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MEDIA AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL MEMORY: A CASE OF WŁADYSŁAW TUROWICZ, THE POLISH GODFATHER OF PAKISTAN'S SPACE, AND MISSILE PROGRAMS

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of media as a vehicle for social memory in building social identity. The concept of social memory used by historians and others is to explore the connection between social identity and historical memory. In this research, the authors explore the role of media in the formation of social memory. The first part of the article explores the term of social memory in the light of literature. In the second part, the authors discussed the role of media in the formation of social memory on the example of Air Commodore Władysław Turowicz, a Polish Pakistani Engineer who was known as “The Rocket-Missile Man of Pakistan”. The researchers present the social memories of the Polish Godfather of Pakistan's Space and Missile programs in the light of Pakistani electronic media. The authors have explored the role of Polish Engineer Władysław Turowicz in SUPARCO, his personal and professional life that has been widely discussed in Pakistani electronic media vs mere mention in Polish media. From the knowledge perspective, this research highlights some of the forgotten memories of Turowicz.

Keywords: Pakistani media, social memory, social identity, historical memory, Pakistan's Space Program, Polish engineer, Pakistan Air Force

1. Introduction

The main purpose of the research is to explore the role of media in the formation of social memory. To understand the concept, it is important to discuss social memory first. The concept of social memory used by historians and others is to explore the connection between social identity and historical memory (Van Dyke, 2016). Social memory has been developed in conjunction with the emergence of communication that is spanned across time and space (Cook, 1997; Dijck, 2007). In the work of Collective Memory, Halbwachs (1992) sets up a central structure for the investigation of cultural recognition. As “a socially constructed notion” (Coser, 1992, p. 22), collective memory talks about society’s comprehension of its past, characterizes the connection between the individual and society, and empowers society to maintain its self-image and to move it through time. Nevertheless, as Halbwachs (1992) explains, “collective memory must be distinguished from [emphasis added] history” (p. 222). Rather, it is “essentially a reconstruction [emphasis added] of the past in the light of the present” (Coser, 1992, p. 34; Jansen, 2007). On the other hand, the structure of the present decides the specific insight of history, and the past is accordingly “shaped by the concerns of the present” (Coser, 1992, p. 22).

In this procedure, for people, their recollections are truly a controlled development of the individuals who keep up power and status and who regulate the pictures of the past. Halbwachs underlines the key job of the “social frameworks for memory,” inside which people confine, sort out, and recall memorial occasions in mnemonic settings. This procedure subsequently strengthens collective memory. In the next decades, many researchers brought innovation into Halbwachs’ (1992) work in different ways, specifically, clarifying the connections among control, counterpower, and the (re)construction of memory. Some declare that the portrayals of collective memory are those that have been explicitly chosen by individuals in control, planning to guarantee the authenticity of control (Alonso, 1988; Nora, 1996; Armstrong, Cragge, 2006).

The connection between communication media, the ordering of cultural objects, and mnemonic devices can be outlined into social memory standards each understanding memory with a certain goal that is different from the other (Radstone, 2000). As highlighted in the table below, the social memory paradigms of social setting and memory palace concentrate on oral recalling by methods of mental aides or mnemo techniques. Conversely, the paradigms of information habitat and memory institutions analyze mediated memory and twofold digital media.

The qualification into the social memory paradigm is a diagnostic device. The classifications are historical or mutually unrelated. Storytelling, for example, is still to be found in contemporary society yet, in addition, finds another life in, e.g. fantasies read to children as a sleep time story or in the regulated type of oral history. In any case, with the emergence of ICT and the internet, another worldview of social memory is developing addressed by the field of computerized memory studies (Marton, 2011).

Table 1. Social Media Paradigm

Social memory paradigm	Related concepts	Paradigmatic medium	Order of order Weinberger (2007)	Paradigmatic examples
Social context as a reminder for individuals No autonomous social memory	Collected memory (Olick) Collective memory (Halbwachs) Communicative memory (Assmann, Assmann) Prophetic memory (Esposito)	Ideograms Pictograms	None	Storytelling Rituals Myths
Places for musing memory palace	Collective memory (Olick) Rhetorical memory (Esposito)	Alphabetic writing	First-order Order of the things themselves	Lists Mnemonic techniques Rhetoric Inventory (Book catalogue) Museion, monasteries, mosques
Institutionalized memory	Cultural memory (Assmann, Assmann) Prosthetic memory (Nora) Modern memory (Esposito)	Mass media (print, radio, television)	Second-order Order of representation of things	Canonization Taxonomies Cataloguing (Card catalogue, OPAC) Libraries, archives, museums
Information habitat	Algorithmic memory (Sluis) Telematic memory (Esposito) Digital memory (e.g. Garde-Hanse, Hoskings and Readings) Social network memory (Hoskins)	Binary-based, digital medium	Third-order Ex-post, performative ordering	Search engines Folksonomies Faceted browsing Internet, WWW

Source: Social Media Paradigm, Media and Order (Marton, 2011).

