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Recent Experiences in General and Social Psychology in Italy and Poland

1. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENEMY: CONTINUITY OR DIFFERENCE?

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1. Introduction

According to political scientists' analysis, in the construction of political reality there are two dimensions which appear to be of a basic importance: the first one is represented by the distinction between friend and enemy, the second one refers to the distinction between public and private areas (Schmitt, 1963; Freund, 1965). From the relationship between the two aforesaid dimensions a further distinction emerges, that is, the one between *public enemy* and *private enemy*. This distinction appears to be interesting and worthwhile to be studied not only from a political but also from a psychological point of view.

The distinction between public and private enemy is not so easy; it may happen, for instance, that a public enemy acquires, by circumstances, the qualification of private enemy. Thus the two images may be, between themselves, different or their boundaries may appear faded.

Most likely, not only individual but also cultural factors play a role in conditioning the existence and the peculiar features of the private and public enemy: one can assume for instance that private and public enemy may have a different extension and relevance in different cultural and political contexts. For example the image of the public enemy appears to be changed in today's society because the relations of distance/proximity among peoples have changed as a result of increased communications and enhanced shared knowledge.

Our study investigates the representation of the private and public

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enemy with reference to the theory of social representations originally proposed by Moscovici (1961) and developed, thereafter, by other European social psychologists (e.g. Herzlich, Jodelet, Di Giacomo, Flament).

The theory of social representations implies the existence of a social knowledge which does not coincide with scientific knowledge but rather with that of common sense which guides our daily life. This is built up both from experience and from models of thinking transmitted by cultural tradition and education. Opinions, attitudes, stereotypes and images are only partial elements of social representation which, on the whole, consists in a mental structure deriving from an active re-elaboration of reality. Such a structure allows us to insert the new acquisitions within the pre-existing interior mental structures. So the new becomes familiar and the subject has access to a patrimony of knowledge which is not only theoretical but also practical, helping him to understand the world events around him and guiding him into action.

Contents and processes of social representation have a «marquage sociale» in as much as they refer to the conditions and contexts in which representations emerge, to the communication through which they circulate and to the functions they carry out in the interaction of subjects with the world and others (Jodelet, 1984). Given this interactive origin of social representation, language carries out an essential mediating function, even if this would not justify reducing social representations to mere «linguistic repertoires» through which they are expressed.

Thanks to these characteristics, the theory of social representations seems to be particularly useful in the study of certain complex social themes. The most well-known researches have in fact considered various themes such as psychoanalysis in its multiple aspects (Moscovici, 1961; 1976), mental health (Herzlich, 1973), work (De Polo & Sarchielli, 1983), childhood (Chombart de Lauwe, 1978) etc. The results of these researches have demonstrated that the largely shared knowledge of these themes does not necessarily coincide with their scientific description.

Secondly the social representations theory lends itself to the study of changing social phenomena. Like a film frame or a series of frames capturing the same aspects of a moving phenomenon, so social representation «photographs» the form of a given theme at a specific historical moment and in a specific social context.

Moscovici defines this characteristic of social representations with

the term of «psychosocial records». The expression emphasizes how the social representation of a relevant cultural theme constitutes a complete and detailed document of a given reality.

In our opinion, the theme of the enemy is well suited to the field of study of social representations. This theme presents aspects which are conditioned by tradition and history and is subject to change in relation with the changing context of the relationships between nations, groups and persons. Furthermore it is possible that the social representation of the enemy is constituted both by general aspects, widely shared, and by specific aspects typical of given groups and roles (e.g. political role).

2. Objectives of the research

The objectives of the research are:

1. to point out how social representations of the public and private enemy are forming, identifying both the single informative elements contributing to build such representations and the relations connecting such elements in significant structures;
2. to compare the two fields of representation (1) of public and private enemy by identifying the common and differential aspects of the two kinds of enemy;
3. to compare the differences in the answers given by subjects belonging to the different groups of the sample. Such groups include subjects which differ according to the degree of participation and interest in political life.

