Between the State and Solidarity: One Movement, Two Interpretations - The Orange Alternative Movement in Poland

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ABSTRACT

The movement known as Orange Alternative emerged in Poland in early 1980s and it continues to operate even though the original conditions of the socialist reality changed. From a relatively small and vanguard form of street theatre it grew to a form of manifestation of one's discontent with the world of symbols. A similar movement exists in Hungary. In this work the Orange phenomenon is analyzed as a form of response to dichotomous organization of social space in the pre- and post-revolutionary period in Eastern Europe.

In May 1990, almost a year after Communists have relinquished power in Poland and the hammer and sickle logos vanished from the semiotic picture of local politics, a peculiar street event took place in Warsaw. Assisted by a group of young people, the leader of the Orange Alternative movement has proclaimed himself the king of Poland and the mock ceremony of coronation followed. The meaning of this coronation was obviously different from the image of ceremony as held in England. The proclamation read during this ceremony indicated that the movement's leader had appealed to both Solidarity chairman Mr. Walesa and the Pope John Paul II asking them to 'fill the void' and become the kind of Poland and, when his appeal was ignored, has taken initiative into his own hands.

Yet Poland is not a kingdom, and this event is a culmination of ten-year history of unprecedented social movement. The Orange Alternative is known to its participants, news reporters and town managers, the law enforcement authorities for its conspicuous forms of collective behaviour in public places, forms which are called by the participants: 'the happenings' or 'the snow clouds'. The form of the street theatre, or improvised performance which includes the passersby and the animators, has been a novelty a decade ago, when the social scene in Poland was dominated by a grim communist presence.

The movement did not wither away with the instauration of the new regime. To the contrary, after the initial muting it took on with new vigor. Interestingly, in 1989 in Hungary a movement of similar character emerged and has marked its social presence by publishing the two-weekly magazine *The Hungarian Orange*. At the time when social life in Poland and Hungary, respectively, have been profoundly saturated with political and economic meanings, most movements, parties and institutions respond with intensified ideological appeal. The 'Orange' movements, however, operate in different semiotic space which I explore in this text. I focus here on the intersection of social, political and cultural space determined by three factors: the state, the omnipotent social movement and the consciousness and connaissance of everyday life (quotidian).

The state for most part of the past decade (and for the three preceding decades, too) has been an authoritarian and repressive communist-run apparatus, although in 1990 its magnitude has certainly been considerably reduced. At any rate, the national state, as Dear and Clark observe,[1] must maintain two façades: 'it must appear to represent the interests of the whole of society for legitimacy, and it must also facilitate the power of certain groups of society for its own growth and power'. In the situation of lack of legitimacy, as it occurred in Poland under communist rule, the façades were easily identified as such, and the devaluation of the system of meanings followed. Likewise, the social movement (Solidarity), has been powerful and holistic in its penetration of social life. Especially at its origins, it allowed the alignment of intellectuals and workers within the larger political environment, it offered considerable organization to the aggrieved population and produced some sort of 'collective assessment of the prospects of successful insurgency'.[2] Subsequently, the state and the social movement have delimited the field of the quotidian whereby the knowledge and consciousness of society have been caught between these two forces.

The refurbishing of Polish political and social scene took place mostly due to the fact that Solidarity (and various other forces of what until recently used to be an opposition) have grabbed a 'political opportunity'[3] at the time when at least part of the population could have been easily mobilized for collective action. Orange Alternative draws attention because it never was an organized opposition, it was never mobilized by or incorporated into any major political force. The movement originated as a permanent cultural alternative to the communist order of meanings (façades), to the religious holism of values (catholic ethics), and to the materialistic beliefs of industrial society, among which the conviction that work plays principal role in the structuring of meanings of everyday life of the entire population stood especially high. The history of the post-war socialist development, the so called forced industrialization, and the contemporary

and profound economic crisis in Poland suggest indeed that the economy, consumption, production and the political organization of labor play especially significant role in determining the field of the quotidian. Elsewhere in the world, as Urry indicates,[4] there is a post-modern culture which effectively replaces the post-industrial one. Poland is certainly not at this stage yet, and most of social movements, political parties and cultural trends belong to the old (industrial), rather than to the new (post-modern) cultural paradigm. The Orange Alternative can be seen as an exception to this rule.

Although the Orange Alternative escaped rigorous academic analysis – in particular it would be futile to apply the 'old' or the 'new' social movements' theory to this event – it calls for intellectual and academic recognition. Its very existence complements the list of ontological problems enlightened with the most recent era of transition in Eastern Europe. Its relative success during the period preceding the new stage of labor protest, its popularity even at the time of massive strikes of mid-1988, its (mocking) activity at the time when the whole of Poland kept holding its breath for the re-instatement of the free trade union late in 1988 and early in 1989, and its continuous presence in the recent period of Solidarity's government indicate that there is much in the production of socialist social reality that is not dealt with, and maybe cannot be dealt with, by the workers' movement. Furthermore, the fact that a sister-movement took off in Hungary, where, after communist domination, a centrist government was instaured, suggests that the problems of production of semiotic meanings in the post-totalitarian period is a universal one, and so is the role played by the theatrical, alternative, Orange movement.

The communist authorities' differential treatment of the Orange movement – from neglecting it as an opposition force back in 1983–1984, through criticizing it for its alleged youthfulness or immaturity in 1986–1987, ridiculing it as fools' play in early 1988, and to persecution and beating up of its members late in 1988 – testifies that Orange Alternative became an element of the political landscape in Poland. Also, the fact that the 'snow-clouds' continue under the Solidarity-led government, and that the language of politics is again helpless in how to label such events, further suggests that the Orange movement is a swaying element on the continuum of public behaviour that ranges from politicization to theatralization.

