Sejm – lower chamber of Polish parliament<sup>13</sup>. Originally, „the thick line” category was used to mark off the communist regime from the democratic reality. T.Mazowiecki wanted to distinguish between the responsibility for the burden posed by the non-democratic past and the responsibility growing out from his efforts to reform the country. Although the thick line was interpreted by the Prime Minister as a symbolic device used to differentiate between two periods and to mark the return of Poland to the democratic, the logic of political struggle changed the meaning of the category which soon after the speech became a symbol of “forgive and forget” approach of the Mazowiecki government and the so called Solidarity’s left towards the former communists<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. Approach and research questions

The abovementioned “genealogical” outline of categories has already displayed the ambiguity of the social and political events which are always already open to the (re)interpretation. The approach adopted here draws on a few assumptions of the discourse theory. First, it is assumed that discourse shall be perceived as a language in use. I’m concerned here with the language used in the institutionally defined political sphere. Discourse is a kind of practice which constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world. It constitutes social identities, social relationships and systems of social knowledge and belief. Secondly, that all means that discourse brings to life a particular kind of order by dictating what is possible to say and what can’t be said. It is due to this order – a contingent, historically specific set of rules, that all objects and actions acquire their meaning. According to Laclau and Mouffe meanings cannot be fixed definitely and are attached only within pre-established discourses. Specific meaning of certain signifier is acquired only through discursive articulation made through connection of different elements into new constellation<sup>15</sup>. Due to articulation process identity of elements is modified as a result of articulatory practice<sup>16</sup>. Thirdly, I take the ontological assumptions of E.Laclau concerning the political. The sphere of politics is the sphere of the ineradicable conflict which constitutes the condition of the possibility of the political. There is no politics without antagonism. Fourthly, given that the

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<sup>13</sup> Z.Domarańczyk, 100 dni Mazowieckiego, Warszawa 1990, p.106, 108.

<sup>14</sup> Such was the interpretation of the Prime Minister, the intellectuals who supported him, or even the critical historians. See: To był rząd zasadniczej zmiany, rozmowa z T.Mazowieckim, „Więź” 1997, Nr 3, p.18; J.Jedlicki, Wariacje na temat grubej linii, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 26 – 27IV1997, Nr 98, p.8; A.Dudek, Pierwsze...op.cit., p.76. As the Prime Minister itself said: "We draw a thick line on what has happened in the past. We will answer for only what we have done to help Poland to rescue her from this crisis from now on". See: Przeszłość odkreślamy grubą linią – przemówienie T.Mazowieckiego w Sejmie, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 26 – 28VIII1989, Nr 78, p.3.

<sup>15</sup> E.Laclau, Ch.Mouffe, Hegemonia i socjalistyczna strategia, Wrocław 2007, p.111.

<sup>16</sup> D. Howarth, Y.Stavrakakis, Introducing discourse theory and political analysis, in D.Howarth and A.Norval and Y.Stavrakakis (eds) Discourse theory and political analysis, Manchester: Manchester University Press (2000), p.7.

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meanings are never fixed, the interpretive practices of political agents are extremely significant. They do not simply differ in their interpretation of reality, but struggle to achieve the power through the imposition of specific representations of reality<sup>17</sup>. The aim of the paper is to analyze the lines of discursive struggles over the meaning of three key events which has constituted the collective political memory of 1989: the Round Table, the Magdalenka and the thick line. In order to establish conflicting representations of the 1989 events among right wing parties four aspects of the political discourse were analyzed. First, the question of assessment marks a point of departure of the scrutiny. What is the general evaluation of the events of 1989 and the set of arguments adduced to justify such assessment? Secondly, I shall analyze the phenomenon of agency as it is constructed in the representations of 1989. Where is the source of causality located? Is it the communist power that initiates all the steps, or the opposition? What were the constraints each side had to face at that time? To what extent these processes are represented as determined by personal factors? What is the role of structural conditions, independent from individual intents? Thirdly, the persisting issue of conspiracy and plot which appears always in the context of 1989 events will be analyzed. Do the representations of 1989 resort to argumentation which adopts the division between the scene and behind the scenes operations? If yes, how important they are for the argumentation provided? To what extent, secrecy or even conspiracy is used as an explanatory factor necessary to highlight the meaning of 1989? Do the political actors raise the issue of betrayal, secret deal, or behind the scenes regulation of the trajectory of processes which happened in 1989? Fourthly, what was, according to the right wing politicians, the alternative to the events and processes that actually took place? These four problems with the set of corresponding questions served as a kind of matrix which governed the analysis of the political discourse of right wing politicians in Poland between 1990 and 2000.

#### **4. The analysis**

The analysis has revealed three different positions the political actors were able to take in discourse when speaking on 1989. Bearing in mind the idealizing character of such labeling, one can still name these three positions as: the affirmative, the critical and the rejectionist. Despite some common assumptions, they were divided so deeply over the meaning and significance of 1989 that

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<sup>17</sup> P.Bourdieu, *The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups*, "Theory and Society" 1985, T.14, Nr 6, s.729. See also: P.Bourdieu, *Social Space and Symbolic Power*, w: tenze, *In Other Words. Essays Towards A Reflexive Sociology*, Stanford 1990, s.135.

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it is fully justified to treat them separately. In fact, they has provided the spectacular evidence for the phenomenological thesis of the multitude of social worlds people live in<sup>18</sup>.

#### ***4.1. The affirmative discourse***

The first from the distinguished positions uses three abovementioned categories only in the exceptional occasions. They do not function as basic categories of the political discourse. It does not mean, however, that events denoted by them are deemed insignificant. On the contrary, relatively rare instances of their usage indicate their significance. They are used mainly in the two types of situations. First, in the context of commemorations or other important situations when they serve as the ennobling categories imbuing the discursive context with the appropriate solemnity (it refers to the Round Table). Secondly, they are invoked in the moments of tensions and vehement polemics to justify or explain past activities (it refers to the Magdalenka and the thick line).

Nevertheless, it does not mean that Round Table is uncritically glorified. The characteristic feature of the right wing discourse in Poland, regardless of specific differences between various discursive positions, is the relatively critical position towards the Round Table talks. It is not represented as the institution of national reconciliation, where divided and conflicted parts decided to forget about the past problems and grievances. It is not possible to say from this discursive position that the 1989 was the outcome of the communist side's efforts to dispose of prerogatives and resign from power institutions. The predominant view here is that both sides can not be juxtaposed as equally worried about the state of the country. As one of the right wing politicians puts it: "It is necessary to reject the legend which turns the Round Table into a myth where both sides, Solidarity and the authority side, as equally worried, preoccupied with the urge to change Poland and where both sides are given a credit for bringing about democracy in Poland. I have no doubts, that such was the intention of the Solidarity, but not the authorities of the Polish People's Republic"<sup>19</sup>. Such words does not mean the critical assessment of the Round Table, but rather pragmatic analysis, taking into account political interests of both sides of the agreement. What is emphasized here, is the ambiguity of the Round Table growing out of the complexity of historical context. The Solidarity side was not interested in any type of instruments designed to reform the communist system. The stake of the game with the communists was to create a perspective of democratization and marketization of the country, even at the price of some compromises necessary for partial extension of the realm of freedom. If it comes to the intents of the communist side, the assumption of

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<sup>18</sup> A.Schutz, *O wielości światów. Szkice z socjologii fenomenologicznej*, Kraków 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksander Hall's speech at the conference „The communism's negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005.