We assume that the social representations of the private and public enemy, although they have different characteristics due to different contexts of information and experience, still have common aspects. Probably, exactly for this reason, the border between the two representations is not always that clear as it may also change with time depending from different historical and cultural situations.

A second hypothesis concerns the influence of political involvement

1. According to Moscovici's theory, there are three elements which participate in forming the social representation: *information* refers to available data we have on a social object, the *field of representation* refers to the organization of the contents in hierarchical structures and finally the *attitude* stresses the general tendency (in a positive or a negative way) towards the object under examination.

on the social representation of public and private enemy and on the relationship between the two representations. The political sphere is located in an intermediate, and thus critical, position between the public and private spheres. Political parties are in fact mediators between society (private) and institutions (public).

Moreover political scientists say that the real or supposed presence of the enemy is a necessary premise for any kind of political association and/or participation. Therefore we suppose that whoever is actively politically involved shows a consistently different representation of the public and private enemy as compared to subjects who don't deal with politics.

3. Method

3.1 Subjects

A sample of 100 subjects from both sexes, aged 25 to 55 years, with high-school or university degrees, was examined. The sample was divided into four groups of 25 persons each:

— the first group was composed of politicians belonging to the various Italian political parties, occupying a post either in parliament or in local government (*politicians*);
— the second group was composed of party activists not holding political posts (*militants*);
— the third group was composed of people not actively involved but still interested in political problems (*interested*);
— the fourth group was composed of people not even remotely interested in political problems (*indifferents*).

All the subjects were resident in Milan.

3.2. Procedure and materials

The results given here represent only a part of the results obtained in a wider research which included a free-association test and a non-structured interview organized in areas. The use of a non-structured interview is consistent with the methodology usually applied in the study of social representations which aims to guarantee the maximum freedom of expression. The date reported here refer to the first two parts of the interview, namely the definition of the private enemy

Tab. 1 — List of categories

1. NEGATION OF EXISTENCE (doubts concerning the existence/reality of the enemy)
2. INTERIOR EXISTENCE (enemy within the person)
3. CRIMINALITY
4. TERRORISM
5. DRUGS
6. POLLUTION
7. PSYCHO-PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT (natural events, illness, stress, anxiety, loneliness)
8. PERSON (any reference to the enemy's action against the individual)
9. SOCIETY (any reference to the enemy's action against the community, the system, the state)
10. REFERENCE GROUP
11. AFFECTIVE SPHERE (friends, family etc.)
12. ECONOMIC / WORK SPHERE
13. POLITICAL SPHERE (reference to the world of and people involved in politics)
14. CONFLICT (struggle, direct opposition, antagonism, opposing factions)
15. FOREIGN POLICY
16. MASS MEDIA (newspapers, television)
17. ADMINISTRATION/GOVERNMENT (bad administration, corruption, bureaucracy)
18. SOCIAL/POLITICAL IDEALS (ideology, general conception of society)
19. MORAL VALUES
20. FEELINGS TOWARDS THE ENEMY (hatred, jealousy, fear)
21. JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE ENEMY (attributes, characteristics of the enemy: e.g. filled with hatred, envious, jealous, to be feared)
22. DANGER (threat, potential violence)
23. INVASION OF PRIVACY
24. OBSTACLE (hindrance, limit, inhibition in following aims)
25. COMPETITION (competition, race, rivalry)
26. VIOLENCE (physical and psychological: aggression, attack, harming, destroying, insulting)
27. NON RESPONSIBILITY (justification of the enemy)
28. FALSENESS (all references to the degrees of clarity of the enemy's action; deceitful action)
29. KNOWLEDGE (understanding of the enemy's identity and motivation)
30. NON KNOWLEDGE (lack of enemy's identification)
31. NON COMMUNICATION (reference to communication difficulties with the enemy; misunderstanding)
32. RETALIATION (reaction to enemy's action)
33. DISINTEREST (indifference to politics)
34. POWER (control, influence, coercion)
35. IMPOTENCE (impossibility to check the enemy)
36. CONSENSUS (reference to the fact that the enemy is shared by several persons or tries to recruit people around him)
37. FREEDOM
38. WAR (invasion of state borders, weapons)
39. OTHERNESS (reference to the enemy as different, strange)
40. NO BOUNDARY (existence of a continuum, a superimposition of private and public enemy)
41. PERSONAL PROFIT (personal advantage from an action which should be of benefit to the community)
42. TRANSGRESSION OF NORMS/RULES (deviation, reference to lack of respect for norms, rules, laws).

