Piotr Forecki

Reconstructing Memory

The Holocaust in Polish Public Debates

GESCHICHTE
ERINNERUNG
POLITIK

Posener Studien zur Geschichts-,
Kultur- und Politikwissenschaft

Herausgegeben von Anna Wolff-Powęska
und Piotr Forecki

PETER LANG
EDITION

The book aims to reconstruct and analyze the disputes over the Polish-Jewish past and memory in public debates in Poland between 1985 and 2012, from the discussions about Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, Jan Błoński's essay *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto*, Jan Tomasz Gross' books *Neighbours*, *Fear* and *Golden Harvest*, to the controversies surrounding the premiere of Władysław Pasikowski's *The Aftermath*. The analysis includes the course and dynamics of the debates and, most importantly, the panorama of opinions revealed in the process. It embraces the debates held across the entire spectrum of the national press. The selection of press was not limited by the level of circulation or a subjective opinion of their value. The main intention was to reconstruct the widest possible variety of opinions that were revealed during the debates. Broad symbolic elites participated in the debates: people who exercised control over publicly accessible knowledge, legitimacy of beliefs and the content of public discourse.

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ISBN 978-3-631-62365-7

www.peterlang.com

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und des Journalismus
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Band 5

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

NARODOWY PROGRAM ROZWOJU HUMANISTYKI

Research project financially supported by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education in the National Program for the Development of the Humanities.

Translated by Marta Skowronska.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Forecki, Piotr, author.
[Od Shoah do Strachu. English]
Reconstructing memory : the Holocaust in Polish public debates / Forecki, Piotr.
pages cm. — (Geschichte Erinnerung Politik : Band 5.)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-3-631-62365-7
1. Jews—Poland—History—20th century. 2. Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)—Poland. 3. Jews—Crimes against—Poland. 4. Poland—Ethnic relations. 5. Public opinion—Poland. I. Title.
DS134.55.F6713 2013
940.53'1809438--dc23

2013028630

ISSN 2191-3528
ISBN 978-3-631-62365-7 (Print)
E-ISBN 978-3-653-03675-6 (E-Book)
DOI 10.3726/978-3-653-03675-6

PETER LANG
Open

Peter Lang – Frankfurt am Main · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

www.peterlang.de

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Introduction

One of key achievements of the Polish political transition was the unblocking of the hitherto limited public discourse. It began to include a variety of issues that had previously been disregarded, ignored, silenced or falsified. The topic of the Holocaust and the attitudes of its Polish witnesses was one of the problems about which communist Poland did not speak, at least not in an honest way. However, it was in the last decade of the communist system in Poland that the silence was broken by Catholic and oppositionist press, although the range of these debates was certainly limited.

After 1989, the problem of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II and, in general, Jewish history, culture and martyrdom, began to become a significant element of public discourse. These issues were no longer omitted by the Polish press; many important books appeared on the publishing market and Polish researchers, although few, gradually approached the subject and started to make amends for the lost decades. The topic of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations during World War II returned on the occasion of the commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Kielce pogrom and the debate over reprivatisation.

During heated debates resulting from the conflicts about the former extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, Michał Cichy's article "Poles and Jews: Black Pages in the Annals of the Warsaw Uprising" published by "Gazeta Wyborcza", became one of the most important subjects of public consideration, as well as Jan Tomasz Gross' books: "Neighbours", "Fear" and "Golden Harvest." Also, the works of authors connected with Polish Centre for Holocaust Research: Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking[1] were widely discussed. The subject was also commented on after the publication of an article in "Der Spiegel" entitled: "The Dark Continent: Hitler's European Holocaust Helpers" in 2009 and the premiere of Władysław Pasikowski's film "Pokłosie" ["The Aftermath"] in 2012, which was inspired by the story of the murders of Jews committed by their Polish neighbours.

Doubtlessly, one could list more contexts and occasions when the topic of the Holocaust was raised. One thing is certain: every time it evoked intense emotions, it was as though it violated an intimate sphere of the nation and en-

1 "Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu" and Barbara Engelking's "Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień… Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942-1945"

tered the area of national taboos. These emotions demonstrate that the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations pose a problem for Poles, one that is serious, deeply rooted and of complex origin. This problem has been inherited from the communist period, when it had never been solved but only removed from sight or instrumentally used. The process of collective forgetting of the Holocaust contributed to serious distortions and gaps in the collective memory, which began to be fully recognised in the second half of the 1980s, during the first public debates.

This book attempts to reconstruct and analyse the disputes over the Polish-Jewish past and memory in public debates in Poland between 1985 and 2012, that is, from the discussion about Claude Lanzmann's "Shoah" to the controversies after the premiere of Władysław Pasikowski's "Pokłosie" ["The Aftermath"]. Not all the issues related to Polish-Jewish relations, i.e. the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, etc., became a topic of public debate even if they were an element of public discourse. Public discourse, defined as all public communication available, is a much more complex phenomenon and public debates constitute only an element of it.[2] Public debate includes public discussion and examining controversial issues and problems and its aim is to settle the dispute. Debate is a collective reflection on an issue that involves many participants who refer to each other's statements. Debates sometimes exist over extended periods of time; they have their own specific trajectories: beginnings, successive stages, turning points and more or less tangible ends. They are usually triggered by a conflict, an event, a publication, or a statement. A debate constitutes a structured entity and the participants are its architects.

The debates described in this book meet all of these criteria. The analysis includes their course, dynamics, main moot points and turning points, and – most importantly – the panorama of opinions revealed in the process. It embraced the debates held in the national press of diverse profiles and circulation. Some of them can certainly be considered a niche. The selection of press to be examined was not, however, limited by the frequency of publishing, level of circulation or a subjective opinion of their value. My intention was to reconstruct the widest possible spectrum of opinions that were revealed during the debate. Besides, opinions presented by periodicals that are considered as marginal and insignificant often corresponded with opinions that were formulated in leading papers by main public actors.

The debates were participated in by broad symbolic elites: journalists, clergy, academics, intellectuals and politicians; in other words, people who exer-

2 M. Czyżewski, S. Kowalski, A. Piotrowski, *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, Kraków 1997, s. 11-15.

cised control over publically accessible knowledge, legitimacy of beliefs and the content of public discourse.[3] Their essays, polemic articles, columns, interviews, public statements, appeals and sermons co-created the debates that are analysed in this book. The analyses include both their explicit and implicit content.

This book consists of four chapters and an epilogue and the first chapter is a prelude that is necessary for reading the others. It would be hard to explain and understand the emotions that accompanied the debates held in Poland after 1985 without recognising what happened to the Polish memory of the Holocaust between 1945 and the end of 1990s. During this period, the Holocaust, everything related to it and anything that caused anxiety was being repressed from collective, national memory. However diverse the reasons for the Polish desire to forget about the extermination of Jews, the fact remains that Polish collective memory was seriously distorted. Hence, ignoring the phenomenon of collective forgetting of the Holocaust in communist Poland would be a serious mistake, as it determined all the following disputes concerning the Polish-Jewish past and memory. What proves that collective forgetting indeed occurred were the irrational responses to information about Polish attitudes to Jews and the Holocaust that had been suppressed, distorted or hidden as they could cast a shadow on Polish nation. As Jerzy Jedlicki aptly noted, no other historical subject in Poland strikes "a hidden chord of moral sensitivity or resentment" so intensely and so often.[4]

The next chapters directly correspond with the title of the book. Chapter II is devoted to the processes of reconstructing the Polish memory of Jews and the Holocaust in the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland. It is based on the analysis of the first public debates inspired by Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah" and the publication of Jan Błoński's essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" in the "Tygodnik Powszechny" weekly. On the one hand, the debates broke the prevailing conspiracy of silence. On the other, they manifested problems that Poles had to face after 1989 and will probably still have to confront. Considering their limited scope, these debates are difficult to compare with those held in the following years. However, their importance was crucial.

Chapter III reconstructs the most important, the most in-depth and the longest debate of all discussions about Polish attitudes to the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish pre-war relations that has ever been held; namely, the debate over Jan Tomasz Gross's book titled: "Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne". The author described the murders of Jews that were

3 Zob. M. Czyżewski, S. Kowalski, A. Piotrowski, op. cit., s. 17.

4 J. Jedlicki, *Jak się z tym uporać. Polacy wobec zagłady Żydów*, "Polityka" 10 II 2001, s. 68.

committed by their neighbours: Polish residents of Jedwabne. The book's uniqueness resulted mainly from the specificity and significance of the problem that Poles had to confront. While Claude Lanzmann and his "Shoah" illustrated the problem of being a witness of the Holocaust and the question of Polish-Jewish past, and Jan Błoński in his essay drew public attention to the Polish sin of indifference towards the Holocaust, Jan Tomasz Gross confronted Poles with the problem of direct complicity in the extermination of Jews. He did it long before Michał Cichy, whose article is also discussed in the chapter. The last chapter of the book includes an analysis of a debate initiated by another book by Jan Tomasz Gross: "Fear". The epilogue examines the debate over "Golden Harvest" by Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross and other recent publications, as well an analysis of the responses to "Pokłosie" ("The Aftermath") by Władysław Pasikowski. It is also a summary of the book.

Considering its subject, this book would undoubtedly be more complete if it also included analyses of other debates around the difficult Polish-Jewish past that have been held so far. These include, for example, the controversy over whether the National Armed Forces had participated in the murder of Jews, the controversies over returning Jewish properties and debates held at anniversaries of the Kielce pogrom and the events of March 1968. However interesting and worthy of consideration they may be, the scope and social significance of these debates were limited.

This book is based on a publication titled "Od Shoah do Strachu. Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych"[5] [From Shoah to Fear: Disputes about the past and the memory of Polish-Jewish relations]. The present version, however, has been significantly shortened; expanded footnotes have been reduced and the composition has been modified. For example, one chapter has been removed; it was devoted to the controversies about symbolic control over the former extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, over the location of Carmelite Convent, over religious symbols at Birkenau Death Camp, and over the act of placing the souvenir cross from the Mass said by the Pope at Auschwitz II in 1979, placed in the Auschwitz gravel pit. All these disputes have demonstrated that Auschwitz-Birkenau symbolised something different for Polish and Jewish memory communities, although for both it was a significant site where they confirmed their identity. Instrumental use of Auschwitz-Birkenau by communist propagandists, who made it a symbol of anti-Fascism and a site of martyrdom of many nations, but particularly Poles, have significantly influenced Polish collective memory. Although 90 percent of the Ausch-

5 P. Forecki, *Od "Shoah" do "Strachu". Spory o polsko-żydowską przeszłość i pamięć w debatach publicznych*, Poznań 2010.

witz victims were Jewish, Poles have rarely perceived this place as a symbol of Holocaust, simple because the truth about the camp had been falsified. However, social awareness has been recently changing for the better. All these questions have been excluded from the book only because they had already been fully described by other scholars.[6] However, analyses of events that took place after the Polish edition, which are discussed mainly in the epilogue, have been added to the book.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the many people who have made this book possible First of all, I am very grateful to Anna Kulec, who was the first proof reader, and Marta Skowrońska, who translated the book into English. Very special thanks go to Michael Steinlauf, Michał Głowiński, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Krystyna Kersten, Jerzy Jedlicki and Mark Ziółkowski. Their books and articles were a source of inspiration so great that to mention them solely in footnotes would be an injustice. Certainly, the blame for all the mistakes and shortcomings lies only with the author, just as the responsibility for all the judgments and opinions included in the book are his.

6 Zob. G. Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz. Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland*, The University of Chicago Press 2006.

Chapter I
Collective forgetting of the Holocaust in the People's Republic of Poland

1. Collective memory and collective forgetting

Collective memory has been explored by different social sciences and defined in many ways. Moreover, there are also other names to describe and analyse this phenomenon, such as: "social memory", "historical memory", "historical consciousness" or "cultural memory". Since collective memory is studied by researchers representing various fields of science (even if they sometimes touch upon the same issues and problems), different meanings are attached to it. Therefore, the literature about collective memory is characterised by "conceptual and terminological confusion".[7] From the perspective of this book, two definitions, which are general and mutually corresponding, seem sufficient. The first was offered by Barbara Szacka, according to whom, collective memory refers to "a set of beliefs" of a given community "about its past, about people and events that inhabited it" and a way of "commemorating the past and spread the knowledge about it" – this knowledge is considered as "obligatory equipment of each member of this community."[8] The other definition was coined by Marek Ziółkowski, who stated that collective memory is "a set (or arrangement) of beliefs about the past; beliefs that belong to social consciousness, in which one's own individual memories mix with messages received from other people. To a smaller or larger extent, this set of beliefs meets the three main criteria of social consciousness."[9]

In conclusion, collective memory is a projection of the past shared by a community that is aware of its own continuance; it is based on a set of beliefs and ideas that refer to the past. These beliefs and ideas usually concern past events, but also persons who are engraved in the memory of a community and are commemorated by it. They do not need to correlate with facts and the historical truth. As

7 B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit*, Warszawa 2006, p. 33.

8 B. Szacka, *Historia i pamięć zbiorowa*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2003, no 4, p. 4.

9 M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting after Communism*. *The Polish Case*. "Polish Sociological Review", 2002, no1, pp. 7-24

Bronisław Baczko noted, images of past events and persons are valued by collective memory more than historical knowledge reproduced and provided by historians.[10] Therefore, historical findings and common beliefs do not have to overlap; collective memory can actually refer to a national imagination consisting of myths and legends. It is only important that the images shared by a community refer to the past of that community and co-create a complex system of signs and symbols that is comprehensible only for the community members.

One should also take into consideration that "collective memory" serves as a metaphor which represents common content rooted in the minds of many people at the same time. However, it is always an individual who remembers, not a community. A member of a social group is also a depository of the collective memory that is cultivated and transferred within this group. Therefore, collective memory consists of beliefs about the past events to which an individual refers as a member of a given social group.[11]

For some social groups, collective memory is a defining element. For instance, nations, religious groups, and ethnic and local communities cannot do without it if they want to maintain and strengthen their identity.[12] A nation is a remarkable example of a community that is difficult to imagine without referring to a collective memory of the past.[13] Not only is collective memory a necessary ingredient of individual identity, but also the collective identity of each nation. As Paul Ricoeur notes, it "assures the temporal continuity of the person" and, by this he means that it assures the identity of this person.[14] A response to the question "Who am I?"/"Who are we?" should be preceded with an answer to another question: "Who was I?"/who were we?" Without memory, individuals and nations would be automatically deprived of their identity; moreover, their present would become difficult to comprehend and interpret. A nation needs to be aware that its present derives from the past and that the past consequently drives a nation into the future. Thus, it is necessary to maintain continuity with

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10 See: B. Baczko, *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej*, Warszawa 1994, p. 14 -15, 40.

11 See: A. Szpociński, *Kanon historyczny. Pamięć zbiorowa a pamięć indywidualna*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 1983, no 4, p. 129-131.

12 Ibidem, p. 130.

13 See: G. Pyszczek, *Pamięć narodowa jako problem filozoficzny*, "Przegląd Filozoficzny" 2004, no 1, p. 241-255; B. Szacka, *Pamięć społeczna a identyfikacja narodowa*, [in:] *Trudne sąsiedztwa. Z socjologii konfliktów narodowościowych*, A. Jasińska-Kania (Ed.), Warszawa 2001, p. 37-45; J. Kilias, *Wspólnota abstrakcyjna. Zarys socjologii narodu*, Warszawa 2004; B. Anderson, *Wspólnoty wyobrażone,* Kraków 1997.

14 P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 96

the past to develop national identity. The further the collective memory goes back into the past, the stronger the national identity is rooted.[15]

Needless to say, each nation refers to their past or searches for their roots with their own varying intensity, as Barbara Szacka noted.[16] For Poles, memory of the past is very significant. They are classified by researchers as a nation which is "historically sensitive about the past and interested in it".[17]

The process of the development of collective memory cannot be reduced to a simple aggregation of individual memories. There are many factors involved in this process. The remembered past is an area of a permanent conflict between different images of the past inscribed in the memory of individuals and social groups. Thus, the development of collective memory can be viewed as a game that is permanently played between different subjects representing different memories. For this reason, Bourdieu's concept of a field seems to be a very useful theoretical tool to study this phenomenon. Anna Sawisz used Bourdieu's theory to analyse the social memory of the past.[18] According to this theory, social memory of the past is a field, in which the "stake of the game" is collective identity.[19]

This game is played by historians, people who popularise history, various social groups, interest groups, political parties, the Catholic Church and other institutionalised and informal participants in public life.[20] Particular attention should be paid to the state authority, represented mainly by the educational system and its communication tools. In the field of social memory, there are also individuals whose memory stems from their own experience and the stories about the past that they were told by their relatives. Family knowledge of the past, however, is limited to three generations.[21]

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15 See: M. Król, *Miedzy przeszłością a przyszłością. O pamięci, zapominaniu i przewidywaniu*, Poznań 2004.

16 See: B. Szacka, *Dzieci – Szkoła – Społeczna pamięć przeszłości*, "Kultura i społeczeństwo" 1998, no 4, p.165.

17 E. Tarkowska, *Polacy wobec przyszłości i przeszłości. Czas społeczny w okresie realnego socjalizmu i w okresie transformacji*, [in:] *Idee a urządzenie świata społecznego. Księga jubileuszowa dla Jerzego Szackiego*, E. Nowicka, M. Chałubiński (Eds.), Warszawa 1999, p. 403.

18 See: P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 226-257; P. Bourdieu, L. J. D. Vacquant, *Zaproszenie do socjologii refleksyjnej*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 94-115.

19 See: A. Sawisz, *Transmisja pamięci przeszłości*, [in:] *Czas przeszły i pamięć społeczna*, A. Sawisz, B. Szacka, Warszawa 1990, p. 121-137; These considerations are based on the research concept proposed by Anna Sawisz.

20 M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting after Communism*..., p.7

21 See: N. Jakowenko, *O pamięci i tradycji historycznej*, "Przegląd Polityczny" 2003, no 59, p. 96.

Certainly, the list of agents who subscribe to the game of memory is incomplete, and the social position of the agents is never identical. However, such a list can be analysed in relation to the political regime of a country and the degree of permission given to the coexistence of competitive memories of the past. Totalitarian, authoritarian and liberal-democratic systems will each have a different impact on it.

The essence of the first two systems is the elimination of any memory that differs from the official version and thus prevents other "agents of memory" from speaking. Totalitarian regimes strictly regulate and standardise the field of social memory. Although the function of every political power is to rule over the past, only totalitarian power exercises absolute control over it and makes it a key government tool in addition to deciding what to remember and how and what should be unquestionably forgotten. According to Hannah Arendt, making people, things or subjects disappear from public memory, creating "holes of oblivion", is an immanent feature of totalitarianism.[22] Thus, as Milan Kundera aptly noted with the words of a character from one of his books: "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"[23].

There are also struggles over memory in liberal democracies, although they are less intensive. They may become exacerbated whenever the state authority aspires to appropriate the past and dictate a binding interpretation of past events and when the social past and the official past no longer correspond with each other.

Official memory includes the public and formal interpretations of the past that are controlled by the state authority. The authorities use various methods to spread this version and, at the same time, to control it. Official memory manifests itself in national celebrations, iconography, publications, and memorials and it is transferred through the media and the educational system. Official memory always occupies a privileged position in the field of social memory and in public discourse, regardless of the character of the political regime. This is because every power has a stake in controlling what is remembered and how it is commemorated. As Michael Foucault noted, "if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism".[24]

By contrast, common memory consists of social beliefs and images about the past, which are shared regardless of whether they were granted official per-

22 See: H. Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism,*

23 M. Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, p. 4

24 M. Foucault, *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, Semiotexte(e), New York 1996, p. 124.

mission.[25] It is an amalgam of individual memories, messages conveyed by family and social environment, a result of education and the acknowledged and internalised version of history. Official and common memory can sometimes overlap and complement each other but also can be mutually exclusive. Differences between common and official memory represent the distance between the authorities and the general populace.

In liberal democracy, the field of social memory includes various memories represented by individuals, informal groups and institutions. They coexist and become articulated within the social sphere. These memories do not always correspond and the differences between them can sometimes result in serious tensions and social conflicts. The opportunity to manifest them freely, however, undermines and disintegrates the status of each memory that aspires to appropriate the interpretation of the past. Therefore, a system of mutual control emerges and the image of the past becomes complemented with recollections embedded in individual memories.[26]

The coexistence of various private memories in the public sphere in a pluralistic social system is related to a phenomenon labelled by Pierre Nora as the "democratisation of history". The memory of the past is no longer possessed by historians, or other people, or institutions formally responsible for its storage, reconstruction and interpretation. It becomes the property of liberated and emancipated nations, of national, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, and individuals. Various equal memories, hitherto confiscated and/or absent from public life, now make their voice heard. For the aforementioned minorities, regaining their own past creates conditions for full affirmation or redefinition of their identity.[27]

The development of a national, collective past in a pluralistic system is thus a specific negotiation process between various actors equipped with their own image of the remembered past. According to Barbara Szacka, their main channel of communication and the field in which they coexist and struggle is the "disseminated memory".[28] It is co-created by diverse journalistic, fictional, popular

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25 See: E. Dmitrów, *Pamięć i zapomnienie w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2000, no 1, p. 2.

26 See: M. Beylin, *Spory pamięci. Analiza debaty prasowej* [in:] *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, M. Czyżewski, S. Kowalski, A. Piotrowski (Eds.), Kraków 1997, p. 227-229.

27 See: P. Nora, *Czas pamięci*, "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, no 7, p. 40-41.

28 See: B. Szacka, *Transformacja społeczna a świadomość historyczna*, typescript, 1996, p. 3, citation after: A. Paczkowski, *Od sfałszowanego zwycięstwa do prawdziwej klęski*, Kraków 1999, p. 208-209; Geoffrey Hartman proposed another term, which is "public memory", embracing the multitude of messages about the past, publicised by the state

science or course book texts about the past. Interpretations of the past are also given via TV and radio educational programmes, documentaries and movies, street names, symbolic policy, anniversaries, commemorations and national holidays[29] and are developed by journalists, historians, teachers, and other public actors. Although the "disseminated memory" still occupies a privileged position, it always runs into common memory based on individual knowledge and experience. Researchers who analyse collective memory identify two main forms of the relationship between common and disseminated memory.

According to Barbara Szacka, "disseminated memory" reaches the general populace and is submitted to the processes of selection and falsification or confirmation. It is confronted with the current resource of factual knowledge, beliefs and evaluative judgments about the past. Both knowledge and judgment result from personal experience and from family and generational transmission. Only when filtered through these media is "disseminated memory" able to penetrate "common memory", which is never a simple reflection and accumulation of messages from the "educational and persuasive area".[30]

According to Jerzy Jedlicki, however, disseminated memory consists of numerous and often mutually contradictory stories of the past. These stories serve as templates for "thousands of individual biographies, deprived of what is irregular, unusual, inconsistent or ambiguous".[31] In other words, individual memories are honed so they can be assimilated into the collectively negotiated and created memory of the past. Collective memory thus seems to be a metaphorical name for the accepted image of the past of the "disseminated memory". This is the image in which individual memories find their roots and from which they learn about the past that is already unavailable for them. As Waldemar Kuligowski notes, selectivity of human memory is sometimes supplemented with the content of the "objectifying collective discourse".[32]

The theories presented above seem to complement rather than exclude each other as they both refer to two elementary human needs: confirmation of identity and belonging to a community. People need to define themselves as individuals with unique biographies but also as members of some community. As a result, their own past memories are supplemented, confirmed and strengthened in the

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and the media. According to Hartman, public memory is jittery, mobile and perpetually changing; See: G. H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, Indiana University Press 1996, p. 107.

29 B. Szacka, *Transformacja...*, p. 208-209.

30 B. Szacka, *Transformacja...*, p. 209.

31 See: J. Jedlicki, *O pamięci zbiorowej*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26-27 VII 1997, p. 14.

32 W. Kuligowski, *O historii, literaturze i teraźniejszości oraz innych formach zapominania*, "Konteksty" 2003, no 3-4, p. 83.

memories of people who surround them. If the need to belong is stronger than the desire for individuality and uniqueness or if our own memories fail – David Lowenthal notes – "we adjust personal elements to the collectively remembered past and we gradually stop recognizing which is which".[33]

It is worth noticing that collective memory is always influenced by the present. It is the present that decides what should be remembered at a given moment and how it should be remembered, but also which past events or people should be forgotten: it defines their position in the collective memory and determines historical interpretations. Researchers who study the determinants of attitudes to the past agree that the present is the determining factor, while our reception and perception of the past are always subjected to current problems,[34] as well as our interest in the past, its recollections and actualisations.

It is also usually true that traumatised nations and societies have a particular tendency to look towards the past to find comfort or confirmation of their identity.[35] Moreover, collective memory, like individual memory, is adjustable and can be adapted to what is currently believed to be just and glorious, and what is to be condemned. It evolves with the changing criteria of social judgements, to which it adjusts the stored images of the past.

Without doubt, however, there are specific events and people from the past that will always generate memories, although there is no certainty when and how they will be remembered and interpreted, what meaning they will convey, who will claim them and which goals they will serve. One should thus agree with Jan Assman, according to whom "cultural memory has its fixed point, its horizon does not change with the passing of time (...) we call these [points] 'figures of memory' (...) it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation (...) sometimes by appropriation, sometimes by criticism, sometimes by preservation or by transformation."[36] Memory is flexible and the present influences "figures of memory"'. This is proved by debates about past events held in different parts of the world and concern changes in current "figures of memory."[37] Redefined, they are no longer valid or lose their exclusive access code to the past.

It would be a truism to say that no complete set of past events and persons are stored in the collective memory of a nation and not everything that took place a long time ago is automatically classified as a "historical can-

33 D. Lowenthal, *Przeszłość to obcy kraj*, "Res Publica Nowa", 2001, no 7, p. 9-10.

34 See: M. Ziółkowski, *Cztery funkcje...*, p. 56.

35 See: E. Tarkowska, op. cit., 403.

36 See: J. Assmann and John Czaplicka, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, New German Critique, No. 65, 1995, p129-130.

37 Ibidem, p. 11-16.

on".[38] These events and characters go through the evaluation process and only a select few play a significant role in the collective memory of a nation, as a reference point for current actions. Therefore, collective memory has little in common with the notion of tradition in the subjective sense, as proposed by Jerzy Szacki, which covers only the part of heritage that the consecutive generations agree to maintain and keep alive.[39] What matters is not the objective legacy but the way the elements from the past are evaluated. From this perspective, tradition is incorporated into the present and "represents a particular type of value which needs to be referred to the past to be defended (or criticised)" and these values must be shared and accepted by a community.[40]

Referring to Marek Ziółkowski, one could say that collective forgetting is a reversal of the phenomenon of collective memory. Collective forgetting means that even if certain beliefs concerning the past cross someone's mind, they are transformed, reduced, reinterpreted and pushed to the subconscious; they cease to be the subject of public discussion, and do not give rise to any group or individual activities of a practical nature.[41]

Needless to say, aspects of our past that are submitted to the process of forgetting are diverse and such is the influence of forgetting on our identity. From the perspective of this book, however, one particular variant of forgetting is significant. First of all, it concerns the community; second of all, it refers to past events that fall into oblivion for a particular reason[42]: usually those that bring shame and discomfort to the community, and/or do not match the acknowledged and cultivated model of collective identity. As with individual forgetting, collective oblivion also applies to the rule expressed by Maurice Halbwachs that one remembers what is comfortable to remember and forgets what is comfortable to forget.[43]

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38 See: A. Szpociński, *Kanon historyczny. Pamięć zbiorowa a pamięć indywidualna,* "Studia Socjologiczne" 1983, no 4, p. 134-136.

39 J. Szacki, *Tradycja. Przegląd problematyki*, Warszawa 1971, p. 150.

40 Ibidem, p.155.

41 See: M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting after Communism. The Polish Case.* Polish Sociological Review , 2002, no1, pp. 7-24

42 As Maria Hirszowicz and Elżbieta Neyman note, "similar to ignorance, which we relativise to knowledge, oblivion may be described only as socially important gaps in collective memory. Thus, if we define memory as accumulation and recording information and its interpretation structures rooted in the mind, oblivion is everything beyond this zone – both unabsorbed information and the information which was eliminated or forgotten". See: M. Hirszowicz, E. Neyman, *Społeczne ramy niepamięci*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2001, no 3-4, p. 24.

43 M. Halbwachs, *Społeczne ramy pamięci*, Warszawa 1969, p. 368.

In this context, collective forgetting does not result from the natural limitations of human memory, which is sometimes fragmentary, selective and burdened with information coming from everywhere. This approach is not intended to be a positive answer to Friedrich Nietzsche's appeal that warned against "the excess of history" which "has attacked life's plastic powers" and propagated the necessity or even apotheosis of oblivion and "enclosing oneself within a bounded *horizon.*"[44] Also, oblivion is not perceived the way Jürgen Habermas defined it, who stated that exact memory of events crucial for the collective past is related to the means of actively forgetting the past and letting it go.[45]

Collective forgetting refers to something completely different. It exposes the more or less conscious disposition of community members to omit some aspects of the past and leave them beyond the margins of collective memory. They are aspects that bring shame and mental discomfort and sometimes burden the community with responsibility and sometimes, in addition to the symbolic apology, require practical action such as reparations or restitution. They do not match the cultivated narratives about their bravery, glory and suffering, but constitute a completely new story. If this story were acknowledged, it would present a diverse and complex image of the past. It would also require necessary corrections to the collective memory, which would enrich it and introduce balance between glory and disgrace. As a result, a complete reconstruction of collective identity would be possible.