The movement's presence in the social space of Poland and Hungary contradicts a certain poverty of the socio-political picture which was drawn mostly by the politically oriented journalists, the political scientists and some sociologists.[5] Such a poverty resulted from two different cognitive processes. Firstly, for those who came to observe the processes from within, the spectrum is so wide that it necessarily requires some order. A dichotomous picture is an instant remedy and social life is depicted as stalled by the two actors. Such

accounts necessarily use the semiotic images produced by the two principal political and social forces. Secondly, for those who make the observation from long distance, the spectrum is so narrow that only the most powerful actors are visible. Time and again, actors are usually two: the state and society, or the Party and Solidarity (or other contending movement), the state and the church and so on. The yawning gap between the political images of the communist party and that of contending movement, even after the transition of power to the latter, is striking many students of East European affairs.

From the journalistic or sociological accounts it transpires that there is no alternative in terms of basic social values, commitments, programmatic statements, and that the entire society is captivated by the opposition of political forces, contradiction of values and two-foldedness of the world-views. Polish society is therefore seen as facing the 'either-or' dilemma: old political forces versus new social movements, command economy versus the market one, secular organization versus the sacral one. It appears that there is virtually no space for the emergence of social forces, political trends, intellectual streams or everyday experiences other than informed by either the praxis of the former communist party or the one of Solidarity. The negotiations at the round table, conducted during the Spring of 1989 and the subsequent elections which led to the establishment of the new political landscape have further contributed to this image where lack of alternative social space is a basic characteristic. Situations elsewhere in Eastern Europe (i.e. in Romania) suggest that confronted with the 'either-or' dilemma, many elect the old elements. Even though the number of political parties and groupings is ever growing the clear demarcation line between the 'old' and the 'new' (the 'new' can frequently be conservative as well, since there is a re-birth of traditional political orientations in Poland) leaves most of the observers of the Polish scene with the impression that the choices are limited to those coming from the opposing angles.

My argument in this paper is that the Orange Alternative movement bridges the gap between the dichotomous social and political forces, enriches the sphere of culture, encourages social criticism and by and large introduces new quality into the sphere of collective behaviour.

1. THE 'LIFE HISTORY' OF THE ORANGE ALTERNATIVE

While the group which called itself The Orange Alternative became nationally visible in the second half of the 1980s, its origins reach to the period of Solidarity's legal existence. Paradoxically, the core of the movement emerged from a conflict with the Independent Student Movement (NZS). At the time of mushrooming new associations, a

group which called itself The New Culture Movement, became legalized at the University of Wroclaw. It did not have any equivalent elsewhere, nor did it become an element of the wider student organization. It consisted of students of the University and of the Fine Arts Academy in Wroclaw. Its objective was first of all cultural: the movement attempted to stipulate artistic and contesting actions. At the time of the crisis of hopes and conflict of values, the movement sought to deepen aesthetic sensitivity, to build constructive ethics, and to establish humanistic social relations. In its first public appearance in late October 1981 the New Culture Movement organized a march-demonstration under the auspices of the following slogan: 'Away with symmetry! Long life to free imagination!'

Both the slogan and the character of the demonstration sat oddly with the then popular climate of social life: vindications, strikes, negotiation of popular demands, hunger marches. The street art which was promoted by the NCM was seen as very distant from the mainstream political life in Poland of the early 1980s. Society was much more preoccupied with building horizontal links between various, newly emerging forms of organizational life which would better serve the purpose of countering the state's overwhelming presence, than with creating as positive culture.

When most of the student associations, like their sister trade union organizations, were involved in the ongoing political conflict with the communist authorities, The New Culture Movement apparently was more preoccupied with problems of peace, and the group proposed to organize a peace march that would remain in the spirit of similar efforts quite common in the West. The initiative itself was probably one of the very first in the Communist bloc (apart from the very narrow experience of the Hungarian Independent Peace Movement). The institution most opposed to this initiative, according to NCM leader Waldemar Frydrych, was the Solidarity's Executive Regional Committee for Lower Silesia.[6] The conflict, though, was either of a logistic nature (the trade union executives were afraid that the march would spark provocations), or a political nature (independent organizations were troubled by internal struggles for domination). Although the march was called off in the first instance, the tension between the NCM and the Executive Regional Committee continued and eventually resulted in the NCM organizing its own meeting at the Olympic Stadium. Several thousand people came to the meeting which turned out to be the first large-scale happening.

Born out of conflict, the NCM got its 'Orange Alternative' label out of joke and denial. Endless bureaucratic and organizational obstacles created by the surrealist life of 1981 Poland made an idea of publication of a journal virtually impossible. Frydrych, who uses the military rank of 'the Major' as his pseudonym, used his contacts at the Fine Arts Academy in Wroclaw to publish the first issue of *The Orange*

Alternative during the Fall 1981 students' strike. Again, the idea appeared to be too light for the semi-professional strike organizers who used the same argument as the Executive Regional Committee: the journal could be potentially used by the state television against the strikers. Frydrych reports that a complicated struggle took place during the strike in which the strike committee attempted to oust the 'Orange' NCM members from the strike. Ironically, all of this happened in Communist Poland, the strike organizers reaching to the repertory of the state authorities and eventually agreeing that *The Orange Alternative* be published if the Editors subjected themselves to the scrutiny of the strike organizers' censorship.

This new journal, however, received considerable circulation among the youth circles in Wroclaw. Unlike many politically contesting publications, *The Orange Alternative* had a clear ontological objective – to describe, understand and explain the social reality through non-conformist contents. While most other journals of the 'second' (i.e. unauthorized) circulation were simply printed on some obscure xeroxes and relied only on the semantic message, *The Orange Alternative* offered extremely thoughtful and ambitious graphics and relied heavily on syntax. The cultural underground and the alternative education movement were the first elements of the East European version of the cultural movement which labelled itself Socialist Surrealism.

The movement has proclaimed its own Manifesto, authorship of which is ascribed to Major Frydrych. This interesting document contains three principal statements. Firstly, it proposes that imagination is the key to individual freedoms.

> Imagination makes the world without limits. (. . .) Hope is our most frequent enemy. (. . .) There is no single force in human life which could restrain the uncontrolled worlds of imagination. It transcends everything without using any real force; our imagination lives in us as long as it is free.

