THE SYMBOLISM OF THE COMMUNIST MANAGER ROLES:

A study of scenarios[1]

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Monika Kostera
Maciej Wicha

Warsaw University
School of Management
Szturmowa 3
02-678 Warszawa
Poland

Abstract

This paper examines the dominant scenario of the communist manager's social role, using the metaphor of the theatre. Through an extensive retrospective study, mainly by means of a critical analysis of the press focusing on dominant symbols, or symbols created and transmitted by the political authorities. The scenarios or role scripts consisting of these symbols are first identified and then interpreted. The study focused primarily on Poland, but the observations have a certain relevance also for other ex-communist countries. The aim is to understand how the role developed, and also how it was meant to be received by the "audience" at whom the authorities were directing the symbols. Finally the implications of the performance of managerial roles in the

past for the creation of new roles after 1989 are discussed. This historical context of contemporary managerial roles should be taken into consideration by institutions involved in management education in Poland.

Key words:
social role, scenario, symbol, communist managers

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CULTURE, ROLES AND MANAGERS: ON THE PLAY CALLED MANAGEMENT

In this paper we intend to explore some dominating symbols associated with management in the former Eastern Bloc, and how they changed over time. The general perspective we adopt is that of organizational symbolism (for an overview, see e.g. Turner, 1986; 1990).

Symbols can be seen as a means of "freezing" meaning, of "immobilizing" experience and classifying it into recognizable and meaningful "boxes" of memory (Schütz, 1982). Through symbols the world we encounter becomes meaningful, offering ready answers to people's most vital questions. In this sense, symbols represent (or manifest) culture, which is the *medium of life* (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1991).

In this paper we concentrate on a certain aspect of culture, namely social roles which we understand, referring to Erving Goffman, as a

> pre-established pattern of action, being realized during the performance, a declaration of rights and duties connected to a given social position [...] including one or more roles played on successive occasions by the performer in front of the same or various audiences (Goffman, 1959/1981: 52-53; our translation).

The roles are replicated, or as Emmet puts it, they are "repeatable patterns of social relations" based on what is considered "acceptable" by society (1966: 15). Although repeatable, the roles are neither "objective" nor "solid". They are re-constructed and co-constructed by the actors performing them (cf. Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992b). The performances and expectations (as to what is "acceptable", "normal", etc.) are influential factors which inspire, motivate and set limits to the tentative performance of the roles. We see the whole process of role performance as a kind of social negotiation, with extensive "use" of symbols. These negotiations are undertaken because people want to put meaning into their lives and to deal with a nontransparent (social) reality. The performance of roles is thus a way of enacting culture, rules that compose the meaning - "not necessarily in the sense of acceptance, but of recognition" (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992b:126). People either meet these expectations or rebel against them - both being ways of acknowledging them.

Further, we do not believe in an objective "social structure", but in an ongoing performance. Societies and organizations studied in this light reveal a great resemblance to the theatre, so we adopt the theatre metaphor[2] as the "second level" metaphor, culture being the "first level" (Alvesson, 1993). Theatre-as-metaphor has long been used in the social sciences (cf. Goffman, 1959/ 1981; 1974; Burns, 1972; V.Turner, 1982; Mangham and Overington, 1983; 1987). The way we use the metaphor is inspired by Erving Goffman (see Goffman, 1959/ 1981).

In our study the play called management was played on many stages in one big theatre: Polish society under communism. We look at how the official scenario evolved over time, and we concentrate on the role played by one of the organizational actors: the manager.

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[2]It would be more correct to speak of metonymy, or a figure of speech, whereby a part stands for the whole: theatres *are* organizations.

Communist managers as actors

The actual performance of social roles is an outcome of social negotiation between the actors and their audience. Under communism part of the audience enjoyed special advantages. Communist Poland was described by Staniszkis (1989) and Wesołowski and Wnuk-Lipiński (1992) for example, as a totalitarian state, i.e. according to the latter "the rule of an uncontrolled elite, supported by a mass political party, and executed by bureaucratic institutions that pervade public life" (p. 85). This elite commanded a massive propaganda apparatus, and they possessed a monopoly on interpretation and were aiming to maintain a monophony (Głowiński, 1992). They possessed the means for a more or less enforced fulfilment of their expectations (for an empirical study of the expectations to which Polish managers were exposed, see e.g. Czarniawska, 1985). Expressing a difference of opinion could be an act of true heroism, or at least of personal strength (on dignity in a totalitarian society, see e.g. Michnik, 1991). That, however, is a topic for a different study. In this paper we focus on the official screenplay, or a specific part of the social role consisting of "transmitted ideas" intended by their authors to be "received" without discussion.

IN THE MAINSTREAM OF SYMBOLS

The method

To establish what the dominant symbols were, we turned to first-hand sources representing the "most powerful among the audience", i.e. *Trybuna Ludu,* the Polish Communist Party's daily

newspaper, of which we made a detailed study. As a division of the (institutionalized) Polish communist era in four phases is quite common (e.g. Bolesta-Kukułka, 1992), we decided to select an entire volume of the paper from each phase for a thorough study. The phases are related to the ruling régimes: the years of Stalinism (in Poland under president Bolesław Bierut), corresponding more or less to the 1950s; the 1960s under Władysław Gumułka; the 1970s under Edward Gierek; and the 1980s under Wojciech Jaruzelski.[3] We decided to choose relatively uneventful mid-phase years, i.e. years with no nationwide strikes or other dramatic national events.[4] We considered the following years typical and thus able to represent their "phase" reasonably well: 1953, 1966, 1976, 1983. We also hastily looked through other (incomplete) volumes of the paper from all the presumed phases, in order to be able to establish something of a context. We spent whole days in the library, doing 5-6 hours of intensive reading a day. This library study was like a real voyage of adventure to the past. We really felt that we had "moved into" it; it was like being engaged in a "live" field study.

In addition we studied literature from and about the periods. We also discussed our reminiscences of TV and radio programmes, at one point together with a helpful journalist who had worked for the Polish radio since the 1970s. We also consulted our reference group, consisting of a pre-1989 director, a pre-1989 middle-level manager, a management consultant active before 1989 and a historian, who all helped us with comments and suggestions.

The procedure we adopt in reading and commenting the texts is that of the "theatrical review". We interpret the sources as different descriptions of the scenario: some are written by

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[3]Except for Bolesław Bierut, who was president, the listed communist leaders were first secretaries of the communist party, or the Polish United Workers' Party.