Needless to say, collective forgetting manifests itself in diverse forms and on different levels. According to Paul Ricoeur, it may be as passive as it is active. It is "a strategy of avoidance, of evasion, of flight", "motivated by a will not to inform oneself, not to investigate the harm done by the citizen's environment, in short by a wanting-not-to-know". These two levels of collective forgetting can overlap and complement each other but can also be mutually exclusive. Spontaneous, social processes of forgetting sometimes cover the state policy of forgetting about some elements of the uncomfortable past. In this case, institutionalised oblivion, or, as Shari J. Cohen labelled it, "state-organized forgetting of history"[46], corresponds with spontaneous forgetting and even overlaps it. This often happens in the name of an unspoken national agreement not to deal with difficult subjects and antagonise society. Forgetting helps to legitimise power, to keep a collective good mood and, in particular, to defend the collective identity that

44 See: F. Nietzsche, *Untimely meditations*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 120

45 See: J. Habermas, *O publicznym użytkowaniu historii*, [in:] *Historikerstreit. Spór o miejsce III Rzeszy w historii Niemiec*, M. Łukasiewicz (Ed.), Londyn 1990, p. 67.

46 Citation after: M. Shafir, *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization"*, "Acta. Analysis of Current Trends in Anti-Semitism", 2002, no. 19, p. 4.

could be disturbed by certain past events. "An all-national community of forgetting and selective remembering, which serves collective, all-national interests" agrees on one thing: not to talk about the difficult past and not to recall it.[47]

Sometimes, however, forgetting is only an order of the authorities, reflected in silence, lies and repressive censorship, which are characteristics of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Such an institutionalised order does not correspond with the common memory of the past, but mutilates, suppresses and represses it.

As has been already mentioned, management of the past is conducted by every authority, including democratic ones. Institutionalised memory and forgetting, as David Middletown and Derek Edwards noted, is demonstrating that collective memory is essential for the identity and cohesion of a community. "It is not just that 'he who controls the past, controls the future' but also 'he who controls the past controls who we are'."[48] The difference is that liberal democracies involve numerous participants in the game of social memory and the position of the state authority, however privileged it may be, is not omnipotent. "Official memory" also occupies a privileged position, for instance in the case of historical policy.

Collective forgetting of some elements of the past is sometimes increased by various means and methods. Past events are sometimes simply passed over in silence, sometimes reinterpreted or falsified; biographies of heroes are presented selectively and the blame for reprehensible acts or omissions is attached to enemies or circumstances. All these actions are intended to unburden memory, ease conscience and safely forget. The process of collective forgetting has a lot in common with the regression of uncomfortable information from individual consciousness. However, these endeavours do not end in complete success. Traumatic events, repressed and stored in the unconscious, cause neuroses and block the processes of remembering and mourning. "Silencing" the dark side of a past not yet dealt with, as Gesine Schwann notes, not only poisons individual minds, but also paralyses social life and hinders the development of democratic attitudes.[49]

Marek Ziółkowski labelled difficult and problematic aspects of the Polish past related to historical taboos as "skeletons in the nation's history closet". This metaphor stands for events and elements of the past that are submitted to "more or less deliberate and functional selective remembering and forgetting".[50] There

47 See: M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting ...*, p. 14.

48 D. Edwards, D. Middletown, *Collective Remembering*, Routledge, London 1990, p. 10.

49 Citation afterA. Krzemiński, *Okaleczeni milczeniem*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 28 VII 2001, p. 18.

50 M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting ...*, p. 9.

are "two distinct layers of memory and oblivion, and, consequently, two main types of 'skeletons'. One is linked with the pre-communist past (up to 1945), while the other is connected with the communist past (1945-1989)". The difference between them is significant.

The former are "mostly 'all-national'" and "kept in the closet" in the name of the national interest "because they can be detrimental to the perception and self-perception of the national group as a whole", while the latter "are hidden in the closet not by the national group as a whole, but rather by some particular groups or individuals".[51] However, the processes of the collective forgetting of the elements of the national past from before 1945 were intensified in the communist period. In other words, "skeletons" from the pre-communist period were then banished.

There are several issues related to the past that were falsified, reinterpreted and repressed after 1945, both by official and common memory. First of all, collective forgetting was evident with regard to the culture, tradition and achievements of ethnic groups that had lived on Polish territory before the war. Secondly, "Poles concentrated on their own fate tended and still tend to disregard or belittle pains, tragedies and losses of other ethnic groups". Thirdly, it was also forgotten that "although Poles were mainly victims they sometimes also victimised others". Fourthly, "Poles tend to forget or minimise the fact that they on many occasions also unjustly benefited from all those historical processes, that they were beneficiaries of some acts of injustice."[52]

All these aspects of the past constitute the realm of historical taboo. This specific social phenomenon is particularly true in the case of the Holocaust, which was organised and led by Nazi Germany. The subject of the Holocaust may be even considered as a paradigmatic manifestation of the process of collective forgetting in Poland, during which official memory corresponded with a spontaneous need to forget among the masses. Between 1945 and 1989 the aforementioned "all-national community of forgetting and selective remembering" developed. It was only at the beginning of the 1980s, when the first signals of breaking the national conspiracy of silence appeared, that the national conspiracy of silence would break. Before presenting a fragmentary analysis of the collective forgetting of the Holocaust, however, it is important to provide the context.

Under the policy of Nazi Germany, Poland became the main arena for the extermination of Polish Jews and other Jews deported from Nazi-occupied Europe. It was in the Polish territory where Nazis built concentration camps, in

51 See: M. Ziółkowski, *Remembering and Forgetting...*, . 14-15.

52 Ibidem, p. 12-14.

which exclusively or primarily Jews died. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Chelmno-on-Ner, Sobibor, Belzec, Majdanek, Gross-Rosen, Stuthoff: these were the "factories of death" installed in Poland by the Nazis.[53] It was also there that the last stage of the murderous plan of the "Final Solution" was carried out. However, the process of the extermination of the Jews who had lived on Polish territory before the World War II was not limited to these camps, where the only participants and witnesses were the murderers, victims and people who lived in close proximity. The Holocaust was stretched in time, consisted of particular stages, was committed with different methods and, most importantly, in numerous places in Poland and before the eyes of Polish citizens. It was the omnipresence of the Holocaust that placed the war fate of Polish Jews in the very "centre of the occupational experience of Polish citizens in every town and village."[54]

Even if "every town" was some generalisation, it is definitely true that the Holocaust occurred before Poles' eyes in different places in Poland and that Poles observed its each particular stage. They knew Nazi orders about the Jews, they met people marked by the stigmatising "Star of David", they saw Jews deported, they observed the walls of the ghettos and how these ghettos were then liquidated. They saw Jews gathering in central points of cities, villages and towns, in squares and markets, sometimes right before execution in nearby forests or deportation to an extermination camp.

Some of them saw Jews killed one by one, executed collectively, or transported in cattle cars. There were those who saw smoke rising from crematoria and learnt what the smell of burnt flesh was. And the rest could at least hear about it. Finally, at the end of the war, Poles must have noted that shtetl residents vanished into thin air; that none of their former Jewish neighbours were around and that the number of Polish Jews had declined. In 1939, the number of Jews in Poland was nearly 3.5 million people, and between 1939 and 1945 nearly 3 million were murdered.[55] About 50-60,000 Jews are estimated to have survived the war in Poland: on the Aryan side, in forest hideouts, or in partisan camps.[56]

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53 These places were acknowledged as extermination camps the Act of 7 May 1999 *on the protection of former Nazi extermination camps* Journal of Laws of 1999, No. 41, item 412 as amended)

54 J. T. Gross, *Upiorna dekada. Trze eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939-1948*, Kraków 2001, p. 58-59.

55 See: F. Tych (Ed.), *Pamięć. Historia Żydów Polskich przed, w czasie, i po Zagładzie*, Warszawa 2004, p. 66-67, 157.

56 This number does not include repatriates from the Soviet Union. Ibidem, p. 175-180; See: B. Szaynok, *Ocaleni z Holokaustu w Polsce 1944-1950,* [in:] *Holokaust. Lekcja*

However, a combination of various circumstances and psychological mechanisms made the unprecedented event of the Holocaust and the memory of the murdered Jews and Jews in general be submitted to the process of collective forgetting. Jews were not mourned in Poland; it would be hard to find any evidence of collective grief. Contrarily, there are testimonies that demonstrate that Jews returning home were welcomed with astonishment and confusion rather than sympathy. Poles wanted to forget about the Holocaust and its victims for many reasons and that is what happened. Referring to Eva Hoffman, who stated that "In the memory of the Holocaust, Poland occupies a special place", one may say that in Poland, memories of the Holocaust have not occupied any special place for decades, although since 1980s, the situation has been improving.[57]

Without doubt, the thesis about collective forgetting about the Holocaust requires evidence and explanation. It demands an answer to the question: what exactly was forgotten and how? What were the main reasons for the need to collectively forget? What were the circumstances and manifestations of this process? Before answering these questions, however, it is necessary to provide some important comments and reservations that explain the structure of the following considerations.

Some researchers claim that forgetting the Holocaust and, in general, exploitation of the problem of Polish-Jewish relations, both of which resulted in serious modifications to the Polish collective memory, are primarily the effect of the policy of the communist Polish state. The historical policy during communism was based on concealment and manipulation of history and memory, and on censorship preventing public debate and limiting the freedom of research and publications. In other words, forgetting the Holocaust was a result of what had been inscribed into the framework of the official memory of the past and what had been eliminated from it through silence and transformation. What is more, the restricting censorship simply blocked any debate attempts. Therefore, from this perspective, the authorities and the system are to blame.

Denying these words would be a serious mistake. The state policy of the People's Republic of Poland (Polish: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa,* PRL) concerning the Holocaust and Jews in general largely contributed to the process of collective forgetting. Forgetting the Holocaust was thus a state-organised element of the official historical policy on the war memory. To claim, however, that the process of forgetting resulted only from the state policy and the nature

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historii. Zagłada Żydów w edukacji szkolnej, J. Chrobaczyński, P. Trojański (Eds.), Kraków 2004, p. 47-62.

57 See: E. Hoffman, *Sztetl*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 II 1998, p. 10.

of the system, would be a simplification and a limitation of the cognitive perspective. Official memory of the Holocaust in Poland responded to the need of the common memory to repress the difficult past. In other words, state and society met the halfway and the "active forgetting" defined by Paul Ricouer corresponded with the processes of "passive forgetting".[58]

The historian Paweł Macewicz drew attention to this phenomenon, stating that PRL constituted two types of taboo on the Holocaust: political and social. The former was reinforced by communist authorities, who, aware of their weak social support, avoided the sensitive subject of the Holocaust and Jews. Therefore, the question of Jewish martyrdom and, in particular, the problematic topic of the Polish attitude towards the Holocaust and pre-war Polish-Jewish relations were not exposed. If these subjects appeared at all, they only did to some limited extent and were treated in an instrumental way.

The social taboo, labelled as a national taboo by Włodzimierz Borodziej, concerned particular aspects of the Holocaust that the authorities were determined to conceal. They included the complicated Polish-Jewish past before the war and, in particular, Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust which were "considered shameful, ambiguous and confusing – even subconsciously."[59] That is how a certain informal, national "community of selective remembering and forgetting" spontaneously emerged. This community, as Lech Nijakowski noted, protected the taboo on the Holocaust "by police batons on the one hand and social anathema on the other."[60]

As we see, the PRL authorities created conditions for forgetting the Holocaust. The official memory of the war reinforced the common processes of forgetting through silence, falsifications, half-truths and modifications of history. To prove this social phenomenon and demonstrate that the state-organised forgetting about the Holocaust corresponded with the social need for oblivion, it is important to determine the reasons for this need and only then present the process of forgetting.

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58 See: P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, zapomnienie, historia*, [in:] *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany*, K. Michalski (Ed.), Kraków 1995, p. 38-39.

59 See: *Pamięć jako pole bitwy*, (editorial discussion of Paweł Machcewicz, Feliks Tych, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Grzegorz Motyka) "Przegląd Polityczny" 2001, no 52/53, p. 11-12.

60 See: Lech M. Nijakowski, *Baron Munchhausen czyli o polskiej polityce pamięci*, "Przegląd Polityczny" 2006, no 75, p. 56.

2. Genealogy of the need to forget

In his memories, Kazimierz Brandys noted that "after seven hundred years of sharing the common ground, Poles did not shed a tear at the Jews turned into ashes."[61] Why was it so? Why did the "common disease of silence" about the Jews and the Holocaust spread across Poland for entire decades?[62] Why did people want to forget?

One of the often-recognised reasons for this amnesia and for indifferent attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust during the war was the cultural, lifestyle and religious differences between Poles and Jews before the war. The distance between the two nations resulted in their separation and mutual lack of understanding in defining the gap between the two communities. The circumstances and reasons for this distance are not crucial and there is no point in searching for those who were responsible for it. It is important, however, to note the fact that before the war, Poles and Jews lived next to each other rather than together.[63]

The pre-war anti-Semitism extended the distance between Poles and Jews. It was obviously manifested in various forms and had its various advocates. Anti-Semitism was included into the programmes of some political parties of national-Catholic origin but it was also used by high and low ranked Church officials.[64] Anti-Semitic discourse was present in the nationalist and Catholic press ("Mały Dziennik", "Rycerz Niepokalanej"). What is more, in the 1930s, anti-Semitism manifested itself in openly racist and discriminatory acts at universities. Jewish students were separated from the rest of students (*ghetto benches*); the number of Jewish students was limited (*numerus clausus*) or Jews were not granted the right to study at all (*numerus nullus*).[65] The rules of *numerus clausus* and *numerus nullus* applied also to the limited or denied access to Jews to some professions. In addition, in the years preceding World War II, violent acts against Jews and the destruction of their properties repeatedly occurred.[66] There

61 K. Brandys, *Miesiące. 1982-1984*, Warszawa 1988, p. 54.

62 Eva Hoffman used these words referring to the silence and collective forgetting about the Holocaust in postwar Poland, *Sztetl*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 II 1998, p. 10.

63 About living "next to each other", particularly its causes, see: A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, Warszawa 2003.

64 See: R. Modras, *Kościół katolicki i antysemityzm w Polsce w latach 1933-1939*, Kraków 2004.

65 See: M. Natkowska, *Numerus clausus, getto ławkowe, numerus nullus, "paragraf aryjski". Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1931-1939*, Warszawa 1999.

66 See: J. Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1937*, Warszawa 1994.

were calls for the boycott of Jewish businesses and plans to solve the Jewish question in Poland.[67]

The distance between Poles and Jews was also strengthened by Polish stereotypes and prejudices towards Jews. Internalisation of these stereotypes was not necessarily equal to anti-Semitism. Most likely, people who simply did not like Jews, who saw them as competition and who shared stereotypes about them outnumbered declared, ideological anti-Semites.

Such an atmosphere of distance and separation prevailed when World War II broke out. Nazi occupiers realised their plan of the Final Solution before Polish eyes. As Franciszek Ryszka noted, however, neither the conclusions drawn from historical knowledge nor empirical manifestations of behaviour suggest that witnessing the Holocaust first-hand made Polish society significantly modify their attitudes towards Jews. Feelings and attitudes resulting from them remained as they had been, "in a wide variety of ethical views". Also, anti-Semitism did not disappear "as if by magic"[68] after observing how the Germans treated the Jews. It is thus safe to say that the negative attitude towards Jews must have blunted moral judgement of the Holocaust both as it was taking place and after the war.

Anti-Semitism in Polish society was recorded by the representatives of the Polish Underground State in their memoranda. There were notes about it in the reports and commands of Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) and the Government Delegation for Poland.[69] Also the Courier Jan Karski informed General Władysław Sikorski, who was staying in France at the time, about the anti-Semitism in occupied Poland, but his note was repressed for many years.

The diagnoses enclosed in some documents of the Polish Underground State were probably right to say that the news about some Jewish acts in eastern Poland after 17 September 1939 intensified the anti-Semitic atmosphere and negative attitudes towards Jews within Polish society. The news was about Jews who welcomed the new occupiers with enthusiasm. It does not matter whether it was true or the image was hoaxed and transformed into myth on the basis of selec-

67 See: A. Landau-Czajka, *W jednym stali domu... Koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933-1939*, Warszawa 1998; W. Mich, *Obcy w polskim domu. Nacjonalistyczne koncepcje rozwiązania problemu mniejszości narodowych 1918-1939*, Lublin 1994.

68 See: F. Ryszka, *Refleksje na temat holocaustu*, [in:] *Historia – polityka – państwo. Wybór studiów*, Toruń 2002, t. I, p. 317, 320.

69 See: J. T. Gross, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i Komunistów 1939-1948*, Kraków 2001, p. 46-47; K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-68*, Warszawa 1992, p. 15-20.

tive and biased information.[70] What matters is that the stereotype of Jewish communists (*żydokomuna*) was strengthened or revived and as a result the distance between Poles and Jews was extended.

The most interesting observation made on the basis of the reports of the Polish Underground State was the one by Krystyna Kersten about the "almost complete separation of Jewish martyrdom from the so-called "Jewish question". According to Kersten, who has analysed historical sources, "the extermination of the Jewish nation taking place before Poles' eyes" probably did not change anything about "the stereotype of a Jew as a threat which perpetuated in the collective imagination."[71]

What can definitively prove Kersten's words is a leaflet titled "Protest," in which Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, a Catholic activist and writer involved in the struggle to save Jews, addressed her compatriots. She appealed to all religious Poles to take an active defensive stand in the face of the atrocity against Jews. She condemned the silence of Poles and of the world, stating: "Those who are silent in the face of murder become accomplices to the crime. Those who do not condemn – approve." At the same time, however, she claimed: our feelings toward Jews have not changed. We do not stop thinking about them as political, economic and ideological enemies of Poland. Moreover we do realise that they still hate us more than Germans, to the extent that they make us co-responsible for their misfortune. Why? On what basis? It remains the secret of the Jewish soul. Nevertheless, that is a fact that is continuously confirmed. Awareness of those feelings doesn't relieve us from the duty to condemn the crime."[72]

Indeed, it would be hard to find more dramatic evidence of the separation of Jewish martyrdom from the so-called Jewish question, described by Krystyna Kersten. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka's leaflet proves that the Holocaust did not bring any broad transformation of Polish attitudes towards Jews. Observing it did not contribute to challenging stereotypes, prejudice, and anti-Semitism or reducing the distance between Poles and Jews. The content of the leaflet shows that it was possible to provide aid to Jews and condemn the atrocities against them and at the same time consider Jews as enemies of the Polish nation. Perhaps many anti-Semites saved Jews during the war but regarded them as strangers and enemies. They saved Jews in the name of Christian love, Catholic ethics or some other sense of duty and believed that aiding them was what

70 About Jewish behaviour in the east of Poland after 17 September 1939, See: J.T. Gross, *Upiorna…*, p. 61-93.

71 K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 17.

72 See: Odezwa *Protest!* Konspiracyjnego Frontu Odrodzenia Polski pióra Zofii Kossak, Warszawa, sierpień 1942 r., [in:] *Polacy-Żydzi 1939-1945, Wybór Źródeł*, A.K. Kunert (Ed.), Warszawa 2006, p. 212-213.

should and had to be done. Thus, the instance of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka was not likely to be an isolated case.

However, this case is still a unique point of reference. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka co-founded the Council to Aid Jews (Rada Pomocy Żydom), "Zegota". Then, as Michael Steinlauf notes, if even a founder of this meritorious organisation was an anti-Semite, "what could one have expected from an average Pole, lacking, let us assume, Kossak's extraordinary moral sensitivity?" While if she was far from anti-Semitism but believed that referring to Jews as enemies of Poland "would make her appeal more effective", this manipulation says nothing positive about the attitudes of her contemporaries.[73]

The pre-war distance between Poles and Jews was thus continued during the war alongside old stereotypes and prejudice. The policy of the occupier contributed to extending the distance, and the division between "we" and "them" was even more firmly grounded.

The Nazis destined Jews for "Special Treatment". They marked them with stigmatising "Stars of David", separated them from the rest of society by ghetto walls and attempted to dehumanise them with the help of propaganda, e.g. by comparing them to insects. Above all, the Nazis sentenced the Jewish nation to be the first to die on the basis of racial criteria. They also popularised these criteria in Polish society.[74]

Thus, a group of people was singled out from the suffering and oppressed Polish nation and destined a special fate. The Jews' situation during German occupation was much harder than the situation of the majority of Poles. Although the Nazis made the lives of both Jews and Poles hell, Jews were placed in its lowest circles, in an atmosphere of contempt, helplessness and loneliness. Such a situation did not in the least bring the two nations closer, but rather extended the distance between them. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, while "equality in suffering unites and heals", "'singling out' part of the sufferers for special treatment leaves hatred and moral terror".[75]

Therefore, as a result of the distance between them, intensified by the occupiers' policy, Poles and Jews were dying separately. However, the loneliness and singularity of death was mostly a Jewish experience and that is how Jews have perceived it ever since. Also, some Poles believe that the Holocaust involved only Germans and Jews: perpetrators and victims, and that it did not in-

73 See: M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, p. 40.

74 See: K. Kersten, J. Szapiro, *Konteksty współczesnych odniesień polsko-żydowskich*, "Więź" 1998, no 7, p. 286.

75 Z. Bauman, *On immoral reason and illogical morality*, "Polin" 1998, t. 3, p. 296.

volve Poles, even if it struck terror into them and took place before their eyes. The instances of Poles saving Jews do not blur this image: instead, they complete it. Two different communities of memory have developed, one Polish and one Jewish, for during the war the two nations lived in two different worlds, separated by ghetto walls. An inherent feature of the "communities of memory" is that they "cannot possess empathy for the victims in other communities and the phrase, 'I feel your pain,' often means merely: 'I'll concede that you feel pain'[76] In the case of Poles and Jews, the communities separated before and during the war by a piercing feeling of distance, these words are particularly true.

What has been said so far about the distance between Poles and Jews as a reason for forgetting the Holocaust and the Jews seems to prove that Marcin Kula was right in stating that if these communities "had been close, one would have cared about the fate of the other and mourned it. Since they were not, the one that survived has not devoted appropriate attention to the one that died".[77]

Additional circumstances of this distance and oblivion as a consequence of it arose in Poland at the end of the war. Pursuant to the decisions made at the Yalta Conference, Poland was under a new "occupation": the predominantly Soviet influence. In the new postwar political system, Jews appeared in a completely new role. A moment earlier, their Holocaust was observed. Now they were back as state officials, members of the Office of Public Security [Polish: *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB*, the communist secret police, intelligence and counter-espionage service] and members of the communist Polish Workers' Party.[78] Some may have thought that if Jews were seen in the streets and holding important positions, the information about Holocaust could be an exaggeration and that in fact not so many of them had died during the war.[79]

Although Jews were indeed found in the structures of the new communist power, and some of them held important political positions, their number was exaggerated in the collective imagination. They were thus regarded as usurpers, occupiers and executioners of the heroes from the Home Army who had fought for independence. Jews were viewed as oppressors and new foes working for Stalin. Hatred towards the new authorities incited or flared the hatred towards Jews, seen as personification of the new political power. The belief in the connection between Jews and state authorities was even strengthened by the fact

76 See: C. S. Maier, *Gorąca pamięć...pamięć zimna. O połowicznym okresie rozpadu pamięci faszyzmu i komunizmu*, "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, no 7, p. 32.

77 M. Kula, *Problem postkomunistyczny, czy historycznie ukształtowany polski problem*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1991, no 4, p. 33.

78 See: A. Smolar, *Tabu i niewinność*, "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, no 8, p. 57

79 E. Koźmińska-Frejlak, *Świadkowie Zagłady – Holocaust jako zbiorowe doświadczenie Polaków*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny" 2002, no 2, p. 188.

that in the first years after the war, the state addressed the Holocaust survivors very favourably and sympathetically (which will be further discussed later in this chapter). As some researchers suggest, the very fact that Jews held important public positions may have brought dissonance and objections as it violated the social order in which Jews had their own position in social structure and hierarchy.[80]

The stereotype of Jewish communists (*żydokomuna*) revived and the conflict between the authorities and the general populace overlapped with the conflict between Poles and Jews. The stereotype, let us recall, not only survived the war, but it was actually strengthened by the information about Jewish acts in the east of Poland during Soviet occupation. As this stereotype implied the strangeness of the new political power and incited hatred towards the authorities, Jews began to be removed from their positions while those with "good appearance" were encouraged to change their names to ones that sounded more Polish. As a result, authorities were supposed to seem more Polish and familiar and and not stimulate the negative connotations that were associated with a Jewish presence.

Not only did anti-Semitism survive the war, it was also intensified by the presence of Jews within new and hated power structures. Perhaps it was also the virulently anti-Semitic propaganda of Nazi occupiers that contributed to its survival and consolidation. Why was this ideology not compromised and undermined? Why did it manage to survive the war when Jews did not? A convincing answer was given by Aleksander Smolar, who described the phenomenon as "a paradox of national unity".

Although during the war there were traitors who collaborated with the occupiers for money, because of hatred or as a result of torture or blackmail, there was no institutionalised collaboration under the auspices of the Polish state. Poland did not deliver their Petain or Quisling. Left and right wing representatives, communists and nationalists, liberals and conservatives, masons and national Catholics: they all fought together against the Nazis. In other words, representatives of all pre-war political options, parties and organisations, who had almost nothing in common before 1 September 1939, then found a common purpose.

However, while collaborator governments and parties in other occupied European countries disgraced themselves with anti-Semitism, the underground was usually anti-Fascist, democratic and against anti-Semitism (considered as an element of the "traitor syndrome"), anti-Semitism in Poland maintained its patriotic, national and democratic legitimacy. Anti-Semitic National Democracy was a part of the Polish Underground State and the government in exile. According to

80 See: A. Cała, *Kształtowanie się polskiej i żydowskiej wizji martyrologicznej po II wojnie światowej*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny" 2002, no 2, p. 171.

Alekssander Smolar, anti-Semitism in Poland "did not wear the stigma of collaboration with Germans", it could "prosper perfectly" during the war: "in the street, (...,) in the underground press, political parties, and army forces" and also after the war.[81] In other words, during the war one could be both a hero, an ally in the fight for a just cause, and an anti-Semite, which in a way justified anti-Semitism as an accepted and functioning view.

The strength of stereotypes and negative views about Jews also helped Polish anti-Semitism survive the war. The ethnographer Alina Cała, on the basis of studies on the image of Jews in Polish folk culture conducted in 1975, 1976, 1978, and 1984, decided that the Holocaust and the sudden disappearance of Jewish culture even intensified and strengthened anti-Semitism.[82] Anti-Semitism and prejudices against Jews do not need Jewish presence as legitimisation. Anti-Semitism is a phantasmagorical phenomenon and belongs to a category of images that are independent from reality. One could even say that it develops more efficiently if there are no or hardly any Jews and thus imagination is not restricted.

A particular confirmation that anti-Semitic stereotypes survived in postwar Poland were anti-Jewish pogroms in Rzeszow, Cracow and Kielce, which resulted directly from rumours about alleged blood libels.[83] Similar gossip, although never resulting in pogroms, appeared also in July 1946 in Czestochowa, Lodz and Kalisz. The rumour spread in Kalisz said that having murdered their victims, Jews gave their bodies to Ukrainians who processed them into sausages.[84]

Therefore, as it has been already said, the pre-war distance between Poles and Jews, intensified by anti-Semitism, stereotypes, Nazi policy, and the postwar situation, befitted the Polish amnesia concerning Jews and the Holocaust. There are, however, also other circumstances and factors that determined the process of forgetting about Jews and the Holocaust and the need to forget about them.

One of them was certainly the situation in Poland after the war. The ending of the war did not bring Poles complete satisfaction with their regained freedom. The change of occupiers decreed at the Yalta Conference and the turning of Poland into a satellite state under the hegemony of the Soviet Union for decades made Poland face new challenges and new problems. Poles had to struggle with a new reality, one that absorbed their attention much more than brooding over the disappearance of the Jewish community and former Polish-Jewish relations.

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81 A. Smolar, op. cit., s .50-51.

82 See: A. Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 187.

83 About the possible reasons for the postwar awakening of faith in the blood libel; See: M. Zaremba, *Mit mordu rytualnego w powojennej Polsce. Archeologia i hipotezy*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2007, no 2, p. 91-137.

84 See: A. Paczkowski, *Raporty o pogromie*, "Puls" 1989, no 50, p. 22.

Even if the subject of Jews and the Holocaust returned during the communist period, it was used by communist propagandists and no honest debate was possible.