Secondly, it suggests that politics and politicians have, unwillingly, contributed to the survival or re-birth of free imagination and of surrealism. This survival happened even against the temporarily successful ideology of rationalism.

> Imagination is the first thing compromised in life (. . .) Realists are solitaire, surrealists never are. (. . .) Part of our youth was drowned in the boring thoughtlessness. (. . .) Who is guilty of injecting intellectual devotionalism into this generation? (. . .) Luckily, even in the most difficult years, thanks to politicians, surrealism found its shelter in our public toilets. (. . .) Rationalism was unable to conquer the toilets.

Thirdly, it states that the entire world can be seen as an object of art and that surrealism makes it possible to treat the world as a play.

> Even a single militiaman on the street is an object of art. Let's play; our destiny is not the crucifix. Why should one suffer if one can play? (. . .) Religion is the opiate or the daydream of the masses. Love, on the other hand, (. . .) is the only idea that can be coupled with the idea of life itself.
>
> *Manifesto of Socialist Surrealism*

The Orange Alternative contended that reifying rationalism of the 1970s was a dead end for individual development and that philosophers or intellectuals played a servilistic role in this process of capturing of human minds. The fact that individual freedom survived can be attributed to clumsy politicians whose activity created surrealism which, in turn, freed individual minds. It is significant that at the time when workers, peasants, students – practically everybody – turned to some form of conspicuous religious behavior, the 'Alternative' proposed freeing one's mind from this type of dependency. When leading oppositionist Adam Michnick proclaims that Solidarity was a movement which had its own utopia characterized by the ten commandments and the Bible,[7] and that this was the sole utopia worth believing in, the 'Alternative' criticized the left, the right and the sacred, pointing to the political bigotry which dominated the Polish scene of social life. Frydrych openly admits that political commotion of the early 1980s has created, or at least favored, organizations or factions which do not meet the requirements for the progressive, or leftist, movement. One of the last postulates of the Orange Alternative, therefore, was that a 'true' workers' party should be created, and Frydrych quotes a slogan which became popular in Wroclaw: 'PPR (the workers' party)-attraction; PPS (the socialist party)-reaction.' Interestingly, only the socialist party was created by the political opposition.

Declaration of Martial Law in December 1981, has had a dual impact on societal perceptions of social reality. Firstly, it affected unilateral commitment to either one of the projects of society. Secondly, it produced so many restraints on individual psychology and on social life alike that the only way to ease the pressure of the hopelessness would be to make an excursus into the surrealist experience. Several people of the opposition indicate that Martial Law has affected their perception of social reality, and while the program of Solidarity has remained pretty much the same, the image of the surrealist social reality has filtered the range of considered options.[8] A series of interviews conducted in 1984 with the members of the power elite and of the underground elite[9] also suggests that the sour experience of Martial Law did not, in fact, help to create a clearer, less schizophrenic social reality. To put it very briefly, everybody has realized that there are no satisfactory and absolute solutions, and situations force most people to some sort of compromise which, in

turn, creates dissonance. While the communist authorities somehow came to grips, with the unwanted existence of Solidarity, they apparently feared the unspecified number of young happeners who were capable of swinging the emotions of the urban folks. The key obviously lies in the fact that however oppositional Solidarity was, it was, nevertheless, predictable. But the movement which is fluctuant, does not have clear structures and, most of all, cannot be attributed to any anti-state political program is much more of a problem.

Those transformations were functional for the Orange Alternative. Martial Law put an end to the immediate conflict between the Alternative and the opposition.[10] When Martial Law was eased, the Alternative took off on its own, working out its own technique of organizing collective episodes.

Major events organized by the Orange Alternative are called 'carnivals' or 'snow-clouds'. Such events are mixture of centrally 'distributed' ideas with the local, or individual initiatives of several organizing sub-collectives. The major idea, however, is to do away with the 'grey reality,' the boredom of street life, and the apathy of passersby. The shock brought about by the Martial Law was a widespread terror, an awareness of the polarized parties involved in the serious encounter. State authorities intended for conspicuous display of the police forces to deter citizens from taking any organized political action. Indeed, the years of Martial Law were marked by numerous episodes in which the protesters attempted to display banners of the outlawed Solidarity while the police, using water cannons, truncheons and similar requisites of the street struggle, chased the protesters. Demonstrators were trying to avoid being arrested, police were trying to catch as many as possible, and those non-involved were trying to flee the scene with as few scratches as possible. Behind such serious episodes were obviously the political struggle and the serious opposition against the regime.

The key idea of the Orange Alternative, it appears, was to socialize the people to the situation of protest, to make of the protest episodes the element of everyday street life. Even more so, Frydrych himself and several of his co-organizers intended to break with the monotony and dullness of the protests, making the events important and interesting to the participants. Therefore, the 'Alternative' brought some fun into the street scenes. Starting with the colorful clothing (often orange or red), paper decorations (the 'Aurora' cruiser), posters, masks, gremlin hats, and banners so serious that everybody would smile (such as *We are For*!, *Love the People's Police*!, *Long Life to the Undercover Agents*!) the organizers attracted onlookers' attention, offering them an attractive form of happening, laughter and mockery of the entire system. Common plays, chants and dances became the constant element of the street life. The intervening police did not encounter any opposition, and the protesters peacefully loaded the

police cars, kissing the officers and inviting them to play. One of the major and the busiest streets in Wroclaw, Swidnicka Street, became the arena of hide-and-seek games between scores of young policemen and their peers wearing red hats and declaring the 'Gremlins' Revolution'. On St. Nicholas Day of 1987, the streets were full of 'Orange' happeners, who strolled with hands full of candy which they gave out freely to the passersby. To the complete surprise of the vigilant police forces, they were busy installing Christmas decorations on the street trees. While it was not difficult to pack the demonstrators into the police cars, it was impossible to have them convicted or penalized. The St. Nicholas celebration was organized under the auspices of friendship with the [economic] reform. 'Major' Frydrych, wearing a devil's costume and carrying a huge poster promoting the reform, led the St. Nicholas festival. The reform, it was a public secret, has completely failed. The happening was completed by the authorities, who barricaded the streets with supply trucks selling otherwise scarcely available toilet paper to the crowding masses. The happeners responded by distributing fliers entitled *Who is Afraid of the Toilet Paper*? asking whether lines to buy the paper result from the leading role of the Communist Party in the advanced socialist society.