and the definition of the public enemy.

The recorded interviews were examined according to a thematic content analysis (Bardin, 1978; Ghiglione et al., 1980) which calls for a selection by categories. To define these categories we followed, with some modification, the thematic analysis method proposed by Ghiglione et al. (1980) which considers the presence/absence of thematic categories within each interview ignoring the sequence and the appearance frequency of such categories. Through an analysis of a first group of interviews it was possible to elaborate a list of 42 categories (Table 1).

This list of categories represents the codifying screen of all interviews.

The coding of interviews was conducted independently by two judges. The following comparison showed an adequate level of agreement in thematic analysis.

On the collected data two different analyses were carried out: the first one taking into account the appearance frequency of the thematic categories in the global sample, pointing out common and differential elements of the private and public enemy fields of representation.

The second kind of analysis does not take into account the single constitutive elements of the representations, but the relationships of nearness/distance which connect them. It is thus possible to reconstruct the *structure* of the field of representation of the two types of enemy.

From the possible methods suited to this type of research, Benzecri's correspondence analysis method was chosen (1973).

This is a multi-dimensional factorial analysis which provides geometric representations of sets of data. In such representations, the nearness/distance between two points can be interpreted as similarity/non similarity. It is exactly for these characteristics that such an analysis lends itself to the elaboration of data based on ordinal rather than metric links. The use of this technique is particularly suited to descriptive/explorative research, aiming to illustrate complex phenomena such as social representations without reducing the richness and complexity of data by artificial simplification.

The application of this analysis allows us to identify which categories appear more similar among themselves and nearer to the subgroups of the sample.

4. Analysis of results

4.1. Elements of the representation

Initial analysis of data considered the frequency of content categories. Table 2 reports the ten categories most quoted by the global sample

Tab. 2 — Content categories most used by the global sample

PUBLIC ENEMY (N = 100)	%	PRIVATE ENEMY (N = 100)	%
SOCIETY	63	VIOLENCE	42
VIOLENCE	58	ECONOMIC/WORK SPHERE	41
POLITICAL SPHERE	29	AFFECTIVE SPHERE	40
POWER	28	PERSON	39
ADMINISTRATION/GOVERNMENT	26	OBSTACLE	35
PERSONAL PROFIT	22	JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE ENEMY	33
ECONOMIC/WORK SPHERE	22	MORAL VALUES	32
FALSENESS	21	INTERIOR EXISTENCE	23
SOCIAL/POLITICAL IDEALS	21	NON COMMUNICATION	23
TRANSGRESSION OF NORMS/RULES	20	FEELINGS TOWARDS THE ENEMY	21

for the two types of enemy,

The *public enemy*, as can be seen in the Table, is seen essentially as an enemy of the community (category «society» 63%) and his action is understood as an openly hostile activity («violence» 58%).

At considerable distance, in terms of percentage, follow some categories which are all related to the political world («political sphere», «power», «government-administration»). On the whole, these three categories were chosen by a large majority of the people interviewed, showing that the political world is perceived as an area of conflict and with hostile connotations.