Most importantly, however, after the war Poles were focussed on cultivating their own martyrdom. As Henryk Szlajfer rightly noted, after the war "there were enough graves for years of mourning and memories so as not to care about someone not in fact known."[85] Almost every Polish family had someone to lament over, or suffered terror and uncertainty, scarcity or poverty of the time of occupation. War losses afflicted almost every family, not to mention material damages. Communities of memory, as already mentioned, cultivate memories of their own suffering and are impregnable against the suffering of other communities. Moreover, Poles have always tended to contemplate the sufferings and wrongs done to them, for which the twists and turns of national history have provided many reasons.

It is worth mentioning that the Polish nation likes to feel proud of its own heroism, sacrifice, resistance and struggle. Poles often recall various uprisings, rebellions against the occupiers' attempts to denationalise them, and the evidence of their struggles "for your freedom and for ours". World War II also provided a wide range of reasons for national pride, examples of resistance, fight and sacrifice. It has an important position in the Polish collective memory, as it also did at the times of the People's Republic of Poland, according to the study of Barbara Szacka.[86] Poles, as one historian noticed, use World War II as a means of improving their mood, as a compensation for failures, confirmation of their uniqueness and as an ersatz success.[87] The memory of war suffering and heroism is something that certainly unites them and makes them feel appreciated. Brooding over the Holocaust and Jews disturbs this black and white image of the war and can divide Poles.

Here we approach another reason for forgetting about the Holocaust and Jews: the postwar "competition" between Poles and Jews for the precedence in suffering. This competition has involved both sides up until now. It is unequal, however, as the Nazi policy towards Jews and Poles was not equal and their fate dissimilar. Ignoring this dissimilarity not only proves short-sightedness but also leads to risky interpretations and intellectual misuse. Contemplating the memory of their martyrdom, Poles do not want to remember the enormous difference of

85 See: H. Szlajfer, *Polacy/Żydzi. Zderzenie stereotypów. Esej dla przyjaciół i innych*, Warszawa 2003, p. 14.

86 See: B. Szacka, A. Sawisz, *Czas przeszły i pamięć społeczna. Przemiany świadomości historycznej inteligencji polskiej 1965-1988,* Warszawa 1990.

87 See: T. Szarota, *Wojna na pocieszenia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 IX 1996, p. 14.

the Jewish situation relative to their own. Whole Jewish families were killed on the basis of their origin and the extermination camps were intended to murder the whole Jewish nation. Poles deny these "obvious facts" – as Stanisław Krajewski noted – "as if they were afraid these facts could belittle the sufferings of Poles".[88] These denials are based on reinterpretations, half-truths and rhetorical misuse, which are intended to let Poles maintain the glory of their unquestioned suffering and heroism.

First of all, from a Polish point of view, Polish and Jewish war fates are considered to be identical and the differences between their situations are disregarded. Sometimes there are even voices that suggest that Nazi schemes intended Poles to be the next to be exterminated but that the Germans did not manage to implement their plan. Therefore, while before the war Poles envied Jewish positions and money, after the war, they also envied ghettos and crematoria chimneys."[89]

Secondly, people tend to forget that behind the number of Polish war victims, overestimated and falsified by propagandists, there are 3 million Polish Jews who were post mortem categorised as Poles, even if they had been treated as second class citizens while alive.

Thirdly, during and after the war, Jews were criticised for their passivity, that is, for not having resisted the Nazis. The myth of passivity managed to survive the war.[90] In this context, the Polish attitude was thought to be an antithesis of Jewish passivity and a reason to be proud.

Last but not least, there was yet another reason to forget about Jews and the Holocaust in the name of the heroic-martyred vision of the war. Memories of them would evoke questions about Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust and bring discomfort, disturb the construct of national identity based on martyr-like tendencies and heroic motives and force Poles to deconstruct it. Moreover, it is justified to believe that Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust were the main reason to forget about Jews and the unprecedented event that was the Holocaust. I do not want to belittle the other reasons for this particular oblivion that have been already mentioned. I only claim – and not only I – that the "punishment of witnessing" imposed on Poles by the Nazi occupiers left them injured and burdened with the sin of guilt and omission.[91] Therefore, the answer to the question

88 S. Krajewski, *"Problem żydowski" – problem polski*, "Więź" 1992, no 4, p. 34.

89 See: H. Szlajfer, op. cit., p. 64-68.

90 The myth of passivity was deconstructed by Grzegorz Kołacz. See: G. Kołacz, *Czasami trudno się bronić. Uwarunkowania postawy Żydów podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2008.

91 See: A. Smolar, op. cit., p. 52.

as to what demanded to be forgotten and how sums up the Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust.

As has been already stated, the Holocaust was not an event that was impossible to observe, but it certainly was impossible to comprehend. It was not organised in Poland because of its anti-Semitic atmosphere or alleged social consent, as some people claim. It was organised in Poland for logistic reasons. In comparison to other European countries, Poland was inhabited by the greatest number of Jews. Poland became the main arena of the Holocaust and Poles were forced to be its witnesses, or bystanders. The Holocaust was an event that, according to the Raul Hilberg definition, involved perpetrators, victims and bystanders.[92] If the Holocaust was an unprecedented event, so was witnessing it.[93]

What were the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust then? In her analysis of this question, Antonina Kłosskowska noted that it was not possible to present the full picture, for some facts are impossible to reconstruct and it was unlikely to "determine the proportions of different types of human behaviour". It is not possible because witnesses pass away and their memories are subjected to interpretation and selection.[94] Nevertheless, it is possible to present average and general categories of the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust. Let us start with the most isolated and extreme ones: Poles who saved Jews and Poles who supported the Nazis in implementing their plan of the "Final Solution".

Neither group constituted a majority of the Polish society. Similarly, as the theories of common collaboration between Poles and their occupants are ordinary lies, so are the conforming statements about mass aid given to Jews. There was Polish Council to Aid Jews "Zegota"[95], there were Polish heroes who risked their lives to help Jews despite the restrictive regulations introduced by the Nazis and capital punishment for helping and hiding Jews. The evidence of their existence can be found in the Jerusalem institute Yad Vashem, where olive trees grow, and in the titles of the "Righteous Among the Nations". Most of the

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92 See: R. Hilberg, R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish catastrophe, 1933-1945*, Aaron Asher Books, NY, 1992.

93 As Michael Steinlauf noted. See: M. Steinlauf, *Refleksje nad cieniem Holokaustu w Polsce powojennej* [in:], *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza. Pięćdziesiąta rocznica Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Żydowski Instytut Historyczny w dniach 29-31 marca 1993*, D. Grinberg, P. Szapiro (Eds.), Warszawa 1993, p. 86.

94 See: A. Kłoskowska, *Polacy wobec zagłady Żydów polskich. Próba typologii postaw*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1998, no 4, p. 111.

95 See: I. Tomaszewski, T. Werbowski, *Zegota. The Rescue of Jews in Wartime Poland*, Price-Patterson., Montreal 1994; T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom 1942-1943*, Warszawa 1981.

"Righteous" are Poles – not because the Polish nation was particularly willing to make sacrifices and risk their lives, but because Poland was the main arena of the Holocaust. It is, however, often forgotten and hidden behind the olive trees of Yad Vashem, which are intended to refute the accusations of passivity and indifference.

Unfortunately, there were also Poles who made their infamous contribution to the Holocaust and demonstrated an "actively hostile attitude".[96] With their own free will, they participated in the murders of Jews organised by the Germans or even committed these murders on their own during the war.[97] The Jedwabne pogrom is the most famous example of this kind of attitude, but, unfortunately, not the only one. There were many more similar events in the region and all of them proceeded according to a very similar scenario.[98]

There were many more Poles, however, who did not participate in pogroms but denounced and blackmailed hiding Jews, profiting from their tragedy. They also significantly hindered the efforts of those who provided help to Jews. Sometimes it was their main source of income, a kind of profession, sometimes only incidental behaviour stemming from a temptation for easy profit and convenient circumstances. Jan Grabowski, the author of a pioneering work about *szmalcownictwo* in Poland [blackmailing Jews who were hiding, or blackmailing Poles who protected Jews], argues that contrary to popular opinions, this phenomenon was not "a marginal behaviour but a source of income for thousands of people".[99] His research findings are confirmed by many wartime memoirs (not only by Jewish authors) in which one can find a returning motif of the fear of Polish *szmalcowniks* and denunciation by Poles. Underground press pro-

96 "Actively hostile attitude" is one of the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust distinguished by Antonina Kłoskowska and based on behavioural criteria. It is the attitude of those who "participated in the persecution and extermination of Jews, in any form except direct compulsion, that is, terror of the occupant. Such an activity, regardless of its motives, can be defined as complicity in the crime". See: A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 113.

97 See: B. Engelking-Boni, *Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień… Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942-1945*, Warszawa 2011; J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945. Studium dziejów jednego powiatu,* Warszawa 2011.

98 See: A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczpospolitej. Wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1941*, Warszawa 2006, p. 213-233; P. Machcewicz, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, [in:] Wokół Jedwabnego, P. Machcewicz, K. Persak (Eds.), Warszawa 2002, t. 1, p. 9-63; A. Żbikowski, *Pogromy i mordy ludności żydowskiej w Łomżyńskiem i na Białostocczyźnie latem 1941 roku w świetle relacji ocalałych Żydów i dokumentów sądowych*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego*, op. cit., p. 159-273.

99 See: J. Grabowski, *"Ja tego Żyda znam!". Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie 1939-1943*, Warszawa 2004, p. 8.

vided up-to-date information about it. The problem was also described by the leading archivist of the Holocaust, Emanuel Ringelblum.[100] Needless to say, not every Pole who denounced Jews and disclosed their hideouts hoped for some kind of payment from Germans or blackmailed Jews. Such behaviour was also motivated by the fear of their own life and the life of their families.

Heroic and disgraceful behaviour is only one element of the overall attitude of Poles towards the extermination of the Jews. There was a passive crowd of bystanders surrounding the heroes and *szmalcowniks*, and as with any tragedy, the passive bystanders made up the largest group. Some of them were Poles who observed the Holocaust with "reluctant passivity."[101] They entered the wartime with a baggage of stereotypes and prejudices against Jews, and the Holocaust taking place before their eyes did nothing to change their opinions. Perhaps some of them felt some sort of satisfaction that the "Jewish question" would be solved without their own participation, although with their silent approval. They were the ones who Zygmunt Bauman described as those who "could do something, maybe even a lot, but they did not want to or were not convinced that the murders in front of their eyes were something bad."[102] They, and all those who did not give aid to Jews when it was possible, were the ones about whom Franciszek Ryszka said they had committed "criminal omission."[103]

There were also Poles, probably many of them, who felt sympathy and compassion towards Jews, and terror because of their suffering ("sympathetic passivity").[104] They observed the Holocaust with terror but could not do anything. Some turned their heads away because they could do little, some decided it was a problem of Jews and Germans and not theirs. The latter observed the Jewish tragedy with indifference resulting from the long-standing distance and cultural and religious strangeness. For them, Jews had always been outside the borders of the Polish community. Their attitude could perhaps be labelled as "reluctant passivity". Indifference, however, was also a form of defensive response to the helplessness against the scenes of Holocaust they were observing.[105]

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100 See: E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, Warszawa 1988.

101 See: A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 116.

102 Z. Bauman, *Holokaust: pięćdziesiąt lat później*, [in:] *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza. Pięćdziesiąta rocznica Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Żydowski Instytut Historyczny w dniach 29-31 marca 1993*, D. Grinberg, P. Szapiro (Eds.), Warszawa 1993, p. 33.

103 See: F. Ryszka, op. cit., p. 309.

104 See: A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 118-127.

105 See: B. Szaynok, *Problem antysemityzmu w relacjach polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945-1953*, [in:] *Zagłada Żydów. Pamięć narodowa a pisanie historii w Polsce i we*

In any case, all of them – reluctant, sympathetic or indifferent – remained passive. This passivity sometimes resulted from the Nazi regulations, according to which helping Jews was punished by death – many times Poles paid this price. In other words, passivity need not be equal to lack of sympathy and to indifference. However, while German terror could explain passivity from fear, it did not hinder or justify a lack of sympathy. The symbol of the indifference towards murdered Jews is the merry-go-round next to the Ghetto walls, described in Czesław Miłosz's poem. This indifference is also often mentioned by Holocaust survivors. Franciszek Ryszka was undoubtedly right, writing that the greatest Polish sin from the war was "the inability to see, in a universal way, our fellow human beings tortured beyond all measure" and that our penitence for this sin would have to last for a long time.[106]

According to the often-quoted Antonina Kłoskowska, one can hypothetically assume that "reluctant passivity and sympathetic indifference were the most common attitudes [towards the Holocaust – author's note] characteristic of Polish society in general."[107] In other words, the prevailing attitude of Poles towards the Holocaust was indifference: sympathetic, indifferent, reluctant or even hostile, which poses a significant moral problem. To conclude, we may say that passive and indifferent bystanders were a dominating group of Polish society, rather than the Righteous Among the Nations and *szmalcowniks*.

If passivity towards the Holocaust characterised the attitude of the majority of Polish society during the war, then perhaps this was the reason why our Righteous were forgotten for many years. Remembering them could bring discomfort to the rest of the society. After all, the attitude of the Righteous was a deviation from the standard of conduct, an exception from (and thus a reminder of) the almost widespread passivity. Whoever came to rescue Jews provided the irrefutable evidence that it was possible to violate the rules imposed by the occupiers. Therefore, the Righteous may have awoken the guilty conscience of the passive bystanders arising from the murder of 3 million Jewish citizens. This is, however, only a supposition.

On the other hand, there is evidence that Polish heroes, who should have been honoured and revered for life, were afraid to confess their heroic deeds and sometimes asked the Jews they saved to help them remain anonymous.[108] Was it

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Francji, B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka, A. Ziębińska-Witek (Eds.), Lublin 2006, p. 236.

106 See: F. Ryszka, op. cit., p. 321.

107 A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 117.

108 See: M. Borwicz, *List do Redakcji*, "Kultura" (Paryż) 1957, no 11, p. 47; M. Hochberg-Mariańska, N. Grüss (Eds.), *Dzieci oskarżają*, Kraków-Łódź-Warszawa 1947,

only a fear of the envious environment and their imagination that conjured up the visions of gold, diamonds and other goods that the savers were widely supposed to have gained for their help? Or, perhaps, it was not befitting for a Pole to help Jews; coming to their aid was seen as dishonour, as something discrediting and deserving infamy. Or maybe Jan Tomasz Gross was right in saying that the Righteous were afraid to confess their sacrifice because they had "breached the existing canon of behaviour" and for this reason the local community "might have felt threatened". Gross also suggested that the Righteous treated Jews differently than the "actively hostile" group and, in particular, the passive rest, and nothing bound them to the "community of silence" formed after the war."[109] Even if none of these questions leads to the right track to the truth, how can one explain the fact that after the war, the Righteous were afraid to confess to having saved Jewish lives?

Years later, Gross's suppositions were confirmed by the case of Antonina Wyrzykowska. In the course of the debate about the Jedwabne pogrom, this modest woman, who had saved Jews from certain death, was sentenced to ostracism by her "neighbours" from Jedwabne. Surrounded by reluctance and suspicion, she had to relocate and then lived in solitude[110] because she did not follow the "canon of conduct" and made the community feel guilty. Antonina Wyrzykowska reminded people of their passivity and complicity through her undoubted heroism.

Therefore, the continuum of Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust consists of the Righteous, of *szmalcowniks* and, in particular, of passive bystanders. The overpowering social need to forget about Jews and the Holocaust was particularly relevant to the last two attitudes. People wanted to forget about Poles who supported the Nazis in their plan of the "Final Solution" and tarnished the reputation of the national community. Most of all, they wanted to erase the memory of their own passivity, sometimes indifferent, sometimes reluctant, sometimes even hostile, which collided with the heroic and martyred vision of the war.

The role of passive bystanders in the extermination of the people that Poles had shared their land with for hundreds of years, Krystyna Kersten wrote, "caused anxiety which was not always realised".[111] Part of this anxiety was also the ballast of the difficult Polish-Jewish past. The Holocaust and the Jewish question inevitably reminded Poles about it. Hence, they were covered with si-

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p. XXXII; J. T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*, Kraków 2008.

109 See: J. T. Gross, *Upiorna*... ,p. 60.

110 See: A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, Warszawa 2004, p. 249-256.

111 See: K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 150.

lence and became a taboo and, as a result, were forgotten. The reason for this collective amnesia was the "particularly disturbing nature of what demanded to be remembered" and, at the same time, "mental numbness and sense of guilt."[112] In the house of the deceased, anything that can cause pain is not mentioned, particularly anything that could cast a shadow on the living.

Both the anxiety and sense of guilt were additionally strengthened by the fact that Poles had been involved in a kind of corruption related to the Holocaust.[113] As a result of the Nazi extermination policy, properties of 3 million murdered Jews, provided they had not been seized by the Germans, became Polish property. Former Jewish homes, land, factories, shops, workshops, synagogue buildings and everyday objects changed hands. Although Poles did not deprive Jews of their ownership, they became beneficiaries of historical injustice and owners of goods that had been paid for with Jewish suffering. Those who came into possession of properties of their murdered neighbours, however, must have felt discomfort. Thus, the new proprietors desperately wanted to forget about the former owners and about what had happened to them.

In the first years after the war, the Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns were rarely welcomed with joy or sympathy, but rather with confusion and reluctance.[114] Their homes, workshops, shops and other material goods already had new owners who were not always willing to go back to the pre-war status quo. Sometimes the attempts to defend oneself against the restitution and solve the problem of financial demands ended in blackmails, assaults or killings.[115] During the war, there were already cases of denouncing and killing the hiding Jews in order to "anticipate" the necessity of giving their properties back after the war. However, the desire to maintain Jewish properties cannot fully explain the phenomenon of postwar violence against the Holocaust survivors. Neither can it explain the atmosphere of reluctance surrounding Jews after the war.

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112 See: E. Hoffman, *Sztetl*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 II 1998, p. 10.

113 As Feliks Tych noted, Polish society was corrupted by the occupiers in two ways. First, it was moral corruption: Polish witnesses were shown that such grave crimes against Jews could go unpunished. Besides, Polish society was not completely impregnable to German anti-Semitic propaganda. Second, it was corruption in the common sense of the word: material goods belonging to murdered Jews fell into the hands of Polish citizens in different ways. See: F. Tych, *Długi cień*..., p. 89.

114 See: np. A. Skibińska, *Powroty ocalałych*, [in:] *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka, Warszawa 2007, p. 505-600.

115 J. T. Gross, Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation, Random House, New York 2007.

According to different sources, a few hundred to three thousand Jews died in Poland in the period 1944-1947.[116] Jews were killed by their neighbours who had been occupying their homes and had taken over their jobs. They were also killed in robbery attacks, including "train campaigns", when travelling Jews were caught and drawn out of a train and then shot.[117] Finally, they were killed by partisans and by nameless mobs in pogroms.

Although the Kielce pogrom is the most well-known and had the highest death toll, it was not the only event where the vector of hatred was directed against Jews. Similar incidents (but on a smaller scale) occurred also in Cracow, Rzeszow, Chrzanow, Radom, Miechow, Rabka and other places.[118] In all of these places, the members of local communities, consumed by mob mentality, took violent action against Jews. It is unimportant whether they were inspired, provoked or spontaneously gave vent to their resentments. What matters is that their negative emotions manifested themselves in the form of violence against Jews. Even if these emotions had been artificially stirred up and the events provoked, it only proves the actuality of the phobias and prejudices and cannot justify such heinous events in any way. In other words, this violent reaction by ordinary Polish people was a clear indication that approval for such acts was widespread.

What were the other reasons for the aggression directed at Jews if the fear of their restitution demands was not the only one? Without doubt, human life generally lost its value in the first years after the war as a result of the omnipresence of death and general demoralisation. Jewish lives were worth even less after how the Nazis had treated them and how the Poles had observed this treatment. Poles were the witnesses of attempts to dehumanise Jews, of killing them with impunity and extreme cruelty. Perhaps some thought these war acts could be still practiced and Jews could be killed without any reason.

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116 See: J. Adelson, *W Polsce zwanej Ludową*, [in:] *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, J. Tomaszewski (red.), Warszawa 1993, p. 401; I. Gutman, *Żydzi w Polsce po II wojnie światowej – Akcja kalumnii i zabójstw*, "Przegląd Prasy Zagranicznej" 1986, no 2, p. 62; N. Aleksiun, *Ruch syjonistyczny wobec systemu rządów w Polsce w latach 1944-1948*, [in:] *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, T. Szarota (Ed.), Warszawa 2001, p. 242; D. Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946*, Yad Vashem Studies" 1998, no. 26, p. 43-47; J. Michlic, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1918-1938 and 1945-1947*, "Polin" 2000, t. 13, p. 34-61; J. T. Gross, *Strach…,* p.57-58.

117 "Train campaigns" were conducted mostly by National Armed Forces. Around 200 Jews, repatriates from the Soviet Union, died as a result of the campaign. Jews were caught and drawn out of a train and then shot – only on the basis of their origin. See: J. Adelson, *W Polsce zwanej…*, p. 393.

118 See: A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.*, Warszawa 2000; J. T. Gross, *Fear*...

Moreover, as has been already mentioned, anti-Semitism survived the war alongside a negative attitude towards Jews, stereotypes and prejudices. The crowning (and most extreme) evidence of the power of anti-Semitic stereotypes after the war were pogroms caused by rumours about the Jewish blood libel.

Yet another possible explanation of the hostility towards Jews is that they were associated with the new authorities. From this perspective, violence against Jews should be interpreted as aggression aimed at Jews as governors and executors of the state authority perceived as an enemy rather than at Jews themselves. In such cases, the responsibility for manifestations of this aggression should be attached to the anti-communist underground or soldiers from the National Armed Forces. While perhaps this theory was true in some cases, in common consciousness the number of Jewish communist officials was additionally exaggerated.[119] However, as Krystyna Kersten noted, "no Jews in authority were needed to make the wave of anti-Jewish mood increase."[120] Kersten's observation was confirmed by research conducted by Alina Cała who demonstrated that only a few murders of Jews in postwar Poland had, without any doubt, the character of "political assassinations of the UB officials, party activists or local authorities.[121]

What other answers can be found to the question of the cause of violence against Jews in Poland after the Holocaust? Both above-quoted scholars present an additional possible explanation, which is the psychological mechanism of displacement and using Jews as scapegoats. The situation of Poles after the war must have brought frustration, a sense of defeat and hopelessness, resulting in aggression, which could not be channelled into an open conflict with those in fact responsible for the position of Poland after the Yalta Conference. Hence the need emerged to find a substitute enemy and to transfer the aggression born from hopelessness and frustration to the "scapegoat".

Jews seemed perfect to perform such a role: weak and decimated after the war, and yet perceived as ubiquitous and representing the new authority.[122] Moreover, the stereotypes about them and the pre-war distance and discomfort

119 There were rumours in Poland about millions of Jewish repatriates returning from the Soviet Union to supply the communist movement and seize power, which was already believed to lie in Jewish hands. For more on rumours and gossip and their influence on social atmosphere in Poland in the Stalinist era, See: D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *W krzywym zwierciadle. Polityka władz komunistycznych w Polsce w świetle plotek i pogłosek z lat 1949-56*, Warszawa 1995.

120 K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 85.

121 See: A. Cała, *Przekleństwo pamięci...*, p. 195-198.

122 See: K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 79-80; A. Cała, *Kształtowanie się polskiej i żydowskiej...*, 167-172.

between Poles and Jews were still alive. In addition, it was relatively easy to displace aggression to them because of their status as victims. Victims, as Aleksander Smolar noted, almost always arouse suspicion that they are not without fault and "have their part in the crime".[123] Connecting Jews with any kind of evil – blood libel, communism or anything else – was of great importance for Poles as the bystanders of the Holocaust. This process helped rationalise and justify Polish indifference towards (or even complicity in) the Holocaust, relieve discomfort and forget about its original cause.

Michael Steinlauf also provided a psychological interpretation of aggression and aversion towards the Holocaust survivors. He referred to the findings of the psychiatrist and historian Robert Jay Lifton who had conducted research on the effects of trauma related to witnessing death and destruction on a mass scale. In his work on this subject, titled "The Broken Connection", Lifton listed a few characteristic "core themes" or "struggles" of the survivors of massive death trauma.[124] The first of these is what Lifton called the "Death Imprint"[125] and described as the "radical intrusion of an image-feeling of threat or end to life". What Lifton terms "Death Guilt" arises "from the encounter with a situation on which the possibilities for physical or even psychic response are nonexistent"[126] and "one feels responsible for what one has not done, for what one has not felt, and above all for the gap between that physical and psychic inactivation and what one felt called upon (by the beginning image formation) to do and feel".

According to Robert J. Lifton, "the heart of the traumatic syndrome" is "psychic numbing". This condition, often involuntary and unconscious, diminishes "the capacity to feel, that is, to witness". It includes denial and the strategy of "interruption of identification" with the victim ("I see you dying but I'm not related to you or to your death"[127]). Psychic numbing

is characteristically accompanied by anger, rage and violence through which the survivor attempts to regain some sense of vitality. It is also accompanied by a symptom that Freud first noted and termed the "repetition compulsion". Unable fully to witness the traumatic experience, the survivor obsessively repeats images and even behaviour associated with it. Ultimately the survivor struggles toward what Lifton calls "formulation", a restructuring of the psyche, its values and symbols, that includes the traumatic image. This process ideally ends in

123 A. Smolar, op. cit., p. 52.

124 The theory of Robert J. Lifton was discussed on the basis of Michael Steinlauf's book: M. Steinlauf , *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York*

125 Ibidem, p. 57

126 Ibidem, p. 57

127 Ibidem, p. 57

psychic and moral renewal; its goal is "emancipation from the bondage to the diseased."[128] But what happens if the feeling is blocked?[129]

According to Robert J. Lifton, the history of the 19th century furnishes examples of entire societies that have experienced massive death trauma without the opportunity for renewal. The consequences have been the reinforcement of guilt, denial, anger, and psychic numbing, "a vicious circle of unmastered history", as Lifton puts it (...). Particularly during periods that Lifton calls 'protean historical situations' (...) traumatized societies are often attracted to new 'totalistic programs' rooted in violence and death. Such "totalisms (...) seek to 'master the death immersion – the 'traumatic situation' – by having it in some way reenacted (on the order of the "repetition compulsion"), changing or rearranging participants, but always in onrush of survival on the part of oneself or one's group". Inseparable from this strategy is victimization, the creation of a "death-tainted group", a group of scapegoats that allows the survivors to turn themselves from passive victimized to passive victimizers, while nevertheless retaining the image of themselves as victims. The result is "a perpetual victim-victimizer ethos" [such as] every act of aggression against the target group is understood as anticipatory 'defense', appropriate revenge, or combination of both.[130]

Applying the Robert Lifton theory to analyse the aggression and reluctance towards the Holocaust survivors in postwar Poland, some modifications are needed. Modification of Lifton's theory does not distort it but only strengthens its meaning and makes it even more adequate for interpreting the discussed phenomenon.

First of all, as Michael Steinlauf noted, the "death guilt" of Poles did not only result from witnessing the Holocaust and the hopelessness in the face of it. It was evoked by the ballast of the difficult, recent and distant Polish-Jewish past: the pre-war reluctance towards Jews, anti-Semitism, the "reluctant passivity" of the wartime, and the cases of evident complicity of Poles in the Holocaust. All these factors, which have been already discussed, must have intensified the "death guilt", as well as the fact of seizing the properties of the murdered Jewish neighbours, which also generated discomfort.

Secondly, Steinlauf explains, Poles had no need to invent new totalitarianism due to "the imposition of Communits rule"[131], which only intensified the

128 About the Freudian "repetition-compulsion" See: S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Broadview Press, 2011 p. 59-65, 74-77.

129 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*..., p.57

130 See: M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*..., p.58

131 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*..., p.60

feeling of harm. The new political situation hindered the process of getting over the trauma of witnessing the Holocaust and thwarted mental recovery. It also generated hopelessness and frustration resulting in aggression that was not directed at those who were in fact to blame for the situation of Polish society, but channelled into Jews as the substitute scapegoats, who also reminded Poles about the death guilt and made it impossible to suppress.[132] "With no hope of healing"[133], Poles could only change from the passive victimised into active victimisers.

As Michael Steinlauf notes, the "death guilt" in Poland must have been all the more powerful than Lifton's paradigm would suggest, "for being unrelated [for the most part] to any actual transgression.... As witnesses, Poles had committed no crime, there was nothing to expiate – yet Polish history had loaded the act of witnessing the Holocaust to spring a psychological and moral trap from which there was no apparent exit. The unacceptable, unmasterable guilt could only be denied and repressed, thereafter to erupt into history in particularly distorted forms...." What is more, Steinlauf writes, "the guilt-driven hostility and violence that greeted Jews in postwar Poland resulted in (...) the creation of even more guilt."[134]

Lifton's theory, analysed by Michael Steinlauf, and its application to the situation in postwar Poland is thus an attempt to explain the violence (actions) against Jews and resentments (feelings) towards them, rooted in Polish experience and witnessing of the Holocaust. According to this theory, hatred and aggression towards Jews are evoked by a repressed sense of guilt.[135] As Lifton presents the causes and circumstances of repressing information, which are uncomfortable for the collective psyche, his theory can also explain the phenomenon of collective forgetting about Jews and the Holocaust in Poland after 1945. It can

132 At one of the conferences about the Holocaust, Michael Steinlauf expressed an opinion that the presence of even a few Jews in Poland was a "living pang of conscience, which made it difficult to deaden the guilt" He also raised a question whether the aggression against Jews should not be interpreted as "an outburst of suppressed guilt directed (...) exactly against supposed accusers?". See: M. Steinlauf, *Refleksje nad cieniem Holokaustu...*, p. 93.