In 1987 the Orange Alternative had organized 15 different events: 'The Parade of the Casseroles' (April), 'Gremlins in Peoples' Poland' (June), 'Away with the Heats' (August), 'Anti-War Manifesto' (September), 'Who is Afraid of the Toilet Paper', 'The Day of Militiaman', 'Direct Action', 'The Day of the Army-Maneuvers', 'Rockmelon in the Mayonnaise', 'Toilet Paper-the Second Edition' (October), 'Eve of the Revolution', 'Referendum-the Meeting of Support' (November), 'St. Nicholas', 'The Evening of Three Kings', and 'The Orange-Blue Toast' (December).

During 1988 there were approximately a dozen events, including one major happening in Warsaw, where the Orange Alternative came out on the day which is, traditionally, the anniversary of the creation of the secret police. Scores of young people gathered around the statue of Felix Dzerzhynski, the founding father of the Soviet secret police, laying wreaths and chanting exhortations to love the policemen. Unlike during the Martial Law, when police tried to 'comb' possibly the vastest segments of the urban population and detain as many as possible just to spread terror, during the Warsaw event police tried to minimize the impact of the 'Orange' demonstration by prohibiting onlookers from entering the area and forbidding buses and tramways to unload their passengers, forcing them to drive past the congested area. The scenario for protest became surrealistically reverted; police were simply uncomfortable arresting demonstrators who declared friendship with the police forces. In the summer of 1988, the 'Alternative' organized an expedition to the Czechoslovakian borders under the banners of extending brotherly help to Czechoslovakia, an

act which clearly alluded to the disgraceful military intervention two decades ago.

In December 1988, the movement organized two major events: one in Warsaw and one in Wroclaw. In Warsaw, the street happening was called the 'Grande Bouffe' (The Obesity); groups of students strolled through the city, treating the passersby to salted pretzels. This happening took place at the time when the Polish domestic market suffered from the most extensive shortage of goods since 1981. Unlike their treatment on previous occasions, the 'Orange' happeners were brutally beaten and arrested, while the government declared that it was going to enforce 'respect.' Almost simultaneously, another happening commemorating the seventh anniversary of the introduction of Martial Law, took place in Wroclaw where the 'Orange' happeners wore the mocking uniforms of Polish paramilitary police. This second event took place independently of serious and quite dramatic commemoration protests organized by Solidarity supporters. In 1989 one would expect that activity of the movement would slow down due to the extraordinary political events (the round-table discussions, the elections and the formation of the non-communist government). The 'carnivals,' however, continued and focused on the most devaluated symbols of the state socialism, the monuments of: Lenin in Nowa Huta and Dzerzhynski in Warsaw. Subsequently both monuments have been removed, which is less of a political and more of a symbolic victory.

Each of the events organized by the Orange Alternative is unique since it ridicules a different aspect of socialist reality, inviting the onlookers to join the common play. Jesting, however, as it may appear, it is not. Better than any serious social criticism, the Orange Alternative enlightens the paradoxes of social life, pointing out that the clergy, the party apparatchiks and the military all belong to the same category, and that the bureaucracy wields totalitarian control over average citizens. The 'Alternative' was first to stage the street celebrations of the anniversary of the Great October Revolution (normally the State and the Party officials are mortally serious in their senseless meetings, called the 'academias'). The make-believe revolutionaries, chanting the names of Gorbachev and the Moscow Party Chief, Yeltsin, and carrying the perestroika-supportive banners, were attacked by the police before the eyes of crowding onlookers who commented on the symbolism of the scene.

The Orange Alternative is not a fixed social organization, nor is it a regular movement which, like Solidarity, would have a negative program (i.e., an agenda of issues to which the movement is opposed). Instead, the 'Alternative' is completely unpredictable, floating and flexible. It responds to the pettiness of official and oppositional forces, mocks the grandiose and meaningless decorativeness of Polish life, and tries to help people to get rid of ambivalence and ambiguity.

Frydrych himself in an interview[11] suggests that the policemen who are dispatched to deal with the happeners would either prefer to go home or have a beer, and – if ordered to shoot 1,000 people – they would most likely shoot only 600 and spare the remaining 400 out of laziness. He points to the fact that the tendency to favor surrealist behavior is only in lesser part the product of the communist powers, and in greater part it is already a product of society itself. The existing documents (mostly fliers, posters and underground press reports) do not contain an explicit political goal, but a picture of the alternative force emerges from several interviews: the Orange Alternative opposes or ridicules the rise of neo-conservatist attitudes within society and the state apparatus, and opposes the pseudo-workers' organizations under various guises; it welcomes the authentic workers' political party. Its major accomplishment, however, is that it has dispelled the myth of political order, thus doing away with fear, and has normalized the street protest. It runs contrary to the original goals of the military government, which wanted to normalize fear and obedience and mythologize the sources of its political power. It runs, also, against the original goals of the underground Solidarity, which attempted to normalize the underground political coalition between the banned trade union and the catholic organizations. Finally, it also runs contrary to the grand words of Soviet perestroika, which captured the minds of the Westerners and of some East Europeans.

What is the structure of the 'Orange' happenings? They appear to operate according to at least two different principles.

The first principle is that any official, and usually senseless celebration, commemoration or anniversary can be turned into a happening. The socialist reality provides ample possibilities for schizophrenic festivities: almost every profession has (even under the non-communist government) its 'own' day (such as the day of the fire fighters, the day of the school-teachers, the day of militia and secret servicemen, the day of the salespersons), not to mention longer celebrations which result either from the sad course of Polish history such as the month of national remembrance, the day of fighter for freedom and peace (celebrated by an extremely reactionary association of veterans who call themselves the 'fighters for freedom and democracy') or some early cultural policies of the socialist state (such as the days of education, book and press, which, for the past 40 years have marked an effort to publicize literacy). Finally, there is the pearl in the crown of socialist surrealism: 'Day of the Women' (March 8th), an absolutely meaningless celebration.