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guilt is the basic principle guiding their representation. For them, the Round Table was part of the bigger game, “elaborated legal-political construction” aimed at retention and relegitimization of their power<sup>20</sup>.

The society, the third important subject in this constellation, was represented as demobilized and exhausted by the last years of socialism. The strikes of 1988 were perceived on this discursive position as weak, rare and lacking the revolutionary potential of the legendary August 1980 where the Solidarity movement was born. Hence it was the balance of power that determined the pace and shape of the Round Table talks with the alienated elites and weak society. Its evolutionary character was not, or at least not merely, the outcome of political and national wisdom, but rather the actual social situation. Regardless of the actual intentions of political elites and the balance of power between the Solidarity and authorities, the Round Table was assessed as unambiguously positive event, which enabled the bloodless transition to democracy. The Round Table is perceived as an event which triggered the unexpected dynamics, finally leading to “the radical change” of the country’s situation<sup>21</sup>. The analyzed position does not deny the fact that not all oppositional groupings were represented by the Round Table. It claims that the groupings and parties uncompromisingly rejecting talks with communists were “the marginal”<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, however, it emphasizes its critical attitude towards too narrow composition of the opposition side which was allowed to take part in the Round Table talks and start under the auspices of Solidarity in the June elections<sup>23</sup>. Nevertheless, this decision was made by “L.Walesa and his closest advisors themselves”<sup>24</sup>, without any inspiration of the communist secret services.

Generally speaking, the thesis on the communists side as a major causal factor, determining the trajectory of transition through the operational games of secret services is rejected on this discursive position. Either the idea that Magdalenka was a place where a secret plot was hatched. The course of the negotiations was known to the public as the public television transmitted the event. Behind the scene activities, even if took place, were of limited efficiency. The predominant opinion one can trace when analyzing first discursive position is that the Round Table should not be explained through strong cause and effect relations with the outcomes a priori known to the actors involved. Neither it should be analyzed as a detailed plan aimed at maximizing interests of the negotiating sides. A lot of processes went spontaneously and the issues appeared on the agenda

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<sup>20</sup> A.Hall, Bronię...op.cit., p.16; R.Matyja, Przebudowa...op.cit., p.8 – 9.

<sup>21</sup> Spór o...op.cit., p.16.

<sup>22</sup> Aleksander Hall’s speech at the conference „The communism’s negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005.

<sup>23</sup> For example groups like liberale from Cracow, „Głos”, Confederation of the Independent Poland were excluded from the process. See: Spór o...op.cit., p.12, 14, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Aleksander Hall’s speech at the conference „The communism’s negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005.

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due to some unexpected turn of events rather than previously planned decisions. All in all, the overwhelming victory of the opposition in June 1989 elections was beyond the imagination of both sides of the political conflict and was not guided by the overall project<sup>25</sup>.

Neither the Round Table was a plot, nor the Magdalenka a place where it was possible to make the deals. Thus “the thick line” policy of T.Mazowiecki’s government should not be treated as the implementation of arrangements aimed at securing a privileged position for the postcommunists in the democratic polity. The soft approach towards communists and the lack of any attempts to reckon with the people of former regime was shaped not by the bad intents or hidden interests, but by the logics of political processes and requirements of stabilization of the new regime. „The thick line” is constructed as a policy playing twofold function. Firstly, it marked off the communism from a new regime to shift the burden of responsibility on the communist elites. Secondly, it was a formula which stressed that former members of the communist party and allied parties “were not going to be the second class citizens”<sup>26</sup>. Such symbolic demarcation was to prevent the consolidation of the communist side unified by the common enemy. As it was argued, the communist reaction could not only make difficulties for the government to do its job, but could threaten the new regime with the aggressive backlash<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, “the thick line” conveyed an ethical meaning expressed through a rule that one can not attack those with whom previously negotiated. Additionally, such an approach was perceived as appropriate for the new democratic conditions. Reckoning with the past was equated with old, bolshevik mechanisms of political struggle based on revenge and aggression<sup>28</sup>. Beyond that, the radical solutions directed against the former communists were not possible due to the ambiguous status of the 1989 events. As there was no revolution or *catharsis* all the clearcut decisions based on the strong division between communism and anti-communism would violate the complicated historical reality and the entangled biographies of people. Consequently, if it comes to negative phenomena which were the direct outcome of the soft policy towards the past (the high level of corruption, the penetration of state structures and economy by the secret services, the destruction of security service’s files etc.), they were assessed as the unavoidable cost of transformation, indirectly caused by the transitional lack of clarity and the non-revolutionary way of extrication from the communism<sup>29</sup>.

The positive although qualified assessment of the Round Table and the defence of “the thick line” policy is accompanied by the considerations pertaining to the historical alternatives to the phenomenon under scrutiny. The vision of the bloody conflict developed from this discursive

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<sup>25</sup> See: Spór o...op.cit., p.37.

<sup>26</sup> A.Hall, Zabrakło woli politycznej? Politycy o rozliczeniu z komunizmem, „Więź” 1994, Nr 7, p.46.

<sup>27</sup> Spór o...op.cit., p.105.

<sup>28</sup> Spór o...op.cit., p.52.

<sup>29</sup> A.Hall, Jaka...op.cit., p.80.



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position is based on the assumption that permanent tensions between the communists and the society would easily turn into war-like solutions with the both sides resorting to the use of force. In such a context the Round Table, Magdalenka and “the thick line” are represented as best possible solutions. The negative phenomenon they brought about are envisioned as the necessary costs which always accompany every kind of political decision.

#### **4.2. *The critical discourse***

The second discursive position breaks the sequence of three consecutive events which constitute the meaning of 1989 among right wing political elites. It also differs in the assessment of these events. The Round Table, including the Magdalenka are deemed as positive and necessary moments of contemporary history of Poland. What is wholeheartedly rejected and vehemently criticized is “the thick line” policy of T.Mazowiecki’s government. In comparison to the slightly ambivalent, but generally affirmative attitude of the first discursive position based on the assumption that Round Table established the specific model of peaceful transition of democracy which Poles should be proud of, the second discursive position is much more nuanced in its assessment. Although the Round Table is evaluated as a positive event which can not be treated as “a betrayal”<sup>30</sup>, his significance is limited to the short historical moment. Its role in the transformation of the polity is difficult to overemphasize, but it lost its importance with the fall of the Berlin wall<sup>31</sup>. The basic parameters of the situation in 1989 are represented in the manner similar to the first discursive position. There are no illusions about the intensions of the communist incumbents. According to the second strand of right wing discourse they strived to guarantee themselves the best possible status in every respect and to legitimize this position by co-option of the oppositional elites. Similar was the picture of society represented as demobilized and tired with the poor conditions of the last phase of the communism. Hence the limited character of the revolutionary potential of 1988 strikes<sup>32</sup>. The system reached its limits, being unable to satisfy the basic material needs of the society. In such conditions appeared the opportunity to start the Round Table talks which for the opposition posed a chance for partial political change which would set in motion the democratizing dynamics. As it is argued here, that would help to organize the society and could lead to the legalization of “the Solidarity”, dissolved during the martial law<sup>33</sup>. There are no doubts that such chance should have been used by the oppositional elites in order to make a change<sup>34</sup>. The analyzed

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<sup>30</sup> Solidarność i lojalność, z L.Kaczyńskim rozmawia M.Łopiński, „Tygodnik Solidarność” 1999, Nr 6, p.6.