[4]During such "critical periods" the media spoke less about management or managers, and more about politics and bloc-politics, which are not our concern here.

the dominating authors themselves, some are critical comments on the original screenplay. We use them all to write our own review, and we use this to reflect upon the "new drama", i.e. on the effects of the old official roles on the possible interpretations of the new managerial role, as publicized by the contemporary press.

The general method adopted is that of a retrospective study, a variant of the case study, or a

> study of a development of certain phenomenon. The process, or focus, is chosen by the researcher, the time frame is beyond the decision (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992a:8).

Our study is historical. However, we seek not to establish "the truth about the past", but to reinterpret it, because the accounts "change in time, as new events demand new interpretations" (ibid: 8). We mainly use the method of a critical analysis of culture (Denzin, 1992). We critically examine the contemporary press of the studied period - the vehicle through which symbols were not only brought to public notice but also proclaimed (in a totalitarian society).

In our analysis we assume that the manager's role within the organization was relatively homogeneous. The diversity of organizational cultures in communist countries was modest (Czarniawska, 1986; Obłój and Kostera, 1994). The organizations were typically similar to each other, individuality was discouraged. This is a working assumption, however. It is helpful to our study but is far from a "general truth" about pre-1989 Poland. The variety of actual organizational cultures in communist Poland ("handicrafts", small businesses, certain cooperatives, etc.) is also interesting, and could be a topic for studies of different managerial roles.

The findings

After the Stalin-Roosevelt-Churchill deal, Central and Eastern European countries came under

Soviet rule. At first the development of the system was fairly similar in all the countries that were

"taken over". After Stalin's death the countries experienced a similar but not identical

development. We speak here of "the" communist manager's social role, but we are focusing

primarily on the roles of Polish managers under communism. We, the authors, both live in

Poland and are most familiar with the Polish context. It was both different and similar to that of

other countries of the communist bloc. The Polish version of communism can be said to have

been relatively "liberal", as compared to other Eastern Bloc countries. Direct terror was less

obvious, and the people were more openly critical of the system. However, it seems reasonable to

assume that there was a certain similar tendency in the official propaganda (cf. Kieżun, 1991).

The role of the communist manager was strongly gendered - it was clearly a male role.

Even if women could occasionally become managers, they had to adapt. Only the role we here

call the Activist could be occupied by a female: women acquired a certain right to co-author the

screenplay but during a limited period of time only, perhaps just during the first years of

communism. The rest of the communist managerial roles were as good as exclusively male. We

therefore use masculine forms in describing them, since "being male" was an important element

of the role.

The Activist[5]

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[5]During the early years of communist rule in Poland (late 1940s and early 1950s) there were two broad categories of managers: the political activists, who we describe here, and pre-war professionals. The latter group was, however, more of an "underground", in the sense that it was certainly not in accord with the dominating ideology, and therefore lies outside our main interest here. The pre-war managers were used by the authorities as a "reserve for crisis situations", e.g. if a factory was in bad shape a pre-war manager could be asked to take it over, but once the situation was remedied, the manager was usually dismissed immediately, and sometimes even arrested. Our reference group quoted an example they believed was typical: a pre-war manager and engineer, Mr Brzostowski, was assigned as manager in a crisis; then, when

During the first period of communism management was to break with all the capitalist traditions. While Marx and Engels did not speak directly of the manager's role in a communist country (nor a socialist, for that matter), they strongly opposed any "enslaving division of labour" or separation between "mental and physical labour", and called for an all-round development of the individual in the production process (Marx and Engels, 1958 as quoted in Kieżun, 1991). The ephemeral picture of the future communist manager one can deduce from this (and similar) statements is that of a non-person, exercising non-power in idyllic surrounding of blossoming equality and (proletarian) self-actualization. Lenin, engaged in more practical interpretations and applications of Marxist theory, was more specific and less idealistic (or should one say, less naive?) in his writings on the role of the communist manager. Both fascinated and repelled by Taylorism (Kieżun, 1991), Lenin nonetheless promoted the application of Taylor's system in Russia, but without the elements of the "bestiality of bourgeois exploitation" (Lenin, 1954:246). The model of Leninist management was thus based on the Marxist concept of work and class morality and the principle of collectivism. The worker (and maybe this applied particularly to the manager) was a representative of the working class, someone familiar with Marxist theory and embodying a socialist attitude. These qualities would ensure motivation for efficient work, and for the professional qualifications which would ultimately guarantee efficient work. However, Lenin recognized the need for professional experience, even if the leitmotif always tended to be communist affiliation (Lenin, 1957). For Lenin the work itself was a vital motivator, enthusiasm was to be the prime albeit not the only driving force: in 1918 Lenin proposed a "piece-work"

the crisis was over, he was accused of sabotage and was imprisoned, he was freed from these charges in a rehabilitation lawsuit after 1956.

system based on the Taylorist idea (cf. Kieżun, 1991). As Lenin also advocated the use of "heavy punishments", the manager at higher levels was to ensure discipline with an "iron hand" (ibid.).

Lenin thought that accounting and control were to be handled by the manager only in the first phase of communism. Later, the working class itself would take over these duties (Kieżun, 1991). Early Russian management theorists such as Gastyev and Jermanski repeated many of the Taylorist principles (such as discipline, order, self-control, functional control, etc.), only under new labels, as a "truly scientific system of work organization" based on Marx's concept of disalienation of the working class under communism (Jermanski, 1972; Kieżun, 1991 after Gastyev, 1924).

The manager-Activist was to be of working class origin (Gomułka, 1945), with a mature class consciousness. The new society was to be reminiscent of a united, uniform, unanimous organization, or "a single office and a single factory with equality of work and equality of pay" (Lenin, 1981:96 as quoted in Kieżun, 1991:15) and with absolute equality in living and working conditions (Kieżun, 1991). In such a society the manager's role was to embody the ultimate interests of the working class, to be its "avant-garde", knowing what is "really" good for the masses.

> A good director is a real treasure for the Party organization. Such a director does nor prompt the Party to intervene directly; he guarantees the proper execution of Party and government directives; he takes an active part in Party work and is able to make use of advice from below (of criticism of the working masses); and he can correct his mistakes of 'self criticism'. One can say without hesitation that a good enterprise director and good divisional director solve half the problems of the Party in the factory. (Szyr, 1951, as quoted in Najduchowska, 1976).