133 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*..., p.60

134 See: M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* p. 61

135 Agnes Heller came to similar conclusions. Referring to postwar Hungary, she wrote: "Until then, only the Nazis had manifested hatred against Jews, while the rest were indifferent. But then some other, almost irrational hatred appeared, driven by seemingly simple motives: people did not want to give houses, flats and furniture, etc., back to Jews. However, this hatred resulted in fact from suppression, and the stronger it was, the more aggression and aversion it generated". See: A. Heller, *Pamięć i zapominanie. O sensie i braku sensu*, "Przegląd Polityczny" 2001, no 52/53, p. 25.

thus be used as a supplement to what has already been said about the reasons and determinants of this particular process of collective amnesia. However, there is one reason that has not been mentioned yet.

Almost 3 million Polish Jews were killed in the Holocaust, 90% of whom had lived in Poland before the war. The dream of Polish nationalists for a national state (and they were not alone in having this dream) came true as, in the postwar landscape, no national minorities were to be found. Although the statistics showed that some representatives of ethnic minorities lived there, postwar Poland was no longer the multinational homeland of many ethnic groups. Few Jews decided to stay in Poland and even they soon left the country during successive emigration waves caused by the anti-Semitic atmosphere and persecutions. Among those who left were also Jews who could not imagine living "in a cemetery."[136] According to Marcin Kula, Poland lacked "the elementary medium of memory, which is the community itself as a potential object of memories and narratives."[137] One should add that community as a *subject* of memories and narratives was also missing. There was no Jewish community of memory – it had either been destroyed or left Poland.

Who does not survive has no history, Agnes Heller says, and the majority of Polish Jews did not survive.[138] There were others writing and speaking of their history and, for some reason, their aim was not to provide a comprehensive and possibly objective narrative of the life of the Jewish community in Poland and, in particular, about how it was all ended by the Holocaust. It was simply much easier to make this subject disappear in the war hell experienced by Poles and to reinterpret or ignore the uncomfortable topic of the Holocaust. In other words, it was easier to compose a new and comfortable story of the Shoah. This story had an advantage of healing sick souls, soothing consciences, overcoming "moral anxiety", alleviating the difficult past and enabling and supporting its forgetting.

Thus, let us shift from the analysis of common memory to official memory and to the subject of forgetting about the Holocaust propagated in the People's Republic of Poland. There were two kinds of official lies: the falsity of silence and the falsity of words and deeds.[139]

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136 For more on the postwar waves of Jewish emigration from Poland and their reasons for departing, see*: np. M. Pisarski,* Emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945-1951, *[in:]* Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku, *J. Tomaszewski (Ed.), Warszawa 1997, p. 13-83; See: także B. Szaynok, Z historią i Moskwą w tle. Polska a Izrael 1944–1968,* Warszawa 2007.

137 M. Kula, op. cit., p. 53.

138 A. Heller, op. cit., p. 25.

139 K. Kersten, J. Szapiro, op. cit., p. 281.

3. From autonomy to repression

In comparison to later periods, in the first years after the war a lot was said and written in public about Jews. Difficult and sensitive subjects were not omitted. Some Polish intellectuals made a brave attempt to face the challenges and ghosts of the recent past in magazines such as "Odrodzenie", "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Kuźnica" and "Twórczość". They wrote about anti-Semitism, both before and after the war. They asked about Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust and pointed at the prevailing indifference. They said harsh words about Poles who had supported the Nazis in the Holocaust or took part in pogroms and murdered Jews after the war.[140]

The Holocaust and the problem of the attitudes of Polish society towards the Holocaust were reflected not only in the Polish press, but also film[141] and, in particular, in Polish poetry and literature. The evidence is the works of poets and writers such as: Czesław Miłosz, Jerzy Zagórski, Stanisław Wygodzki, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Zofia Nałkowska, Krystyna Żywulska, Tadeusz Breza, Adolf Rudnicki, Kazimierz Brandys, Stefan Otwinowski and Tadeusz Borowski.[142] The first postwar textbooks provided information about the Holocaust in a relatively extensive, if still somewhat fragmentary fashion. Until the political transition, no subsequent textbooks devoted more space to the subject and, in addition, they all distorted its image.[143] Polish historians also devoted their attention to studies of the Holocaust.[144] Such relative freedom of speech and research on

140 See: J. Michlic, *Holokaust i wczesne lata powojenne w świadomości Polaków*, "Midrasz" 2005, no 1, p. 27-36; See: także D. Libionka, *Antysemityzm i zagłada na łamach prasy w Polsce w latach 1945-1946*, [in:] Polska 1944/45-1989. Studia i Materiały, Warszawa 1997, p. 151-190; J. Andrzejewski (Ed.), *Martwa fala. Zbiór artykułów o antysemityzmie*, Warszawa 1947.

141 Considering the production year (1948), Aleksander Ford's film "Ulica graniczna" (released 1949) should be perceived as a daring representation of the Holocaust and, in particular, of the Polish-Jewish relations during the occupation. The movie provoked considerable controversy and sparked off a debate in the media at the time. See: P. Litka, *Polacy i Żydzi w Ulicy Granicznej*, "Kwartalnik Filmowy" 2000, no 29-30, p. 60-74.

142 See: A. Brodzka-Wald, D. Krawczyńska, J. Leociak, *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady*, Warszawa 2000; N. Gross, *Poeci i Szoa: obraz zagłady Żydów w poezji polskiej*, Sosnowiec 1993; I. Maciejewska (Ed.), *Męczeństwo i zagłada Żydów w zapisach literatury polskiej*, Warszawa 1988; W. Panas, *Pismo i rana. Szkice o problematyce żydowskiej w literaturze polskiej*, Lublin 1996;

143 See: A. Radziwiłł, *The Teaching of the History of the Jews in Secondary Schools in the Polish People's Republic*, 1949-1988, "Polin" 1989, t. 4, p. 413-414.

144 See: L. Dobroszycki, *Polska historiografia na temat Zagłady: przegląd literatury i próba syntezy*, [in:] *Holocaust z perspektywy półwiecza. Pięćdziesiąta rocznica Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim. Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Żydow-*

the Holocaust resulted mainly from the fact that the official and binding interpretation of the wartime was only in its initial phase. Therefore, it was a period of active and private memory, not yet monopolised by ideological state discourse.

Undoubtedly, Jewish historians and their institutions published the most material about the Holocaust in postwar Poland. It is enough to say that one of the first institutions founded by the Holocaust survivors was the Central Jewish Historical Commission. It was established in August 1944 in the liberated Lublin, and its main task was documenting German crimes against Jews and obtaining accounts related to the Holocaust and preparing them for print. Between 1945 and 1946, the Central Jewish Historical Commission established regional offices in bigger cities while correspondents worked in smaller towns.[145] The Holocaust survivors, Natalia Aleksiun writes, considered documenting and publicising the fate of Polish Jews during the war to be their obligation. Their sense of mission was additionally strengthened by the fear that otherwise the Holocaust would be forgotten or incorporated into the general history of Poland.[146] Their concerns and anticipations proved to be fully justified.

While Jewish historians initiated the process of registering and popularising knowledge of what had happened to Jews during the war, it was important for all Jews to maintain the memory of their deceased relatives and the Jewish community that used to live in Poland. Keeping these memories alive was a moral imperative for the Jewish survivors. Therefore, both individuals and institutions took steps to do so.[147] It was possible for Jewish historians to conduct research connected with documenting the Holocaust and to establish and run relevant institutions, because the first years after the war brought an atmosphere that was favourable for the Jewish minority.

Already in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, the new Polish government promised to help Jews rebuild their lives, and to

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ski Instytut Historyczny w dniach 29-31 marca 1993, D. Grinberg, P. Szapiro (red.), Warszawa 1993, p. 177-189; N. Aleksiun, *Historiografia na temat Zagłady i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w okresie drugiej wojny światowej*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2005, no 1, p. 32-52; J. Tomaszewski, *Historiografia polska o Zagładzie*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 2000, no 2.

145 See: M. Horn, *Działalność naukowa i wydawnicza Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej przy CKŻPwP i Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce w latach 1945-1950 (w czterdziestolecie powstania ŻIH)*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1985, no 1-2, p. 123-132.

146 See: N. Aleksiun, *O konstruowaniu historii Żydów polskich*, [in:] PRL. *Trwanie i zmiana*, D. Stola, M. Zaremba (Eds.), Warszawa 2003, p. 338.

147 See: N. Aleksiun, *O konstruowaniu...*, p. 333-349.

provide "legal and actual equality".[148] Initially, there were favourable conditions in postwar Poland for the Jewish community to revive itself. Some historians even say that this was the time – although short – of Jewish national autonomy in Poland. Jews who decided to stay in Poland made a successful attempt to re-establish Jewish political parties and reconstruct Jewish education. The Central Committee of Polish Jews (Polish: *Centralny Komitet Żydów; CKŻP*) was also brought to life. It was intended to be a political representation of Jews in Poland and abroad and to coordinate aid and social security for the Holocaust survivors. The main statutory task of the Committee was the reconstruction of Jewish life in Poland.[149]

In addition, Jewish Religious Congregations worked to organise Jewish religious life. Between 1945 and 1948, diverse cultural Jewish associations were in operation; the National Jewish Theatre functioned in Warsaw, and a publishing house, "Dos Naje Lebn", was based in Lower Silesia. Jewish press and Jewish literature were published. The Jewish Press Agency delivered information about Jewish life in Poland and abroad. A Jewish cooperative was developing and administration jobs were available for Jews.[150]

Where did this freedom to reanimate Jewish life and to self-organise result from? Why did the state guarantee it? Aleksander Smolar is undoubtedly right to note that this goodwill of the authorities, quite obvious at the beginning of the People's Republic of Poland, should be interpreted as pragmatism rather than empathy.[151] The authorities hoped for Jewish support and loyalty and, as a consequence, for the sympathy of the West, while some Jews believed that communism, based on the idea of internationalism and equality, would protect them from anti-Semitism. Therefore, Jewish support for communism did not always stem from love for the idea but also from pragmatic judgment of the situation and the balance of gains and losses. Jews hoped that a long life for communism would give them a chance to live their lives and provide them with a guarantee of safety. Hence, they supported and swelled the ranks of the communist government.[152]

148 See: *Manifest PKWN*, Warszawa 1974, p. 20.

149 See: E. Hornowska, *Powrót Żydów polskich z ZSRR oraz działalność Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1985, no 1-2, p. 105-122.

150 See: A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944-1968. Teksty źródłowe*, Warszawa 1997, p. 75-86; 166-173; 221-240.

151 A. Smolar, *Tabu i niewinność*, op. cit., p. 62.

152 See: A. Grabski, *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944-1949)*, Warszawa 2004.

As the authorities struggled with anti-Semitism and attempted to provide safety – a pressing need in the postwar years of anti-Semitic violence – Jews accepted their statements with satisfaction. The problem was, however, that governmental manifests against anti-Semitism were in fact directed at the state's political and ideological enemies. The authorities attempted to attach anti-Semitism to the Home Army (AK) and the National Armed Forces (NSZ), which they called the "reactionary forces". Similarly, acts of violence, pogroms and murders of Jews were attached to the government-in-exile.[153]

Clearly, the favourable attitude of the new government towards Jews was reflected in the social consciousness. The popular conviction that postwar Poland was ruled by Jews was confirmed, which strengthened and sanctioned the myth of Jewish communists (*żydokomuna*) based on the visibility of Jews in the new state administration and the Jewish approval of the new government. As a result, postwar communism was automatically linked to anti-Semitism.[154] Therefore, the government did not need to make efforts to label their enemies as anti-Semites – that is in fact what they were. Anti-Semitism and the Jewish question were also skilfully used in later years but in the opposite way: the government discovered the utility of anti-Semitic rhetoric and made extensive use of it.

One of the events interpreted as a manifestation of the authorities' goodwill towards Jews was the unveiling of the Jewish Ghetto Memorial by Natan Rappaport and Leon Marek Suzin in Warsaw, on 19 April 1948.[155] The event was seen as honouring and giving preference to Jewish martyrdom at the expense of Polish martyrdom. There had been no monument in Warsaw devoted to the Warsaw Uprising until then, and the memory of the Home Army soldiers was systematically blotted out by labelling them as traitors to the nation. The Jewish Ghetto Memorial was for many years the only public place in Poland where all the national commemorations of the Holocaust were held.

The following months of 1948, however, brought about a significant change in the political strategy towards Jews. A symbolic manifestation of this change and an announcement of the new policy was the order to liquidate the Jewish exposition at the Recovered Territories Exhibition in Wroclaw in the summer of

153 See: A. Grabski, G. Berendt, *Między emigracja a trwaniem. Syjoniści i komuniści żydowscy w Polsce po Holocauście*, Warszawa 2003, p. 78-79.

154 Dariusz Stola observed an organic relationship between anti-Semitism, anti-communism and anti-Sovietism; see: D. Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968*, Warszawa 2000, p. 23.

155 See: J. E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press 1993, p. 155-185.

1948, and to move it into the Polish pavilion.[156] Alongside the increasing Stalinisation of the country, Jewish parties disappeared from the political scene. They were dissolved on the wave of the ideological offensive launched against the "right-wing and nationalist deviation" and Zionism. Manifests of these attitudes were found in Jewish parties and institutions. The campaign was aimed mostly at Jewish Zionists and the Bund (*General Jewish Labour Bund in Poland*) and it was run mostly by governmentally supported Jewish communists from the Faction of Polish Workers' Party, who dominated the Central Committee of Polish Jews. In 1948, its members declared their willingness to act "unanimously" and in 1949, after expelling the opposition and leaving Socialist International, the Bund merged with the Polish United Workers' Party. Additionally, the Ministry of Public Administration established deadlines for elimination of Zionist parties. As a result, at the beginning of 1950, there was no Jewish party in opposition to the Polish United Workers' Party.[157]

The change of the official policy on Jews reached even further. All Jewish youth organisations directly or indirectly associated with political parties were liquidated. Jewish schools, hospitals, social security and worker cooperatives became nationalised. Jewish history was eliminated from the curriculum of Jewish schools. The Central Committee of Polish Jews was transformed into the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland, and became absolutely controlled by the state. It was the only Jewish organisation until 1989 to which *Związek Religijny Wyznania Mojżeszowego* (former Jewish Religious Congregations) was subordinated. As Alina Cała and Helena Datner-Śpiewak noted, "Jewish politics, defined as the representation of interests of diverse Jewish groups, ceased to exist."[158]

The Polish communist government policy relating to Jews from 1948-1953 followed, corresponded with and resulted from the actions undertaken by the Soviet Union and other countries of the Eastern Bloc. Starting from the end of the 1930s, Joseph Stalin was clearly planning an anti-Jewish crusade, and these tendencies intensified around 1948. Almost all Jewish institutions were liquidat-

156 See: B. Szaynok, *Walka z syjonizmem w Polsce (1948-1953)*, [in:] *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, T. Szarota (red.), Warszawa 2001, p. 260.

157 See: A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, op. cit., p. 84-90; A. Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska*, [in:] *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresach przełomów politycznych (1944-1989)*, P. Madajczyk (red.), Warszawa 1998, p. 263-270; L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944-1960*, Łódź 2003, p. 398-416; A. Grabski, *Działalność komunistów…*, p. 256-301; B. Szaynok, *Z historią i Moskwą w tle. Polska a Izrael 1944–1968*, Warszawa 2007.

158 A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, op. cit., p. 89; See: także A. Grabski, *Działalność komunistów…*, p. 304-328.

ed in the Soviet Union. Numerous Jews were accused of an "international Trotskyite-Titoist-Zionist conspiracy"; they were brought to show trials, sentenced to death or sent to Gulags. Kremlin doctors of Jewish origin were also sent there, accused of contribution to the death of Żdanow and other state officials. [159] Similar things happened in other countries of the Eastern Bloc: in Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany or Czechoslovakia, where the secretary general of the communist party, Rudolf Slánský and several other activists of Jewish origin, were charged, sentenced and hanged in a show trial.[160]

In comparison to other 'satellite countries', the Stalinist struggle with Jews was relatively soft and bloodless. It was limited to the liquidation of Jewish institutions and the dismissing of Jews from their political positions. On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that show trials and more brutal methods to deal with "the Jewish question" were also planned in Poland. Stalin's death (5 March 1953), however, stopped the anti-Jewish campaign he had unleashed. Perhaps Jerzy Jedlicki was right to say that "it was very likely the war campaign of 1968 would have taken place in 1953. But then it would have had a much more brutal character."[161]

The period of initial debates and first publications about the Holocaust in Poland was short. It lasted two to three years after the war. It was soon replaced with the need to deal with the difficult times of occupation and the even more disturbing memories. The attempts of Jewish historians to document and describe the Holocaust were limited after the end of Jewish national autonomy in Poland. Admittedly, the Jewish Historical Institute worked throughout the whole period of the People's Republic of Poland but, as Feliks Tych noted, the knowledge of the Holocaust that had been gathered and publicised by Jewish historians never got through to the image of Polish history "spread by the most influential instruments of shaping historical awareness."[162] Besides, the Jewish Historical Institute was not always impregnable against ideological pressures.

This way or another, the Jewish Historical Institute was continuously at work and, from 1950 onwards, the Jewish Historical Institute Quarterly, a Polish-language academic periodical, was published. However, Dariusz Stola and Natalia Aleksiun note that it was only an ostentatious gesture by the authorities to maintain this institution as well as keeping the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and the Estera Kamińska Jewish Theatre in Warsaw. This ges-

159 See: J. Rapoport, *Sprawa lekarzy kremlowskich*, Warszawa 1990.

160 See: A. Lustiger, *Czerwona Księga. Stalin i Żydzi*, Warszawa 2004; Y. Gilboa, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry 1939-1953*, Boston 1971; A. Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews*, New York 1994.

161 J. Jedlicki, *Organizowanie nienawiści*, "Res Publica" 1988, no 4, p. 48.

162 F. Tych, *Długi cień Zagłady, Szkice historyczne*, Warszawa 1999, p. 75-76.

ture was intended to prove to the Western world that the communist government cared about Jewish culture and, in general, about Polish Jews. It also allowed the government to control and infiltrate the Jewish minority.[163]

For long decades, the topic of Jews and the Holocaust was eliminated from public discourse and the pages of Polish history. If this subject ever appeared, it was falsified and deformed. Jews were only mentioned when they were used as scapegoats during periods of political crises and party reshuffling. So it was during the 1953 Polish Thaw in Poland when communists of Jewish origin were accused of the crimes of the Stalinist period, or in 1956, when "natolińczycy", a faction of the communist party, struggled with "puławianie" (another faction) using anti-Semitic rhetoric. Jews were also made the scapegoats in March 1968 during an apparently anti-Zionist, but in fact anti-Semitic, campaign.

Silence on the subject of Jews and the Holocaust also resulted from the propagandist slogan about the ultimate national homogeneity of Poland. The reasons, however, were never analysed. There was no public discussion about Jews or other ethnic minorities who had lived in Poland before the war, or about the impoverishment of Polish culture and the emptiness of the ethnic landscape. This subject simply did not match the vision of an ethnically homogenous country that was promoted by the government.

Hence, the word "Jew" was continuously avoided. Sometimes it was replaced with various periphrases or allusions in order not to invoke the ghost and to affirm the conviction that the People's Republic of Poland was an ethnically homogenous country. However, as Michał Głowiński points out, this silence and avoidance of the word "Jew" was a result of other factors. One of the reasons was the experience gained during the occupation period – the awareness of the danger of being a Jew and calling someone a Jew. Jews who decided to keep their false "Aryan" identity even after the war knew it very well. Another reason observed by Głowiński was the government's desire not to be perceived as strangers, which was particularly true in the early postwar period. The discourse about Jews could have undermined the "familiarity" of the new government and its national character. Jews who were in power even changed their names to ones that sounded more Polish.[164]

The silence about Jews and the Holocaust resulted also from the accepted and popularised communist historiography of the war. The government made national martyrdom, heroism and anti-fascism the fundament of the memory of the war. The memory of Polish heroes and victims became the superior memory.

163 See: B. Polak, *Wszyscy krawcy wyjechali*..., p. 21-22.

164 See: M. Głowiński, *Rosjanin, Niemiec, Żyd. O nazwach narodowości w PRL-owskim wysłowieniu*, [in:] *Komunizm. Ideologia*..., p. 24-26.

It corresponded with the national demand for commemorating heroism and suffering and it was the perfect cement for the collective identity of the nation. Its canonical version included acknowledging Poles as the main (if not the only) victims of the war and illustrating their heroic resistance against the Nazis. The Nazi victims of other nationalities were ignored, just as Stalin's victims from Poland were forced to subside into silence in the name of friendship with the Soviet Union. For various reasons, they were not suitable for the "political cult of the fallen" and the murdered. As Robert Traba noted, monopolisation of the war memory in the People's Republic of Poland concerned two dimensions: national and ideological; national, because the focus was only on the Polish nation's martyrdom, and ideological because the attention was given only to the suffering inflicted by the Nazi occupiers.[165] Anti-fascism was regarded as an attitude shared by all Poles during the war and as the "confession of faith" of every Polish citizen after the war. It also defined the Polish reason for state and legitimised communism as the only right antidote to fascism.

The authorities turned to the past to bond with the nation and to find sources for legitimising their power. War memory was abused, shaped according to needs and framed into an official and possibly cohesive version. The task was simple enough as the government took full control of the institutions that were responsible for memories of the war.[166] The government's aim was to polish national memory so that the nation could proudly look at it. This goal could only be achieved at the price of silence and reinterpretation. Some of these covering-up interventions, e.g. concerning Katyń and other events and persons, resulted from the need to legitimise power and were committed against the common memory. However, the silence and reinterpretation regarding Jews and the Holocaust were a response to the all-national need to forget and in this case, the official memory of the war met the social need.

Focusing only on Polish suffering and subjecting Polish historiography to such a perspective resulted in forgetting about the Holocaust. The forgetting had different forms and was manifested at different occasions.

First of all, the Holocaust was deprived of its uniqueness. The fact that its scenario and implementation involved almost exclusively Jews was silenced. In other words, the Holocaust was not regarded as a very specific event that required a very special attention.

Secondly, the difference between the occupational situation of Jews and Poles was blurred and the number of murdered Jews was counted together with

165 R. Traba, *Symbole...*, p. 60.

166 See: R. Traba, *"Krajobraz po bitwie". Polityczny kult poległych w Polsce po II wojnie światowej*, [in:] *Historia – przestrzeń dialogu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 125-133.

the number of Polish victims. Therefore, Jewish suffering was mixed into the Polish martyr vision of the occupation period, and the Holocaust – as a solely Jewish experience – was erased from the pages of Polish history. All of this was intended to lead to a perception of the Holocaust as something that had happened to Poles and the propagandistically exaggerated number of war victims was intended to intensify the sense of suffering and the immensity of war losses.

Thirdly, if the image of the history of the war was dominated by the vision of the martyred and heroic Polish nation, anything that could contradict this image was eliminated. Thus, indifferent and shameful attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust were silenced and the focus was on actions that could ease the national conscience and suppress moral anxiety. For this purpose, the Righteous Among the Nations were brought to public attention, while Jews were somehow made partly responsible for what had happened to them. They were admonished for their passivity, for lacking the "spirit of resistance" and for collaborating with the Nazis (e.g. *Judenräte*). Thus, the authorities attempted to unburden the conscience of the bystanders by making the victims accomplices. They also deliberately did not discuss the subject of the pre-war anti-Semitism but willingly presented evidence of the alleged Jewish anti-Polonism and their collaboration with the enemies of Poland.

Fourthly, if the subject of the Holocaust appeared at all, it was described and discussed through the lens of the accepted ideological interpretation of what had happened during the war and this was usually the reason to refer to it.[167]

Different levels of the limited public discourse demonstrate that the process of forgetting the Holocaust indeed took place as one of the strategies of the official policy on war history. The evidence of this can be found in academic literature and fiction approved for publishing, in history and Polish language textbooks or articles in the official press. A specific historical policy to standardise monuments and memorials was implemented. For many years, it also embraced the anniversaries of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, attaching new meanings and senses to it. What also required forgetting was the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968 and earlier attempts to instrumentally use anti-Jewish resentments. In other words, the efforts to forget the Holocaust were many-sided and with the use of a whole spectrum of communication media and "carriers of historical memory."[168] Let us now provide relevant examples.[169]

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167 See: A. Kichelewski, *"Kwestia żydowska" w Polsce – władza i społeczeństwo wobec Żydów w latach 1945-1968*, [in:] *Zagłada Żydów. Pamięć narodowa...*, p. 254-255.

168 The term has been borrowed from Marcin Kula's book. See: M. Kula, *Nośniki pamięci historycznej*, Warszawa 2002.

169 These considerations have not been chronologically ordered and they are rather a case study. Only the events, episodes, fragments of public speeches and publications con-

4. A monument of martyrdom and the *encyclopaedists* case

The way the communist government presented and propagandistically used the former concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau is crucial proof of the covering up and repression of the memory of the Holocaust.[170] According to the prevailing research findings, this factory of death, built on Polish land, had claimed half a million human lives, of which 90% were Jews from Poland and other European countries. Poles and people of other nations also died in Auschwitz. The camp had two functions. From the very beginning, it was a concentration and labour camp where people worked beyond their normal capacities. After it was expanded in 1941, it also became an extermination camp. For the whole world, Auschwitz is the symbol of the Holocaust. In Poland however, the second stage of the history of Auschwitz, involving the extermination of Jews, was long left to neglect and oblivion, while the initial function of the camp, involving Polish martyrdom, is rarely discussed outside Poland. Why hasn't the important information about the second stage of the history of Auschwitz appeared in Polish collective consciousness?

The consciousness of contemporary Poles has not yet recovered from the effects of the communist propaganda that falsified the history, function, symbolism and meaning of the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. For decades, Auschwitz was used for ideological purposes and the ways of using it reflected the political tendencies of the time. As Zdzisław Mach observed, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (Polish: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau) was subjected to successful attempts to "appropriate its symbol by the Polish communist government and make it an element of the ideological system which legitimised the political status quo."[171]

Depending on the current need, the government gave the place different meanings. At the beginning, the state made the camp a symbol of anti-fascism

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nected to the process of forgetting the Holocaust were chosen. These choices are undoubtedly incomplete and the considerations presented above do not exhaust the subject. They only present the most important manifestations of the process of forgetting the Holocaust between 1945 and 1989 and demonstrate that this process did in fact take place. The reader can find more detailled and competent analysis here: M. Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięć Zagłady*, Warszawa 2001; I. Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland*, Transaction Books, New Jersey 1989.

170 On the subject of official memory policy involving former Nazi camps and the disputes about the memory of the camps in the first years after the war, see: Z. Wóycicka, *Przerwana żałoba. Polskie spory wokół pamięci nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady 1944-1950*, Warszawa 2009.

171 See: Z. Mach, Wstęp, [in:] *Europa po Auschwitz*, Z. Mach (Ed.), Kraków 1995, p. 10.

and hostility towards Germany. With time, as East Germany became one of the "satellite" countries and the Cold War divided the world in two, the anti-German blade of the symbolic meaning of Auschwitz was becoming blunt, but the camp was still used for propaganda against ideological enemies. Between the beginning of 1950s and the end of 1980s, it was the representation of various political manifestations: under the banner of anti-fascism, anti-imperialism or "the fight for peace". The manifestations usually took place on the occasion of anniversaries of the outbreak of World War II or the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army (January 1945). These two anniversaries were never commemorated according to the historical calendar, but always in April, which was recognised by the government as the "month of national memory".

Regardless of the meaning attached to Auschwitz or the purpose it served, it never ceased to symbolise Polish martyrdom. Certainly, there were periods of emphasising the universal significance of the place, as well as the internationalism and ethnic diversity of the victims. However, even then Poles occupied the leading position, while other nations were mentioned in Polish alphabetical order. Therefore, Jews were mentioned last. There was a consistent silence about the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the Jewish origin of the vast majority of the victims, condemned to death as a single ethnic group defined on the basis of the Nuremberg Laws.

Scholars agree that the origin of the "Polish-national commemorative idiom"[172] and, at the same time, the symbolic process of "shoving Jews into oblivion"[173] began with the building of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. It was created from the initiative of the former inmates of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the inauguration ceremony was held on 14 June 1947, on the anniversary of the day when the first transport of inmates arrived in Auschwitz. The commemorations were dominated by the speeches of the state officials, with Józef Cyrankiewicz, the then prime minister and the former inmate of the camp, in the foreground. [174]

However, the Museum was not legally sanctioned until 2 July 1947, by the Act of 2 July 1947, on the commemoration of martyrdom of the Polish Nation and other Nations in Auschwitz. The name of the act itself suggests that "shoving Jews into oblivion" was a fact confirmed by the law. The content of the act proved as much in that it did not even mention Jews. The first press article labelled the former camp area as "the monument of martyrdom of the Polish Nation and other Nations". The care of the museum was given to the Polish Asso-

172 J. Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration 1945-1979*, Ohio University Press, Ohio 2003, p. 147.

173 J. Ch. Szurek, *Między historią a pamięcią: polski świadek...*, p. 174.

174 See: J. Huener, op. cit., 32-33.

ciation of former political prisoners of German prisons and concentration camps, which was supported and controlled by the State.[175] State institutions also had a key role in shaping the symbolism of the former camp and the museum.