Logically connected to the preceding categories is the one «personal profit» (22%) which indicates the identification of the enemy in whoever exploits for personal aims a position which should be instead of benefit to the community. The category «economic sphere» also takes up the theme of illegal gain or greed. «Falseness» and «transgression» are two other categories quoted; both refer to reprehensible behaviour: the non transparent nature of the enemy's action and the violation of the norms and rules on which society is based. A final category, «social-political ideals», groups together the replies which identify the enemy not in terms of violent behaviour towards society, but rather in problems of a theoretical-ideological nature.

This category refers to two possible modalities of content: either a lack of ideals or a feared proposal of ideologies different from

those dominant.

When defining the borders of a field of representation, apart from the most quoted categories, other categories should be remembered, particularly those whose quotation incidence was lower than expected, considering that they belong to the traditional definition of the enemy. For example, there has been only a limited reference to the foreign enemy and to historical and traditional enemies, whilst «foreign policy» is mentioned by only 6%, and references to «war» and «terrorism» 17% and 14% respectively. However other categories seem important when taken as a whole; these refer to social problems and internal politics, such as «crime» 14%, «drugs» 15% and «pollution» 12%. In social representation these aspects appear as a more significant public enemy than the traditional figure.

Let us now consider the categories most frequently used to refer to the *private enemy*. In this case too, we refer to the global sample.

As can be seen in Table 2, the description of the private enemy is more comprehensive than that of the public enemy: the contents are distributed throughout a greater number of categories. Here the most quoted category is «violence», 42%, which was also crucial in the representation of the public enemy. Almost equal to this however, is the category «economic sphere», which emphasizes the importance given by the individual to problems connected with work and income. The following two categories, «affective sphere» (40%) and «person» (39%), show the importance of the threat to intimate values and personal relationships. In particular, the category «person» shows how the private enemy tends to be perceived as someone who acts against the interests of the individual. This action is seen basically as an «obstacle» (35%), a barrier to the person's freedom of expression, in such a way that the enemy, even when not openly violent, constitutes a hurdle in the realization of personal aims.

Examples are the competitor at work, or the rival in love, who do not aim to destroy or harm the person, but who compete with him for certain objectives.