<sup>31</sup> Quotations from the L.Dorn parliamentary speech. See: L.Dorn, Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 45 posiedzenia Sejmu III kadencji w dniu 4 marca 1999 r., available at: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl>, accessed: 20.05.2005 r.

<sup>32</sup> Gdzie tkwił błąd?, rozmowa z J.Kaczyńskim, in: J.Kurski, P.Semka, Lewy...op.cit., p.12 – 14.

<sup>33</sup> Tamże, p.9; Jaruzelski wołał Wałęsę, rozmowa z J.Kaczyńskim, „Gazeta Polska” 17II1999, Nr 6, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> Czas na...op.cit., p.20.

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positions display the dual approach towards the Round Table talks. On the one hand it was designed to be a short-term, tactical solution necessary to organize the society and capture the chance for political activity. On the other hand, it is represented as a prefiguration of the political-historical compromise between the Solidarity's left and the communist forces which determined the trajectory of transformation. The argument is that the step perceived as purely tactical by the part of the opposition activists was allegedly treated by other oppositionists as the long-term arrangement. Such division within the oppositional elites was underpinned by the biographical similarities (e.g. membership in the communist party), the reluctance towards right wing groupings and even the similar, ideological thinking shared by the Solidarity's left and the communist party<sup>35</sup>. According to this position when the Round Table is considered as a tactical step its accuracy and efficiency are obvious. It triggered the chain of events which paved the way to the end of communism. It enabled the elections of June 1989 which revealed the lack of legitimization of the governing camp and, indirectly, it also led to the appointment of the Solidarity government.

The strong criticism of this position is directed first and foremost against the Mazowiecki's government and its policy after the dissolution of the communist party in the beginning of 1990. "The thick line" policy is considered as completely wrong, unnecessary and harmful at least since the fall down of the Berlin wall, the changes in Czechoslovakia or Romania and the dissolution of the Polish United Worker's Party<sup>36</sup>. It is not questioned that before that events the basis Round Table agreements had to be complied with. The communism still existed, the situation was ambiguous, and the force departments (the army, the police and the secret services) were still controlled by the communists. Whatever the original intentions of the Prime Minister T.Mazowiecki, "the thick line" engendered the policy which retained the communist networks rooted in the pre – 1989 past. "The chance for all"<sup>37</sup> idea allegedly inherent in the slogan of "the thick line" proclaimed by T.Mazowiecki contributed to the reproduction of the privileged status of postcommunists, allowed for the perpetuation of nomenklatura, prevented deep changes in the public administration and led to the apathy and alienation of the society<sup>38</sup>. Those negative processes and phenomenon are responsible for the protracted transitional status of Poland. The hybrid character of the polity, cap-

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<sup>35</sup> Tamże, p.18 – 19; *Solidarność...* op.cit., p.6; J.Kaczyński, Kogo nie zamyka się do więzienia, „Gazeta Polska” 29VIII1996, Nr 35, p.5; „S” strategicznym partnerem ROP-u, rozmowa z J.Kurskim, „Myśl Polska” 15XII1996, Nr 50, p.6; J.Pawłowski, J.Węgiełek, *Droga...* op.cit., p.7.

<sup>36</sup> J.Kaczyński, *Nowa...* op.cit., p.104; *Zabrakło wyobraźni w tej grze*, z L.Kaczyńskim rozmawia A.R.Potocki, „Życie” 7II1999, Nr 31, p.14.

<sup>37</sup> J.Orzeł, *Dwie...* op.cit., p.3.

<sup>38</sup> J.Kurski, *Rok Mazowieckiego*, „Konfrontacje” 1990, Nr 9, in: *Spór o Polskę...* op.cit., p.246 – 248; J.Orzeł, *Co ja tu robię?*, w: tamże, p.250 – 251.; tenże, „Gruba kreska”, „Tygodnik Solidarność” 23XI1990, Nr 47, p.14; *Chcę – dla reform – przejąć społeczne niezadowolenie*, rozmowa z J.Kaczyńskim, „Tygodnik Solidarność” 23VIII1991, Nr 34, p.6.

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tured by the communist networks the essence of the diagnosis formulated on the second discursive position.

The discourse, however, is not constrained by the narrow minded methodological individualism eager to accuse the specific politicians of bringing about the unwelcomed processes. The second position, although harshly critical, is founded on much more subtle, nuanced and sociologically informed analysis. Thus, social processes are not treated as fully controlled outcome of the interests – driven behaviour of the politicians but rather as the amalgam of uncoordinated and spontaneous actions taken by the political actors with the activities planned by actors having at their disposal the resources necessary to bring about expected aims (e.g. social networks, contacts which can be easily converted into political or economic capital). What is more, a lot of events in the social life appear due to the mistakes or the lack of knowledge. That is why the second position is relatively reluctant towards the monocausal explanations, with their tendency to localize and then demonize one factor as a cause of the social processes. This is the source of disregard for the deterministic speculations, resorting to easy, individualistic explanations or to the conspiracy theories while facing difficulties in finding the appropriate solutions. These general assumptions do not mean that the significance of the behind the scene activities is completely underplayed. They rather emphasize that the specific historical trajectory was shaped not by one, but many, different factors.

Such a set of premises which underpinned argumentation narrowed down what was possible to say on this discursive position. It was not possible to say for example that the Round Table was the betrayal of elites, at least not in literal sense of the word. Neither it was possible to conceive Magdalenka as a plot which secured the future position of the communists<sup>39</sup>. The thesis that there was a deal “on capturing the power position in exchange for property” is also rejected<sup>40</sup>. The propertization of nomenklatura was not the Solidarity’s fault. The process began yet in the 1989, long before the Round Table talks started<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, the authorities did not control the composition of the Solidarity side. The latter one, although not fully representative, reflected the actual balance of influences between various groupings. The groups absent by the Round Table enjoyed no social support and had not any reasonable proposals. If claims of radical circles had been accepted, they would have been able to achieve much more, protest more stridently and make real

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<sup>39</sup> Zabrakło...op.cit., p.13. As L.Kaczyński explained: „There were tough negotiations in Magdalenka over the division of power in the new parliament, on a new elections to Senate and its role, on the president’s office”. See: *Solidarność*...op.cit., p.6.