Thus, in the first years after the war, the basic symbolic meaning of Auschwitz was thus: it represented Polish suffering and the Polish struggle against the Fascists. This representation was obligatory and was reproduced in public discourse. There were also moments when state nationalism involving the Auschwitz Museum was supplemented by additional ideological ornaments dictated by the needs of the hour. Hence, alongside the developing Stalinisation and according to the demands of the Cold War, Auschwitz became a symbol of the fight against imperialism and ideological enemies, and the defence of peace, internationalism and the alliance with the Soviet Union.

After Stalin's death, the internationalist approach towards the symbolism of Auschwitz continued from 1953 to 1967. The museum was used to emphasise the significance of the alliance between "progressive countries" but also to point out the fact that Auschwitz had been the place of a crime against humanity. Humanity was conventionally represented by "national expositions" presented in the former prisoner blocks. Between 1960 and 1985, 14 such exhibitions were arranged and countries were responsible for expositions in their respective "national pavilions". The only exception was the Jewish pavilion, arranged by Polish government and international organisations. The first exhibition in the Jewish pavilion was closed right after opening, on the crest of the wave of the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968.[176]

While the Act of 2 July 1947 only mentioned the martyrdom of other nations, the moment when the national diversity of the camp victims was actually emphasised was during the unveiling of the International Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau on 16 April 1967. Its erection was in honour of the internationalist approach to the area of the former camp, which was coming to an end as the process of nationalisation of Polish communism had been intensifying. The international Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau was situated near the ruins of the crematoria, that is, in the part of the camp which had been the main arena of the extermination of Jews. The central motif of the monument deserves special attention. Initially, according to the project, it was to be a cubist, figurative composition presenting three abstract figures: a woman, a man and a child. In the opinion of James E. Young, the figures were meant to

175 *Ustawa z dnia 2 lipca 1947r. o upamiętnieniu męczeństwa Narodu Polskiego i innych Narodów w Oświęcimiu* (Dz. U. no 52, poz. 265).

176 See: M. Kucia Auschwitz jako fakt społeczny, Kraków 2005, p. 37-38; 248-249; T. Zbrzeska, *Z historią do milionów*, "Pro Memoria" 1997, no 7, p. 96-101.

symbolise Jews and it would be hard to disagree, as almost only Jews were killed with whole families and the three abstract figures probably represented a family. Additionally, "the different sizes of stones in the initial sculpture suggested children, who could not have been killed as political prisoners, but only as Jews."[177] This motif however might have as well been a symbolised universalism of all the inmates: adults and children, women and men. However, just before unveiling it to the public, the monument was changed.[178] Instead of the three figures, a polished square of black marble appeared, divided into four parts that formed a cross with a triangle in the middle. The triangle in KL Auschwitz used to symbolise political inmates, thus the monument symbolised their death and suffering. It distinguished this group and made it a universal symbol of all the Auschwitz victims. Considering that Poles represented the majority of political inmates, one can say that Poles became the symbolic embodiment of all people who died or were murdered in Auschwitz. Unlike Poles, Jews were usually not registered at all because they were led directly to the gas chambers. If they ever had the "privilege" of registration and their death sentence was postponed, they were marked with the Star of David. The metaphorical language of the monument did not mention it and thus ignored the main victims of the camp.

The inscription also disregarded Jews. 19 plaques read in as many different languages: "Four million/ people suffered/ and died here/ at the hands/ of the Nazi/ murderers/ between the years/ 1940 and 1945."Admittedly, two plaques included the text translated into Hebrew and Yiddish. However, another inscription, on the main plaque, next to the "Cross of Grunewald" and below the triangle, was only in Polish and its text also disregarded Jews. It read: "The Council of State of the People's Republic of Poland awarded the "Heroes of Auschwitz, who suffered death here/ fighting against the Nazi genocide/ for freedom and human dignity/ for peace and brotherhood of nations" with the First Class Order of the Cross of Grunewald.[179]

The Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz, who participated in the unveiling ceremony of the monument along with the Minister of the Interior Mieczysław Moczar, Deputy Minister for Culture Kazimierz Rusinek and other state dignitaries, also said nothing about Jews. In his long speech, the Prime Minister listed

177 J. E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven and London 1993, p. 139-141.

178 James E. Young notes "While some snapshots show evidence that the figures did stand as planned for one week, just before the dedication itself, the carved stones were replaced by a polished square of black marble with a triangle in the middle, with no official explanation for this change to this day." See: J. E. Young, op. cit., p.141.

179 Citation after B. Lessaer, *Auschwitz jako rzeczywistość przedstawiona*, "Bez Dogmatu" 1996, no 30, p. 12.

many nationalities of the camp victims, but the Jewish one he consistently omitted.[180] His speech provoked outrage from Robert Weiss, the chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee, and not only him. The context of these events inspired Michał Borwicz to write and disseminate in France a small brochure titled: "Les chambres à gaz déjudaïsées" (The de-Jewified Gas Chambers)[181].

Both monument inscriptions need a commentary as they included false, propagandist presumptions, which existed and were spread almost till the end of the People's Republic of Poland, and their effects on the social consciousness of Poles have been significant.

First, the inscriptions included clear untruth – the number of victims was overestimated. The number of 4 million victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau, considered to be valid, was disseminated in all the countries of the Soviet Bloc and it was disproved only in the late 1980s. Additionally, the plaques in 19 different languages were intended to suggest that the 4 million victims were people of different nationalities. The problem was that nationality of the victims was equated with their citizenship and no attention was paid to the fact that the vast majority of these people had died because they had been Jewish, not French, Greek or Hungarian. Clearly, such a manoeuvre served propagandist purposes. It well suited the internalisation of the symbolic meaning of Auschwitz as the International Monument of the Victims of Fascism.[182] However, the truth of the main victims of Auschwitz, sentenced to death because of their origin, was diluted and falsified.

The overestimated number of the victims implied that the number of murdered Poles was also higher. This, however, did not matter much; a more important fact was that the number of murdered Jews was included in the register of Polish victims. The figure of 6 million Poles murdered during the war, which was disseminated by the communist government, is the best evidence. Of course, the Polish Jews *were* Polish citizens. However, counting them as Polish victims was dictated by the desire to magnify the enormity of Polish martyrdom and led to the process of blurring the singular horror of the Holocaust.

The inscription carved on the main plaque of the monument highlighted the heroism of the victims and only mentions the heroes of the camp resistance movement – mostly communists and socialists. Therefore, it completely disregarded Jews and other victims who occasionally fought for dignity, but mainly

180 For more on the speech of the Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz and generally on the monument unveiling ceremony, see: J. Huener, op. cit., p. 165.

181 The brochure was mentioned by Jean-Charles Szurek. See: J. Ch. Szurek, *Między historią a pamięcią: polski świadek...*, p. 177.

182 See: Z. Mach, *Czym jest Auschwitz dla Polaków?*, [in:] Y. Doosry (ed.), *Representations of Auschwitz*, Kraków 1995, p. 21.

for survival. Victims of the gas chambers, Stanisław Krajewski aptly observes, did not fight for anything, even for survival, because they did not even have a chance to do so. The inscription on the monument, which was situated next to the crematoria, completely ignored them – although Jews were the ones who deserved commemoration in this special place. According to Krajewski, the inscription would make sense only if "it regarded only the members of the camp resistance movement – not all the victims of gas chambers". Napis w zaproponowanym brzmieniu miałby zdaniem Krajewskiego sens jedynie wówczas, gdyby założyć, "że mowa jest nie o zagazowanych, nie o wszystkich ofiarach, ale wyłącznie o uczestnikach obozowego ruchu oporu"[183].

The communist interpretation of the history of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau (Polish: *Oświęcim-Brzezinka*) was binding almost to the end of the People's Republic of Poland. Regardless of the attempts to attach the symbol of heroism and martyrdom of many nations to this place, in Poland, Auschwitz symbolised the heroism and martyrdom of Poles[184] and, only later, of other nations. It definitely was not interpreted as the symbol of the extermination of Jews as an ethnic group sentenced to annihilation by the Nazis – this historical fact had been shrouded in a veil of silence. In other words, as Tomasz Goban-Klas notes, by saying "Four million people suffered and died here", the authorities covered up the truth: the fact that the majority of the victims, nine out of each ten, were Jews.[185]

Considering what has been already said, the campaign launched in 1967 against *encyclopaedists* should not surprise anyone: it was simply a consequence of the tendencies to glorify Polish martyrdom and to forget about the Holocaust. It was also an element of the whole "anti-Zionist" campaign, which was at its most intensive in 1968, but started about two months after the unveiling of the Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau.

The first signals of the attack on the *encyclopaedists*, that is, the members of the editorial staff of the Great Universal Encyclopaedia (WEP) by the State Academic Publishing House (PWN), were already evident in June 1967.[186] Veterans associated with the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD) discussed the article titled "Hitlerite concentration camps" (*Obozy*

183 S. Krajewski, *Żydzi, Judaizm, Polska*, Warszawa 1997, p. 241.

184 See: S. Kapralski, *Oświęcim – miejsce wielu pamięci*, "Pro Memoria" 8 I 1998, p. 21.

185 T. Goban-Klas, *Pamięć podzielona, pamięć urażona: Oświęcim i Auschwitz*, [in:] *Europa po...*, p. 72.

186 It is important to note that the government's first attempts to deal with the State Academic Publishing House were between 1964 and 1965 and ended in the dismissal of the chief editor, Adam Bromberg. The "encyclopaedists' case, however, started only in 1967. See: J. Eisler, *Marzec 1968*, Warszawa 1991, p. 340-341.

koncentracyjne hitlerowskie), printed in Volume 8 in 1966. The authors of the article, in accordance with the facts and the new terminology used in the literature of the subject, made a reasonable distinction between concentration camps and extermination camps. In other words, they differentiated between camps where, despite murderous work and hopeless sanitation, there was some chance of survival and camps that were designed for industrial killing (e.g. Treblinka, Chełmno, Breslau, Belzec, Sobibór). The authors' main offence was that they dared to note that death camps were installed only on occupied Polish soil and that the number of their victims was approximately "5.7 million, including 99 % Jews, app. 1% Gypsies and others."[187]

This article had been discussed by the veterans from ZBoWiD since June 1967 and the members of PWN editorial staff were accused of depreciating Polish martyrdom and of pro-Israel sympathies, which, after the Six-Day War, corresponded with the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland.[188] However, the accusation that initiated the campaign against the *encyclopaedists* was formed by the Ministry of the Interior and the head of the department, Mieczysław Moczar, who may be regarded as its 'godfather'. Members of the communist party allied to Moczar constituted a faction called 'partisans'. Most of the 'partisans' were veterans of the Communist anti-Nazi underground and they shared a love of military traditions. Their outlook was a type of nationalism expressed by the language of the communist doctrine. It included anti-Semitism, dislike of everything that was not Polish and an aversion towards any manifestations of cultural liberalisation.

The position of Mieczysław Moczar was not only the result of his control over the Ministry of the Interior, but also over institutions responsible for the public memory of the war: the aforementioned ZBoWiD, which he headed, the International Auschwitz Committee and the Central Commission for Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. All of these institutions were dominated by people devoted to Moczar.[189] Moczar presented himself as a war hero. Hundreds of thousands of copies of his autobiographic book, "Barwy walki" ("Colours of Combat"), in which he described his war experience, were published in the 1960s. It was obligatory reading for high school students; it has also been trans-

187 The article: "obozy koncentracyjne hitlerowskie" [in:] *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna*, Warszawa 1966, t. 8, p. 87-89. See: także P. Skwieciński, *Encyklopedyści '68*, "Res Publica" 1999, no 1, p. 78.

188 See: P. Skwieciński, op. cit., p. 77; P. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6-7 III 1998, p. 30.

189 See: K. Lesiakowski, *Mieczysław Moczar "Mietek". Biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 1998.

lated into several languages and made into a film.[190] Without going into details of the phenomena of the popularity of Mieczysław Moczar and his *partisans*, it is enough to say that their environment felt predestined to fulfil the role of the guards of the official memory of World War II. This memory was based on martyred and heroic motifs and presented Poles as the nation that endured the greatest pain, suffered the greatest number of deaths and displayed the greatest bravery. *Partisans* were determined to defend such an image and not to let anyone belittle or defame it.

Coming back to the *encyclopaedists* case: on July 17, 1967, the Ministry of the Interior sent an "Information about the mistakes found in the Great Universal Encyclopaedia" to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party and the Ministry of Justice. In their letter, the Ministry noted that "the content of the article is similar to the propagandist reasoning of Zionist groups and Western nationalists." They also made charges relating to the prevailing historiography, which had allegedly researched the murders of Jews rather than Poles.[191] Most importantly, the editorial board members were accused of the "unjustified" distinction between concentration camps and extermination camps and of giving the figure of 5.7 million Jews killed in the latter (99% of all the deceased). Secondly, the article lacked the figures for Poles who had died or been murdered in camps, which allegedly implied that only Jews had died in German camps. Thirdly, the editors were accused of providing the information that all death camps had been located "on Polish soil", thus accusing Poles of complicity in the Holocaust.[192]

In other words, as Marcin Zaremba rightly observed, "the authors' crime was to question the stereotype" that Poles had suffered the most during the war, they were the "Christ of Nations" and they should yield their victory palm of martyrdom."[193]

By violating one of the fundaments of national Messianism and unconsciously getting involved in rivalry for the precedence in suffering, the editors of the Great Universal Encyclopaedia exposed themselves to the negative response of the authorities. At the end of July 1967, a special commission of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party was appointed. Its task was to explain the crime committed by the PWN editors. A separate investigation was

190 See: M. Moczar, *Barwy walki*, Warszawa 1961; Film adaptation with the same title, directed by Jerzy Passendorfer, had its premiere in 1964.

191 Citation after: P. Osęka, M. Zaremba, *Wojna po wojnie, czyli polskie reperkusje wojny sześciodniowej*, [in:] *Polska 1944/45-1989. Studia i materiały*, Warszawa 1999, p. 231.

192 See: P. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści...*, p. 30.

193 M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2001, p. 332.

also conducted by the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw and the "party group of the V Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" carefully analysed the content of the VIII volume of the encyclopaedia.[194] At the same time, the press started a campaign against the *encyclopaedists*, initiated by Władysław Machejk's article *Smutno mi Boże...* (*I'm sad, God:* the title of a famous Polish poem by Juliusz Słowacki) in the weekly publication, "Życie Literackie".[195]

The commission finished their investigation in mid-October 1967. As a result of their decision, Leon Marszałek, the chief editor of the Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries Team, was officially reprimanded, but none of the employees were dismissed.[196] The commission was satisfied with highlighting "the lack of political sensitivity of the editorial board" and recommending the creation of a proper supplement to the VIII volume that would correct the existing "distortions". Considering the intensity of the campaign launched against the *encyclopaedists* and the circumstances of the case, it was an "extraordinarily gentle move", Piotr Osęka comments.[197] This move, however, was also only temporary. In 1968, on the crest of the wave of the anti-Semitic campaign, the case of the *encyclopaedists* was reopened. This time the investigation was pursued under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and its task was to "examine the entire situation regarding the personnel of the State Academic Publishing House (PWN).[198] The press campaign against the *encyclopaedists* was initiated by Tadeusz Kur in "Prawo i Życie" weekly.[199]

Alongside the work of the commission and the accusatory press articles, all the prior charges against the editorial board were repeated and the list was even extended. Their common denominator was that the editors devoted too much space to Jewish martyrdom and Jews in general and too little to Poles and their suffering. The responsibility for this matter was attributed to the Jews employed by PWN, whose names were revealed with alacrity. In this way, the authorities found a way to deal with the ideological enemies they had been trying to seize for some time.[200]

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194 Citation afterP. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści....*, p. 31.

195 See: W. Machejek, *Smutno mi Boże...*, "Życie Literackie" 6 VIII 1967, p. 16.

196 P. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści...*, op. cit., p. 31.

197 Ibidem.

198 P. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści...*, p. 32.

199 See: T. Kur [Witold Jerzmanowski], *Encyklopedyści*, "Prawo i Życie" 24 III 1968, p. 1,3; Citation after P. Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968*, Warszawa 1999, p. 174.

200 See: D. Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968*, Warszawa 2000 p. 63-64. See: P. Osęka, M. Zaremba, op. cit., p. 231-232.

As a consequence, on 6 April 1968, the Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries Team made an official statement, which in fact was a self-criticism and an admission of their error. The very same day, the Fundamental Party Organisation of PWN also adopted a self-critical resolution and applied to dissolve the editorial team of the Great Universal Encyclopaedia, which indeed took place two days later. In addition, the ministerial commission dismissed 37 PWN employees.[201]

In the name of atonement for the crime, the new editorial staff of the State Academic Publishing House prepared a special supplement attached to the XI volume. Subscribers were advised to insert it in place of the controversial article “"Hitlerite concentration camps" published in the VIII volume. The editorial note in the supplement stated that in the previous article “the image of the martyrdom of the Polish nation and Polish citizens of different nationality was distorted” and that “the proportion of the losses (...) in Polish society during the World War II was the greatest in comparison to other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition.” The corrected article did not include the distinction between concentration camps and death camps. Instead, it informed that “H. C. [Hitlerite camps: author’s note] served to implement the programme of biol. [biological: author’s note] extermination of the Polish nation (...) they were also a tool of the planned extermination of Jewish people.”[202] Therefore, according to this logic, all these camps were first of all intended to murder Poles, and only afterwards “also” Jews” and other nationalities.

The case of *encyclopaedists* is a striking example of one of the struggles in the Polish-Jewish rivalry for the precedence in suffering – which in fact was not a real rivalry because after the Holocaust there was no one left in Poland to compete with. Therefore, this case demonstrates how the memory of the Holocaust was eliminated and how it was erased from the pages of Polish history. The campaign against the *encyclopaedists* was also an element of the spectrum of events that are usually referred to as ‘March 1968’, and the accusations against the *encyclopaedists* corresponded with the whole idea of ‘March talk’.[203]

201 See: P. Skwieciński, op. cit., p. 83; P. Osęka, *Encyklopedyści...*, p. 32.

202 Citation afterJ. R. Krzyżanowski, op. cit., p. 194.

203 This phrase has been borrowed from Michał Głowiński’s book. See: M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie. Komentarze do słów 1966-1871*, Warszawa 1991.

5. March exorcisms on the Holocaust

There is no single answer to the question of what March '68 was. The events under this name may or even must be analysed on different levels.[204] After 1956, March was another conflict over power within the communist party and a confrontation between government and society. To quote Adam Michnik: "There were two main scenes of March 1968. One may say: like in Homer's literature, in which the conflict of Gods was intertwined with the human war, the March conflict within the power apparatus intertwined with people's fight for freedom."[205]

Thus, March events involved Mieczysław Moczar, "partisans" and their adherents, as well as the students' rebellion at the Warsaw University. They also involved an attempt of the government to establish contact with the general populace. The prevailing language of the communist doctrine was abandoned in favour of a language that spoke more to people's needs and, most of all, was full of emotions and resentments, with anti-Semitism at the top. It referred to the "national-undemocratic heritage", Aleksander Smolar wrote, e.g. to the tradition of the National Radical Camp which Adam Michnik clearly suggested.

March '68 was a far-flung attempt to invite the general populace to the game. Never before had the government approached the people so directly and with such a flourish, using all available media. The image of the enemy, which emerged from the intensive propagandist campaign, included: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Cardinal Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński, the Komandosi group ("The Commandos": a famous group of students from the anti-Communist opposition), West Germany, and, most of all, Jews.[206] March was a public eruption of state anti-Semitism and an anti-Semitic campaign which, in postwar Europe, were nowhere else to be found on such a scale. Considering its rhetoric and actions, the campaign was a reflection of two seemingly opposing traditions, or perhaps their peculiar hybrid: the tradition of anti-Semitic nationalism and the heritage of the Stalinist campaigns of hate. The March campaign adopted the anti-Semitic clichés and slogans of the interwar period ("the key to the national heritage of anti-Jewish prejudice"[207]) while previous communist campaigns provided not only mottos, catchwords

204 For more on the events named March 1968, see: L. Cooper, *In the Shadow of Polish Eagle. The Poles, the Holocaust and Beyond*, Palgrave New York 2000, p. 206-224.

205 A. Michnik, *Sakrament byka*, "Krytyka. Kwartalnik Polityczny" 1988, no 28-29, p. 24-25.

206 See: M. Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku*, Warszawa 1990, p. 63-68.

207 This phrase was used by Dariusz Stola. See: D. Stola, op. cit., p. 148.

and "enemy models" but also ready-made patterns of conduct for individuals and institutions.[208].

Clearly, the anti-Semitic campaign, as well as other events termed 'March '68', were not limited to one month or even one year. The symbolism and conventionality of the term seem obvious. March was a culmination of the prevailing tendencies and processes and its consequences were perceptible for years. In other words, it was rooted in the past and influenced the future. It is important to consider it in the context of the anti-Semitic campaign, which did intensify in the spring of 1968, but had already started in 1967 after the Six-Day War, which was won by Israel. In addition, March '68 had not been the first time that the government openly used anti-Semitic rhetoric. It had already happened in 1956 during the crisis in the Polish United Workers' Party.[209] However, while Jews were then accused of having co-created and supported the system in its Stalinist version, in 1968 they were accused of contesting it.

If we attempted to generalise and compare these two cases of an instrumental use of anti-Semitism, we may come to conclusion that they both took place in moments of political crisis.

During the anti-Semitic campaign, symbolically inaugurated by Władysław Gomułka's speech of 1967, when he said his famous words about a "fifth column" operating in Poland, no one openly said anything about who was this campaign's target.[210] The sad and obvious truth was camouflaged by speaking of "Zionists". There is no doubt, however, that in fact it was about Jews and those who were recognised as Jews by the government. This semantic manipulation was a protective shield against accusations of anti-Semitism, which did not fit the idea of internationalism. The concealment was however superficial enough to be comprehensible. Even if the meaning of the word "Zionism" and "Zionist" was not known for all Poles, which the famous transparent "Zionist to Siam!" [in Polish, two words are homonyms] clearly demonstrated, the majority must have intuitively guessed that "Zionist" in fact meant "Jew". It was a very comfortable substitution: "everyone knew what and who it was about but nothing was called by its real name."[211]

As has been already said, the main forum of the anti-Semitic campaign organised under the auspices of the state was the press, and its main weapons were words.

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208 See: D. Stola, op. cit., p. 148-149; J. Jedlicki, *Organizowanie nienawiści...*, p. 64-65.

209 See: P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, p. 216-234.

210 See: D. Stola, op. cit., p. 40-41.

211 J. Jedlicki, *Organizowanie nienawiści*, [in:] *Źle urodzeni czyli o doświadczeniu historycznym. Scripta i postscripta,* Londyn – Warszawa 1993, p. 62.

Thus, Dariusz Stola's words were not unjustified when he described the "anti-Semitic trend of March 1968" by "a symbolic or verbal pogrom", whose culmination was not "bloody terror, but mental terror, not a wave of arrests and deportations to Siberia, but a wave of layoffs and emigrations."[212] Jerzy Jedlicki also draws attention to this fact, and the observations of both scholars are confirmed by the content of the press articles of the time. They are confirmed by the anti-Semitic speeches during many rallies, organised at workplaces, but not only there. They are confirmed by purges of the army and layoffs on the basis of criteria derived from the Nuremberg Laws.[213] Finally, they are confirmed by the last wave of Jewish emigration from Poland.[214] Victims of March talked about this "bloodless pogrom" and the dilemmas that accompanied them in interviews and memoirs many years later,[215] naming them, not without a reason, "a March shock".[216]

An attempt to provide a comprehensive description of all the elements of this "anti-Zionist" but in fact anti-Semitic campaign in Poland between 1967 and 1968 would require a great deal more time and space than we have at our disposal. Even the analysis of the press, anti-Zionist rhetoric and the panorama of roles attached to Jews in the March scenario is a separate topic. For the purpose of this book, there is no need for a detailed reconstruction of the "anti-Zionist campaign". Instead, attention should be paid to the elements of the campaign that significantly concerned Polish memory of the Holocaust. [217]

As Michael Steinlauf rightly observed, the last years of the 1960s, that is, the period of the anti-Semitic campaign, may be viewed as "an attempted exorcism of the worst demons of Polish national memory."[218] Similarly to other scholars, Steinlauf states that the campaign "referred to the suppressed guilt which had been festering in the Polish subconscious."[219] The guilt and discomfort was related to the attitude of Poles towards the Holocaust.

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212 D. Stola, op. cit., p. 149-150.

213 See: T. Pióro, *Czystki w Wojsku Polskim 1967-1968*, Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego 1997, no 2, p. 59-76.

214 According to various data, the anti-Semitic campaign resulted in 12,000 to 20,000 Polish Jews leaving Poland.

215 See: J. Wiszniewicz, *Z Polski do Izraela. Rozmowy z pokoleniem '68*, Warszawa 1992; J. Wiszniewicz, *Życie przecięte. Opowieści pokolenia Marca*, Wołowiec 2008; A. Mieszczanek (Ed.), *Krajobraz po szoku*, Warszawa 1989.

216 See: P. Śpiewak (Ed.), *Szok marcowy: przegląd prasy*, Warszawa 1998.

217 See: J. Leociak, *Instrumentalizacja Zagłady w dyskursie marcowym*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2008, no 4, p. 447-458.

218 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage*…, p. 88.

219 M. Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona...*, p. 104-105.

As has been already mentioned, March rhetoric was an attempt to establish contact with the general populace. It is easy to notice that one of the methods employed to this end was to refer to the memory of the occupation. This memory, rooted in the heroic-martyred mythology of the oppressed nation, had been the key element of building national identity, and referring to it was nothing new. Before 1968, however, the topic of Jews and their war experience had been silenced. Jews, the Holocaust, and, in particular, Polish attitudes to the Holocaust, had been a taboo, one that belonged to the sphere of embarrassment and silence. Perhaps March '68 was a possibility to deal with the subject and to fill the silence gap. As Michał Głowiński noted, it was an attempt to "find a language to lie about it rather than to speak."[220] Instead of truth and historical facts about the Holocaust, the discourse of March '68 presented an official, narrative palimpsest, which had therapeutic power and the ability to anaesthetise the difficult past. Referring to Krystyna Kersten's words, one may say that this "construct", made of half-truths, was "intended to replace the truth of the reality that was too difficult to face."[221] This construct could bring relief to anyone whose subconscious was nagged by discomfort related to their role as a passive bystander, beneficiary or sometimes even accomplice of the Holocaust. It did not, however, disturb the martyred and heroic memory of the war. On the contrary, it even made such thinking more reasonable.

The most important news delivered by the March orators was the conspiracy against Poland and the Polish nation, the aim of which was to assign responsibility for the Holocaust to Poles and to label them as a nation contaminated with organic anti-Semitism. The conspiracy was allegedly organised by "Zionists", that is, Jews – Polish citizens, Israeli Jews and the Jewish diaspora in the world – and West Germany; in other words: by the victims and the executioners. This elementary plot of the March narrative was developed by dignitaries from the communist party, by writers, and, in particular, by journalists.[222]

In his speech of 1 May, Władysław Gomułka referred to a "dirty, anti-Polish, Zionist campaign."[223] The goal of this campaign was specified by Tadeusz Walichnowski, one of the leading mentors of March '68, whose book was titled "Izrael a NRF" ["Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany"] and became a real bestseller: in one and a half years, five Polish editions and eight foreign translations were published.[224] In his book, Walichnowski reported that

220 M. Głowiński, *Pismak 1863 i inne szkice o różnych brzydkich rzeczach*, Warszawa 1995, p. 64.

221 K. Kersten, op. cit., p. 150.

222 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage*…, p.85.

223 Citation afterM. Głowiński, *Pismak 1863...*, p. 67.

224 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage*…, p.85

"The aim of the Zionist campaign is to draw the world's attention away from the Nazi crimes against Jews by making the Polish nation co-responsible for these crimes."[225]

Walichnowski's thought was popularised by the press, who published information about a campaign of slander against Poland, the goal of which was to make Poles co-responsible for the Jewish tortures and to thus to unburden West Germany from their responsibility for the Holocaust. This theory was supposedly confirmed by publications and cited statements from the Western press as well as some literary works, such as Jerzy Kosinski's *Painted Bird*, Leon Uris' *Exodus* and *Mila 18* or Jean Francois Steiner's *Treblinka*. According to people referring to these publications, all of them assigned at least approval and passivity (if not complicity) towards the Holocaust to Poles and accused them of anti-Semitism.[226] They thus confirmed the conspiracy theory.