Several categories follow which show how the private enemy is given a whole series of particular attributes which are absent in those relating to the public enemy, and which regard the spheres of ethics and affectivity. Particularly the categories «judgments» and «feelings towards the enemy» both refer, although somewhat differently, to an emotional involvement with the private enemy. Two further categories, «moral values» (32%) and «non communication» (23%) include contents which, within certain limits, could be understood in the same way as the
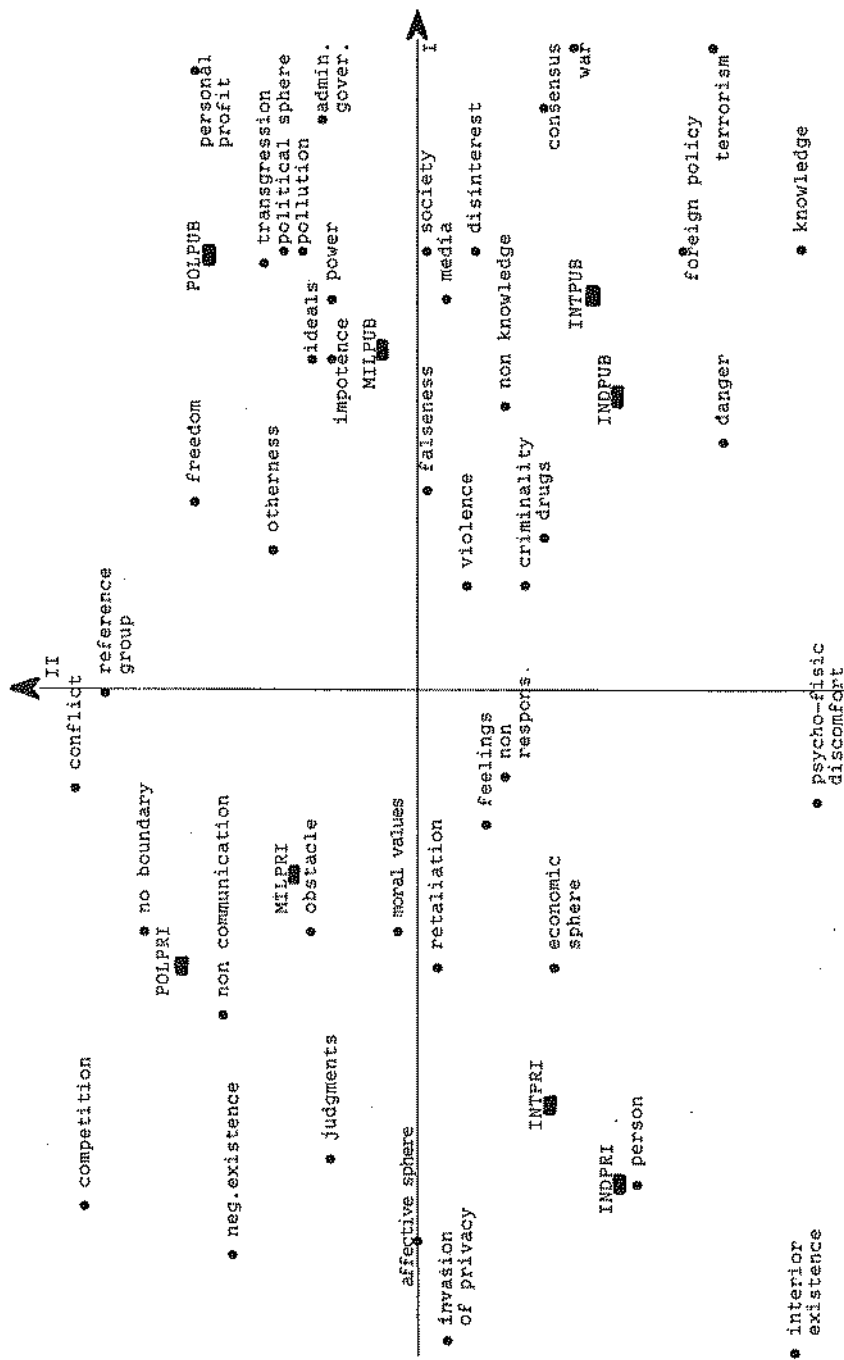
conflict

reference group

competition

neg. existence

POLPRI • no boundary

• non communication

MILPRI • obstacle

• judgments

• moral values

• retaliation

affective sphere

• invasion of privacy

INTPRI

INDPRI • person

• interior existence

• feelings • non respons.

• economic sphere

• psycho-fisic discomfort

• freedom

• otherness

impotence • power
MILPUB

• falseness

• violence

• criminality • drugs

• danger

• society

• media

• non knowledge

INTPUB

INDPUB

• disinterest

POLPUB

• transgression
• political sphere
• pollution
• ideals • admin. gover.
• personal profit

• consensus
• war

• foreign policy

• terrorism

• knowledge

II

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*Fig. 1 — Analysis of correspondences on the matrix categories x (stimuli x groups) (axes 1,2) ***

* For the meaning of abbreviations see note no. 2.

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preceding categories. The lack of moral values or the lack of personal communication appear as a hostile threat to the private sphere. A final category «interior existence» (23%), shows the enemy as something inside, rather than outside us.

4.2. Structure of the representation

After analysing the main *elements* of the two fields of representation, meaning the categories most quoted in the global sample, the relationships between the single elements were analysed, in order to establish the *structure* of the fields of representation of the private and public enemy.

In order to carry out the analysis, a matrix was formed, in which the lines were made up of the content categories and the columns were formed by the groups and by the two terms stimuli: at the intersection of lines and columns could be found the frequency relative to the number of times a category was mentioned for one or the other term by the four groups. The matrix thus obtained constitutes the basis of the analysis of correspondences. The results show two main factors, which alone explain the 70.81% of the global inertia.

The first factor explains the 57.38% and the second factor the 13.43% of the global inertia. The graph in Fig.1 (2) illustrates the bidimensional space obtained.