While the first type of the happening situation banks on existing yet surrealistic arrangements in public, or official life of Poland, the second type creates new surrealistic situations. In February, 1988, for example, the 'Alternative' organized the 'Rio-Workers Carnival' an event which somehow referred implicitly to the alleged leading role of

the working class in state socialism. Approximately 1500 people brought music and dance into the streets of Wroclaw. At the same time, participants displayed banners carrying a dual message: *The militia is playing with us!* or *Wroclaw is the Rio de Janeiro and the Las Vegas of Poland.* The flier distributed before the happening suggested the group's objectives

> Let's play around together and make foolish jokes. Long life to the clergy, undercover agents, angels, cardinals, opposition and militia . . . At the entrance to the bar we are going to display a banner: 'More carnival, games and mockery' . . .

The configuration of the targets (the clergy, the policemen, the cardinals and the opposition) of this carnival actually lists all major actors on the political scene. This suggests that the movement as such does not come up with a specific political profile. Or, to put it in a different way, to be 'non-political' in today's Poland is already a political program.

2. THE INTERPRETATIONS

Social facts, or new forms of social life, are produced at a pace far exceeding any reasonable progress of the social sciences. Making sense of such new developments is, in itself, a challenging epistemological enterprise, despite the fact that the results are frequently preliminary and sociological theory lags behind everyday life. Despite some criticism,[12] several studies of new Polish social movement(s) known under the various guises of Solidarity, have at least demonstrated the insufficiency of theory and contributed partial answers to the questions which haven't been asked before: what are the unfulfilled functions of social movements? how do members of society build their sense of identity? what is the logic of the Party-State response to the challenge of social movement? Those studies, however, failed to explain the nature of the social reality in which the new movements so unexpectedly emerged and functioned.

While one may find a journalistic description of Orange Alternative to be plausible, one may have difficulty grasping the movement's essence, goal or character. Even the most relaxed definitions of the so-called 'new' movements, do not appear to describe the Orange Alternative since it does not explicitly stand for any specific model of social change or target any particular social institution. Controversial and non-conformist as it was in the 1980–81 period, the movement (unlike Solidarity did) does not aim at the Communist state, nor does it aim at the Solidarity establishment; one could, therefore, conclude that it is 'safe.' Furthermore, unlike other major actors (i.e. the party, the church, or Solidarity), it does not possess an organizational

structure, nor does it have any particular executive bodies. It is interesting to note that the movement is based on participation, and not on belonginess. Participation is fluctuating: one comes and one goes; one is an element of the happening in the time and place when and where it happens, but once the happening is over, the member's role as such ceases to exist.

Nevertheless, I believe, one would err to assume that Orange Alternative is just an accidental configuration on the skies, transitional and ephemeral. Its target is much more general than that of any particular politically based movement. The 'Alternative' targets society at large; it does not attract one particular category of participants. The photos of the events show multi-generational participation. The accounts of organizers indicate that students, workers, the middle classes, even the policemen are attracted to and take active roles in the happenings.

In order to explain the movement at this early stage of its existence, one should, firstly, indicate what particular role the Orange Alternative plays or need it fulfills for the rank-and-file members of society. Secondly, one should point to the general processes that the movement initiates now, or could unleash in the future, processes which would most likely affect the polity and the society. Therefore, I provide here two arguments: one about the state of individual consciousness as a conducive condition for the cultural vanguard movement to emerge, and another about the course of political processes which may result if the movement continues to influence the society.

2.1. Between the 'First' and the 'Second' Societies: The Cognitive Dilemma & the Randomization of Behavior Hypothesis

The first hypothesis is that social life is split between two different worlds, neither of them being able to provide the individual with a consistent vision of social reality. The 'First' world, or the 'first project of society' as it is sometimes called is the one produced by the (until recently) official communist propaganda. It is fake, full of empty symbols and meanings and yet for the past forty years it was proclaimed the only valid and state-licensed reality. The 'Second' world, or 'the second project of society' is the one which stems from everyday experience, where the socialist values look much less gleaming, the grey reality negatively verifies every statement of the official propaganda and where people learn the emptiness of signs and symbols displayed by the 'first project'. The two worlds remain in conflict; they contradict and complement each other, thus creating a permanent cognitive dilemma for those caught in either of the two worlds. It is argued here that the Orange Alternative grew from such a

split reality and that by its very existence and character, it helps people cope with the cognitive dissonance.

The very emergence in the 'inter-Solidarity' Poland of the cultural, vanguard social movement indicates the complex nature of socialist social reality, part of which is epistemologically unavailable to the considerably large segment of society involved in either one of the two worlds. Politicization of social consciousness which results from devoted participation in one of the two worlds imposes either a rationalist or an existentialist (idealist) perspective which does not fit the surrealism of reality produced by the split between the two projects.

There are periods of strong dominance of one project and – subsequently – of one perspective when there is narrow social space for surrealistic criticism. For example, the years of 'ideology of success' (1970–1980) did not allow this type of critical activity; suffice to mention that the foremost surrealist playwright, Mrozek, found this particular period to be unbearable, and he left Poland. At the same time, Kundera determined that his surrealistic creation could not find home in his native Czechoslovakia. Those were the years of reification of social relations.

Alternatively, the years of the 'revolution of hopes'[13] attracted people's attention to the most striking and negative political aspects of the social reality and some unprecendented idealism arose which, for its own sake, could not tolerate surrealistic criticism. But the late 1980s saw the failure of the objectives of the 'First Society,' and the incompleteness of the project of 'Second Society'.[14] Participation in either of the worlds encountered equally surrealistic constraints, hence the need for the alternative project.