2. Role of Media in Social Memory

During the last decade, there is a dramatic surge in exposure and access to media. This has happened widely in terms of quantity and availability of modalities along with its implications for various facets of our lives. There is a great impact of media on human behavior regarding how we built a relationship with strangers and how people make experiences of their lives as a whole. There is one such impact that has been rarely discussed, and that is the media's impact on creating the memory of human beings and the way it affects our understanding when we recall history. Unfortunately, the overall impact of media has been seen as detrimental to human memory rather than advantageous or beneficial. There is a general perception that having more communications and methods of delivery would improve human memory to retain historical events. The literature, on the other hand, suggests that media has an impact on the capacity, content, and recollection of memories and ultimately affects the way we reminisce history (Lawson, Strange, 2015).

Our existence is fundamentally based on the content, we maintain in our memories. With no memories, we remain not connected with our cultural and personal histories which in turn would leave us baseless to undertake our lives. Essentially, our memories represent our personalities and the context for how we make future decisions. Having memories are crucial for our survival because our current actions are based on our past learning. In current times, our memories are open to new challenges with the rapid inflow of media exposure which consequently affects what we remember. Media not only alters what we recall but also how we recall. For instance, a false Facebook post or a tweet can have a huge impact on what we remember about a certain event. This has also been supported by a study (Lawson, Strange, 2015) that highlights the fact that false or incorrect information can result in the wrong recollection of memory. Similarly, the use of exaggerated language affects the content of the information being remembered about an event. Hence, if there is a strong use of unnecessary and complicated information and that is then widely shown, there is a huge risk of falsification of memory.

It is also presented that the ways exaggerated language is utilized, also affects the plausibility of information. Study shows that the information presented through newspapers is more likely to be trustworthy or believable than the one which is televised, stressing that newspapers are likely to avoid inflated information. This phenomenon can be due to the long existence of the newspapers, as compared to recent means to convey news i.e. Facebook and Twitter. Social media have a significant impact on the formation of our memories. In the context of false or fake news spread, it affects the formation of memories through the "illusory-truth effect", a phenomenon based on the fact that repeatedly presented information is considered true even if it is fake (Fragale, Health, 2004).

3. Case of Władysław Turowicz

Ever since Pakistan gained independence, many emigrants have served and played a vital role in the evolution and supremacy of Pakistan. One of them was Air Commodore Władysław Turowicz, a Polish-Pakistani scientist who was known as “The Rocket-Missile Man of Pakistan”. He was a prominent and distinguished Polish-Pakistani military scientist and aeronautical engineer and was one of the chief architects of Pakistan’s Space Program.

Władysław Turowicz was born in 1908 in Siberia, close to the Chinese border, in the family of a Polish railway constructor and builder. Since his childhood, he had an affiliation with technology specifically in aviation technology and aircraft engineering. He used to amass different kinds of aircraft and loved to play with cars when such things were just invented. The affiliation with the aircraft leads Mr. Turowicz to pursue a master’s degree in aeronautical engineering from one of the most prestigious institutes of Poland known as the Warsaw University of Technology in 1920. Later, he also acquired Ph.D. from the same university in the said field.

Turowicz graduated from Warsaw University of Technology and was rewarded his honorary Ph.D. degree in 1926. Later, Turowicz joined the Aeroklub Polski (Polish Aero Club) as a pioneer member, where he had a chance to work and study in the field of aerospace engineering with his friend, teachers, and other renowned Polish engineers. He later migrated to Great Britain where he was inducted by the Royal Air Force as Reservist Polish Pilot. In World War II, he served in Royal Air Force. After the war, he turned out unwelcome in his new communist homeland so, along with 29 Polish engineers and pilots, he settled in Pakistan and helped to establish one of the most admired air forces in the world at the time.

In Pakistan, he was deployed at Karachi airbase where he trained Pakistani fighter pilots. Moreover, he was also responsible for setting up technical institutes for upgrading the engineering setup. During his contract at Pakistan Airforce, he held key positions as chief engineer and later as Air Marshal at different key locations such as Peshawar airbase and PAF Academy.

Turowicz was a real courageous warrior who bravely fought in World War II. He also fought for Pakistan during the 1965 war against India. He had a dream of establishing the foundations for space engineering in Pakistan. He worked to establish the nuclear and space program in cooperation with Dr. Abuds Salam who was the physicist and Pakistani winner of the Nobel prize. Like a real patriot, he worked tirelessly to make Pakistan one of the strong nations in the world. He strongly believed that Pakistan can launch its own space and nuclear program that would help the country in establishing sovereignty and peace in the region. Pakistan has successfully developed its nuclear and space program although, sadly, Mr. Turowicz could not see it for himself. Exactly after the 10 years after his death, Pakistan successfully launched its very first satellite for digital communication. Mr. Turowicz was also part of the launch of Pakistan’s first rocket Rehbar-1. He was the developer

and chief designer of the program. Later on, he became part of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) of Pakistan, where he served as an administrator. The last project he tirelessly worked on was the launch of the Hatf missile which was successfully tested only 9 years after his death (Zibago, 2015).