The graph allows us to show the position of the four groups in the two types of relationship with the stimuli.

The positions of the groups and the terms appear quite distinct. The four stimulus-groups connected with the private enemy are on the left of the graph, whilst those relative to the public enemy are on the opposite side. If, however, we consider the graph from up to down, we see that the two groups of *politicians* and *militants*, both in terms of private and public enemy stimulus, are to be found

2. Abbreviations used in the Figure no.1 are to be read:

POL.PRI = politicians-private enemy
MIL.PRI = militants-private enemy
INTPRI   = interested-private enemy
INDPRI   = indifferents-private enemy
POL.PUB = politicians-public enemy
MIL.PUB = militants-public enemy
INTPUB   = interested-public enemy
INDPUB   = indifferents-public enemy

in the upper part, whilst the *interested* and *indifferent* groups are to be found in the lower part. Proceeding on the horizontal axis, we move along the private-public continuum; on the other hand, proceeding along the vertical axis shows the disinterest-political involvement continuum.

The positions of the groups and of the content categories present in the replies are to be found in the graph.

This type of representation, made possible thanks to the symmetrical characteristics of correspondences analysis, gives a picture of both the stimulus terms in the various groups, and of each category compared to the others and to the groups. Let us analyse the distribution of points in the various parts of the graph.

In the upper right-hand quadrant are to be found the categories whose meaning can be connected to the world of politics. These are the categories «political sphere», «personal profit», «administration-government», and «transgression norms-rules». These are the categories nearest to the *politicians'* public enemy. Other categories, still connected with the political world but referring to more theoretical aspects («social-political ideals», «power», «impotence»), are to be found in this area, but are nearer to the group of *militants*. This group of subjects would seem to be in a more critical position and therefore more sensible to political problems, connected with management and control of power. Amongst the categories to be found on the borderline of the two quadrants, it is interesting to note those of «falseness», «non-knowledge» and «mass-media», which express the concern about the ability to recognise the enemy. The categories «violence», «criminality» and «drugs» are also connected and are nearer to the origins of the axis in that they are not exclusive of the public sphere, but received a certain quantity of mentions in the private sphere too.

Another area is that made up of the categories «war», «foreign policy» and «terrorism». These categories are nearer to the public enemy of the *interested* rather than the *politicians* who, as we have seen, seem to concentrate more on internal politics and control of power, that is on political conflict among parties.

In the upper left-hand quadrant, it should be noted that the category nearest to the private enemy of the *politicians* is that of the «no boundary». This category collects contents which describe the existence of a continuum between public enemy and private enemy. The position of the category would lead us to believe that it is difficult for *politicians*, totally involved in public life, to identify a purely private enemy.

On the same side we find two other categories, «competition» and

«conflict», which emphasize the fact that the *politicians* have an active and aggressive relationship with the enemy. The category nearest to the group of *militants* is instead the category «obstacle», which indicates a more passive relationship with the enemy.

The position of a group of categories in the middle of the graph («judgments about the enemy», «moral values», «affective sphere», «invasion of privacy», «retaliation», «feelings», «non responsibility»), shows that they are relatively equidistant and therefore common to the various groups.

Proximity among the categories themselves is also worthy of note. E.g., the proximity between the categories «affective sphere» and «invasion of privacy», which both imply a threat to the more personal area; proximity between «feelings towards the enemy» and «non responsibility» indicates a tendency towards affective involvement with the enemy and even justification of the enemy.

The private enemy of the *interested* and *indifferents* seems to be characterized by the categories of «economic sphere» and «person». Finally, two categories, «interior existence» and «psychophysical discomfort» are in an anomalous position compared to all the others. The meanings of these two categories are quite close: one affirms that the private enemy is within us, whilst the other describes the discomfort which the presence of the enemy involves. The group nearest to these categories is that of the *indifferents*, the group most far away is on the contrary that of the *politicians*.