There is almost no disagreement regarding the failure of the 'First Society' – in Poland as well as in other socialist countries. What Hankiss found for Hungary is almost entirely applicable to Poland today. The 'First Society' was the project introduced during the political takeover of the 1940s when the hegemony of one country had overshadowed the very existence of diversified opinions, polarized societies and pluralistic interests. The 'First Society' is also, to a considerable degree, a product of the precipitation of the Cold War, when the political necessity to mobilize economic resources has dictated a range of totalitarian solutions. From a merely economic point of view, the project resulted also from the chronic reproduction of shortages that was supposed to be remedied by the implementation of the central state. In this sense it was almost assumed that the 'First Society' would be paralleled by the 'Second Society,' i.e., that the parallel participation in the first and second economic circuits would be the prescription for everyday survival of the labor force.

The 'First Society' is based on the principles of homogeneity, diffuseness and atomization; its economy is vertically organized, its

power is unidimensionally transmitted, its property rights are undefined and remaining within the central state, its life is centralized. Moreover, as Hankiss correctly points out, the elite of the 'First Society' has 'a more or less clear view' of the sphere of social reality. However impartial the picture, the project of the 'First Society' has promoted considerable visibility of social reality: the goals, values, modes of behavior, ideology, models of man, and standards of social structuration were meant to be conspicuously visible since, in the absence of any real commitment of the people, such a façade was meant to stand for the entire construction.

The historical and political reasons why the project failed are very complex. In general one could say that the state failed to deliver what it had promised. While Manchin and Szelenyi argued that the project encountered regular problems of economic growth and hence a 'crisis of transition' affected the 'First Society,' reinvigorating, by the same token, the 'Second Society,' Misztal maintained that the state attempted to control the uncontrollable and that it did so by removing democracy from its political agenda.[15] Such removals occurred periodically (1946, 1957, 1968, 1970, 1981) and immediately followed spontaneous attempts by society to do away with the economic and cognitive dualism of the two projects. In a recent television program[16] Georgi Arbatov conceded what has been observed by Misztal. Manchin and Szelenyi, however, are correct in diagnosing the product of such a failure as the 'grey reality.'

Dualism of the worldviews, dimorphism of values and schizophrenia produced by the collision of the festive values with grey reality have completely tarnished the entire project.[17] The continuous fading of social welfare policies, or the privatization of several spheres of social consumption provision,[18] has weakened the project, changing the balance of forces acting on the state, reducing the state's distributive control and unleashing spontaneous market processes. The material foundations of the 'First Society' are no longer real; only the unpleasantly mediocre collage of people and institutions, all plunged in learned helplessness,[19] and the cognitive dissonance of all involved in this project remain.

When the primary project crumbled, the social response was a series of spontaneous processes which contributed to the immediate strengthening of the 'Second Society'. It countered homogeneity with differentiation, horizontal economic organization, non-state ownership, limited autonomy and deliberate non-ideological programs. Subsequently, its view of society became either invisible, partially invisible, or so distorted that it produced a social fabric as unreal as and less comprehensible than the 'First Society'. Hankiss[20] makes the important remark that the distinction between the two societies does not imply existence of two distinctive groups of people. Instead, it suggests 'two dimensions of social existence governed by two different

sets of organizational principles'. As a result, most citizens move or float around in both of these dimensions.

Other observers[21] who focus on the Polish scene, also see this two-tiered social reality. People, it is reported, see social structures differently, depending on normalcy or non-normalcy of situations. When there is no imminent breakdown of economic stability, the vision of the 'First Society' dominates. But as soon as critical social situations arise, accompanied by high political tensions and economic breakdowns, the 'Second Society' dominates collective perceptions of social reality. Although social interpretation of social reality somehow differs from the one suggested by Hankiss, it is enough to imagine what happens to social consciousness when the pace of crisis-non crisis cycles increases. Perceptions of social reality sway from one extreme to another. The 'First Society' supplies the people with praxis of survival; the 'Second Society,' as Bakuniak and Nowak suggest, contributes to praxis of struggle.

The shifting images and swaying cognitive perspectives do not contribute to increased radicalism of political expectations, nor do they create accurate or psychological comfortable situations. Therefore, whether individuals move around the dimensions of social existence at liberty, as suggested for Hungary, or are forced to move by kaleidoscopically shifting circumstances, as suggested for Poland, the results – in terms of the state of social consciousness and the collective representation of society – are the same. While structural conditions still determine the society's ability to create coalitions, the social-economic conditions are also responsible for behavioral manifestations of existing problems. As indicated by Wesolowski,[22] coalitions, if ever accomplished, would determine some immediate solutions to problems of economic distribution and political representation. But coalitions would not solve the dilemma of people torn between distorted visions of social reality, between the demanding political situations and appalling economic conditions. For the people confronted with the monumental task of reconstructing a socio-political edifice of state socialism, people haunted by everyday economic shortages, people trying to make sense of the two, rivalling visions of the present, life is simply not so much fun. From this perspective, the movement of socialist surrealism or Orange Alternative makes an excellent example of randomization of behavior (diversifying the scope of behaviour beyond the predictable patterns) in order to avoid being totally caught by either of the two projects. Such randomization as offered by the 'Alternative' was, under political conditions of the post-martial law period, much more effective than similar offerings by Solidarity – hence the Orange Alternative was tremendously popular among the young generation.