Lenin argued strongly for worker participation in the management process, but nevertheless he promoted the idea of "one man responsibility" and "one man will" at the "micro-level", as

opposed to the "macro-level", where strategic decisions were to be prepared collectively (Kieżun, 1991). Centralization was driven to the extreme (Koźmiński, 1993), but was labelled "democratic centralism". Officially, decision making was to be preceded by discussion with the comrades.

Under Stalin the Activist became even more of a despot, supported like "Batiushka"[6] himself by a severe punishment system (Kieżun, 1991). The enterprise was transferred into a small totalitarian system of its own, in the same way as its surroundings. Anything could turn out to be "sabotage" against "the good of the state enterprises", and could even be punished by death after an "exemplary" trial. A simple day of unjustified absence could be punished with a jail sentence. "Enemies of the people" and "parasites" were condemned to forced labour. The manager-despot himself did not enjoy civil liberty either, being subordinate to "higher levels" and subject to party control supervising his step.

Trybuna Ludu at that period was a deadly serious paper, speaking mainly of "battles" for the plan, "battles" for "rhythmic[7] production", "alertness" against "enemies", etc. - the war metaphor was employed intensively. There were very few funny articles or jokes, if any; the only examples we found in the issues we studied (1953) consisted of political satire, in heavy propaganda style. Nor were there many photos; the few that were to be found portrayed top Party officials, Stalin, and sometimes even workers, male or female, in their plain working clothes, smiling as they worked. We did not find a single picture of a manager, and only a few of engineers - and then in rather secondary roles (e.g. shaking hands with Party officials). There were neither pictures nor articles in honour of managers. Most of the texts about enterprises (and

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[6]Batiushka means "Daddy" and was one of the names often used for the dictator, who was also referred to as the "genius of humankind" and the "sun of humankind".

[7]This metaphor was often used under communism to signify "continuous" or "well organized" production.

there were many) concentrated on figures: how high a percentage of the plan had been achieved

so far and how much would be achieved, and when. Very often the texts spoke of the workers

(referred to as the "crew") accepting the challenge of new norms and committing themselves to

achieve more ambitious objectives. Sometimes the directors were mentioned, as plain "members

of the crew" (e.g. *TL*. 1953/ 3). In one issue, a speech by Poland's communist president, Bolesław

Bierut, was extensively quoted (*TL* 1953/ 33). The text was entitled: "Achievement of plan

objectives is the highest duty of every worker, technician, engineer, manager". The manager was

not only mentioned in the title, but the president described broadly what a communist manager

should be like. In the speech, the manager was called "supervisor" more often than manager,[8] and

frequent use was made of the war metaphor. Bierut declared that:

> The supervisor should consider the worker, his working conditions, his pay
> conditions, his security; the supervisor should be friendly to the worker, just as in
> our people's army the officer is friendly to the soldier.
>   Secondly, the supervisor should be demanding, should strictly espouse all
> the regulations... (ibid., p.1).

Bierut briefly mentioned that the "supervisor" should be skilled (the context implied it was

technical skill that Bierut meant), and continued:

> The supervisor should have an adequate political attitude and class, and construct
> his/her[9] authority on it... The supervisor has to guard his/her authority, his/her
> dignity as a commander, because those who do not see that all their commands are
> strictly and well followed, are not worthy the name of commander (ibid., p.1).

Bierut then asked a rhetorical question: "Do we have such supervision in Poland?" and answered

himself: "Not yet". Skills were lacking, because "we" (the Party) have given managerial posts to

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[8]The context in which the word "supervisor" is used here implies that Bierut meant managers at various levels, possibly including the directors at higher levels.

[9]Gender unclear in this and following expressions.

very young people. But we would do, soon, because the Party, the "educator of the nation", is

taking care of the managers' development.

> ... a true manager, a true commander is not afraid of critics and control from the masses, from various links of social organizations, because such creative criticism is the driver of his development (ibid., p.1).

Bierut reminded the managers, that

> ... Lenin and Stalin pointed out many times that the task of management is not only to foster, to organize the masses, but to learn from them, to take their voice into account (ibid., p.1).

TL was certainly trying to "educate" and criticize the managers. Just as praising articles - naming

heroes by name - were very few, reprimanding ones were far from rare. Sometimes a hateful

category of managers was named such as "bureaucrats" (*TL* 1953/ 37). Another vicious group of

business people consisted of the "speculators", e.g. private traders, who were described in the

harshest terms, for instance as "enemies" deliberately aiming to harm the working people of

Poland (e.g. Mink, 1953; *TL* 1953/ 5). Nor did the paper refrain from mentioning reprimanded

managers by name. Managers, under their full names, were labelled "too conservative", "not

determined to struggle for supplies" (Torończyk, 1953); another manager was said to believe

"that managing meant issuing commands and shouting" (*TL* 1953/ 58), and the directors of a

mine were declared responsible for all possible disasters[10] (Oleń, 1953). In only a few examples

of praise was the manager ever mentioned. For instance in a text on a construction enterprise, the

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[10]This was a particularly frightening text. In that epoch the mines were being utilized very intensively ("the economy of plunder"), not because the managers decided so, but because of the challenge of the plan quotas. Coal was exported (or rather - sent) to the Soviet Union, and so exploitation of this resource was seen as strategically important. This led, of course, to catastrophes. The managers in the text were quoted as explaining that the accidents were due to "natural forces"; they could hardly say that the authorities were pressing them to exploit coal senselessly. The author of the text ridiculed the managers' claims, pointing out that "it is an easy excuse to blame nature", and that everybody knew that accidents were due to mismanagement.

manager was praised by name, because he was "the manager and teacher" of his subordinates, spending much time on teaching his workers (Stępowski, 1953). A second positive text referred to the Ursus tractor factory. The paper published a letter from the factory management, the Party organization and the workers' council to "comrade" Bierut, assuring him in the name of "the entire crew" that the company was intending to do even better in the future. The company was celebrated in the paper, but it was the workers and the local Party representatives who got all the attention; the managers were hardly even thanked (*TL* 1953/ 106).

The issues of the Party newspaper from 1953 often presented women workers, in fact nearly as often as male workers. The texts often spoke of women's emancipation and the issue of March 8 was dedicated to women's battle for equal rights - naturally in Western countries where inequality prevailed. Even though this interest in women's situation was heavy with propaganda and hypocrisy, at least it existed. But in none of the later issues we studied was there much about women at all; after the early 1960s women tended to be treated paternalistically and not really to be taken seriously.