5. Conclusions

Further to the preceding considerations, the following observations may be made:

1. In the description of the enemy, the attribute «public» seems to lose its original meaning, which is that of something visible, open and therefore recognisable. The subjects interviewed by us defined the *public enemy* using, amongst other attributes, that of something invisible and hidden. Consistent with this characteristic of non-identifiability is the lack of reference to any nation, political party or person. More frequent however are the references to a more widespread, hard-to-pin-down danger, which is thus all the more threatening. References to nuclear power/weapons are included in this type of perception of the enemy. Even references to drugs, criminality and pollution can be interpreted as belonging to this

category of public enemy which is difficult to track down. In this respect, it is interesting to note the ambivalent interpretation of the mass media: on the one hand they are seen as instruments which inform (and therefore help us to know the enemy), and on the other as an instrument of manipulation and confusion. The public enemy, such as he emerges from our research, no longer corresponds to the traditional, stereotyped image of the foreigner, the external aggressor; neither is he merely the criminal (public enemy no.1); the image is more varied and composite, and includes social problems, and to a lesser extent, problems of international politics.

2. Consistent with the philosophical and juridical theories which put the concepts of affectivity, economy and ethics in the private sphere (Bobhio, 1982), our data confirm the fact that the *private enemy* is to be identified in the affective and economic sphere and evaluated in the ethical sphere. In the identification of the private enemy, a clear typology emerges concerning the enemy's sphere of action. The first type of private enemy works from the outside, and this is the personal enemy in the true sense.

    The second type works against a group to which the subject belongs. A third type represents the enemy within the subject, and represents the negative part of himself which stops him from reaching his aims and from living peacefully.

3. The representation of the public enemy appears, on the whole, less differentiated from that of the private enemy, and more concentrated around certain dominant themes. The public enemy, although no longer the foreigner, is still considered as something more distant compared to the private enemy, represents "them" as compared to "us", and as something extraneous, whereas the private enemy enters into the personal sphere, is sometimes part of the subject's own group and is therefore, in a certain sense, an enemy because of his proximity, which qualifies him as an obstacle and a near threat. He is then an enemy because he is similar rather than because he is different. This could also be interpreted in terms of social categorization. The description of the public enemy as an expression of the outgroup appears less articulated and more generic than that of the private enemy, which is perceived as nearer, more detailed and differentiated.

4. As far as the third objective of this research is concerned, namely a comparison of the social representations of the groups which make up the sample, it was possible to infer a certain specificity

from the different relationships of nearness and distance to the various categories.

For the politicians, the nearest categories are those which belong to a specifically political area: the categories «conflict» and «non communication» pose the problem of aggregation and counterposition. As far as the private enemy is concerned, the category «no boundary» between public and private enemy is the most relevant. The *politicians* seem particularly distant from the categories which refer to emotivity, to the affective sphere and to interpersonal relationships. This is particularly true as far as the public enemy is concerned, where certain categories are ignored such as «interior existence» of the enemy and «psycho-physical discomfort».

Still on the theme of the public enemy, it is interesting to note that politicians show great sensitivity for problems of power and conflict amongst parties, rather than concern for international political problems.

The *militants* differ from the *politicians* in that they seem further removed from active political debate and conflict, and more intent on criticizing the negative aspects of power. The *interested*, on the other hand, seem nearer to more concrete problems in their definition of the public enemy, such as crime, terrorism and international politics. The categories nearest to the *indifferents*, finally, were almost all in the emotive-personal area («person», «interior existence», «psycho-physical discomfort», «danger»). This group had a minor relationship not only with political problems but also with social problems, and was more withdrawn in the private and more sensitive to psycho-physical harm which might result from their relationships with others and with themselves.

Since we are dealing with social representations, our data are expression of a specific historical and cultural context, and of a certain historical moment. Probably research carried out along similar lines in a different context would provide interesting elements of comparison. It would also be useful in improving our understanding of how the enemy is represented by societies and how such representation may differ from the image projected by political forces.

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