I mentioned earlier that the existence of some special occasions was an element of the 'First' society which particularly contributed to the

degeneration of social life into the unacceptably surrealistic form. Originally, I believe, those special occasions were introduced as a sort of instant reward for the professional groups or lobbies most involved in implementing the socialist state – that is a reward for those who invented or implemented the 'First' project. Medals and awards, honorable mentionings or just flowers and tears have marked those celebrations in the early years since the implementation of the project did not pass without opposition. Several militiamen, fire fighters and teachers fell victim to the popular idea that the modernization and social change were associated with the implementation of the 'First' (state socialistic) project. During the days of open political struggle and also during the times when, for example, education, literacy and safety standards were so low that actually every effort brought about remarkable progress and improvements, such celebrations were an opportunity to re-evaluate efforts and policies and to increase the visibility of those immediately involved. Over the years, however, the conspicuousness of such endeavors has considerably lost its meaning. The level of education, after a short blooming, has decayed to such an extent that a school-teacher has become a symbol of profanity; the system of law has been so much abused that the militia officer has become a symbol of oppression and insecurity; the system of higher education has become so corrupt that the university administrator is now a symbol of bribery; the level of national health care has deteriorated so much that a medical profession has become a symbol of ignorance and insensitivity to human suffering. However, the bleaker the accomplishments, the stronger and higher the voice of the official ideology, which has finally produced the artificial image of the non-existing success. In the social consciousness, the rhetorics of the political language has become divorced from its predicates. Structurally speaking, for several years people were indoctrinated to believe that the overall improvement of social and economic life would be brought about by the agents of change; willingly or not they have also accepted the existence of the façade, the symbolic layer which accompanied the entire process. At some point, however, the improvements were gone, or the process of decremental deprivation occurred, but the propagandistic machine did not stop, creating a gap between reality and values or beliefs.

There is no doubt that such a gap accounts for the existence of an acute cognitive dissonance: while most of the society still believes that the state should provide free and equal health care, the state does not provide free and equal health care. Yet any individual solution to the cognitive dilemma is constrained by aggressive propaganda and lack of avenues for social criticism or constructive change. As a result, a generation of onlookers was bred, and the rank-and-file members became involved in passive participation in the meaningless rituals created by the 'First Society.' This is the very segment of Polish society

that became a target for the Orange Alternative: the passive, the tired, the grey, the mediocre passers-by who rush to get back home, burst into the stores to buy anything whatsoever, try to avoid any confrontation with the militia. But if they can't, these same onlookers will participate in the 'street politics'. They are frustrated because the failure of the economic, political and social aspects of the 'First' project rebukes them, while the official propaganda limits their possibility of actual withdrawal from the society. So the onlookers, who may have had positive attitudes towards the system, are confronted with negative information about it but have no ability to solve the dilemma. The very coming of the 'orange' happeners to the street scene has an immediately soothing effect: the hopeless, inescapably sad, grim and deadly serious situation rapidly becomes comical, full of humour. A militiaman, traditionally belonging to the gray and dehumanized reality, suddenly gains some human traces when he receives a bunch of flowers. But also, the hopeless celebration instantly can gain meaning, a different meaning, though, from that originally intended. When the 'orange' happeners celebrate the Great October Revolution of 1917, life becomes a cabaret, and even more so when scores of communist police attack the decoration of the 'Potiomkin'. Therefore, from the point of view of those who are a mix of the socialist breeding and social and economic frustration, the 'alternative' plays the role of a solution to the cognitive dilemma: while nothing serious can make sense of social reality, its transformation into a large scale street cabaret at least helps people cope with day-to-day life.

Also another category of participants, members of the second society rather than of the first one, is comprised of the rank-and-file members of the various underground or opposition movements, activists who play a vital role in keeping underground publications alive. Paradoxically, they aren't any better than the predominant members of the 'First Society'. For the people actively involved in the opposition, life is a struggle and the prospects for success or even any basic unity of opinions are still foggy. Apparently life is seen in 'black and white' terms, the inconclusiveness of the social situation (lack of progress and unclear programs, for example) reinforces the already negative attitudes and, thus, the cognitive dilemma is still present; this dilemma will wither away only with some measurable breakthrough (such as organizational improvements forced on the regime, democratization of political life, or economic improvement). In the absence of such measurable accomplishments, life, again, risks becoming meaningless. Under such circumstances, the happenings help to exhibit the superficial and mediocre character of the official social life, thus delivering some sort of immediate gratification. In view of the failure of the 'First' project, individual members of society realize the lack of prospects for massive upward mobility, and.

therefore, neither the existing social order nor the challenge of the opposition attracts them. The 'Alternative' provides an alternative solution, indeed.

The popularity of the 'Orange' happeners is ever growing. Surely, the Orange Alternative is not going to contribute to any immediate solutions to the Polish protracted social, economic and political crisis (this is best demonstrated by the absence of the Orange Alternative on any political scene of negotiations between the former communist authorities and the Solidarity and oppositional forces). It has, however, had an impact on society and individuals. The separation between the 'First' and the 'Second' project has been already mentioned. The existence of such a split in social reality is certainly not conducive to a positive rebuilding of society. As Sampson remarks, it puts the formal spine of a society beyond the sphere of moral obligations.[23] Polish people become alienated from the established environment and the fabric of social institutions. In an opaque way, the Orange Alternative brings the people back to where they belong: to the city streets, public places and official holidays. 'It is quite possible – says Albin, one of the members of the core movement – that soon one would be able to play guitar on the city streets without a threat of being sued for spreading social unrest'.[24] While different institutions of the 'Second Society' fought to claim their separateness from the 'First Society', the Orange Alternative simultaneously claims its place within both projects at the same time.

In view of the existing contradiction between the two worlds, the psychotherapeutic function is yet another of valuable aspects. As indicated earlier in this paper, turbulent events of past decades have left the Poles unable to comprehend either side of reality. The underground's remedy is not any better than that of the official line: both produce dissonance. The Orange Alternative proposes to leave the scene dominated by schizophrenia; it offers joy and togetherness. While people are constrained in the worlds created by the two projects, they can construct a world which offers them some desalinating features: freedom of expression, unrestricted and unlabelled participation and spontaneity. In the world of controlled processes, where one side contends that everything is controllable and the other maintains that everything is counter-controllable, the 'Alternative' offers complete non-restraint and, hence, the sense of freedom at the expense of realism.