<sup>40</sup> L.Kaczynski’s speech at the conference „The communism’s negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005.

<sup>41</sup> Zabrakło...op.cit., p.14.

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changes<sup>42</sup>. The analyzed position does not reject the significance of behind the scene activities, neither it claims that the transitional processes were fully transparent. Within this perspective transition to democracy covered many different strands, motivations and activities. The break down of the police state necessarily entailed various acts, including the undercover activities, steering processes, operational games of secret services etc. It is clear that the Round Table was not an entirely staged spectacle in which the main parts were played by the communists and secret services collaborators<sup>43</sup>. At least there is no evidence for that<sup>44</sup>.

Accordingly, three analyzed categories are not represented as part of a linear chain with the cause and effect relations between them, entirely determined by the intents and interests of both sides. As L.Kaczynski said: „I am not claiming that on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1989 the dice were cast, that is to say, the Round Table itself brought solutions which had to produce outcomes we have to deal with now”<sup>45</sup>. As the transitional processes were multidimensional, structural as well as personal determinants came into play. Such a complexity could lead to the interpretation of the Round Table as the prefiguration of the future balance of power rather than a tactical step necessary to make a breach in the existing system. To put it bluntly, it was believed on this discursive position that some oppositionists negotiating by the Round Table could have believed, due to many reasons, that they establish the long term balance of power and secure themselves and their partners future positions. Such a perception of situation could have been strengthened by the good negotiating atmosphere or even fraternization based on deliberate activities of secret services<sup>46</sup> or past ideological and social bonds<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, the logic of the situation, where the two antagonists started to talk could produce the conviction that from the ethical point of view it would be reprehensible to punish former partners of the debate. There are also other explanations of the political behavior of actors involved in the Round Table talks which are put forward by this discursive position. The fear of communism felt especially by those who had experienced its worst phases is the factor which, it is believed, was of great importance for the behavior of certain politicians. It determined the cautiousness and reluctance towards settling accounts<sup>48</sup>. Among other explanatory factors employed to make sense of oppositionists activities are: the lack of imagination, the prejudices, the

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<sup>42</sup> Jaruzelski...op.cit., p.8.

<sup>43</sup> Tamże, p.9.

<sup>44</sup> Czas na...op.cit., p.23.

<sup>45</sup> L.Kaczynski's speech at the conference „The communism's negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005.

<sup>46</sup> Legenda Okrągłego Stołu, z Wiesławem Chrzanowskim rozmawia R.Krasowski, „Życie” 11V1999, Nr ?, p.108.

<sup>47</sup> Solidarność...op.cit., p.6; Pół wieku polityki czyli rzecz o obronie czynnej, z W.Chrzanowskim rozmawiali P.Mierecki, B.Kiernicki, Warszawa 1997, p.432.

<sup>48</sup> L.Kaczynski's speech at the conference „The communism's negotiated collapse. The Polish Round Table talks. Ten years later”, available at: <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/>, accessed: 20.05.2005; Czas na...op.cit., p.58.

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political mistakes and the secret services inspiration<sup>49</sup>. All of them taken together narrowed down the scope of available political solutions which the leftist part of the Solidarity movement could accept or even imagine. That is why it was not necessary to make any agreements or hatch the plots<sup>50</sup>.

The model of interpretation of events is slightly similar to the third dimension of power invented by Steven Lukes. According to this position the will of the Solidarity side was shaped, affected or even determined by the will of the authorities<sup>51</sup>. What is more, the logic of the political situation per se, which usually makes beneficiaries from those who are responsible for the political action influenced the way oppositionist were reasoning. As is claimed on this discursive position, the typical premise of the leftist elites of Solidarity movement was: "They (the communists – A.L.) give back a part of their power in exchange for property, and we tolerate this act"<sup>52</sup>. So, as it is argued, "the thick line" policy was not deliberately favourable to the former communists. Being the beneficiary of the transformation grown out from the spontaneous social processes which were merely not eradicated by the Mazowiecki's government, but which were not a part of the "the thick line" policy. The privileged position of postcommunists was the outcome of nothing but their better starting position in the beginning of transformation<sup>53</sup>.

As every critical position gives rise to the question of its own normative basis, what should be considered here is the issue of better alternatives. The answer to the question of alternative pertained mainly to the "thick line" policy of T.Mazowiecki's government, especially after the fall down of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe countries. The Round Table as such, although it created a logic which resulted in unnecessary fixation of Poland in the interim phase, is assessed as the event which had no better alternative at that time. Waiting for the inevitable decay of the communism is not considered as reasonable option here, because no one was sure at that time how fast could the end of the system come about. Moreover, waiting too long could also bring many problems, burdening a new regime with many additional problems. First, it would cause irreversible harm to the economy, being already in a desperate condition. Secondly, the implosion of communism would mean that "the independence was given to us" not secured by the society itself. Thirdly, at the political level the spontaneous decay of the communism would weaken the international position of Poland by destroying the myth of "Solidarity" as *a spiritus mo-*

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<sup>49</sup> Solidarność...op.cit., p.6; J.Kaczyński, Budowa...op.cit., p.5; Gdzie...op.cit., p.24.

<sup>50</sup> „There were no secret deals. There was the Round Table context. For the communists and, as it turned out, for the straight part of the Solidarity side the Round Table was the agreement on the change of the situation in Poland. It was the logical part of the agreement that the partner whom one talks to can not be send to jail”. Zob.: Tenże, Kogo...op.cit., p.5.

<sup>51</sup> S.Lukes, Power. A radical view, Hampshire – New York 2005, p.27.

<sup>52</sup> Gdzie...op.cit., p.16.

<sup>53</sup> „The essence of the social process after 1989 was that the people of the former regime were stronger in the struggle for the position in the new social structure and market economy”. See: Zabrakło...op.cit., p.14.

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*vens* of the political changes in Poland<sup>54</sup>. Waiting for the social unrest similar to that from Eastern Germany or Czechoslovakia would not have improved the situation as well, due to the active participation of the secret services in the events. The revolutionary events would have also been inconvenient for the future system by triggering the populist atmosphere which would unnecessarily put the huge burden of social demands on the freshly created system of market economy<sup>55</sup>.

Contrary to the Round Table, “the thick line” policy faces the radical criticism on this discursive position. This is because of the completely different political project and assumptions constituting ground for the criticism. Its core can be reduced to the plan of multidimensional, radical changes, including the adoption of transitional justice measures implemented as soon as the internal (the dissolution of the communist party) and international context (the Autumn of the People) would allow for that. Actually, even earlier, yet in the autumn 1989 the communism should have been “attacked and finished off” in Poland<sup>56</sup>. That would mean severing the Round Table agreement, delegitimization of the communist party, capturing the force apparatus, arresting the high ranking functionaries of the secret services and party, securing the archives of the Central Committee of PZPR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence and, last but not least, stopping the propertization of nomenklatura process.