According to the discourse of March '68, the conspiracy against Poland was organised by Jews ("Zionists") and West German "revanchists", or simply Israel and West Germany. Therefore, it was seen as an unprecedented alliance of the victims and executioners from which both sides would benefit. Germans were believed to have Jewish support in diluting their crimes and responsibility for the Holocaust while Jews supposedly hoped to receive high war reparations. This theory was additionally supported by the stereotype of Jewish conspiracy, disseminated by "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion". What also made it seem more reliable was the memory of World War II and the axiom about German hostility towards Poland, repeated by propaganda for years. What made this situation different was that two enemies of the Polish nation had allegedly decided to join forces to Poland's detriment.

In addition, some events from the past were seen as verification of the alliance of Jews and Germans and provided the answer to the question: how long did this "breeding season"[227] last? In particular, World War II was seen as proof of the Jewish-German collaboration. The press mentioned the complicity in the Holocaust of the *Judenräte* and the Jewish police in ghettos. In other words, the press suggested that Jews had contributed to the extermination of their own nation and that present events only proved and updated this theory. The extreme version of the collaboration theory suggested a correlation between the Jews and the Nazis. In one of his radio speeches, Kazimierz Rusinek, the Deputy Minister

225 T. Walichnowski, *Izrael a NOF*, Warszawa 1968, p. 165.

226 See: P. Lendvai, *Ant-Semitism without Jews*, Doubleday 1971, p.187; See: także T. Walichnowski, *Izrael a NOF...*, p. 164-193.

227 This term was used by W. Machejek in his article titled: *Izrael a NOF* published in "Życie Literackie" (11 II 1968). Citation after M. Głowiński, *Pismak 1863...*, p. 84.

of Culture at the time and an activist of ZBOWiD, said: "it is no secret that many Hitlerite criminals are in the service of the Israel army".[228] Piotr Goszczyński, a "Głos Robotniczy" journalist, noted that the Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, was in fact Otto Skorzenny, "the well known specialist in murder from Uncle Adolf's SS".[229] A "Kultura" journalist suggested that Yael Dajan, Mosze Dajan's daughter (and a famous writer) resembled "the notorious Ilse Koch", a "Nazi war criminal, who had lampshades made of the skin of murdered Jews.[230]

The Six-Day War was another event that supposedly confirmed the alliance of victims and executioners and the affinity between Jews and Germans. The context of the war was used to point out the analogies between the "Zionists" and the Nazis. Thus, the press reported that both Nazi Germany and Israel were carrying out imperial policy. Israel, like Germany before, introduced racial criteria and did not avoid openly discriminatory practices in its domestic policy[231]; it was also the oppressor and aggressor against the Palestinian and Arab nations. These similarities were deliberately suggested by the press, who portrayed the Six-Day War as a "Blitzkrieg", the Israeli army as occupiers, and the Jewish-German pact as the "Bonn – Tel-Aviv Axis"."[232]

Therefore, the press deliberately used very specific language, which Poles automatically associated with the period of the Nazi occupation. As a result, the image of Israelis was to "overlap with the image of the Nazis" or even "both images [should] be considered the same".[233] Sometimes, the Israeli army was openly called "Nazis" and accused of genocide.

Moshe Dayan became the embodiment of all evil. Dayan was compared to Adolf Hitler, and the Israeli army he led was called "Dayan's cohorts."[234] The World Zionist Congress was described as more nationalist and racist than the Nazi Party, proud of the Nuremberg laws.[235] The fact that the Israeli army had been trained by German experts and was supposed to be the evidence of the collaboration between the two nations. March orators warned against this alliance of "two militarisms" as particularly dangerous for Poland.[236]

228 P. Lendvai, op. cit. p. 149.
229 Ibidem, p. 59.
230 Ibidem, p.159.
231 Ibidem, p.187-194.
232 See: M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 29, 152.
233 See: M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 105.
234 See: M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 17, 20, 102, 152,
235 Citation after P. Lendvai, op. cit., p. 167.
236 Citation after M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 158.

All the events and discourse from the March plot were doubtlessly intended to demonstrate the affinity and closeness between Jews and Germans or the "German-Jewish fraternity."[237] One should not forget, however, that the prime purpose of this Jewish-German alliance was to pin the co-responsibility for the Holocaust on Poles and stigmatise them as eternal anti-Semites. Thus, the goal of the alleged conspiracy against Poland was to disseminate a version of World War II history in which Poles contributed significantly to the Holocaust and are anti-Semites. In other words, this aim of the conspiracy (or, "the Zionist anti-Polish high jinks"[238]), that is, the imagined coalition of victims and oppressors, was the main element of the structure of the March plot. It was against this campaign that the Polish United Workers' Party came out and defended the good name of the nation from the calumnies to which it was subjected. By identifying "Zionism" with anti-communism and, most of all, anti-Polonism, dignitaries and propagandists ostentatiously manifested themselves as the defenders of the nation.[239]

Obviously, the defence was mostly organised by the attack against "Zionists" (Jews) and all those who were intended to be socially perceived as their allies. It was a campaign of hateful words, but also openly anti-Semitic deeds, presented as a justified defence. The more eagerly the vilified nation was defended, the more accusations were levelled at Jews and the more sophisticated they became; the more decisive the actions and the more credible the conspiracy. One can see here the classic echo effect: the more aggressive and evident the official Polish anti-Semitism, the more was written and said about it abroad. And if more was written and said about it, the conspiracy theory about the anti-Semitic label attached to Poles was confirmed and strengthened.

Only the proponents of the conspiracy theory benefitted from this vicious circle because their elucubrations only gained credibility. It is enough to say that Paweł Jasienica's speech, apparently giving credence to the anti-Polish conspiracy and warning against the consequences of the "world's belief that we are a nation of anti-Semites" was greeted with a long ovation during the general assembly of the Warsaw department of the Union of Polish Writers.[240]

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237 See: M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 225-226.

238 M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie...*, p. 107.

239 In his analysis of the influence of national ideology on political reality in communist Poland, Krzysztof Tyszka noted that in March there were attempts to prove that Zionism "combines anti-communism, anti-Sovietism and anti-Polonism." Hence, the communist party became "the force which defended the good name of Poland, the only truly national and patriotic organisation". See: K. Tyszka, *Nacjonalizm w komunizmie. Ideologia narodowa w Związku Radzieckim i Polsce Ludowej*, Warszawa 2004, p. 156.

240 See: K. A. Jeleński, *"Hańba" czy wstyd?*, "Kultura" 1968, no 5, p. 12.

In order to refute the accusations of anti-Semitism, passivity and complicity in the Holocaust made against Poles and Poland, the scheme for talking about the Holocaust was ultimately specified in March. This contra-narrative, developed for some time, probably met the social need.

Many discourse elements were repeated, but the problem of the Holocaust and Polish society's attitudes towards the Holocaust were exposed for the first time. The content of the "March talk" on this subject was a form of polemic against the accusations made by the alleged anti-Polish conspirators. The pattern of this polemic was quite banal: the blame supposedly assigned to Poles was *a rebours* shifted to Jews.

The answer to the accusation of Poles for their complicity in the Holocaust was thus accusing Jews for the collaboration with their torturers. This was the aim of the press stories about the collaboration of the *Judenräte* and Jewish police with the Nazis in ghettos. Ryszard Gontarz, and not only him, wrote about it in "Walka Młodych" weekly.[241]

The answer to the accusation of Poles for their passivity was the argument of Jewish passivity. It was highlighted that Jews had humbly and passively let themselves be labelled with the Stars of David, closed in ghettos and sent to gas chambers.

Reversing the accusations did not end the campaign. Passive Jews, collaborating with the Nazis, were contrasted with heroic Poles, who never collaborated and resisted the occupiers from the beginning of the war until its end. The Righteous Among the Nations, hardly ever publicly mentioned until then, were brought back from silence.[242] Paradoxically, Alina Cała noted, due to the supporters of Moczar, who had the lead in belittling and playing down Jewish suffering during the war, the silence around the Righteous broke. The Righteous turned out to be useful as a "fig leaf" for the anti-Semitic propaganda.[243] The press (but not only) provided evidence of their heroism and sacrifice in saving persecuted Jews.

Reading March press, one could get an impression that the undoubtedly heroic attitudes actually involved the majority of Polish society under the Nazi occupation, and was, if anything, a norm of conduct. What can indirectly confirm this impression is the fact that with time and a certain amount of ink, the number of Jews saved by Poles was increasing. The official statement of the board of the Union of Polish Writers titled "To the Writers of the World" is direct evidence

241 See: szerzej na ten temat M. Głowiński, *Pismak 1863...*, p. 73 – 76.

242 See: A. Cała, *Sprawiedliwi wśród Narodów Świata. Trudne ratowanie i gorycz*, "Midrasz" 2007, no 1, p. 9-13.

243 See: A. Cała, *Sprawiedliwi wśród...*, p. 11-12.

of this. The statement, prepared in 1968, reads: "Every Jew and Pole of Jewish origin who was in danger during the war could find a helping hand, support and a hiding place in tens of thousands of Poles: intelligentsia, workers and peasants, which often required true heroism. In addition, the secret network 'Zegota' provided organised forms of help. This help was widespread."[244] Besides, the content of many articles inclined to conclude that apart from strict German restrictions which hindered the provision of help to Jews, Jews themselves hindered this process: *Judenräte* and the Jewish Gestapo.

From the perspective of the help given by Poles to Jews, the campaign of calumnies against the Polish nation seemed even more vile and unjust. There was even a kind of rhetorical figure in the public discourse, which can be described as the "Jewish ingratitude". The figure was used to suggest that instead of eternal gratitude and due respect, Jews repaid Poles with nothing but accusations of passivity, collaboration and anti-Semitism; they falsified the memory of the war together with Germans by making Poles its anti-heroes and anti-Semites. It has been already mentioned how the accusations of passivity and collaboration were refuted. However, it is worth mentioning how the accusations of anti-Semitism were handled.

Similar to other charges, the accusation of anti-Semitism was refuted by accusing "Zionists" of anti-Polonism, allegedly demonstrated by the "anti-Semite" label assigned to Poles, which was ruining their image in the world outside Poland. This was relatively easy to prove during the anti-Semitic campaign: it was enough to quote the Western press, which openly reported on what was happening in Poland at the time. There were desperate attempts to identify the word "Zionism" with some anti-Polish forces or ideology, disregarding its real meaning. One of the observers of the March campaign commented that reading what had been written in Polish about this anti-Polish plot, one could conclude that Zionism "did not arise in order to create a national home for Jews in Palestine – as it is officially stated – but in order to fight against Poland and the Poles."[245]

In this way, to quote Michał Głowiński once more, the plot and the language was found to lie rather than speak of the Holocaust. The topic of the Holocaust was not treated honestly. Most importantly, the truth about the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust was not faced. Nonetheless, it was during the March campaign when the most sensitive topics for Poles were actually raised, even if it was by means of lies and half-truths, and suppressing discomfort and guilt.

244 "Życie Warszawy" 11 IV 1968. Citation after J. Leociak, *Instrumentalizacja*..., p. 454.
245 Citation after P. Lendvai, op. cit., p.167.

The problem of *szmalcowniks* and denunciators was discounted by accusing Jews of collaboration with the Nazis.[246] The problem of the passivity of the majority of Polish society towards the Holocaust was replaced and partly justified by the passivity of the Holocaust victims. Furthermore, passive Jews were contrasted with fighting Poles, particularly the heroic Polish Righteous. The problem of anti-Semitism was suppressed and replaced with the accusation against "Zionists" (that is, Jews) of hostility towards Poland and Poles and of the conspiracy they had allegedly organised with Germany. The main objective of the conspiracy, let us remind ourselves, was to label Poles as anti-Semites and to exonerate Germans of the murder of the Jews and pin the blame for it on Poles. This could clearly undermine the martyred vision of the war years and pose a threat to the national identity based, to a large extent, on brooding over Polish heroism and suffering.

Therefore, as Michael Steinlauf rightly observed, the March campaign resulted in quite a peculiar situation: "The Holocaust" – Steinlauf writes – "has been transformed affectively into a German-Jewish conspiracy against Poles. In this extraordinary reversal, we recognise the unacceptable, unmasterable substratum of guilt connected to Polish witnessing of the Holocaust. This was an anguish most powerfully rooted precisely in those who had come of age during the war years, whose identity was directly shaped by them. Festering for twenty years, repressed psychologically in the individual psyche and politically in the public arena, this anguish was now channelled by Moczar and his followers into a system of belief that denied the facts but not feelings."[247]

One should now ask the question: to what extent was this system of lies and half-truths, loudly articulated in the March campaign, socially accepted? Unfortunately, there is no clear answer, for there has been no relevant research of the social consciousness. There is also no answer to the question about the level of support amongst the general populace for the whole anti-Semitic campaign which started in 1967, and a year later, at its apogee, led to the forced emigration of at least several thousand Jews, Polish citizens, from Poland.

While according to some scholars, the anti-Semitic campaign was a "boorish agreement" between the government and the general populace, reached behind

246 This paradoxical situation was described by Alix Landgrebe, who wrote: "While collaboration with the Nazis was never discussed as a POLISH problem, the Jews themselves were being accused of "collaboration" with Poland's enemies. Poles were thus being turned into victims of the Jews." A. Landgrebe, *Polish National Identity and Deformed Memory from 1945 to the Present: Mythologizing the Polish Role in the Holocaust*, RFE/RL East European Perspectives 2004, no. 6, p. 3.

247 M. Steinlauf, op.cit, p. 85-86.

the backs of Jews; others claim it had little social support.[248] Sociological studies measuring the attitude of Poles towards different nations, conducted for the first time in Poland in 1966 by Jerzy Szacki and his team, demonstrated that 75% of respondents declared their dislike of Jews.[249] Clearly, it would be a misinterpretation to assume that because of their concurrence with the anti-Semitic campaign, the research findings were a reliable indicator of its public support. However, according to Alina Cała, they can explain why the actions undertaken under the auspices of the state and the publically spoken words that accompanied those actions did not spark any widespread protest beyond the intelligentsia circles.[250] State violence and repressions do not explain everything, considering that on other occasions people would overcome fear and go out to the streets to protest. Nothing similar happened, although some magazines, such as "Polityka", refused to participate in this anti-Semitic campaign, and some Polish intellectuals condemned it. The majority, however, were passive and silent spectators, and today it is difficult to judge their attitude.

It is worth returning to the question of Polish society's acceptance of the way the Holocaust, and Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust, were presented in the March campaign. Perhaps Michael Steinlauf was right to note that even if the "system of belief" of the March campaign "denied facts", it did not deny feelings and thus was widely accepted.[251] Even if the March discourse included historical untruth, it helped to alleviate and forget the difficult past and provide explanations, excuses and rationalisations for the truths that were uncomfortable for public opinion. It was reassuring to hear about Jewish passivity if one's own passivity was troubling.[252] It was reassuring to hear about the *Judenräte* and Jewish police's collaboration with the Nazis if the problem of *szmalcowniks* was bothering and had been never been publically examined. It was reassuring to hear about Jewish anti-Polonism if the anti-Semitic heritage of the interwar period (not to mention the anti-Semitism during and after the war) had never been

248 See: *Szok Marcowy*, "Midrasz" 1998, no 3, p. 18.

249 See: J. Szacki, *Polacy o sobie i innych narodach*, Warszawa 1969 (unpublished typescript available in the Institute of Sociology of the Warsaw University). Citation after A. Cała, *Mniejszość żydowska*, [in:] *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresach przełomów politycznych (1944-1989)*, P. Madajczyk (red.), p. 286.

250 Ibidem. p. 286-287.

251 See: M. Steinlauf, op.cit, p. 85-86..

252 Alina Cała writes about the advantages of the stereotype of "passive Jews", demonstrating that it was comfortable for public opinion, as it soothed conscience and excused people from examining it. See: A. Cała, *Kształtowanie się polskiej i żydowskiej...*, p. 177.

falsified and also even employed by the Communist Party, who had revived it for their own use.

Each of these interpretations helped people to believe that Poles had no reason to reproach themselves and provided ready-made answers to possible accusations or troubling questions. These answers, by the way, have been used ever since during various debates on the Polish-Jewish past. They were given in March for the first time and were met with approval. The aforementioned psychological mechanism is not the only confirmation of that. The support for the struggle with accusations against the Polish attitudes to the Holocaust is also indirect evidence of this, evidence that the government received from independent actors: the Catholic Church, Znak MPs [an association of lay Catholics in Poland granted several seats in the Polish Parliament (Sejm)] and Polish emigration from the West.[253]

The support involved only one question, which can be considered meaningful. All these actors, however separately, defended Poles from the accusations against them, which collided with their own image and the image of the war, preserved in the collective memory. They also separately defended national identity based on this collective memory, thus blocking access to the truth about themselves and about the Holocaust. Even if there were indeed some publications or statements abroad that were unfavourable to Poland, it was not an anti-Polish attack. The attack was fabricated by the government, but they were not the only ones who needed it. The fight with the imagined enemy, or with the rhetoric attributed to it, was in fact the fight with the aching past. In particular, it was the first public attempt since the war to deal with the traumatic memory of the Holocaust: by falsification and making the past more bearable.

6. Alibi for Oblivion

While Jews and the Holocaust were a taboo subject long before March '68, after March the word "Jew" alone became almost unprintable. The only exception from the official and public rule of silence were official and public subsequent anniversaries of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, commemorated during the whole period of the People's Republic of Poland.[254] These commemorations, however,

253 See: J. Eisler, op. cit., p. 326-329; D. Stola, op. cit., p. 166.

254 See: B. Szaynok, *Konteksty polityczne obchodów powstania w Getcie Warszawskim w latach 40. i w pierwszej połowie lat 50.*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2004, no 2, p. 205-215; M. Shore, *Język, pamięć i rewolucyjna awangarda. Kształtowanie historii powstania w getcie warszawskim w latach 1944-1950*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1998, p. 44-66; M. Zaremba, *Zorganizowane zapominanie o Holokau-*

were in fact state-organised methods of forgetting about the Holocaust rather than cultivating the memory of it. The government held commemoration ceremonies every April. Their central place was The Jewish Ghetto Memorial, unveiled in 1948, where the highest officials and guests delivered their speeches. Commemorations were usually accompanied by solemn ceremonies and evening meetings. The press reported on all these projects and there were also thematic articles.[255]

Thus, commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising provided opportunities to speak about Jewish war martyrdom in public. Paradoxically, however, sometimes the subject was not mentioned and the "Jew" word did not even fall from the lips of the main speakers. The commemorations were rather a kind of "alibi for oblivion, for excluding the memory of the Holocaust from the pages of Polish history."[256] According to Krystyna Kersten and Jerzy Szapiro, they were also a method "of drawing the attention away from the significant presence of anti-Semitism in Poland".[257] In order to avoid accusations of anti-Semitism but at the same time to make it seem as though they cared about the history of Polish Jews, the authorities built Potemkin villages at every anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The theatricality of the anniversaries was unquestionable. Their content reflected current ideological tendencies and political trends. Important facts were neglected, desired facts were exposed and contexts were manipulated. The aim of all these solemn speeches, lectures and press articles was – Jacek Leosiak observed – to explain and clarify how the uprising should be understood and interpreted.[258] The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was a historical fact that was an excellent fit for propaganda use: it had been the first uprising against Germans in occupied Poland and the first urban uprising against them in occupied Europe.

ście w dekadzie Gierka: trwanie i zmiana, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2004, no 2, p. 216-224; M. Jazdon, *Ograniczony punkt widzenia – filmowy obraz powstania w Getcie Warszawskim*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2004, no 2, p. 225-232; J. Leociak, *Zraniona pamięć. (Rocznice powstania w getcie warszawskim w prasie polskiej 1944-1989)*, [in:] *Literatura polska wobec Zagłady*, A. Brodzka-Wald, D. Krawczyńska, J. Leociak (Ed.), Warszawa 2000, p. 29-51.

255 See: G. Berendt, *Obraz powstania w getcie warszawskim w prasie PZPR (1950-1970)*, "Midrasz" 2003, no 11 p. 30-37; J. Leociak, *Zraniona pamięć. (Rocznice powstania w getcie warszawskim w prasie polskiej 1944-1989)*, [in:] Literatura polska wobec Zagłady, A. Brodzka-Wald, D. Krawczyńska, J. Leociak (red.), Warszawa 2000, p. 29-51.

256 A. Cała, *Kształtowanie się polskiej...*, p. 176.

257 K. Kersten, J. Szapiro, *Konteksty współczesnych...*, p. 282.

258 J. Leociak, *Zraniona…*, p. 35.

At the beginning, the tendency was to depict the uprising not as specifically Jewish, but rather as Jewish communists joining Stalin's anti-fascist battlefront, supported by their friends from the *Gwardia Ludowa* [People's Guard] and the Polish People's Party. The living heroes of the uprising, such as Marek Edelman, Icchak Cukierman, and Cywia Lubetkin were not even mentioned, for they did not fit the political narrative of the event,[259] in which undesirable characters were eagerly described: Jewish bourgeoisie, collaborationist *Judenräte*, the treacherous Bund and the passive government in exile together with its Home Army. The positive heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto fought against "the bane of Fascism and Nazism", and for "the freedom and independence of the country,"[260] or for "human dignity", which became a ritually repeated cliché used to give universal meaning to the uprising and to internationalise it.[261]

Such was the image of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the public discourse before 1953, that is, until its 10th anniversary. After Stalin's death and the Polish Thaw, significant changes appeared in this discourse. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was absorbed into the other struggles and resistance acts that made the Polish nation famous during the World War II. The intensive process of the polonisation of the uprising had its apogee in 1968, although the first symptoms of these tendencies had already appeared much earlier. According to Marcin Zaremba, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was appropriated by the state and "thrown into one urn with one single inscription: 'Polish resistance movement'".[262] Thus, the anniversaries of the outbreak of the uprising served mostly to remind of and confirm Polish martyrdom and heroism.

The project of the 20th anniversary of the uprising, developed by four departments of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (PZPR), did not take the nationality of the insurgents into account and the word "Jew" was absent. Also, during the roll of the dead, the Jewish insurgents were passed over in silence. Instead, the speeches were devoted to the "sons and daughters of the Polish nation" who were engaged in the fight for the dignity and honour of our country."[263] Kazimierz Rusinek, one of the speakers, said: "The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was one of the links in the chain of suffering and struggle in which the

259 See: G. Berendt, *Obraz powstania w getcie warszawskim...*, p. 30-37; B. Szaynok, *Konteksty polityczne obchodów powstania...*, p. 205-215.

260 Citation after M. Shore, *Język, pamięć i rewolucyjna awangarda...*, p. 46.

261 About universalisation and internalisation of the meaning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, See: J. Leociak, *Zraniona…*, p. 35-38.

262 M. Zaremba, *Urząd zapomnienia*, "Polityka" 13 X 2001, p. 73.

263 Citation afterM. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm...*, p. 329.

Polish nation was involved since the loss of September 1939 to the victory of May 1945."[264]

Even when the Jewish insurgents were casually mentioned, it was in the context of help they received from the Polish resistance movement, particularly leftist. The magnitude of loss and suffering experienced by Poles during the war, as well as their heroism, were mentioned every time. These elements constituted the plot of all the official speeches and press articles related to the uprising anniversary, and resulted from propagandist tasks that, at the behest of the authorities, had to be fulfilled.

Other topics were also raised during the commemorations. The content of speeches, lectures and articles reflected current ideological tendencies, and was determined by them. For instance, speakers for years warned against West German militarism, which had already once led to war and was allegedly returning. On the 25th anniversary, "Zionists" (thus Jews) were decried, which was quite paradoxical. The anniversary fell at the time of the "anti-Zionist" campaign in Poland, which was reflected in the commemorations. The speakers did not fail to mention Jewish collaboration with the occupiers, treacherous *Judenräte,* the "criminal indifference" of the current leaders of Israel and the Polish aid to the Jewish insurgents. As proclaimed in the publication about the Warsaw Ghetto printed on this occasion, this aid was provided first of all by the Polish Workers' Party and the People's Guard, and personally by Władysław Gomułka, Franciszek Jóźwiak, Marian Spychalski, Zenon Kliszko and others (the Home Army was also recognised, for it had been gradually rehabilitated for some time).[265] Thus, the laurel wreath of the Warsaw Ghetto heroes went to the heroes of the Warsaw firmament of power. Five years later, on the 30th anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising, there were speeches about the passivity "of international Jewish financiers towards the martyrdom of Jewish people." The accusation of silence and indifference was also applied to the Vatican.[266]

None of the interpretations spoke the truth about the first urban uprising against the Nazis in occupied Poland and Europe, i.e. the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Its true picture was falsified, universalised (denying its specific character) and, most of all, polonised. There was silence about the real heroes and the direct link between the uprising and the Holocaust. The uprising was presented as an event that had no connection to the Holocaust.

From the government's perspective, such an approach was comfortable and useful. By emphasising the Polish context and character of the uprising, the

264 Citation after J. Leociak, *Zraniona pamięć*..., p. 40.

265 See: W. Poterański, *Warszawskie Getto*, Warszawa 1968, p. 11, 30-42, 60-63.

266 Citation after M. Zaremba, *Zorganizowane zapominanie*..., p. 221.

Communist Party hoped to be perceived as Polish and familiar. This goal could be achieved, for instance, by eliminating the stereotype that the government was composed of Jews, which, to some extent, was present in the social consciousness. Facing Jewish martyrdom could only strengthen this stereotype. Moreover, the narrative pattern of speaking about the uprising, which had been elaborated and implemented for years, had yet another important advantage. It did not deprive Poles of their palm of victory in suffering or question the uniqueness of their heroism. Poles were still first in the "suffering competition."[267] It wasn't only party dignitaries and the government who liked this fact. The polonisation of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was used by the authorities to establish contact with the nation by commemorating national martyrdom and strengthening the national belief of the immensity of their own suffering. In other words, it served to consolidate the essentials of how Poles thought of themselves and the elements constituting the national stereotype.

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Summing up the considerations about forgetting the Holocaust within official and common memory, one should say that the memory of Jews and their war martyrdom had been long obliterated, on different levels and with the use of diverse methods. For decades, the topic had been covered with silence, lies or some convenient compilation of both. Doubtlessly, the exception was the initial postwar years, when a lot was written and spoken about the Holocaust, and, thanks to the courage of some Polish intellectuals, sensitive questions were publically articulated. Afterwards, even if the problem of Jewish martyrdom during the war was raised, it always followed the binding discursive pattern.

This pattern was based on reinterpretations, lies and concealments. It was present in historical and academic literature, in fiction and also in school textbooks, in which the topic of the Holocaust was hardly discussed or even completely disregarded. It also applied to the policy of memory about the extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau and to the commemorations of the anniversaries of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Developed long before March '68, it was then that it reached its mature form and the capacity of reinterpreting the whole, complex war reality. Although Mieczysław Moczar's influence weakened shortly after March and the ruling party changed, the official version of Polish history remained intact for a long time. Clearly, there were glorious exceptions to this pattern: in particular, Polish literature about the Holocaust, which has had pride of place ever since. Yet these were only exceptions.

267 Marcin Zaremba draws attention to this fact. See: M. Zaremba, *Urząd zapomnienia...*, p. 73.

According to this pattern, the Jewish history of the Nazi occupation was absorbed into Polish history, Jewish victims became Polish victims and even the word "extermination" was used to describe what happened to Poles during the war and strengthen the narrative of Polish martyrdom, which was permanently in the centre of interest. If the war experience of Jews was no different from Polish martyrdom, should the term "extermination" not describe the latter? Since the "encyclopaedist" case it had also been known that the extermination camps had been installed by the Nazis mainly for Poles. The Holocaust, as an unprecedented and specifically Jewish experience, was not included in the scheme. Obviously, neither were the sensitive subjects of the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust. The national conspiracy of silence lasted for decades. Only the passivity of the Jews and their collaboration with the Nazis were noted, according to the ready-made March patterns.

Let us now come back to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter. To what extent did this official forgetting about the Holocaust correspond with the common forgetting? To what extent did the government meet society half way? The answer was partly given by what has been already said. Official forgetting must have met the need for oblivion and corresponded with the spontaneous processes of common forgetting. Polish society wanted to erase the Holocaust from memory in order to forget their role as passive bystanders. Moreover, Poles wanted to forget about Jews, who continuously reminded them about the Holocaust. Hence, according to Ewa Hoffman, "the specific history of the Holocaust, Jewish aspects of the Polish pre-war culture and perhaps Jews themselves – they all became a taboo subject, and, as a result, were gradually forgotten."[268]

The silence about the Holocaust can doubtlessly be interpreted as a response to the shock of witnessing it, its magnitude and incomprehensibility. Most of all, however, this silence should be interpreted by considering the consequences of being witnesses: remembering one's own passivity, often indifference, or even complicity in the crimes of Polish *szmalcowniks* and informers. Together with the memory of the pre-war anti-Semitism and taking over of Jewish properties, it all must have caused guilty consciences. It must have brought moral discomfort even if its causes were not entirely realised or were pushed into the subconscious. The easiest way was to forget all these taboo subjects. A very prosaic regularity, verbalised by Maurice Halbwachs, is that one remembers what is comfortable to remember and forgets what is comfortable to forget.[269]

Forgetting the Holocaust in the People's Republic of Poland was also forced by a collective need to feel like a nation made up only of victims and heroes.