Overall, the role of the Activist was strongly characterized by "enthusiasm", "commitment" and "sincerity". In a study of the dominant literature of the time published in Stalinist Poland, Głowiński shows convincingly how the monophony straightened, flattened out and specified meaning (the monopoly of meaning). The propaganda stressed the total commitment of "activists" of all kinds (and everyone was supposed to be an activist, otherwise they were "enemies of the people"), in a complete and naive identification with the (shallow) role (Głowiński, 1992).

> [W]e will not spare ourselves in the struggle against the sources [of human mistakes and errors]: cynicism, indifference, hypocrisy and lies (Brandys, as quoted in Głowiński, 1992: 69).

Thus the scenario embraced no distancing from the role; it is doubtful whether separation from the role was possible at all on the individual plane. Certainly, anyway, the manifestation of such distancing was hard in times of direct terror and coercion.

The Activists' stage and scenery[11] was of the most unpretentious kind. They had no secretaries, no cars, no offices. All they had at their disposal was perhaps a company bicycle, a modest room more reminiscent of a monastery cell (no sofa, no armchairs and *no books*). The male Activist wore no tie or formal suit; he was dressed like a worker and spoke like one. The female Activist could wear a suit resembling an army uniform with a dark skirt and high boots, or the typical dress of a revolutionary with a long leather coat and a fur hat. On the wall hung a portrait of Stalin (and perhaps also of Lenin). If the Activists had any works of art in their rooms it was likely to be a statuette of a worker or a picture of a 1st of May Demonstration. They liked to argue and often engaged in discussion, actively and intensely upholding the Party's point of view. They did not spend much time in their rooms, but walked around the factory talking to people and supervising them on the spot, or meeting with Party and Secret Police officials. They behaved in a plain and unpretentious way, much like simple unschooled souls, in fact. They were not keen on ceremonies and rituals. Their favourite profile was one of simplicity. Their scenery was ascetic and meagre, symbolizing the purely idealistic commitment of the role.

It should also be noted that the scenery had great symbolic importance: superficial artifacts could indicate clearly whether one was "good" or an "enemy", and such details as socks

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[11]The following description is based on TV-documentaries and films; our interview with a relative of an early Activist carried out by the authors in March, 1993; interviews with our reference group; stories by Szczypiorski (1987/ 1990).

of the wrong colour could signify that you were a traitor who should be reported to Security

(Głowiński, 1992). The Security people did not have to be quite so modest: there were special

shops "behind yellow curtains", where they could buy attractive goods, unavailable to other

people.

The Bureaucrat

In the Khrushchev era a different archetype of the communist manager emerged, together with

mushrooming institutes of management, centres for management studies and analysis, etc.

(Kieżun, 1991). The focus was now on procedures, techniques, operational problems and

processes (cf. Piłejko, 1969; Grosman, 1969). The idea was to combine "technology and people

in the uniform production process" (Prudienski, 1967 as quoted in Kieżun, 1991:25). Planning,

operations research, harmonograms of various kind were the hot topic of the time. The manager

became a clerk engaged in preparing projects for plans, dealing mostly with figures, according to

Koźmiński in a critical essay on management in that epoch (Koźmiński, 1976). The manager was

to embody the scrupulous accountant, preparing "the logic of the functioning of indices that

permit supervision of the enterprises by the higher echelon" (ibid: 398). Commenting upon the

social role of the manager of that time, Koźmiński observes that

> the independence of the managers appears imaginary, as they only take, then, part
> in the process of execution of the plan, decisions that correspond to the
> preferences of the higher units (in other words, those that flow from the plan
> itself) (1976:399).

The manager was supposed to provide the higher authorities with information; he was also the

supervisor, organizing the execution of the plan. He "redistributed planned tasks", "set norms",

transmitted information "adequate to execution of plan", "guaranteed input factors", "controlled

the activity of organizational cells" (Koźmiński, 1976), and so forth. Control of the enterprises (and the managers) was highly developed, but not by means of direct action (or terror, as in Stalin's time). The instruments of control were now regulations, indices, indicators and figures, and planning became highly complicated (Piłejko, 1969; Grosman, 1969). Najduchowska, describing the coming of new times and changes in the expectations to which the communist manager was exposed (from party-man to "professional"), makes the following significant statement:

> *Much is forgiven* a director if he does his job well, conscientiously, and professionally (1976:435, our emphasis).

But the political dimension is still crucial (*much* is *forgiven*), although you can be accepted if you work conscientiously - *sine ira et studio*, one is tempted to add.

The ideal of turning the economy into "one big factory, one big office" now seemed to have more or less reached completion. The enterprises appeared to be copies of each other, tiny elements in a big machine. The organizational rules imposed were characterized by a high degree of homogeneity; most of the regulations stemmed from a higher level of bureaucratic rules. Goals were seen as having a hierarchical order, and the ideal was to "integrate the goals of macro- and micro-organizations" (Piłejko, 1969: 62). Kieżun (1978) explains the direct and immediate impact of the communist party on the manager's work. It involved the following areas: creating plans for the development of the macro-organizations; motivating (in the societal sphere); controlling the realization of plans by individual enterprises; solving social problems and conflicts; appointing managers (ibid: 161). Thus, it was the Party officials who were supposed to be "creative"; the manager's role was simply to carry out tasks and to administrate.

The following quotation, from Sarapata's critical essay on pre-1989 management fits well into the picture of that epoch:

> [t]he manager of a given enterprise was greatly restricted by the regulations and directives he received, he had a very small margin of freedom in choosing products to be turned out, in choosing subcontractors, in choosing customers, in fixing prices, in fixing the remuneration of the employees, and in selecting his personnel. His main duties consisted in carrying out 100% of the imposed production plan, in urging the personnel to work, in enforcing labour discipline, in enforcing the obedience of the personnel (the de facto prohibition to strike), in thwarting conflicts and dissatisfaction, in bringing up the personnel in the socialist spirit, in concern for socialist property, in a socialist attitude toward work, in socialist labour competition, etc. (1992: 106).

In his analysis of communist management of that period, Koźmiński concluded that if showing initiative was welcome at all, it was to be directed towards input rationalization (Koźmiński, 1993).