### ***4.3 The rejectionist discourse***

Although the third discursive position would be able to accept the proposed means of coming to terms with the communism<sup>57</sup>, it would be reluctant to accept the representation of the Round Table and Magdalenka put forward by the second position. Despite some common assumptions or similar interpretation of some categories, the finegrained analysis has revealed that the apparent difference of degree is actually the qualitative difference. The radical interpretation of three categories under scrutiny leads to different mechanisms of explanation, completely different conclusions and vision of alternative political scenarios.

Striking is the status of these three categories. On the third discursive position, they are converted in factors able to explain the overall course of transformation in Poland after 1989. Similarly to previous positions, there are no doubts here what were the intents of the communist side. What is different, however, is the opinion to what degree the trajectory of transformation was determined by their intentions. Such a perspective precludes perception of the Round Table as a chance which could extend the realm of freedom and paved the way to the democratization and

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<sup>54</sup> *Solidarność*...op.cit., p.6.

<sup>55</sup> Jaruzelski...op.cit., p.8.

<sup>56</sup> *Czas na*...op.cit., p.26.

<sup>57</sup> What had practical effects for the politics and manifested itself in the political cooperation between two prominent representatives of these two discursive positions: Jan Olszewski and Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

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marketization of the country. It is rather perceived as a chance for the communists to retain their influences. Thus radically negative opinion on the situation in Poland after 1989 turned the attention to the issues of power relations and real causes standing behind and determining the shape of Polish transformation.

What provided convenient explanation of the perceived maladies of transformation in 90. were the events of late 80. The genesis of the forces operating from backstage dates back to the mid-80. when the communists with the help of the secret services started to prepare the Round Table scenario understood here as “formal agreement of the communists with the communist opposition”<sup>58</sup>. The general aim of the entire operation was to retain the essence of communism and the privileged position of communists. As the underpinning element of the whole argumentation developed from this discursive position is is permanently referred to. Although the accent is put on different properties, the aim is represented similarly: „a prolongation of the communist life within the transformation”<sup>59</sup>, „a defence of the communists against the Catholic nation”<sup>60</sup>, a prevention of the loss of power<sup>61</sup>, a creation of the safety net providing the opportunity to experiment with the multiple variants of socialism<sup>62</sup>, a legalization of communists in the new political-economic system and strengthening their influences in the economy<sup>63</sup> or „preventing from degrading the social position of former nomenklatura”<sup>64</sup>. As it is clear, the discourse promotes a thesis that the major aim of the communists was to secure their own interests represented as contradictory to the interests of society.

The second important agent of the game – the opposition was also entirely controlled and even constituted by the power holders<sup>65</sup>. Using the fact that many oppositionists had a communist episode in their biographies, the most radical variants of this position suspend almost completely a difference between both sides what results in the vision of the deal between conflicted fractions of the communist party<sup>66</sup>, or even between the communists and the trockists<sup>67</sup>. Nevertheless the more typical mechanism was based not on the identification of both sides, but rather on the ques-

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<sup>58</sup> A.Glapiński, Ukryta...op.cit., p.11.

<sup>59</sup> Gdy politykom...op.cit., p.189.

<sup>60</sup> S.Małkowski, Wokół „okrągłego stołu” – w rocznicę zdrady, „Nasza Polska” 26II1997, Nr 9, p.4.

<sup>61</sup> P.Jakucki, Rocznicą zdrady, „Nasza Polska” 12II1997, Nr 7, p.1.

<sup>62</sup> J.Korwin – Mikke, Jestem, „Najwyższy Czas” 1997, Nr 39, p.24.

<sup>63</sup> P.Jakucki, Świętowanie zdrady, „Nasza Polska” 10III1999, Nr 10, p.1.

<sup>64</sup> S.Michalkiewicz, Bałanda a la carte, „Najwyższy Czas” 11XI1995, Nr 45, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> Gdy...op.cit., p.196.

<sup>66</sup> See: P.Siergiejczyk, Blisko...op.cit., p.9. As J.Olszewski was recollecting his memories from the Round Table during the conference of right wing party The Movement for the Republic in 1993: „I knew that I was participating in the meeting of a family reconciling and coming together, but previously divided for many years [...]”. See: J.Olszewski, Mamy plan kształtowania Polski XXI wieku - przemówienie wygłoszone podczas konferencji RdR w dniu 24 stycznia 1993 r., w: Ruch dla Rzeczypospolitej. Materiały programowe, Warszawa 1993, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> See: P.Jakucki, Zwycięzcy?, „Nasza Polska” 9VI1999, Nr 23, p.1; tenże, Czerwoni...op.cit., p.9.

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tioning and undermining the difference, often in the revealing tone<sup>68</sup>. It is pointed that oppositionists were active members of the communist party in the past or that they were ideologically committed to the same leftist ideas as the communists. Another argument is that the close cooperation between them was possible due to their alienation from the society. Hence it is not only a biography, an ideology but also a fear of the loss of position pushed them to negotiations<sup>69</sup>. Contrary to the second position, however, these episodes were not interpreted as the specific properties of the social situation which could affect the behavior, or as favourable conditions helping to start negotiations, but as the evidence of the full communist control over the situation. There are no doubts: „on the Solidarity side by the Round Table were sitting exclusively the people chosen by the communist power who, inspired by the communists, captured the control over the trade union” (A.Macierewicz), „It is the general Kiszczak (the then Minister of Internal Affairs – A.L.) who established the composition of the other side” (J.Korwin – Mikke)<sup>70</sup>. The Solidarity side, it is claimed, was constituted through the operational actions of the communist secret services. As the result, not the whole society but only the interests of the left wing elites, were represented by the Round Table. Such thesis, which constitutes the essence of this position was easy to reconcile with the vision of the plot between “pinks” and “reds”<sup>71</sup>.

The society, a third collective agent of the political situation is represented ambivalently. On the one hand, what is emphasized is a growing wave of the social discontent expressed by the strikes of 1988<sup>72</sup>, but on the other hand, those strikes are envisioned as triggered by secret services. Their alleged aim was to put credibility on the Solidarity side as a force appropriate to negotiate with due to its ability to call off the strikes<sup>73</sup>. The ambiguous assessment of the social actions enables to attack the power holders and the opposition as well. It uses not only the romantic, martyrological and insurrectional allusions and tone but also demonizes the communist side, by attributing them the ability to control everything what is against it. In the last instance, however, the social attitudes are the most important aspect of the situation. As it is argued, the potentiality of the strikes stronger than that from 1988, doubled with the withdrawal of the Soviet guarantees for the communist in Poland forced them to start the Round Table talks with the opposition<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> M.Ryba, Polityczny majstersztyk, „Nasz Dziennik” 18III1999, Nr 41, p.8; M.Likowski, M.Rotulska, Porozumienie ponad Narodem, „Nasz Dziennik” 6 – 7III1999, Nr 31, p.10; J.R.Nowak, O Okrągłym...op.cit., p.10.

<sup>69</sup> P.Bączek, Oszustwo stulecia, „Najwyższy Czas” 5II1994, Nr 6, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> Quotation after: I.Pręcikowska, A.Sarzyńska, Okrągły Stół 10 lat później, „Życie 8II1999, Nr 32, p.4.