268 E. Hoffman, *Sztetl*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 II 1998, p. 10.

269 See: M. Halbwachs, *Społeczne ramy pamięci*, Warszawa 1969, p. 122.

Officially cultivated memory of World War II met this demand and was used to build national identity based on such a belief. Placing fairly treated issues related to the martyrdom of Jews on the agenda of public discussion could seriously thwart these efforts and undermine the structure of the national stereotype, take the palm of victory away from Poles and question the dogma of the always heroic and oppressed nation.

The sense of national history, Marek Ziólkowski notes, is always easier to grasp when events conflicting with the main image are ignored.[270] Therefore, the subject of the Holocaust, which could evoke sensitive issues and touch a chord in the nation, was disregarded in the official memory. This difficult subject was pacified by stripping it of its uniqueness, redefining it and absorbing it into the Polish history of the war and the occupation.

The memory of War World II, quite contrary to the Holocaust, was very significant for the communist government. The state attempted to establish contact with the nation and it was the memory of the war that helped the government to present their role in the national history. This memory was like a narrow bridge where the government met the society that was usually critically oriented towards it. Clearly, there were still significant differences and tensions between the official and common memory: for instance, the evaluation of the role of the Home Army or the interpretation of the Katyn massacre. Nevertheless, there was a national consensus regarding one issue: the Polish nation emerged from the wartime destruction as a nation of heroes and victims. The Holocaust was to be only "a minute, minor and somehow embarrassing element of the fate of the Polish nation, 'sentenced for extermination."[271] The subject of Jewish martyrdom, which would have been raised openly and loudly, could have undermined the essence of this unwritten consensus and lead to serious deconstructions of the national identity, and national identity draws its strength and cohesion mainly from the "unifying version of the past in which the collective subject is idealised".[272]

As a result, the Polish memory of the Holocaust became neurotised. The trauma of witnessing the Holocaust was not dealt with. National mourning was never announced, because the Holocaust was not regarded as exceptional. All the troubling elements and traumatic experiences related to it were erased from memory. Finally, Jews also were sentenced to oblivion. Education, memory pol-

270 M. Ziółkowski, *Pamięć i zapomnienie: Trupy w szafie polskiej zbiorowej pamięci*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2001, no 3-4, p. 8.

271 A. Cała, *Kształtowanie się polskiej i żydowskiej...*, p. 178.

272 M. Hirszowicz, E. Neyman, *Społeczne ramy niepamięci*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2001, no 3-4, p. 29.

icy, propaganda and academic research not only corresponded with forgetting but even accelerated it.[273] At the same time, they caused even greater distortions of the Polish collective memory. How deep these distortions are can be proved not so much by public opinion polls, but mostly by the responses to all the debates about ambiguous Polish attitudes to the Holocaust, which took place in Poland, and the level of emotions that accompanied them.[274] These debates clearly demonstrate that the process of collective forgetting about the Holocaust indeed took place; they also demonstrate its scale. Moreover, the discussions restore the real memories and prove that "the object of memory cannot be easily annihilated – it is rather suppressed and influences actors from behind the scene."[275] The first of these debates was held before 1989, at a time when not yet everything could be said in public.

273 As Henryk Szlajfer observes. See: H. Szlajfer, *Polacy/Żydzi. Zderzenie stereotypów...*, p. 80.

274 See: J. Jedlicki, *Jak się z tym uporać? Polacy wobec zagłady Żydów*, "Polityka" 10 II 2001, p. 68.

275 L. M. Nijakowski, *Baron Münchhausen czyli o polskiej polityce pamięci*, "Przegląd Polityczny" 2006, no 75, p. 56.

Chapter II
"Poor Poles" look at "Shoah": Recovery of the memory of the Holocaust in the country of witnesses

1. Reconstructing the memory of Jews and the Holocaust in the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland

In the middle of October 1980, a group of Polish intellectuals issued an open letter to the editors of "Polityka" weekly, in which they attempted to reclaim the memory of the victims of March '68. In particular, they demanded that a spade be called a spade and that the anti-Semitic campaign organised by the state in 1968 be publically condemned. The first words of the letter, however, did not refer only to this single event: "The deeper the moral renewal we go through, the more beneficial the effects of the current breakthrough will be. This renewal should include an explanation of hypocritical, seemingly outdated cases that cast a shadow on the atmosphere of our community, such as the issue of Polish-Jewish relations. The history of Polish Jews is an integral part of Polish history. A Jewish minority lived on this land for at least 700 years and made a lasting and valuable contribution to the nationwide culture. Of the occupier's will, this land became a collective tomb of millions of Jews from Poland and other countries. Therefore, the so-called 'Jewish question' should not be understood as concerning only Jews, who, by the way, are very few in Poland. It is in fact a matter of great social importance; the matter should be honestly taught, written and spoken of in Poland."[276]

The editorial commentary of "Polityka", posted below the letter, suggested that the March events should not be only reduced to the "Jewish question". Most of all, however, the editors expressed doubt whether in the "current political situation", in the "atmosphere of widespread anxiety", it would be sensible to reawaken old enmities again, even if they were "morally and politically justi-

276 The letter was signed by Władysław Bartoszewski, Alina Cała, Helena Datner-Śpiewak, Michał Głowiński, Maja Komorowska, Stanisław Krajewski, Zdzisław Łapiński, Jan Józef Lipski, Konstanty Gebert, Wojciech Karpiński and others. See: *Listy do Redakcji*, "Polityka" 12 X 1980, p. 2.

fied".[277] The authors of the letter did not respond to this doubt; however, the following years proved that the time had come to talk, and to talk honestly: about Jews, the Holocaust and, in particular, about Polish-Jewish past. Paraphrasing what Jacek Borkowicz wrote, the name of the deceased was finally spoken in his home and the difficult lesson of how to deal with the memory of them and the knowledge about ourselves was begun.[278]

This specific process of "reconstructing the memory" (as Michael Steinlauf[279] puts it) of Jews, the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish past, and, at the same time, reconnaissance and "breach in the prevailing area of silence", as Henryk Szlajfer wrote[280], began at the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s. The shape of this reconnaissance was determined by the restricted freedom of speech and the psychological barriers to raising some questions. In other words, one could not say in public everything one wanted to say and, in any case, there were things that people did not want to speak about. This is illustrated by censored press articles and responses to Claude Lanzmann's film and a groundbreaking Błoński article, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The initial phases of bringing the Jewish topic to light coincided with the origin of the "Solidarity" movement and a short period of political pluralism, interrupted by the imposition of martial law in 1981. However, even if the ruling period of the Military Council of National Salvation (Polish: *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego*, abbreviated WRON) slowed down the process of memory reconstruction, it certainly did not stop it. Manifestations of this process were visible at many levels during the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). In the middle of 1980s, the increase of interest in Jewish themes became a social phenomenon, if not a certain "fashion". "Fiddler on the Roof" was attracting large audiences and the books of Isaac Bashevis Singer, describing the mysteries of Jewish *shtetls*, gained great popularity. To what extent was it a manifestation of the feeling of emptiness, expressed in Antoni Słonimski's poem "Elegia miasteczek żydowskich" [Elegy of Jewish towns"], and to what extent was it only an interest in the exotic folklore of strangers? It is difficult to answer, particularly since the former does not necessarily exclude the latter.

The aroused interest in Jewish themes was noticed and described by Wiktor Kulerski in the underground, oppositionist magazine "Krytyka". Kulerski suggested that such a moment should be used to "straighten out false and schematic

277 See: *Od Redakcji*, "Polityka" 12 X 1980, p. 2.

278 See: J. Borkowicz, *Parę słów o Żydach i Polakach*, "Więź"1996, no 7, p. 63.

279 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, op.cit., p. 89-121.

280 See: H. Szlajfer, *Polacy/Żydzi. Zderzenie stereotypów*, Warszawa 2003, p. 21.

views" and "oppose the attempts to resuscitate old prejudices and obsessions."[281] This challenge had been already faced by some intellectuals before Kulerski published his text, and continued after the publication It would be hard to deny that it was Polish intellectuals who brought to light the subject of the difficult Polish-Jewish past. It was they who broke the prevailing taboo and shameful silence. Many belonged to or identified with democratic opposition, which attempted to deny the false version of history and to explore its *terra incognita*.

The activists of Polish liberation movements, from the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) to the "Solidarity" movement, not only condemned anti-Semitism but also unmasked its manifestations and stigmatised them whenever it was possible. Admittedly, before the imposition of martial law, some words that had fallen from the lips of some activists contradicted this rule and brought discredit to the movement. However, self-proclaimed eulogists of anti-Semitic enunciations, such as Marian Jurczyk, who identified Jews with state power, were criticised or even ostracised.[282] One of the ideological aspirations of the liberation movements was "the need for authentic cleansing – not only a superficial and alibied one – of the sin of omission of the acts against Jews and the silence over them, particularly if Poles were the perpetrators." It was the need for a real catharsis related to past actions.[283]

Even if authors of these observations overestimated the role of democratic opposition and the importance of the Jewish question among their ideological aspirations, the driving force of the processes of memory reconstruction should doubtlessly be regarded as crucial. The Polish calendar of public holidays was then supplemented with a whole range of new anniversaries that had never officially been celebrated before. Oppositionists claimed not only dates, but also memorials, events and people from the past. They wished to revive them, bring them back or to embed them into the national memory. Their interest included both the victims of Katyń and of December 1970. Not without reason did the historian of ideas, Bronisław Baczko, name this period "an explosion of memory" and a popular joke at the time was about Poles who were going to run out of days in a year to celebrate their martyrdom.[284] Thus, the period of

281 The article was written by Wiktora Kulerskiego in November, 1987. It was published at the beginning of 1988. See: W. Kulerski, *Na marginesie "żydowskiego" numeru "Aneksu"*, "Krytyka" 1988, no 27, p. 184.

282 See: M. Wieviorka, *Les Juifs, la Pologne et Solidarité*, Paris 1984.

283 See: Kersten, J. Szapiro, *Konteksty współczesnych odniesień polsko-żydowskich*, "Więź" 1998, no 3, p. 292-293.

284 B. Baczko, *Polska czasów "Solidarności", czyli eksplozja pamięci*, [in:] *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice o nadziei i pamięci zbiorowej*, B. Baczko, Warszawa 1994, p. 193-249.

"memory explosion" was perfect to remind Poles about Polish Jews and about what had happened to them during the war, before the Polish eyes.

The role of democratic opposition in the reconstruction of the memory of Jews, Polish-Jewish relations and the Holocaust cannot be denied. Neither can one question the efforts of the scholars whose publications on the subject increased in number in the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). However, the role of the state in the reconstruction process is less obvious. It is worth noticing, Krystyna Kersten and Jerzy Szapiro observe, that the state's official manifestation of its interest in Jewish themes was ostentatious.

The authorities wanted the Jewish subject to be well-known, and this was manifested at many different levels. Jewish fiction was available in bookshops; Jewish culture could be learnt in theatres; press readers had access to it.[285] Most probably, monographic issues of Catholic magazines devoted to Jewish themes would not have been released without governmental consent. On the other hand, taboo subjects did not cease to exist, which was well demonstrated by the response of "Polityka" editors to the subject of March 1968. Official discourse included only glorious and heroic attitudes of Poles towards Jews during the war and all public attempts to correct this biased judgement were regarded as anti-Polish. March clichés and plots kept reappearing in literature; for instance, in Wacław Poterański's book about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which was reprinted in 1983.[286]

The same year, bookshop shelves filled with Józef Orlicki's "Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich 1918-1949" [Sketches of the History of Polish-Jewish Relations 1918-1949]. It included a series of lies, obvious to anyone, and distortions following the prevailing discursive pattern. One of these lies was that the Kielce pogrom was inspired by Zionists, and that they and actively participated in it. Orlicki also claimed that Jewish plutocracy, "particularly Zionists and groups related to the World Agudat Yisrael" [an Orthodox Jewish organisation – the author's note] had not avoided 'the practice of destroying' communist Jews" considered as 'Jewish dissenters'. Finally, according to Orlicki, Jewish nationalists slandered Poles by accusing them of "zoological anti-Semitism."[287]

Detailed analysis of this subject is not the aim of this book. Suffice to say that the authorities were concerned about changing their image abroad and getting rid of the anti-Semitic odium upon the country. To gain international esteem and move out of isolation, Wojciech Jaruzelski's team decided to show to the world how much significance was attached to Jewish culture and the memory of

285 K. Kersten, J. Szapiro, *Konteksty współczesnych...*, p. 292.

286 See: W. Poterański, *Warszawskie getto*, Warszawa 1983.

287 J. Orlicki, *Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-żydowskich*, Szczecin 1983, p. 251-263.

the Jews in Poland. Such was the purpose of the sudden interest in Jewish culture and the ostentatious commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In addition, one should not forget that there were still people in the communist party, holding various positions, who remembered the leadership of Mieczysław Moczar with nostalgia and whose worldview was equal to the nationalist version of communism.[288] Without doubt, they reluctantly watched Jewish themes appearing in public discourse and blocked the process of memory reconstruction. Nevertheless, the opportunism and conformism of the state resulted in substantial benefits, which were manifested, for instance, in the number of books on Jewish topics on the bookstore shelves.

These were the circumstances of the process of the reconstruction of memory about Jews, the Holocaust and the difficult Polish-Jewish past. Its main initiators were Polish intellectuals of diverse provenience and professions: political scientists, sociologists, literati, etc; people involved in democratic opposition or those who had nothing in common with it. Partly, Polish government also participated in this process: through distance and passivity, which, in fact, meant permission. Various efforts were made to restore the memory that had been suppressed and confiscated until then. Therefore, the influence of all the publications, films, cultural and academic endeavours, celebrations and discursive events was of diverse intensity and range. It would be impossible to compare the scope of influence of a film broadcast just before the main edition of the TV news with an article photocopied by an underground magazine. Similarly, it would be impossible to compare the words of John Paul II at his visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau with a publication of an important academic paper. However, it is worth presenting a broad spectrum of the events that can be classified as components of the process of the reconstruction of memory in the public discourse in the last decade of the PRL.

Considering different levels of the phenomena that constituted this process, it is necessary to distinguish between the publications on Jewish topics and events such as the Pope's visit to Auschwitz, anniversaries of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, or new monuments in the public space, and to analyse them separately. The first public debates on the Polish attitudes towards Jews and the Holocaust, which took place in Poland before 1989, should also be a separate subject of analysis.

Without doubt, the number of publications related to Jewish topics that appeared in the last decade of the PRL makes this period similar only to the years immediately following the war. Considering the long silence over the history

288 See: M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2001, p. 383-397.

and culture of Jews and the Holocaust in particular, this last decade was doubtlessly an important turn. It was then when numerous historical studies were published, which not only raised the question of the fate of Jews during the war, but also discussed older history; for instance, the works of Artur Eisenbach[289], Alina Cała[290], and Henryk Piasecki[291]. Admittedly, the majority of these authors were associated with the Jewish Historical Institute, which conducted Jewish studies for the whole PRL period. However, this was not the case for all of them.

The majority of the historical works published at the time dealt with various aspects of the Holocaust. Some authors analysed the help given by Poles to the Jews during the occupation, sometimes exaggerating it,[292] but just as often providing reliable data, which has been proving valuable even up to now.[293] Moreover, interesting studies, both monographs and sourcebooks, were published about the organisation and conditions of the Warsaw Ghetto. As for the latter, particular attention should be paid to "Dziennik getta warszawskiego" by Adam Czerniakow[294], "Kronika getta warszawskiego" by Emanuel Ringelblum[295], "Pamiętniki z getta warszawskiego. Fragmenty i regesty"[296], and, most of all, fragments of the invaluable Ringelblum's Archive, edited by Ruta Sakowska.[297] Jewish history was also examined in the academic journals, with the Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute at the top of the list.[298]

289 A. Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich 1785-1870 na tle europejskim*, Warszawa 1988; A. Eisenbach, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1983.

290 A. Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864-1897). Postawy, konflikty, stereotypy*, Warszawa 1989.

291 H. Piasecki, *Sekcja żydowska PPSD i Żydowska Partia Socjalno-Demokratyczna 1892-1919/20*, Warszawa 1982.

292 See: W. Bielawski, Cz. Pilichowski, *Zbrodnie na Polakach dokonane za pomoc udzielaną Żydom*, Warszawa 1981, p. 6-7.

293 See: np. T. Prekerowa, *Konspiracyjna Rada Pomocy Żydom w Warszawie 1942-1945*, Warszawa 1982; M. Arczyński, *Kryptonim Żegota. Z dziejów pomocy Żydom w Polsce 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1979, wydanie drugie Warszawa 1983; M. Arczyński, W. Balcerak, *Kryptonim Żegota*, Warszawa 1983; W. Smólski, *Za to groziła śmierć. Polacy z pomocą Żydom w czasie okupacji*, Warszawa 1981.

294 A. Czerniaków, *Dziennik getta warszawskiego 6 IX 1939-13 VII 1942*, Warszawa 1983.

295 E. Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa 1983.

296 M. Grynberg (ed.), *Pamiętniki z getta warszawskiego. Fragmenty i regesty*, Warszawa 1988

297 R. Sakowska (ed.), *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Getto warszawskie lipiec 1942 – styczeń 1943*, Warszawa 1980

298 See: szerzej M. Czajka, *Bibliografia zawartości "Biuletynu Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" (1950-2000),* "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" (do 2000 roku Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego) 2001, no 3, p. 393-531.

Academic literature did not avoid the subjects that were sensitive for Poles. Analysing the ideology and organisation of pre-war nationalist organisations, Szymon Rudnicki and Roman Wapiński discussed the anti-Semitism of these groups and Polish society's susceptibility to it.[299] In his work on the Blue Police, Adam Hempel examined the role of this organisation in the persecution and extermination of the Jewish population, despite the difficulty of the subject and its links to the Polish collaboration.[300] Kazimierz Wyka's "Życie na niby" [Life as If], regarding social and economic life under the Nazi occupation, definitely referred to the Polish conscience. In his book, first published in 1957 and complemented and reprinted in 1986, Wyka used harsh words to describe the problem of the acquisition of properties of the Holocaust victims: the problem of Poles who became more or less coincidental beneficiaries of someone else's misery. The author seemed to have asked: "How do Poles cope with this knowledge"?[301]

The subject of the Polish-Jewish past was also present in a documentary work of fundamental historical importance, written by Emanuel Ringelblum, published in 1988, and entitled: "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie II wojny światowej". The author did not limit his analysis to the war period; he also included Polish-Jewish relations before the war.[302] Another author who raised the subject of Poles and Jews living next to each other in pre-war Poland was the sociologist Aleksander Hertz in "Żydzi w kulturze polskiej": the "opus magnum" of his life, as he called it. The book was first published in 1961 by the Literary Institute in Paris, but its first Polish edition was only released in 1988. It also could not avoid censorship, which removed the introduction written by the author.[303]

In the last decade of the PRL, Polish historians who studied Jewish history and the Holocaust not only published their research results, but also presented their work at international conferences devoted to Polish-Jewish relations. These conferences provided an opportunity to present the achievements of Polish historians and to establish contacts and ensure international research cooperation. They also offered an excellent forum for exchanging ideas and experiences and

299 See: Sz. Rudnicki, *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny. Geneza i działalność*, Warszawa 1985; R. Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja 1893-1939*, Warszawa 1989.

300 A. Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski. Rzecz o policji "granatowej" w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1985, p. 166-189.

301 K. Wyka, *Życie na niby*, Warszawa 1986.

302 A. Eisenbach (ed.), E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie II wojny światowej*, Warszawa 1988.

303 A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej*, Warszawa 2003, p. 319-323; Książka ta ukazała się również w 1987 nakładem podziemnej Oficyny Wydawniczej "Margines".

for discussing sensitive issues. The first such conference took place in 1983 in New York and was entitled: "Poles and Jews: myth and reality in historical context".[304] Another, which was attended by historians from Poland, Israel and the USA, was organised a year later in Oxford.[305] It was at this conference where an initiative was developed to edit a journal entirely devoted to the history of Polish Jews. It was first entitled "Polin. A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies", but the name was later changed into "Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry" (Polin means "Poland" in Yiddish). The first issue of the journal was published in 1986. "Polin" has remained to be an esteemed journal in which researchers from different countries present their research results. The current editor-in-chief is Antony Polonsky.

Finally, an international conference devoted to the history of Polish Jews took place in Poland, in 1986 in Cracow. It was attended by scholars from France, Israel, Great Britain, the USA and Poland. The subject of the conference was "Autonomy of Jews in Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth", which, as the journalists rightly observed, should not have aroused "any emotions except academic interest."[306] The event was meaningful for two reasons. First, because it was the first endeavour of this kind; second, because it inaugurated an interdepartmental program in the history and culture of Polish Jews at the Jagiellonian University. It had been the second such initiative in Poland, after the Department of Jewish Culture at the University of Warsaw. The status and character of the Jewish Historical Institute or the Flying University (Polish: Uniwersytet Latający) was different. The latter, very specific and non-institutionalised, was intended as an informal discussion forum and was founded in the 1980s by young Polish Jews discovering their identity and sometimes called "the new Jews". In their search for knowledge about Jewish culture, tradition, history, etc., they

304 The conference was held on 6-10 March 1983. It resulted in a publication: *Proceedings of the Conference of Poles and Jews – Myth and Reality in the Historical Context*, Held and Columbia University, 6-10 March 1983, Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, New York 1986.

305 The conference was held in September 1984. The presented papers were published 2 years later. See: Ch. Abramsky, M. Jachimczyk, A. Polonsky (ed.), *The Jews in Poland*, Oxford 1986; Another conference entitled "History and culture of Polish Jews" was held at the end of January and the beginning of February 1988 in Jerusalem. Almost a hundred Poles took part.

306 J. Gaworski, A. Gorzała, *Polacy-Żydzi po raz pierwszy*, "Więź" 1986, no 11-12, p. 215; See: także A. Link-Lenczowski, T. Polański (ed.), *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Materiały z konferencji "Autonomia Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej Szlacheckiej". Międzywydziałowy Zakład Historii i Kultury Żydów w Polsce Uniwersytet Jagielloński 22-26 IX 1986*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1991.

started gathering in private homes, where they organised informal lectures and seminars. Jewish and non-Jewish experts, Polish and foreign, were invited as speakers. Sometimes the members elaborated on some subjects on their own, and others were only discussed as a group. The imposition of the martial law, however, ended the short activity of the Flying University.

Returning to publications about war martyrdom of Jews, one should not forget about particular sources of data, first published or reprinted in the 1980s: diaries, journals and memoirs written during and after the war. This diverse literature was written by the victims and witnesses of the Holocaust, both children and adults: Dawid Rubinowicz[307], Janusz Korczak[308], Halina Birenbaum[309], Janina Bauman[310], Irena Birnbaum[311], Mary Berg[312], Henryk Makower[313], Arnold Mostowicz[314], Jerzy Eisner[315], Eugenia Szajn-Lewin[316], Jona Oberski[317], Stefana Chaskielewicz[318], and Leokadia Schmidt[319]. The above list of authors is obviously incomplete. Moreover, in 1979 and 1987, a very popular book-length interview given to Hanna Krall by the hero of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Mark Edelman, was reprinted.[320]

Particular attention should also be given to another kind of witness literature: poetry by Holocaust victims. Books of poems released at the time included, for instance, the works of Władysław Szlengel, a poet of the Warsaw Ghetto[321], and "Wiersze wybrane" [Selected Poems] by Zuzanna Ginczanka[322]. Unfortu-

307 D. Rabinowicz, *Pamiętnik*, Warszawa 1987. (First issued: 1960)
308 J. Korczak, *Pamiętnik*, Poznań 1984; Earlier edition, see: J. Korczak, *Wybór pism*, t. 4, Warszawa 1958.
309 H. Birenbaum, *Nadzieja umiera ostatnia*, Warszawa 1988. (First issued: 1967)
310 J. Bauman, *Zima o poranku. Opowieść dziewczynki z Warszawskiego Getta*, Kraków 1989.
311 I. Birnbaum, *Non omnis moriar. Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa 1982.
312 M. Berg, *Dziennik z getta warszawskiego*, Warszawa 1983.
313 H. Makower, *Pamiętnik z getta warszawskiego październik 1940-styczeń 1943,* Wrocław 1987.
314 A. Mostowicz, *Żółta gwiazda i czerwony krzyż*, Warszawa 1988.
315 J. Eisner, *Przeżyłem!*, Warszawa 1988.
316 E. Szajn-Lewin, *W getcie warszawskim*, Poznań 1989.
317 J. Oberski, *Lata dzieciństwa*, Warszawa 1988.
318 S. Chaskielewicz, *Ukrywałem się w Warszawie, styczeń 1943 – styczeń 1945*, Kraków 1988.
319 L. Schmidt, *Cudem przeżyliśmy czas zagłady*, Kraków 1983.
320 H. Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem*, Kraków 1977. (next issues: 1979, 1989, 1992, 1997)
321 W. Szlengel, *Co czytałem umarłym*, Warszawa 1979.
322 Z. Ginczanka, *Wiersze wybrane*, Warszawa 1980.

nately, none of the authors survived the Holocaust. However, their poetry – a testimony of the "crematoria era" – included questions that were not asked in postwar Poland, presented in poetic form the indifference of Poles towards the Holocaust, highlighted the differences between Poles and Jews in their war experiences and brought up the *szmalcownik* figures.[323] Certainly, the Holocaust was also considered by other Polish poets whose works were published at the time: Polish Jews and Poles, both victims and witnesses, for instance: Czesław Miłosz, Stanisław Wygodzki and Jerzy Ficowski. The latter was classified by Henryk Grynberg as "one of the most important voices on the memory side"[324].

In the last decade of the PRL, numerous novels devoted to the Holocaust were also released. Although the vast majority had been first published much earlier, new editions came out in the decade of interest in the Jewish topic, during the process of "recovering the subject of the Holocaust."[325] Achievements of Polish literature devoted to the Holocaust, novels in particular, were "greater than superpowers"[326], to quote Henryk Grynberg again. The authors wrote openly about Polish indifference towards the Holocaust, about *szmalcownik*s and Polish anti-Semitism; suffice to mention "Początek" by Andrzej Szczypiorski or "Umschlagplatz" by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz.[327]

A kind of phenomenon, shrewdly observed by Jan Błoński, was the presence of Polish Jews in the field of Polish literature. Although these writers wrote not only about the Holocaust, it was the main subject of their interest, which allowed them to refer to the bygone world of Polish Jews and describe the void they left. Błoński referred to this phenomenon as to "the most cruel paradox", for "Jewish presence in the field of novel, or even in Polish literature in general, had never been more visible than after the Holocaust."[328] Błoński commented on

323 It is worth noticing that Zuzanna Ginczanka's poem: "Non omnis moria" was used in 1946 as evidence in the case of Zofia and Marian Chomin, who were accused of denouncing Jews (including the author of the poem). See: A. Haska, *Znałam tylko jedną Żydóweczkę ukrywającą się... Sprawa Zofii i Mariana Chominów*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały" 2008, no 4, p. 392-408.

324 H. Grynberg, *Holocaust w literaturze polskiej*, [in:] *Prawda nieartystyczna*, H. Grynberg, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2003, p. 179.

325 Such an expression relating to Polish literature of 1990s devoted to the Holocaust was used by Przemysław Czapliński See: P. Czapliński, *Odzyskiwanie Zagłady*, "Przegląd Polityczny"2003, no 61, p. 72-80.

326 H. Grynberg, *Holocaust w literaturze polskiej*, [in:] *Prawda nieartystyczna*, H. Grynberg, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2003, p. 179.

327 A. Szczypiorski, *Początek*, Paryż 1986; J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Umschlagplatz*, Warszawa 1988.

328 J. Błoński, *Autoportret żydowski czyli o żydowskiej szkole w literaturze polskiej*, [in:] *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, J. Błoński, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1996, p. 63.

this paradox quite emphatically, writing that Jewish literature in Polish language in the postwar period, novels in particular, "flourished – quite literally – at the graveyard."[329]

During the discussed period, Jewish themes were present not only in popular and academic literature, but also in official and underground Polish press. A special issue of "Znak" monthly, published in 1983, and almost 600 pages long, was devoted only to this subject. In his introduction, Stefan Wilkanowicz called for national self-examination regardless of the "opportunistic topicality" of Jewish themes.[330] In the same year, the Catholic "Więź" magazine also published a whole issue devoted to the Jewish minority and to Polish-Jewish relations.[331] Both magazines had occasionally included the subject before, but since the beginning of the 1980s it had remained there for good. 1983 was the groundbreaking inauguration of writing about Jewish issues, which the content of the following issues of the magazines clearly demonstrates.[332] Hence, the role these Catholic magazines (also "Tygodnik Powszechny") had in breaking the silence about Jews and the Holocaust seems invaluable from a time perspective, as the first debates on the Holocaust, Polish-Jewish past and Polish anti-Semitism were held in their columns.