The *Trybuna Ludu* of that epoch was a dull "correct" paper, mainly reporting figures and indicators, and reprinting the official speeches of Party executives. Photos of people were few, and those few were mostly of engineers and technical workers, generally male, well dressed and clean, and performing some "typical" job, such as working in the lab. Pictures of "ordinary" workers were now fewer, and those of managers were non-existent, at least in the issues we studied. The propaganda "funnies" had gone, but even other humorous articles or cartoons were rare. The paper was looking serious, and so was its contents.

Articles praising managers by name were now more usual. The managers, often presented as a Master of Engineering, spoke about technicalities, figures, percentages etc. A steel works director, for example, explained in detail the technological peculiarities of the production process - an account difficult to read or understand (we did not understand it) (*TL* 1966/150). Directors raised their voices in a discussion on the national economy, talking about "organization",

"programming", "modernization", "coordination of investment plans with the central plan, in order to achieve accurate establishment of input data..." (*TL* 1966/ 114). A party official spoke of "systems", "planning", "cycles", "control", claiming that:

> An important source of utilizing internal production capacity reserves is an introduction of *modern management and planning methods* ... use of network diagrams to enable making the most rational decision regarding the investment process [original emphasis] (ibid., p.3).

The faith in systems, methods, organization and planning was ever-present in all the studied issues. If only the "right mechanisms and systems" were found, all problems would be solved. Managers should learn fast about these rational methods, so special training programmes were introduced (Wacławek, 1966).

> Contemporary economic management is slowly becoming a new specialization. To become proficient in it - apart from experience, economic and technical education - it is becoming necessary to learn about the scientific organization of work and contemporary management techniques (ibid., p.3)

Many centres for education and research were opened, and the authorities even launched a 10-year plan for management development. The curriculum was concentrated, again, on techniques such as the "scientific organization of work", "management methods", "programming", "management cybernetics", etc (ibid.).

> One can say that electronic machines first enable the creation and application of the management techniques appropriate to the socialist economy (ibid: 3).

The Bureaucrat was surrounded by modest but functional artifacts.[12] He had a phone and sometimes even a car, but a plain one (either a national product or a Soviet one - although the latter were mainly a privilege of the highest hierarchical levels). Many Bureaucrats walked to their offices. No "unnecessary luxury" such as armchairs could be found in the Bureaucrat's

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[12]The following description is based on our interview with the reference group; TV documentaries and films.

room. He wore a decent but simple suit and often also a pair of glasses, read books (he was an engineer) and spoke like an intellectual. He liked numbers and quoted them often, as "they speak for themselves", either without comments altogether or with "technical" ones.[13]

The Dignitary

After the sober Bureaucrat came the merry Dignitary. Now the economy would "open up", investments in production and consumption would improve the living standard of the population. Poland received big loans from the West and espoused a "new strategy for social and economic development" (Jezierski and Petz, 1980). The plan was based on the assumption of heavy investment and intensive development. The plan aimed at an increase in the gross national income of 39 per cent in 1975 as compared to 1970, and the investment quota in the national income was assumed to be c. 24 per cent yearly. At the same time it was assumed that the employment figures would rise continuously, and real wages were to rise by 18 per cent. The plan was implemented fairly successfully in the period 1971-1975 (ibid.). In the mid-1970s the international conditions for the planned Polish economic growth deteriorated, and in Poland the symptoms of mismanagement grew more obvious.[14] Nonetheless the strategy was carried on, and the next 5-year plan assumed a growth in national income of 40-42 per cent (Jezierski and Petz, 1980). In 1977 the Association of Scientific Consultants was formed, for the purpose of warning "the Centre" or the authorities of the deteriorating economic situation. The association prepared numerous reports, some of which were alarming. Reports - some brief and some detailed - on

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[13]According to our reference group it is important to note that in this epoch the "shops behind yellow curtains" disappeared.

[14]As popular rumour has it, these loans were to a large extent transferred to Brezhnev.

important societal problems were delivered. The authorities were clearly familiar with these reports; the general public was not (Bożyk, 1988). The reports did not fit in with the "normal" tone of official propaganda. All the warning signals were ignored and the main route continued.

Edward Gierek, the Polish First Secretary of the Communist Party, often used the *pluralis majestatis* in his speeches: "we gave you", "we have built", "we have created", etc (Czarniawska, 1987). A "propaganda of success" was the main official frame of reference for ideological control (ibid.). Along with criticism of the system, all "negativeness" was now also banned.

These cheerful hopes were accompanied by excessive feasting and wasting of resources - a little for the people, a lot for the chosen (the nomenclature, communist "human resource management" on a macroscale: the Party prepared "succession files" for all significant positions, including enterprises, institutions, etc; in popular use the nomenclature came to signify people appointed through this system, managers included). Under Brezhnev corruption blossomed and the manager's role changed from bean-counting to showing off. Even the highest party officials and their families were engaged in criminal affairs (hard currency trade was perhaps the mildest one) (Kieżun, 1991). All nomenclature levels, and of course Security, indulged in a life of comfort: alcohol flowed, western goods were finally available. The affluence of the ruling elites, the managers included, reached its apogee. This was particularly true of Russia and Poland under Gierek, who openly advocated profiting from material means. People (i.e. the nomenclature) should get richer and richer: luxurious villas and apartments and big entertainment budgets became popular. Fraud, double standards and cynicism were all common.

The economy was managed in a "generous" and wasteful manner, grandiosity (and perhaps even gigantomania) was the current fad. The wasting of energy and resources became common, work efficiency declined, gigantic investments were started and planning became

impossible (Kieżun, 1991). The organizations were also grand: in Poland the centralization mania resulted in the creation of "Big Economic Organizations". A giant investment, the steel works Huta Katowice was launched outside the plan, devouring enormous resources, at excessive material and human costs (ibid.). The organizational structures were correspondingly sophisticated and Byzantine: vast and complicated, a "mosaic of many separate groups with various areas of competence, frequently overlapping one another" (ibid: 224). Decisions were being made in the same manner - sometimes in conflict with each other.

The Party press (*Trybuna Ludu*) declared that we were "doing better and better" in all respects: this was the decade of dynamic development (Krasucki, 1976); the economic policy was modern, Poland was becoming an economic superpower (*TL* 1976/ 243), exports were growing and the energy industry was developing (*TL* 1976/ 257). Everything looked just fine: wages increased, big investments were launched, consumption goods flooded the Polish market (although the paper failed to reveal that the goods were imported, and the investments paid with borrowed money). The first secretary, Edward Gierek, assured the country: "We have all grounds to look into the future with confidence" (*TL* 1976/247: 3). He pronounced that Poland now had a strong position in the world. Statistics were gladly quoted: they always showed how well Poland was doing. However, as one of our reference group observed, the outstanding results and the superb statistics flourished on paper: they were produced by the authorities.