<sup>71</sup> See: J.M.Jackowski, Bitwa...op.cit., p.22 i n.

<sup>72</sup> See: P.Jakucki, Rocznica...op.cit., p.1; A.Gelberg, Bo to wszystko nie tak..., „Tygodnik Solidarność” 1V1992, Nr 18, p.6.

<sup>73</sup> Prosto w...op.cit., p.266.

<sup>74</sup> See: J.Olszewski, Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 45 posiedzenia Sejmu III kadencji w dniu 4 marca 1999 r., available at: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl>, accessed: 20.05.2005 r.



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The Round Table per se is consistently represented as a kind of a blueprint or a game staged in the smallest details. Generally speaking, it is described as “the agreement between the communist nomenklatura with the part of the Solidarity elite”<sup>75</sup>. If one remembers two important premises on which the radical versions of anticommunism were founded: the thesis on the changeless essence of the communism and its tendency to hide the truth about itself, it becomes obvious to what extent the vision of communism affects the way the Round Table, Magdalenka and “the thick line” are represented. The actual function of the Round Table, Magdalenka as a secret meetings forum and, consequently, “the thick line” policy was securing the status quo, despite the change of its external manifestations<sup>76</sup>. The Round Table provided the symbolic facade, the scene on which the spectacle of negotiations was acted out. According to this discursive position, it was nothing but a show aimed at making the impression of tough bargaining between antagonized sides trying to maximize their interests. Accordingly, Magdalenka is perceived as behind the scenes realm – a place where the most important decisions were made<sup>77</sup>. It helped to sustain the communism in the country. As the communism always tended to use manipulation, and displayed a truth about himself reluctantly and only in extraordinary occasions, its transformation also required mystification<sup>78</sup>.

The Round Table is depicted through the metaphor of the theatre (e.g.: screenplay, actors, performance<sup>79</sup>). Moreover, there are expressions suggesting its instrumental character (e.g. “the political masterstroke”<sup>80</sup>), its fraudulent status (e.g. „the great mistification”<sup>81</sup>) or its strangeness to the society and anti-national character (e.g. „the betrayal”<sup>82</sup>). As to the Magdalenka it was a forum of secret meetings. The discourse does not adduce any evidence to prove that<sup>83</sup>. Subsequent events, assessed negatively assessed and treated as direct outcomes of the Round Table and Magdalenka, are considered as sufficient evidence<sup>84</sup>. Their allegedly anti-national and pro-communist

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<sup>75</sup> J.Olszewski, Triumf i klęska Okrągłego Stołu, „Biuletyn Ruchu Odbudowy Polski” 1999, Nr 7, p.1.

<sup>76</sup> See: Prosto w...op.cit., p.266; Konspiratorzy i negocjatorzy, „Gazeta Polska” 24II1999, Nr 7, p.9.

<sup>77</sup> „The most important events took place behind the curtains”. See: W.Kańka, Szantaż Kiszczaka, „Głos” 4XII1999, Nr 114, p.11.

<sup>78</sup> Such a way of thinking can be exemplified by the J.Olszewski’s words that the main force of the communist system after 1956 was not terror but „the experience of secretly and deeply hidden political manipulation”. See: J.Olszewski, Nie nasza Polska, „Nasza Polska” 4VI1997, Nr 23, p.3. See also: T.Bochwic, A.Gelberg, Jak to się stało?, „Tygodnik Solidarność” 1X1993, Nr 40, p.7.

<sup>79</sup> J.Olszewski writes on „the incorrectly staged play”. What was striking for him in the Round Table was its „incredible theatricality of the entire event”; „it was entirely prepared and created situation”; as he claims everything made an impression of the „huge, scrupulously designed spectacle”. Zob.: Prosto...op.cit., p.267, 270, 272.

<sup>80</sup> P.Bączek, Jak majstrowano Okrągły Stół, „Gazeta Polska” 27VII1995, Nr 30, p.1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12; M.Ryba, Polityczny...op.cit., p.8.

<sup>81</sup> P.Bączek, Wielka mistyfikacja, „Głos” 1 – 6IV1999, Nr 64, p.12 – 15.

<sup>82</sup> P.Jakucki, Świętowanie zdrady, „Nasza Polska” 10III1999, Nr 10, p.1; A.Macierewicz, Okrągły Stół czy zdrada narodowa?, „Głos” 5 – 7II1999, Nr 25, p.8 – 9.

<sup>83</sup> J.Bukowski, Tajemnicze dziedzictwo Magdalenki, „Ład” 8XI1992, Nr 45, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Such a line of reasoning is accurately reflected in two utterances: „In my deepest conviction the protection of the property of the communist party is nothing but the realization of some secret deals or the clauses to these deals and

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character is perceived as the best indicator of secret deals. The change of the election rules in June 1989 and the election of the former dictator W.Jaruzelski for the president by the General Assembly are the events referred to particularly often<sup>85</sup>. The Round Table and Magdalenka are represented as mysterious events and this is the aura which is deliberately not dispelled. On the contrary, the function of both categories is to make an impression that there are some secret forces behind the transition and transformation processes<sup>86</sup>. These labels and their derivatives (e.g. “the Round-Tableness”, “magdalenkowy”<sup>87</sup>) as categories with the inherently negative value are used to discredit the phenomenon they are applied to describe.

The representation of the Round Table and Magdalenka are underpinned by at least one general premise determining the construction of utterances on this discursive position. It is the belief that the organization of social and political relations is determined by the domination of the merely one subject. It has at its disposal all the resources (e.g. the cultural, institutional, financial and social) necessary to carry out own political projects<sup>88</sup>. The role of such subject is played on this discursive position obviously by the communist side. Its omnipotence is epitomized exactly by the Round Table and Magdalenka, two functionally connected institutions aimed at sustaining the essence of the communist system. The communist side was able, if not to design the scenario (prepared in Moscow), at least to its effective implementation and control over the subsequent course of events. Interestingly enough, its success should not be limited merely to the accomplishment of certain plan prepared elsewhere.

As the third discursive position holds, the significance of The Round Table and Magdalenka goes far beyond 1989 and its events. These are the institutions which established the generalized matrix of power relations. The division of power between negotiating sides as well as the underlying philosophy of the Round Table and Magdalenka has determined the distribution of power and resources in practically almost all spheres. The Round Table as the relation between

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not merely the outcome of wrongly interpreted state of public feelings or result of the wrong political philosophy”. See: S.Niesiołowski, *Reguły gry*, „Ład” 10VI1990, Nr 23, p.11. „It is surprising how little one knows on so called deals from Magdalenka, preceding the Round Table. Judging from the consecutive events and certain symptoms, which I observed [...] in Magdalenka something must have been guaranteed to nomenklatura. The prevailing atmosphere of the fraternization [...] certainly had to have some causes. What causes? I don't think we will find out”. See: M.Łowiecki, *Na stole i pod*, „Tygodnik AWS” 14II1999, Nr 7, p.36.