Source: Pakistan Air Force Museum.

January 8, 1980, was the day when Mr. Turowicz passed away in a deadly accident, leaving behind his intellectual heritage and very precious technological knowledge. He was laid to rest with military honors in Christian Cemetery in Karachi. His name, General Władysław Turowicz, is engraved in monuments in the cities of Lahore and Karachi. He was also the recipient of many awards and honors by the government of Pakistan, among them Sitara-e-Khidmat, Sitara-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Pakistan, Tamgha-e-Pakistan, and Abdus Salam Award in Aeronautical Engineering and ICTP Award in Space Physics (Myth, 2008).

4. Documentary Film on Turowicz

In 2008, a documentary film on the scientific work and life of Air Cdre Władysław Turowicz was released. This film was directed by Anna T. Pietraszek, a Polish film-maker, and journalist, a holder of honorary Pakistani citizenship. The film

shows the contribution of Turowicz and other Polish officers in the building of the PAF and SUPARCO (Myth, 2008). One of the senior officials of PAF has talked about Turowicz, Group Captain (ret'd) S. Ahtesham A. Naqvi of PAF, in one of the documentaries about Polish pilots. He still remembered, even after 60 years, how Polish pilots played a vital role as his teachers, instructors, and friends at the Pakistan Air Force Academy in Risalpur. "Poles came to help us when we were abandoned by everyone else" (Laskowska, Hali, 2016).

5. The presence of Władysław Turowicz in the Polish media

A wide group of media recipients in Poland knows little about Władysław Turowicz, his presence in the social memory is very small. So far, no significant monographs in Polish concerning the life and fate of this outstanding Pole have been created. Press and media mentions are usually limited to the context of the fate of World War II veterans. A more comprehensive description of the trip of about 30 Polish pilots to the newly created country of Pakistan, and the fact that it was organized by Władysław Turowicz, who then served in the Royal Air Force (RAF) as a technical inspector, can be found, for example, in Polityka's Historical Assistant. The presence and significant role of Polish pilots are shown in this study from the perspective of their involvement in the training of Pakistani pilots, so much needed by their country, as well as the air force itself, in the ongoing battles for Kashmir [Historical Assistant].

The only known book in Poland entirely devoted to Polish pilots in Pakistan, published on the 70th anniversary of Poles' arrival in Pakistan (December 28, 1948), was presented at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Warsaw, a book by Anna T. Pietraszek published in English was promoted for Pakistani readers of "Freedom Under the Pakistani Sky" [A.T. Pietraszek]. The event was attended by the Pakistani ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan and the Polish ambassador to Pakistan Piotr Opaliński, and the event was reported by TVP Info (4 million viewers) and Polish Radio. The work of life, including over 200 unknown photographs, was presented on almost 400 pages and was published by the Culture Foundation with the support of the Pakistani Embassy. The book is aimed at an English-speaking audience, but the very fact of creating such a book has attracted the interest of Polish media.

When researching for information about Turowicz in Polish media, apart from the instances mentioned above, we will find little. Often, the same information is duplicated in various forms in biographies and shorter or longer studies, often being a cliché of information about Turowicz found on Wikipedia.

Poles do not know the figure of General Władysław Turowicz. The absence of this outstanding engineer, a Pole, the hero of Pakistan, in the social memory is mostly due to the fact that his life, activity, and professional work coincided with

the post-war period of communism in Poland. The communist authorities were hostile to all information coming from abroad, the media under the communist regime were merely propaganda tools that polarized everything in the communist-good and capitalist-bad opposition; Turowicz's successes in Pakistan were in no way useful to communist authorities. Secondly, the fall of communism, which opened Poland to the world, took place a decade after his death. The absence of Turowicz in the minds of Poles is, therefore, due to the presence in the media reality, the effect on the one hand of the media as a tool of communist propaganda, and the tendency of the media to focus on current events.

6. Conclusion

The researchers tried to explore the term social memory and the impact of media on the formation of social memory. The study highlights the social memory of Polish Engineer, Władysław Turowicz, who played a vital role in the formation of the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan's Space Program. The authors have explored Pakistani electronic media to discuss the social memory of Władysław Turowicz. Keeping in view the secret nature of the project, not too many technical details were available in Pakistani electronic media, but the author has tried to access some of the records and some interviews given by the then colleagues of Władysław Turowicz.

7. Future Research

The authors have discussed the social memory of Polish Pakistani Engineer, Władysław Turowicz. Keeping in view the secret nature of the project, this topic has not received proper attention in previous research, so the nature of the current research was descriptive and exploratory. In future research, more electronic and print media should be explored to highlight the work of Władysław Turowicz.

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