TL became cheerful: it contained funnies, the quality of paper was improving (even though it was still poor by Western standards), there were many photographs and the regular columns carried headings: "Better-more", "The People of Good Work", etc. The paper celebrated many "socialist heroes", who had made their contribution to the collective feast. Among the

heroes were the managers. Their pictures and success stories appeared in almost every issue of the paper. For example, the director of a sugar mill was optimistic about the future:

> We will produce some tens of thousands more tons of sugar pre-fabricates. For the first time we will produce improved pre-fabricates... (Fąfara, 1976: 1).

The Lenin steel mill installed a computer (*TL* 1976/64), and even the railways were modernizing (*TL* 1976/253). The success of the economy was due to the Communist Party's "strategic programmes" and its insight, but the managers also deserved all honour. One article was headlined: "What achievement will Director Nowak produce now?". The author (Marcińczak, 1976/71: 3) opens with some ironic rhetorical questions:

> And what will you produce as an achievement now? You have sold everything you had, and now there should be reserves... Was it not better to go slowly, to keep calm?

However, the Director was not a mediocre man, the author revealed, but a dynamic, ambitious and modern manager. He was not someone who would be satisfied with doing "well enough", but wanted the company to grow, and to go "full speed ahead".

The modern manager was an educated specialist (*TL* 1976/221), and a visionary. He did not resemble the Bureaucrat at all. One of the "new heroes" spoke with no respect for "paperwork":

> To me the main barrier to [effective] work is all the paper, needed for everything. Not the simplest thing can be carried out without a "paper" (*TL* 1976/219: 9).

The daily newspaper was full with expressions like "strategy", "client", "effectivity", "quality", "computers", "modern", even "market". It was all excellent, but "we could do even better", the Party bulletin assured us (Krasucki, 1976).

The Dignitary liked to surround himself with luxurious status symbols.[15] He had a beautiful car, often with a chauffeur, moved into the biggest office in the building, bought armchairs, had many phones (higher management levels had the so called "hot line", or direct connection with higher Party levels) standing on his big modern desk. He had an exotic palm (this seemed to be important for some reason), and later he equipped his office with a TV set. He had of course a secretary, well-dressed and preferably English-speaking. He dressed well himself, or at least wore expensive (Western) clothes. He liked awards and medals and was very fond of wearing them. In his modern office the Dignitary kept a bar with Western liquor, purchased in PEWEX (hard currency shops) and ready to be offered to his prominent visitors. He seldom left his room, and if he did it was for the ritual of "walking round the production process", making encouraging comments like "we are developing dynamically". He was not really an intellectual, but knowledge of foreign language was now welcome. He liked to think of himself as a Western-type manager, but outwardly had to express loyalty to the communist system. Therefore he liked to keep both "Western" and "communist" symbols in his office: for example, a gilded plate with Lenin's portrait and an ad for Coca-Cola. We heard a story about a top level manager who had a metal statuette of Lenin, which he used in front of his colleagues as a hammer to set up a Western poster on the wall. Sometimes, out of boredom, the Dignitaries invented political jokes, mainly ridiculing the Party and the Soviet Union.

The Stand-In

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[15]The following description based on: TV documentaries and films; interview with reference group.

Some of the countries (the USSR, Poland and Hungary) entered upon a last phase of development (or rather, collapse). In Poland this was the period of martial law and military administration. This era, under Gorbachov in the USSR and General Jaruzelski in Poland, was not a glamorous time for the managers. For Polish society in general it was a time of severe crisis, with many restrictions and lost hopes. The economy was in deep depression after the careless spending and (mis-)investing of the 1970s. The state of the economy was now a public concern. With the emergence of *Solidarność* in 1980 state control of the mass media slackened for a short time, and all the former "secrets" came out into the open. After the proclamation of martial law in December 1981, censorship was tightened up again, but the economic crisis remained a public issue. The new authorities declared that they knew how to remedy the problems: through control, discipline and order. The declarations failed to arouse people's enthusiasm. People were bitter and disillusioned (cf. Michnik, 1986).

All kinds of abuse, corruption and even the "deserved" high status of the 1970s were severely criticized as "relics of the past". Strict sanctions were introduced. The "Last First Secretary", Mikhail Gorbachov, did not spare his words when critically examining the demoralization of the past (Kieżun, 1991).[16] However, Leninist principles were to be maintained. Poland's General Jaruzelski also declared that the "gains of communism would be strictly guarded". Discipline in the enterprises was tightening, management was to follow traditional military logistics rather than a creative economic line (Bolesta-Kukułka, 1992).

The *Trybuna Ludu* of that epoch was a dull, serious paper: no "funnies", no optimism, no celebrations, fewer pictures, and the paper quality had become worse. Even the Party bulletin,

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[16]See Kie¿un, 1991 for a selection of Gorbachev's speeches.

Zagadnienia i materiały, was now printed on paper of poorer quality. The picture was depressing - so different from the happy times of the Dignitary!

The headlines spoke of crisis: "An economical budget, or unpopular decisions" (Krauze, 1983), "Problems with recycled paper" (*TL* 1983/ 83: 7). They also spoke of all kinds of abuse: "Mismanagement in sales of liquid fuel" (*TL* 1983/ 83: 8), "No good news from trade and services" (Stachowska, 1983). Mismanagement and abuse were subject to severe control, which was "merciless to the unreliable" (*TL* 1983/97). We were waiting for the "real clean-up", and learned that success had been achieved for borrowed money (Wodzicki, 1983). *TL* had stopped celebrating managers (if it now celebrated anyone at all, it was the military, or the controlling institutions). If managers appeared in its columns, they were not honoured with photos, nor with pompous titles. The language was now one of "allocations", "costs", "economizing", "discipline" and quoted figures. General Jaruzelski, the Communist Party's first secretary, set the example: "Our most important opportunity is... all that lies at hand: hard, well organized work, economizing..." (*TL* 1983/77: 1). The managers concentrated on technicalities, and used expressions such as "optimizing" - e.g. the regulation of heating should be "optimized" (*TL* 1983/ 86). The director of a shoe manufacturing factory declared that even the smallest pieces of leather should be utilized, and that quality should be raised by introducing "objective control", exercized by groups of employees from other factories for example (Rudziński, 1983). These were the "champions", but in the daily paper there were now villains, too. In one article "the merry-go-round of privileges" was severely criticized - by "privileges" the author meant extra supplies of consumption goods, not necessarily articles of luxury (Fiala, 1983). Another article mentioned by name a director who had "lost his authority", and "given proof of mercilessness, ruthlessness and ordinary careerism" (Kubasik, 1983/139: 3). Even the cheerful headings of the regular columns

disappeared, and were replaced by drier ones, such as "The hard workers". These columns presented not managers but "ordinary people", workers and farmers. Again the war metaphor was often employed; in speaking of enterprises and the economy, the paper used expressions like "the battle for the economy" (1983/104), "lustration" of "cadres" (1983/ 97), etc.