<sup>85</sup> Gdy...op.cit., p.202; P.Skórzyński, *Resumé*...op.cit., p.4; P.Bączek, *Wielka*...op.cit., p.15; A.Kern, *Krótko*...op.cit., p.4.

<sup>86</sup> See: *ROP jest nam najbliższy*, rozmowa z M.Krzaklewskim, „Gazeta Polska” 20II1997, Nr 7, p.7; M.Miszalski, *Do... „nowej Magdalenki”*, „Najwyższy Czas” 30VI1990, Nr 14, p.6.

<sup>87</sup> For example D.Goszczyński writes on „the post-Round Table silence” and J.Olszewski describes his government as „the post-Round Table accident”. Zob.: D.Goszczyński, *Moskiewska sieć*, „Najwyższy Czas” 20I1996, Nr 3, p.7; *Prosto w...*op.cit., p.347.

<sup>88</sup> For example the Round Table is envisioned as „the game played from the very beginning to the end merely by one side. On our side there were few people oriented in the whole process”. Zob.: *Prosto w...*op.cit., p.267. Zob. także: R.A.Ziemkiewicz, *Wspólny wróg*, „Spotkania” 27VIII – 2IX1992, Nr 40 – 41; D.Kasztelewicz, *Cienie władzy* kleptokracji, „Głos” 10XII1998, Nr 236, p.10.

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two sides is sustained and reproduced at all the levels of state structures securing the interests of the founders of the new regime<sup>89</sup>. Hence the arguments pertaining to the oligarchization of the Polish political life, the long-lasting and unsurmountable division of the political scene between “the Round Table” forces and these who were excluded from the power division and have no chance to become a legitimate subjects of the democratic political game<sup>90</sup>. Such premises serve to simplify reality through the reduction of complexity. The discourse is able to capture what is hidden behind apparently obvious, publicly available interpretations of the multiplicity of events, factors and divisions<sup>91</sup>. In such perspective the social and political processes are represented as logical, linear and repeating the historical mechanisms known from the past<sup>92</sup>. As their main aim is reproduction of the existing power relations key political actors tend to operate beyond the eyes of the democratic public opinion. That is why, according to discourse users such thinking is not based on a simplification and ahistorical reasoning but on the insightful reflection, able to penetrate the façade of the democratic politics. Accordingly, “the thick line” policy of T.Mazowiecki’s government is treated as the best evidence that a secret deals must have been made. Whereas the previous position keeps a distinction between the intents of the T.Mazowiecki and the actual policy of his government, here this division is systematically suspended. Premier is “guilty”<sup>93</sup>, because he „inaugurated”<sup>94</sup>, “ordered”<sup>95</sup> or „announced”<sup>96</sup> “the thick line” policy.

“The thick line” as a consequence of negotiations between the communists and the group of oppositionists brought manifold consequences. First, at the axiological level the boundary between the good and the evil was blurred, due to the fact that the communists were not called to

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<sup>89</sup> Wszystko od początku, rozmowa z J.Olszewskim, „Najwyższy Czas” 18IX1999, Nr 38, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> See ie.: S.Michalkiewicz, „Drugi etap” budowy demokracji, „Najwyższy Czas” 2III1996, Nr 9, p.4; P.Wierzbicki, Czy warto umierać za Magdalenkę, „Gazeta Polska” 25I1996, Nr 4, p.5; P.Jakucki, Czerwoni...op.cit., p.9; J.Engelgard, O co...op.cit., p.11. The Round Table deal is represented as a structure reproduced in many different situations. For example A.Macierewicz on the lustration as an issue which polarizes the political scene according to lines of division rooted in the Round Table talks period. See: A.Macierewicz, Sejmowy projekt lustracji chroni konfidentów, „Gazeta Polska” 13II1997, Nr 7, p.4. Even the expression „the Round Table syndrom” was coined to name the intellectual incapability to overcome the historical matrix. See: J.Rachowski, Stańc w prawdzie, „Nasza Polska” 8XI2000, Nr 45, p.10.

<sup>91</sup> Characteristic is the opinion of J.Olszewski: „It is difficult to imagine that this system [Third Republic – A.L.] come into being as unprogrammed accidental by-product of the reforms. No, there were too many activities, moves, systematically applied propaganda tricks which prove that it was rather way round”. See: Wyjście...op.cit., p.15. Similarly, A.Macierewicz comments upon the victory of Aleksander Kwasniewski in 1995 presidential elections perceived as „predictable and planned” by the Alliance between postcommunists and the Freedom Union party. See: A.Macierewicz, Wypowiedź w ankiecie pt.: Politycy o wyborach, „Gazeta Polska” 23XI1995, Nr 47, p.3.

<sup>92</sup> The following excerpt confirms the thesis that such a manner of reasoning was present on this discursive level: „Current situation [...] is substantially similar to the 1989 year with its non feasant, naivety of the part of incumbents and Bad will of the other part, unwillingness to deal with the communists and breaking the strenght of their camp. The unavoidable consequence of the 1989 was 1993, namely the coming back of the communists to political power”. See: M.Kamiński, Przeciw repecie z ’89, „Życie” 23I1998, Nr 19, p.13.

<sup>93</sup> Okaż łaskę złoczyńcy – a on się nie nauczy sprawiedliwości, rozmowa z J.Łopuszańskim, „Sprawa Polska” 1991, Nr 8, p.21.

<sup>94</sup> A.Macierewicz, Egzekucja...op.cit., p.

<sup>95</sup> J.Łopuszański, O potrzebie polskich propozycji politycznych, „Nasz Dziennik” 10VI1999, Nr 107, p.8.

<sup>96</sup> T.Ciołkowski, Rocznica wyborów w 1989 r., „Nasz Dziennik” 4VI1998, Nr 130, p.5.

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account<sup>97</sup>. The analyzed categories denote the events which brought only the social confusion, relativism and hollowed out the public sphere from the moral criteria<sup>98</sup>. Secondly, at the political and legal level the major problem is caused by the state capture, inability to deal with the past, continuation of the old networks and structures in the new regime and slowing down the necessary reforms<sup>99</sup>. Third, the source of problems at the economic level lies in the propertization of nomenklatura and creation of the political capitalism serving the interests of the functionaries of the old regime<sup>100</sup>.