Finally, the success of the 'Alternative' is also significant for yet another aspect of social life: tolerance. Poland does not have a strong record of tolerance; culturally and politically speaking, the society is highly conservative, punitive (Poles generally favor the death penalty), nationalistic, religious, and cautious in forms of cultural expression. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe the problems are similar and during recent forum of intellectuals in Krakow, Poland, the assessment of

growing intolerance has been made in alarmistic terms. The 'Alternative' does not claim to represent any particular and important segment of society; therefore, no one feels compelled to accept or reject its program. Instead, the movement offers free participation (not a membership) based on an individual's extemporaneous acceptance of an episode; the Orange Alternative's structure is based on an individual's inclinations to join the event. Therefore, if the movement in itself has no political bearing, it certainly affects the climate of personal relations, integrating young circles of urban society. According to Walesa, the future of Solidarity is the better, wiser and first of all younger movement.[25] Any social transformation of Poland will be carried out by the growing generation of people who do not remember either March 1968, or December 1970, or even August 1980. For those people, any efficient participation in the 'First Society' would be highly demoralizing, involvement in the 'Second Society' would be highly saddening and possibly demobilizing, and even in view of likely re-instatement of Solidarity, regaining some sense of social reality would still take a long while. The 'Alternative', if it continues, may play an important role in the positive socialization of society to the new stage of struggle and development, and, by extending the sphere of free participation, it may actually contribute to the shrinking of surrealism. Crucial for its survival from the perspective of this interpretation is its ability to maintain active contact with the creative intellectual circles of Polish society.

2.2. Transition from Authoritarian Rule: The Cultural Vanguard

The second hypothesis is that while the society is caught between the state and Solidarity, both coupled in a deadlock, the prospects of the transition from authoritarian rule lie in the existence of alternative movements that will come up with constructive and progressive programs. The democratization is not a process that can be implemented from above; the flexibility of the state administration can only facilitate it. Nor does the very existence of the oppositional structures (like the Walesa's Civil Committee) warrant by itself a democratic transformation. Such transformation can only appear if and when the society itself matures enough to adopt the working measures of democracy (equal opportunity, religious tolerance and overall social acceptance for the progressive forces). Otherwise, one authoritarianism will be replaced by another. This remark comes frequently from the current Solidarity government.

The process of transition from authoritarian rule bears several meanings which result from the hopes which accompany such a process. O'Donnell and Schmitter[26] suggest the process itself goes far beyond mere transfer, surrender or overthrow of power, and that it also goes beyond liberalization or democratization. They indicate that

such a transition can either oscillate towards 'social' or towards 'economic' democracy. At some point, actors may hope for the simultaneous attainment of the two processes, so as to satisfy the equality of rights and the equality of benefits. The coincidence or 'socialization' of the two interrelated processes is a path of transition from authoritarian rule, which O'Donnell and Schmitter note 'seems to require, at least in the interim, the installation of a popular authoritarian regime which is unlikely to respect either the guarantees for liberalization or the procedures of political democracy'.

The political situation in Poland is peculiar. The agendas of various movements which appeared in the aftermath of the 1980 workers' protest dealt mostly with the issues of equality of benefits. The frustrated consumerist dreams and culturally determined civilizational expectations dictated the desperately militant program of Solidarity, while the existing and profound differentiation of professional and branch interests pressured vindications which have actually gone beyond economic democratic postulates. If, when Martial Law was implemented, the military had any long-term strategies, they would probably halt the benefit-oriented demands of the angered population. What happened later on, especially during the aborted counter-revolution which was brought about by the military rule, was that much to the surprise of the generals, the issue of citizenship rights arose. If Poland were invaded by foreign powers, the situation would more clearly be defined in terms of oppression. Since this was not the case, and the society was affected by its own army, the issue of citizenship came to the political agenda. In this way, hopes for the 'socialization' model of the transitional process caught the state and Solidarity in the political dilemma of choice, making both actors highly authoritarian. One can apply to the Polish situation a recent remark by Andrei Siniavski that an opposition is a product of the regime it opposes. I would argue here that crucial to the future democratic transition is not the succession of the authoritarian government by the one selected by Solidarity, but whether this new solution will give rise to the emergence of truly progressive and democratic mechanisms.

At this point the issue of the Orange Alternative returns in a completely different light. First of all, the 'non-political' profile of Orange Alternative should be read as if the movement opted for the true alternative. Everyday life in Poland is stigmatized by those endless celebrations of the grim past, grey present and hopeless future. The number of commemorative days, monuments, meaningful dates, and other celebratory structures and occasions has no equal in the world. The existing political groups (including the parties) were either programless (as the so-called satellite parties which formed coalition with the Communists), orthodox (as the previous ruling party) or reactionary (as several opposition groups which proclaim, for example, ethnocentrism or nationalism). Some of the political groupings have created

radical and militant factions. Orange Alternative demonstrates that in the social reality which has been thought of as imposing the zero sum game only, it is not impossible to reject this type of 'symmetry', or order. It may become suggestive not only on the individual level, but also on collective level. Therefore, I argue that the 'Alternative' does not only solve individual dilemmas, but also, to a considerable extent, it could solve the collective dilemma of absence of a social movement that can produce the forces of progress independently of the devalued communist ideology (i.e. not by the mere denial of it), and that it can also be alienated from the catholically based social philosophy which is not progressive. From this perspective, the survival of the movement depends upon its ability to maintain the active and growing network of horizontal communications (i.e. generational links). Finally, its survival and success in the process of transition from authoritarianism depends upon the tolerance of other social movements, including Solidarity itself. The spread of surrealist happenings to large cities other than Wroclaw and Warsaw as observed in 1989 and early in 1990 suggests that the alternative cultural movement is responding to the needs of society. If the movements becomes less vanguard and more counter-cultural, broader in its composition (it draws now from youth of small towns as well) and more stubbornly critical even of the new political reality, is the indication that the movement is well and alive.

Finally, as many authors indicate,[27] the processes of communication in Eastern Europe of the late 1980s are characterized by spectacular and dramaturgic behavior. The streets are talking everywhere from Warsaw to Bucarest, from Berlin to Moscow. The 'silent majority' speaks, using theatrical performance, posters, costumes and forms of visual expression. The Orange Alternative movement was a harbinger of this spectacular change.

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NOTES

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more complete picture of alternative social movements see B. Misztal, 'Alternative Social Movements in Poland', in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts & Change*, L. Kriesberg (ed.), vol. 12, 1990. Greenwich, Conn., JAI-Press, pp. 67–88.

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