The same tone appeared in the Party's own bulletin. The crisis was a fact (Chędzyński, 1983), but the managers were not competent enough to activate the economy of their own enterprises (Król, 1983). Someone, though, was quite active - the "speculators" turned up again (Popielski, 1983). These were mostly private entrepreneurs, but they also included people "without jobs", who had thus "fabricated 'jobs' for themselves". They were harming the country, already in bad crisis (ibid.). Self-sufficiency was spoken of very often, it was seen as something to strive for, especially in the production of food (e.g. Kosmala, 1983; Łoziński, 1983). Control was, perhaps, the second most popular topic (e.g. *ZiM* 1983/ 12: 33-47).

This is the era Kieżun labels as "management by hope" (1991:129). However, the hopes were vain and communism fell. The "liquidators of communism", among them communist managers of the last era, exit the stage.

This era is a cynical one and no enthusiasm need even be simulated (not too much anyway). The communist system resigned from its self-solemnization and its place was taken by a certain nihilism: "No values exist - on either side in the [societal] conflict" concluded Głowiński (1992:169). He labelled this attitude "pan-swinism" - the authorities could admit they were not being ethical, but neither were the dissidents, nor anyone else for that matter. "We are all swines".[17]

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[17]Our reference group noted, that anonymous denunciations to the Security were common in that time, e.g. employees gladly wrote such anonymous letters accusing their managers of being "uncommitted", or "disloyal".

The Stand-In manager was a provisional role,[18] thriving on the remnants and left-overs of the Dignitary. He tended to adopt double standards without much attempt to hide it: while criticizing the big cars and big offices of his predecessors (and colleagues), he engaged in luxurious and wasteful consumption himself. Everybody knew this: it was incorporated in the script. Pretending loyalty became a vulgar show, which was not even meant to be convincing - yet the vulgar pretence was obligatory. Thus the Stand-In could treat communist symbols with almost demonstrative disrespect. There were other symbols that he had to honour, however, The Stand-In was often a military man , who thus liked to surround himself with army symbols; perhaps he even kept books about Second World War in his office. In the Polish enterprise, life was really warlike: everything was "top secret" during that epoch. The regulations about "secrecy" were interminable, the telex was sealed off, even the copying machine was protected by a special employee, generally a member of the military or a Security officer. If you wanted to make a photocopy you had to apply formally, and the decision making path was long indeed.

The setting for the performances varied. The Activist was a role performed on an ascetic but thrilling stage (like a performance in the Polish avant-garde theatre, Studio). The Bureaucrat appeared on a "modest but serious" stage, like the Teatr Adekwatny. The Dignitary performed against an affluent and pompous decor, as in the Grand Theatre. Finally, the Stand-In, appeared in a kitschy and messy theatre (we will be kind enough not to name a theatre representing this style).

The implied interpretations

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[18]The following description based on: our recollections, interviews with reference group.

The role of the Activist was to be interpreted as a sign of the then "new era", based on complete honesty and dedication. The scenario excluded everything that had to do with self-awareness or even awareness of taking part in a play. The aim was to create an illusion of "naked reality", of participation one hundred per cent in "real life".

The Bureaucrat replaced the Activist on stage when the system matured, and left its revolutionary youth behind. The Bureaucrat was to embody the role of the efficient "machine". This role was full of ties and duties; there was not much room for improvisation. Unlike the Activist, the Bureaucrat did not give himself completely to his role. For the Bureaucrat there was no scope for innovative thinking, and especially not for changing the stage. He was "locked into" the bureaucratic "iron cage", which "impair[s] [its] members ability to conduct a rational, reflective, and self-determined life" (Kieser, 1987: 103). The role was meant to be interpreted as a part in a societal play designed to achieve maximum rationality, "the only rational play". The illusion of "naked genuineness" was now revoked, but only to be replaced by another one: that of the "no-alternative scenario". The rational mega-mind of the central planner would see that the play in which the people were engaged would produce optimal results at the macro level. The actors therefore took on modest and restricted roles, giving up all "irrelevant" personal desires, needs and attributes.

The Dignitary represented the most mature version of the communist managerial role. The Dignitary was a self-aware actor. The Dignitary was a man (yes) of ceremonies and rituals - also of parody and jokes - on the organizational stage. As frequently as possible the Dignitary consciously arranged and utilized ceremonies and symbols to enhance and demonstrate his status. Meanwhile, the audience grew seasoned and more difficult to impress. To excite them the

manager had to use increasingly grandiose symbols, which eventually became vulgar. By the era of the Dignitary, it was recognized by the "directors" that roles in the performance were subject to spontaneous interpretations. Instead of maintaining the illusion that everybody saw only what the designers wanted people to see, they now started to speak a different language: that of motivation. Individuality, creativity and romanticism became central issues in the scenario. The actor, through a conscious management of meaning, was to persuade people to participate in the play "of their own free will". The status of the actor rose, as did the status of the role. The distinction was now clear: the role *was not* the actor. It has to be noted that the Dignitary's individual position was stronger than that of his forerunners. He was an individual, not just a "messenger of the party", or "a cog in the machine".