The third position's unambiguous critique and robust rejection of the Round Table, Magdalena and "the thick line" are based on the concrete alternatives which, if implemented, would have completely changed the country's situation. If it comes to the Round Table, it is argued that the oppositional side should have waited. The system itself was gradually declining. The more difficult would have been the situation of the communists, the more the oppositional side could gain<sup>101</sup>. Beyond that, contrary to negotiations, in the situation of the regime's downfall its functionaries would have to yield to the pressure posed by the spontaneously created oppositional structures, not those created by the regime itself. Consequently, the opposition would have captured the power earlier and without the personal and structural burden posed by the informal relations. Symbolically, the situation would also have been better as the victory over communism would be clear without any attempts of cooptation from the regime which put the opposition in the ambiguous situation. It is assessed that the haste of the Solidarity's left – "the revisionist elites" slow down the democratic process and postponed the first fully democratic elections until 1991<sup>102</sup>. Such an alternative scenario is supplemented by the idea of the ceremonialisation of the end of the communism and the inauguration of the new system. Performative activity of the state officials symbolically marking off the old order would draw a clear line at the level of political elites and social consciousness as well<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> J.Pawlas, Czerwony karnawał trwa, „Nasz Dziennik” 5I2000, Nr 4, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> For example one writes on „amoral thick-liness”. See: J.Kwieciński, Odcinki, „Gazeta Polska” 1993, Nr 9, p.16. Zob. także: Z.Najder, Wielkie...op.cit., p.7; Niedostrzegalna...op.cit., p.7; M.Piłka, Postkomunistyczne zagrożenia, „Nasz Dziennik” 19V2000, Nr 116, s.13; J.Parys, Moralność szarej strefy, „Rzeczpospolita” 29VIII1994, Nr 200, s.3; Okaż...op.cit., p.21; E.Isakiewicz, Przekłete...op.cit., p.12.

<sup>99</sup> J.Załęski, Gruba kreska, „Myśl Polska” 30VI1996, Nr 26, p.4.M.Ryba, Polityczny...op.cit., p.8; J.Pawlas, Czerwony...op.cit., p.13; M.Likowski, Wokół „okrągłego stołu”, „Nasz Dziennik” 6III1998, Nr 20, p.6; J.R.Nowak, O Okrągłym...op.cit., p.11; Konspiratorzy...op.cit., p.9; P.Jakucki, Kanciasty stół, „Nasza Polska” 10II1999, Nr 6, p.1.

<sup>100</sup> „On the economic level the forming strata of owners, including the middle class was constituted mainly from the people of former nomenklatura and secret services”. See: A.Macierewicz, Egzekucja...op.cit., p.9.

<sup>101</sup> On the opinions of J.Olszewski and A.Macierewicz on this issue see: S.M.Królak, Czy istniała alternatywa dla „okrągłego stołu”?, w: „Solidarność” a wychodzenie Polski z komunizmu. Studia i artykuły z okazji XV rocznicy powstania NSZZ „Solidarność”, Gdańsk 1995, p.118 – 122.

<sup>102</sup> A.Macierewicz, Gdy...op.cit., p.197 i 200.

<sup>103</sup> „After the June elections of 1989 there was an opportunity to announce the break in accordance with the will of voters. [...] So the chance for creating by the victorious anticommunist camp a new ideology of the independent state, analogical to that efficiently created by the Second Republic of Poland [1918 – 1939 – A.L.] was wasted. Nothing at

## 5. Conclusions

What is characteristic to all the three discursive positions is their reluctance to use the analyzed categories as a part of legitimizing formula. If employed, they are used very rarely or with many qualifications. Second and third position use them rather to delegitimize political opponents<sup>104</sup> and to diminish own contribution to the processes denoted by these categories<sup>105</sup>. Common is also the ambiguity as an important property of the Round Table's representation. According to the first position the ambiguity was unavoidable due to the lack of revolutionary public feelings. Other discursive positions emphasized that it was the task of the elites to initiate a breakthrough. Such an attempt, even without a revolting social ground would change the situation and affect the collective consciousness. The second thread, common to all distinguished variants of right wing discourse claims, contrary to the assumptions shared by the postcommunist historiography<sup>106</sup>, that it was not the democratic spirit which induced the communists to start negotiations, but rather cold calculation aimed at sustaining power through the cooptation of oppositional forces. These two observations exhaust the degree to which three position overlap. There are more differences which determine the boundaries between positions. They pertain to the question of representativeness of the Solidarity side negotiating with the communists, problem of relation between scene and behind the scene activities, issue of agency of the opposition camp or the opinions on the available alternatives. The origins of this division can be found in the beginning of 90. and ascribed to the so called "war at the top" when the Solidarity movement started to differentiate. That event divided the Solidarity into two camps. The first camp, favourable to the actual course of democratization and shape of the Third Republic positively assessed the Round Table, treated the rumours pertaining to the plot in Magdalenka as the intellectual aberration, recognizing "the thick line" policy as a historical necessity. The second camp was very critical towards the outcomes of the Round Table and Magdalenka and strongly against "the thick line policy" as a measure which broke a trajectory of necessary changes, being responsible for the hybrid status of the Third Republic. It is not difficult to find strong affinities between two camps and discursive positions right wing parties were able to occupy after 1989. As to the third position distinguished here, it can be perceived as the radicalization of the opinions formulated from the second camp.

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least similar was done. On the opposite, the difference between the Polish People's Republic and The Third Republic was blurred. >>The thick line << of Prime Minister Mazowiecki became not the synonym of break of bonds but forgetting about differences". See: Z.Najder, *Wielkie...dz.cyt*, p.7.

<sup>104</sup> For example, in the run up of presidential elections of 1995 Jan Parys declared: „I did not took part in the Round Table talks, neither in the meeting in Magdalenka. The obligations which were taken there I consider illegal. I will do everything so as the constellation of power created there without the approval of the nation ceased to govern Poland". See: J.Parys, *List do członków Politycznego Zespołu Koordynacyjnego*, „Gazeta Polska” 1VI1995, Nr 22, p.3.

<sup>105</sup> See for example: *Czas na...op.cit.*, p.21.

<sup>106</sup> See e.g.: *Polska pod rządami PZPR*, red.M.Rakowski, Warszawa 2000.

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Yet, its radicalism, the individualist interpretation of political processes and leaning towards conspiracy theories, the features of reasoning developed throughout 90. has introduced the qualitative difference between this position and the second one.

The constitution of these two camps affected the structure of public discourse in the consecutive years. The construction of 1989 in the political discourse was strongly determined by these early divisions. What is often raised by the analysts of Polish public discourse is high degree of its ritualization<sup>107</sup>. The categories, key words, motives, themes and constructions have been resistant to change, being repeated in almost unchanged shape since the beginning of 90. The more important the topic the more conventionalized it has been. What determines the importance of the 1989 in Poland is its crucial character for the subsequent course of events, confirming the comparativist idea of path dependency<sup>108</sup>. From the constructivist points of view one should even say more, it is the perception of the post-communist reality that determines the significance and the meaning of 1989. Not accidentally, the most radical opponents of the Third Republic are critical of The Round Table or “the thick line” and suspicious of Magdalenka. In this sense 1989 and its constitutive events should be perceived as still actual rather than past problems.

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<sup>107</sup> See: Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego, red. M.Czyżewski, S.Kowalski, M.Piotrowski, Kraków 1997.

<sup>108</sup> See i.e. S.P.Huntington, Trzecia fala demokratyzacji, Warszawa 1995, p.216 – 236; J.Linz, A.Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe, Baltimore and London 1996, p.55 - 65; D.Stark, L.Bruszt, Postsocialist pathways. Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe, Cambridge 1998, p.80 - 109; G.Pridham, The Dynamics of Democratization. A Comparative Approach, London and New York 2000, p. 29 – 59, 93 – 136.