The Stand-In came on after the Dignitary had left the stage. The Stand-In was either equipped with power, as a military man, or he was subject to such power. On the one hand the Stand-In followed the Dignitary in trying to solve political problems at the lowest level in the enterprises, on the other he was not, as a rule, an expert. He used whatever he could lay his hands on to execute his power: ideology, bureaucratic rules, money. The audience also seemed to have grown sceptical (if not cynical).[19] The role of the Stand-In lacked any consistent scenario; it was made up of symbols from the past: e.g. the war metaphor, criticism of "speculators", a predilection for figures and technicalities, etc. These symbols were sealed together more or less chaotically, so the role failed to make any sense of a nontransparent reality: it helped to mystify it further. By that time it had become obvious that the performance was "just a performance", and not "the only possible one", or even "the best". The designers intended the scenario to receive at

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[19]On popular attitudes in a declining communist society see e.g. P³oszajski (1990), Szafraniec (1990), Connor and P³oszajski (1992).

least minimum acceptance by the audience: this is our play and this is what we have right now, so be realistic and stop dreaming, life is cynical and corrupt. If you pretend to believe in it, you will be left in peace.

CONCLUSION: NO STANDING OVATION

The official screenplays for the Polish manager roles were, as we explained above, intended to varying degrees as obligatory standards for performance and emotion. We have shown a drama of diminishing identification with the role. Richard Rottenburg (1994) presents an interesting analysis of reality construction in East German *Volkseigene Betriebe*. The author considers the role of the managers, who had to present the communist party's ideas "publicly and ritually", and were thus affected by those ideas in a way different from that of "more passive actors" (Rottenburg, 1994: 75). Their roles involved "deep acting", or the definition of emotions. The actors were anxious to keep up a façade of "right acting", but felt emotionally detached. This distancing from the role, however, was illusory, as Rottenburg shows.

> The efforts of the Party to instil the right consciousness into the population and, above all the concrete living conditions created for this purpose, could not fail to have an effect on personality structures - even if not the one intended (p. 80).

People thus believed that they possessed a "self" outside their place in society, or in terms of our metaphor - that they could leave the stage, and could "be themselves" only when they were not on it. Their images of themselves were hardly put to the test, and their self-perception thus became an illusion. As a consequence, the symbols were undermined.

The Polish managers had similar problems with their self-perception, even if the intensity with which total involvement of the "whole person" was demanded varied, as we have shown. The scenarios developed into a low pastiche of the original screenplay. In the end the façade was

openly "just" a façade and presumably embraced "something else", the "true person", etc. In Rottenburg's study we see how the symbols were undermined in East Germany - through the highly ambiguous relationship between the actors and their roles. In Poland this was further enhanced by the evolution of the scenario itself.

In light of what has been said about the recent past, one can ask oneself: what basis is there for reconstructing the performance in the new drama, after 1989?

In an essay about institutional identity transfer in Poland (Kostera, 1995), the images spotlighted by the Polish press are analysed. The study includes an analysis of the new image of the manager's role. An idealized picture of Western managers is offered as the standard. The Polish version of the American myth is often invoked. Frequently the manager or business person is presented as having had a tough start: they can be presented as coming from poor families, as having had a difficult start, etc. The business person has to have "new ideas" and "luck", and has to like "adventure". "Profits" are important, but "an inner need" to be in business is also crucial. The main metaphor used has been that of "success". Success can be achieved through hard work, not by political games. The exemplary manager is sometimes explicitly described, and the following qualities are mentioned: "commitment to hard work", "ability to overcome obstacles", "a strong drive for success". In accord with the same romantic myth the manager is a strong individualist, a powerful leader, a charismatic person, who is also resistant to stress and enjoys making money. At the same time the manager symbolizes the change, personifies it, is personally a symbol for the new rationality.   The professional press is also helping to popularize the life styles of the modern manager, including their clothes, sports, travel. Advice is also given about how to organize the office, what car to choose, what equipment is the best and most fashionable, etc.

The image is strongly gendered, and women are explicitly presented as "primarily" housewives, mothers, feminine women. The women managers do not have a scenario of their own to take up; they can "borrow" others - that of the male manager, or a traditional script for women's social role (dating from before Second World War).

In the quoted study managers at different levels and from various industries were asked to comment upon the proposed images. The respondents were generally very reserved about the managerial images that were being popularized. They refrained from comment, or came up with brief sceptical reflections. The female manager image was not commented upon at all, not even in answer to a final plea from the researcher.

The new scenario contains what we would call an image of the New Activist: ingenious, dedicated, not necessarily highly educated, direct and courageous. The New Activist is a symbol for the new drama, or even for the change itself. There are quite a few similarities between this screenplay and that of the old Activist, but there are also some crucial differences (beside that of lifestyle - the New Activist's lifestyle is reminiscent of the Dignitary's): the press now persuades, popularizes, while under early communism it pronounced on things. Behind the pronouncements was a powerful machinery of repression and enforcement. Together with the secret police, *Trybuna Ludu* could "impose" images on people's faces and even - to a certain degree - implant them in their hearts. Now the press can suggest, can interest the managers in the images. However, without proper discussion, the suggestions are just as "transmitted" as they were before. Our point here is that there *is* no real discussion, and hence the "new managers" tend to react to the proposed scenarios in much the same way as the "old managers" did under communism. As Rottenburg (1994) says: the communist system has succeeded in instilling the "right consciousness", even if not in the way intended. This consciousness makes the "real

selves", in which people still strongly believe, indisputable, and the façades not worth disputing. The situation is even more paradoxical because of the evolution through which the communist scenarios passed in Poland during the 44 years of communist rule. It became obvious to the actors that the official scenario was in itself ambiguous and not to be taken too personally by the actor. As Rottenburg says, it became important for the actors to believe in a distance between themselves and the role. We believe that in Poland this distancing between the actor and the role became increasingly a part of the performance. There is no need to negotiate screenplays - they are, obviously, not to be taken too seriously. The façade is one thing, the "real self" of the actor another. Under these circumstances the ambiguity persists (cf. Rottenburg, 1994). Furthermore, the new images being invoked risk being treated in the same way as old roles were: with simulated acceptance (outwardly) and "private" rejection and ridicule of the façade (inwardly). We believe that both these reactions are performances, part of a script - a learned way of reacting. If the pattern is to be broken, there must be some form of societal discussion of management and manager roles, including the problem of façades and role distancing, and of the "first level" scenario - or tacit script, that persisted through all the phases of the communist era. The change in "second level" scenarios is also an important topic to discuss. We suggest that both kinds of script be reviewed, otherwise the post-1989 changes will probably be interpreted according to the old tacit script. It is important for educational institutions to bear this conclusion in mind, if their aim is to help the Polish (or other East European) managers to learn new ways of acting, more appropriate to creative problem-solving in a market economy.

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