These difficult subjects were also examined by the underground press. Having escaped from the limitations to free speech, underground magazines featured even more articles about sensitive subjects, with even more courage and firmness than before. Already in 1980, on the wave of the "Solidarity carnival" and "the explosion of memory", a supplement to "Biluetyn Dolnośląski", entitled "Jews and Poles" was published. The occasion was the 40th anniversary of the closing of the ghettos. The editorial included an appeal: "We have recalled the Katyn Massacre and the murder of the Baltic countries. Perhaps we should also recall Palmiry. We MUST [original spelling – the author's note] recall the beginning of the extermination of Jews in Europe". The editorial later reads: "Let us leave general problems. Let us look at Polish Jews. Not only to pay homage to their martyrdom, but also because the Jewish topic is still a problem for us, even if Jews are no longer among us." The problems signalled in this fragment were discussed later in the article: the problem of "our ignorance" about the cultural, religious and social life of the former citizens of Poland, the problem of "our conscience burdened with the pre-war anti-Jewish excesses", ghetto bench-

329 J. Błoński, *Autoportret...*, p. 76.

330 S. Wilkanowicz, *Antysemityzm, patriotyzm, chrześcijaństwo*, "Znak" 1983, no 2-3, p. 171.

331 See: "Więź" 1983, no 4.

332 See: Z. Nosowski (opr.), *Tematyka polsko-żydowska w "Więzi"*, "Więź"1993, no 3, p. 65-70.

es at universities and the indifference towards the Holocaust of parts of Polish society, and the contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism.[333]

"Aneks", a London emigration magazine, also published a special issue devoted to the Polish-Jewish past and was entitled: "Jews as a Polish problem".[334] It included an important essay by Jan Tomasz Gross: "Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej ... ale go nie lubię" ["This one is from my fatherland ... but I don't like him"]. The title was a deliberate and clear reference to the publication edited by Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, which concerned Polish help given to Jews during the occupation.

There were more essays and articles in the official and underground press; the authors of these pieces also dealt with the problem of the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust. Putting their chronology aside, it is important to mention "Tabu i niewinność" by Aleksander Smolar[335], "Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy" by Jan Józef Lipski[336], "Dziedzictwo i odpowiedzialność zbiorowa" by Jerzego Jedlicki[337], and, in particular, the groundbreaking essay by Jan Błoński "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto", which will later be discussed in detail for its contribution to an important public debate.

Before analysing the first public debates about the Polish-Jewish past and memory, it is worth mentioning certain events that stimulated or confirmed the process of memory reconstruction. The former was certainly the visit of John Paul II to Auschwitz-Birkenau in June 1979, that is, less than a year after Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope. The words spoken by the Pope in Warsaw and Nowa Huta were extremely important and the whole pilgrimage to Poland became a watershed event.

From the perspective of this book, the words which fell from the Pope's lips in Auschwitz-Birkenau were most important. Stopping at the International Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau and taking notice of the plaques in different languages at its base, John Paul II said: "This inscription invites us to remember the people whose sons and daughters were doomed to total extermination. This people has its origin in Abraham, our father in faith

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333 See: "Biuletyn Dolnośląski", *Żydzi i Polacy. Dodatek specjalny*, 1980 (listopad-grudzień), no 11/18, p. 1-2; citation after: M. Steinlauf, *Pamięć…*, p. 116-117.

334 See: "Aneks" 1986, no 41-42.

335 See: A. Smolar, *Tabu i niewinność*, "Aneks"1986, no 41-42, p. 75-121.

336 Lipski's essay, the full title of which is: *Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy (uwagi o megalomanii narodowej i ksenofobii Polaków)* [Two fatherlands, two patriotisms: remarks on Polish national megalomania and xenophobia] was first published in 1981 in Warsaw by Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza (NOWA).

337 See: J. Jedlicki, *Dziedzictwo i odpowiedzialność zbiorowa*, "Res Publica"1987, no 5, p. 73.

(cf. *Rom* 4:11-12), as Paul of Tarsus has said. This, the very people that received from God the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' itself experienced in a particular measure what killing means. No one is permitted to pass by this inscription with indifference."[338]

John Paul II demanded that Jews be remembered as victims of the Holocaust, and his words were quoted by the press. By noticing the vastness of Jewish martyrdom, he spoke on behalf of the absent. What is more, he did it at the site that symbolised the Holocaust. The Pope's words can certainly be considered as a breakthrough and an inaugural stage of the process of reconstructing Polish memory of the Holocaust. By having his say in Birkenau, John Paul II contributed to this process, as he similarly did a few years later when he took an important step towards ecumenical dialogue by crossing the threshold of a Roman synagogue.

The Pope's visit to the former camp, however, also initiated the process of Christianisation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, although not through the fault or direct participation of the Pope. Communist symbols were replaced by Catholic ones and anonymous victims became to be embodied by Maksymilian Kolbe and Edyta Stein, a founder and editor of interwar anti-Semitic press and a Jew who converted to Catholicism but died in Auschwitz because of her origin; both were canonised by John Paul II. The Christianisation of Auschwitz-Birkenau combined with a tendency to Polonise its victims provoked strong protests from Jews, which ended in several Polish-Jewish conflicts. The first was related to a Carmelite Sisters monastery located in the area within the borders of the camp. It began in 1985 and for a long time attracted the attention of Polish and international public opinion.

Commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were also significant for the process of the recovery and reconstruction of the Polish memory of the Holocaust. In particular, the 40th anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising was a groundbreaking and noteworthy event. As has been already mentioned, General Wojciech Jaruzelski's team wished to get support and economic help from the West and thus took care to present the country in a favourable light. After the imposition of martial law, this need was even more burning. In order to improve the image of Poland around the world, Jaruzelski's team decided to use the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This move was inspired by a stereotypical and not very sophisticated belief that Jews had considerable influence

338 http://www.centrum-dialogu.oswiecim.pl/strona.php?lang=pl&id=274 [accessed: 22 IV 2006r.]
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/pont_messages/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20050127_auschwitz-birkenau_en.html

on shaping the world's public opinion. The government had already flirted "publicly with so-called philosemitic trends"[339] for some time, which was demonstrated, for instance, by the number of books in stores. An element of this flirtation was the 40th anniversary of the uprising, to which Jews and Jewish organisations from all around the world were invited.

Against the organisers' intentions, as Ireneusz Krzemiński noted, "this political plan of the general failed."[340] Underground press published an open letter by Marek Edelman, the last living leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, in which the author called on his readers to boycott the official commemorations organised under the control of the still binding martial law. His letter was reprinted by the Western press and although not all the invited guests heeded the appeal and some decided to participate in the event, the significance of the commemorations was considerably depreciated. Most importantly, the state monopoly in organising the anniversary of the uprising was broken. A few days before the official anniversary, alternative commemorations were prepared by people connected with the democratic opposition and by young Polish Jews. They laid flowers at the Jewish Ghetto Memorial, gave speeches and recited Kaddish. Another alternative commemoration took place at the Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw.

Since then, unofficial commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising have been regular events, but on a different scale. According to Michael Steinlauf, who participated in many commemorative events in person, they "became ever more closely intertwined with the Polish political struggle."[341] What demonstrates this process are underground postage stamps with Lech Wałęsa's image, the "Solidarity" logo, or the Kotwica symbol (the emblem for the Polish struggle to regain independence), and stamps with the well known image of a ghetto fighter being led out from a bunker or a terrified Jewish boy with his hands raised above the head. By the way, the latter photo became a kind of a "symbol of the extermination of European Jews and one of the most often used images of the Holocaust".[342]

During independent celebration of the 45th anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising, "Solidarity" activists solemnly unveiled a monument in memory of Victor Alter and Henryk Ehrlich, leaders of the Bund who had been murdered in

339 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead...*, p. 108.

340 I. Krzemiński, *Razem a osobno*, "Dialog" 2002, no 60, p. 76.

341 M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, op.cit, p. 108

342 See: J. Struk, *Holokaust w fotografiach. Interpretacje dowodów*, Warszawa 2007, p. 118, 265-267; F. Rousseau, *Żydowskie dziecko z Warszawy. Historia pewnej fotografii*, Gdańsk 2012.

the Soviet Union.[343]According to Michael Steinlauf, "competition to appropriate the meaning of the uprising climaxed in 1988, for its forty-fifth anniversary", because that year the government also decided to give the anniversary a special setting.[344] For this reason, new monuments were erected in the streets surrounding the ghetto. These were stones bearing the names of persons linked with the uprising, leading from the ghetto memorial to a new monument that had been erected at the site of the Umschlagplatz, from where around three hundred thousand Jews had been deported to extermination camps. This new Memorial Route for Jewish Martyrdom and Struggle was unveiled on 19 April 1988 and was intended to symbolically represent Jewish suffering and to mark within the public space the last road of the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Umschlagplatz.[345] While the state was the author of this initiative, the monument at the Umschlagplatz was erected in 1988 and was mainly inspired by Polish intellectuals. It replaced a petrol station that had been located there until 1980s, which was a significant event from the perspective of the analysed process of the reconstruction of memory of the Holocaust.

The monument was designed by Hanna Szmalenberg and Władysław Klamerus. It is a marble gate with a vault of a semicircular granite stone with a motif of a shattered forest. Inside, glimpsed through a cut in the wall, one sees a living tree, grown after the war. A plaque reads: "Along this path of suffering and death over 300,000 Jews were driven in 1942-1943 from the Warsaw Ghetto to the gas chambers of the Nazi extermination camps." Exactly 438 names are engraved on the wall, from Abel to Żanna. Additionally, on the side wall of the monument a quotation from the Book of Job reads: "O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place." All the inscriptions are in Polish, Yiddish, English and Hebrew.

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343 M. Steinlauf, op.cit., p. 109

344 Ibidem, p. 125.

345 This route is still marked by seventeen stone blocks of black syenite, which bear the names of Emanuel Ringelblum, Janusz Korczak, Shmuel Zygielbojm, Arie Wilner, the activist Joseph Lewartowski from PPR, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum, as well as the poet Yitzhak Katzenelson. It begins with an oak, planted near the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial, next to the first of the seventeen stone blocks with an inscription written in Polish and Hebrew: "The tree of shared memory. To Polish Jews who were murdered between 1939 and 1945 by the German invaders and to the Poles who died helping you." The route is surmounted by the statue in Umschlagplatz. See: B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście*, Warszawa 2001, p. 765-766; See: także J. *Young, The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1993, p. 203-205; M. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead...,* p. 108.

It was in the middle of the 1990s when the multi-language plaques around the International Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau, which clearly hid the truth about the main victims of this death camp, were replaced.

The process of reconstructing Polish memory about Jews and the Holocaust in the 1980s, including the difficult Polish-Jewish past, was manifested also in other ways, for example, the weeks of Jewish culture organised by the Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej (KIK; English: Club of Catholic Intellectuals), the initiatives related to the Christian-Jewish dialogue and an academic session on the topic of March 1968 organised at the University of Warsaw. In addition, what deserve particular attention are the first public debates, which violated the national taboo about the attitudes of Polish society towards Jews and, in particular, the Holocaust. The impulses that prompted these debates were two profoundly moving works of art: Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah" and Jan Błoński's essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto". Although using different methods, both authors touched the sensitive side of Polish self-knowledge and began the process of deconstructing the national auto-stereotype. Defensive responses to their works can prove how sensitive the subject was and how much it was repressed.

2. "Shoah" in Poland: identification of the areas of repression

"Shoah" premiered in France in May 1985.[346] It was the crowning of a 9-year work by the director, whose camera recorded about 350 hours. Finally, however, Lanzmann chose 9 for the viewers' eyes. The monumental work he created is difficult to describe or classify. What is certain is that Lanzmann spoke about the Holocaust. However, his film is not about its causes or about the racial policy of the Third Reich, or the Polish-Jewish past, or about anti-Semitism – even if each of these topics is to some extent present in the movie. "Shoah" is about the Holocaust and its various aspects, and about the detailed process of its implementation, but it is important that it is not Lanzmann who speaks and reconstructs the Holocaust. In addition, the film contains no documentary texts or images. The Holocaust is reconstructed by its victims: perpetrators and witnesses. They are the main characters of "Shoah" and they were also the main characters of the actual Shoah. It is them who bore the testimony.

As Shoshana Felman noted, "because the testimony is unique and irreplaceable, the film is an exploration of the differences between heterogeneous points

346 More on Lanzmann's film, See: T. Majewski, *Sub Specie Mortis. Notes on Claude Lanzmann's*, "Kultura Współczesna" 2003, no 4, p. 198-208.

of view, between testimonial stances which can neither be assimilated into, nor subsumed by one another."[347] Thus, Lanzmann depicts three different categories of his interviewees who responded to his inquiry: "those who witnessed the disaster as its victims (the surviving Jews), those who witnessed the disaster as its perpetrators (the ex-Nazis); those who witnessed the disaster as bystanders (the Poles)."[348] These three lead parts of "Shoah" were borrowed from the fundamental classification made by the historian Raul Hilberg, the only academic expert in the film.[349]

As Shoshana Felman shrewdly observed, Lanzmann's film, thanks to the distinction between the three categories of the interviewees and the penetrating questions of the director, allows the viewer to see "three different performances of the act of seeing". Jews (victims) see, "but they do not understand the purpose and the destination of what they see; overwhelmed by loss and by deception, they are blind to the significance of what they witness." They fail to see that the aim of their journey by cattle cars is death. Poles (bystanders), unlike the Jews, do see but, as bystanders, they do not quite look, they avoid looking directly, and thus they overlook at once their responsibility and their complicity as witnesses." Finally, Germans see and participate but they try to hide what they see and do: make it invisible, cover it with euphemisms. They do not see bodies or people but "disembodied verbal substitute" which they refer to as "Figuren".[350]

"Shoah" is a film woven with the multivoiced discourse of the survivors, perpetrators and witnesses, who speak about the Holocaust in different languages and from different perspectives. It is also woven with today's landscapes of the places where the Holocaust happened; the remaining of ex-camps, remote areas and the silence that envelops them and creeps into the statements of the characters. The film has no soundtrack, unless the clatter of the train to Treblinka, recurring like a *leitmotiv,* can be counted as one. Consequently, Simone de Beauvoir notes: "Neither fiction nor documentary, Shoah succeeds in recreating the past with an amazing economy of means: places, voices, faces. The greatness of Claude Lanzmann's art is in making places speak, in reviving them

347 M. Steinlauf, op.cit.,p.110

348 S. Felman, *The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's Shoah*, [in:], *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, S. Felman, D. Laub (ed.), Routledge New York 1992, p. 207-210.

349 See: R. Hilberg, *Sprawcy, Ofiary, Świadkowie. Zagłada Żydów 1933-1945*, Warszawa 2007.

350 S. Felman, *The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's Shoah*, [in:], *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, S. Felman, D. Laub (ed.), Routledge New York 1992, p. 207-210

through voices and, over and above words, conveying the unspeakable through people's expressions."[351]

Gesticulation and body language play an important part in "Shoah". They express emotions, and therefore arouse emotions in the viewer, which was probably Lanzmann's primary goal. Not only did he make places speak, but also people, sometimes exposing them to difficult tests. He formulated insightful questions, mostly about the feelings, thoughts, reactions and behaviour that accompanied the victims, perpetrators and bystanders while they were fulfilling the roles they were either given or chose themselves. For this purpose, Lanzmann not only asked his interviewees to visit places with him that evoked their memories, but also made some of them reconstruct and confront the past by roleplaying. "People in his film do not narrate memories but rather re-experience situations", Gertrud Koch notes. In other words, Lanzmann forced his interviewees to go through past events again, but this time in front of the camera. Jan Karski's and Abraham Bomba's testimonies prove to what extent this artistic method was successful.

However, neither the construction nor the artistic value of Lanzmann's film was discussed in the debate over "Shoah" that took place in Poland. The debaters focused only on Polish aspects of the film; precisely, on how Lanzmann presented Polish witnesses of the Holocaust and for what purpose. The film indeed includes many Polish threads: as Poland had been the main arena of the Holocaust, Lanzmann talked to its Polish bystanders. People who lived in the immediate vicinity of the Nazi factories of death saw the arriving transports and smoke rising from the crematoria; they felt its scent while cultivating their fields. The director talked to Henryk Gawkowski, a railwayman who drove trains full of Jews to the Treblinka station under German command. He also talked to farmers from Treblinka, to residents of Chelmno and asked questions to people who live today in former Jewish houses.

Almost all of his Polish interviewees were simple people who formulated their statements in a simple way. Lanzmann asked them what they had felt during the war, what their attitude towards Jews and the Holocaust had been. Answers and facial expressions were different. Some people could not hide emotions and burst into tears. Others, proud and excited about the conversation with a foreign director, smiled despite talking of terrifying things. Still others, such as a group of Chelmno residents, repeated openly anti-Semitic clichés, which resonated with those of the teachings of the Catholic Church but were far from the Second Vatican Council. Some talked about Jewish wealth and how Jews had

351 See: Simone de Beauvoir's preface to the book with the text of Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah". C. Lanzmann, *Shoah*, Koszalin 1993, p. 7.

exploited Poles. The only exception to this poorly educated group of the Holocaust bystanders was Jan Karski, who appeared almost at the very end of the film. Reporting his visits to the Warsaw Ghetto, he spasmodically burst into tears and overcame his emotions with difficulty. One could say that Karski was the only Polish intellectual in Lanzmann's film, and he did not even live in Poland.

The debate over "Shoah" was difficult and complicated from the very beginning, mainly because almost nobody in Poland had seen the film, including its critics. Those who spoke publically about the film were basing their opinions only on the commentaries from the French press or repeated schematic opinions disseminated by Polish press. Thus, it was the film's reviews and opinions rather than the film itself that shaped the social representations around which the debate revolved. Claude Lanzmann himself made the debate even more complicated and off the track by stating his opinions and reflections to the press. He suggested that the Nazis had decided to install the death camps in Poland because they had believed they could count on "Polish complicity". He also equated Catholicism with anti-Semitism, claiming that as much as Poles were Catholics, they were also anti-Semites, for anti-Semitism was included in the teachings of the Catholic Church.[352] In other words, Lanzmann often said things that were untrue or half true; he also reacted impulsively and considered different opinions as insult. It was noticed even by those debaters who evaluated his film positively and wanted to separate Lanzmann's work from his character. "Let us not believe the artist but his work" – Timothy Garton Ash asked in his review of "Shoah".[353]

"Debate" is perhaps not the best word to describe the commentaries on "Shoah" that appeared in the Polish press. The majority of articles, published even before the French premiere, resembled an organised attack, or at least a long and well-thought out campaign. This campaign even preceded the Polish release of the film and was organised, as Jerzy Jedlicki noted, almost in the image and likeness of the one from 1968.[354] It was conducted mainly by "Trybuna Ludu", "Życie Warszawy", "Rzeczpospolita", but also by specialist magazines devoted to cinematography, such as "Film", or "Ekran". The majority of their journalists referred to an article published by the French newspaper "Liberation", entitled "Poland on the dock", which included the controversial Lanzmann

352 Citation after: M. Jaworski, *Kto na ławie oskarżonych?*, "Trybuna Ludu" 20 IV 1985, p. 6.

353 T. Garton Ash, *Życie śmierci*, "Aneks" 1986, no 41-42, p. 44.

354 See: *Dyskusja wokół tekstu Abrahamama Brumberga "Polska inteligencja a antysemityzm"*, (a debate that Krystyna Kersten, Jerzy Jedlicki, Konstanty Gebert, Alina Cała, Abraham Brumberg participated in), "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1997, no 2, p. 5.

quotes, and other equally schematic and one-sided publications from the French press. That famous statement influenced the critical reception of "Shoah", which the titles of the articles clearly demonstrate: "Potwarz" ["Calumny"][355], "Shoah – skandaliczny film szkalujący Polaków – w programie francuskiej tv"[356] ["Shoah – a scandalous film that vilifies Poles – a French TV programme"], "Trwa antypolska kampania we Francji" [357] [Anti-Polish campaign in France continues"], "Antypolscy fałszerze historii" [Anti-Polish forgers of history"][358], "Obelga dla Polaków" [359] ["Insult for Poles"], "Film »Shoah« obelgą dla narodu polskiego" [360] ["The film 'Shoah': an insult to the Polish nation"], "Oszczerstwa przeciwko Polsce w filmie 'Shoah'"[361] [Slander against Poles in the film 'Shoah'], to name but a few.

The analysis of the majority of the articles that appeared in the aforementioned magazines demonstrates that they were in the same vein. The only differences were the levels of aggression and the fact that some of them were based not only on other people's opinions and selected fragments from the French press, but also on the statements of foreign correspondents who had seen the film. Nevertheless, they seem to have been written according to the same pattern, which was nothing new in the communist press. Moving from the general to the particular, let us now reconstruct the objections against "Shoah", bearing in mind that almost no one had seen the film at the time, which blinded both the offensive and defensive press campaigns.

First of all, "Shoah" was considered an anti-Polish film, one that vilified Poles and thus Poland. The word "anti-Polish", as well as "insult", "slur" or "slander" were key terms used to describe and review the film. The "anti-Polishness" was believed to be demonstrated in the anti-Semitic label assigned to Poles and the deliberate distortion of the image of the war to Poland's disadvantage; in showing Poles in a bad light and portraying a biased image of World War II. Lanzmann's film was accused of distortion of historical truth, one-sidedness and manipulation. According to the journalists, "Shoah" suggested the complicity of Poles in the Holocaust or, at least, their tacit consent. The director

355 Z. Morawski, *Potwarz*, "Życie Warszawy" 2 V 1985, p. 2; (W. R.), *Potwarz*, "Ekran" 19 V 1985, p. 2.

356 (PAP), *"Shoah" – skandaliczny film szkalujący Polaków – w programie francuskiej tv*, "Życie Warszawy" 29 IV 1985, p. 2.

357 M. Jaworski, *Trwa antypolska kampania we Francji*, "Trybuna Ludu" 3 V 1985, p. 7.

358 D. Luliński, *Antypolscy fałszerze historii*, "Trybuna Ludu" II V 1985, p. 6.

359 (PAP), *Obelga dla Polaków*, "Rzeczpospolita" 6 V 1985, p. 7.

360 (PAP), *Film "Shoah" obelgą dla narodu polskiego*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 V 1985, p. 1, 5.

361 (PAP), *Oszczerstwa przeciwko Polsce w filmie "Shoah"*, "Rzeczpospolita" 4 V 1985, p.1.

was accused of ignoring the aid provided to Jews by Poles, who sometimes paid for it with their life: in other words, of disregarding the Polish Righteous Among the Nations.

In addition, Lanzmann was accused of excessive focus on Jewish martyrdom and of the omission of the fact that Poles had also suffered during the war. Thus, he was accused of "depleting Polish martyrdom", of questioning the suffering and heroism of Poles. Some of the more aware journalists – those who had actually seen "Shoah" – had stipulations related to Lanzmann's choice of Polish witnesses of the Holocaust. They complained that he had chosen primitive interviewees, and not people from Warsaw or former members of the Home Army or Żegota, or the Polish Righteous. They were also displeased that his film had not included any historical sources, archival materials, or experts' voices, etc.

The criticism and protests against Claude Lanzmann's film were not only formulated by journalists. Some state institutions and organisations and individual, self-appointed defenders of Poland's good name also manifested their disapproval, for example with the protest of the Presidium of the Supreme Bar Council, the veteran organisation ZBoWiD (the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy), or the Board of the Association of War Veterans of the PRL. In addition, a declaration condemning Lanzmann's film was addressed to the French Embassy by the representatives of the Board of the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and the Religious Association of Judaism. Needless to say, the criticism expressed by the organisations of the Polish Jews was particularly powerful because of the identity of its authors. Thus, the statement made by Polish Jews was extensively reported, and individual opinions of Jews in this matter were also published.

A "strong protest" against the film was also expressed and submitted in writing to the French *charge d'affaires* by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The letter stated, for instance, that: "(...) the film contains insinuations, insulting for the Polish nation, about the alleged complicity of Poles in the Hitlerite genocide" and called for its removal from French television. The Polish Ministry also criticised the participation of the French president and members of the French government in the premiere of "Shoah". A journalist who commented on the statement declared that: "(...) Polish public opinion fully supports the ministerial protest, dictated by the will to defend our national dignity, against broadcasting such an abusive film, which casts aspersions on Poles".[362]

362 See: *Protest polskiego MSZ w związku z wyświetlaniem francuskiego filmu "Shoah"*, "Życie Warszawy" 2 V 1985, p. 2; *Protest polskiego MSZ przeciw filmowi "Shoah"*,

The defence of Poland's good name was not limited to official declarations. The legitimate, censored discourse also included attempts to defend the heroic-martyred image of the war, which "Shoah" had supposedly questioned. For this purpose, Lanzmann's film was often supplemented with the content that the director had allegedly ignored and its "lies" and "distortions" were corrected.

Supplementing mostly consisted of bringing up the figures of the Polish Righteous and depicting Poles as a nation that helped Jews on a mass scale and paid the highest price for their actions. The testimonies of Polish Jews who had survived the war solely due to Polish help were published, as well as information about the number of Polish trees in Yad Vashem. Polish martyrdom, silenced by Lanzmann, was also brought up. There were even suggestions that "it is a documented truth that the Hitlerite Reich gave the order for biological extermination of Poles and Jews".[363] While the author of this statement presented Poles and Jews as nations equally sentenced to extermination, other versions presented Poles as "second on the list."[364] Perhaps this was the reason why Lanzmann was accused that he had not emphasised the "Polish-Jewish war 'community of faith'"?[365]

The suffering Poles, fully devoted to helping Jews, and their heroic attitude in the fight against the occupier was contrasted with a completely dissimilar image of the French and France under Nazi occupation. The French were reproached for their collaboration with the Nazis, the Vichy Government, the "French Gestapo" and the fact that Marshall Petaine's collaborating government had been responsible for the extermination of French Jews. French society was also reminded that their achievements in helping Jews were not comparable to the Polish ones, which was supposedly demonstrated by the disproportion in the number of trees on Yad Vashem. The Polish nation, the press reminded, had never delivered to this world any Petain or Quisling and although helping Jews had been punished by death, Poles had not hesitated to lend a hand to the dying. This contrast was clearly expressed by one of the journalists, who wrote: "the behaviour pattern of the Polish nation under foreign occupation, which is preserved in our memory and subconscious, contains three main axioms: resistance against the occupiers, protest against their policy and moral condemnation of

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"Trybuna Ludu" 2 V 1986, p. 6; *Protest polskiego MSZ w związku z wyświetlaniem francuskiego filmu "Shoah",* "Film" 26 V 1985, p. 2.

363 D. Luliński, *Antypolscy fałszerze historii*, "Trybuna Ludu" 2 V 1986, p. 6.

364 (C), *Film "Shoah" obelgą dla narodu polskiego*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 V 1985, p. 5.

365 An "Ekran" journalist wrote about it after the broadcast of "Shoah" on Polish TV. (J.K.), *Po emisji "Shoah"*, "Ekran" 10 XI 1985, p. 4.

those who collaborate with them (...) In France, collaboration was a norm, and conspiracy, resistance and partisan movement – a violation of the norm."[366]

This was not the end of the list of accusations against the French. The positive image of Poles was incomplete and the mood was not quite improved. The problem of anti-Semitism, which Lanzmann and the French press reproached Poland with, was not solved. However, the journalists defending Poland's good name came up with a solution. They argued that France was where anti-Semitism actually ruled, where acts of vandalism were committed on Jewish cemeteries, synagogues burned and Jews lived in constant fear. Poland, on the other hand, was believed to be a place where the Jewish minority lived with a sense of security and never complained about any manifestations anti-Semitism, as they certified themselves in the press. Parenthetically, it is interesting that the example of French anti-Semitism can serve to invalidate Polish anti-Semitism.

As has been already mentioned, all the press statements were primarily intended to extract all the differences between Polish and French attitudes during the Nazi occupation. They were supposed to clearly demonstrate the Polish moral superiority, provide reasons for national pride, and thus refute the alleged charges. They also served to prove that the French had no right to make any accusations against Poland and Poles regarding the war past and anti-Semitism; particularly that no one else but Poles fought for freedom for Poland, France and other countries. Lanzmann was advised to focus on the dark side of his own nation and make their self-examination the main subject of his film.

Why did the French press accuse Poles of anti-Semitism and complicity in the Holocaust? Why was Lanzmann's film made? To quote one of the journalists, using the well known conspiracy rhetoric: "Who gave the false testimony and why? Whose political need is this distortion of historical truth?"[367]

The articles that preceded the Polish premiere of "Shoah" did not fail to answer these questions. They demonstrated that both the film and the accusations against Poland by the French press had the same purpose: to ease the French conscience and draw the attention of the international public opinion away from their troublesome war heritage. Moreover, as one of the journalists suggested, the anti-Polish campaign unleashed by Lanzmann was not only a method "to divert attention from their own [French] imperfections from this period [World War II – author's note]" but also was a "screen, behind which the contemporary

366 Z. Orski, *Kolabo-Film czyli "panowie Francuzi, siadajcie pierwsi!"*, "Film" 30 VI 1985, p. 3.

367 (Lik.), Cynizm po czterdziestu latach, "Rzeczpospolita" 6 V 1985, p. 7.

ulcers of the reviving of Le Pen's brand of fascism" and "the raising wave of xenophobia, racism and homophobia in France" was to be hidden.[368]

There were also suggestions that "the anti-Polish film 'Shoah' seems to be an element of a larger political whole, including the falsification of history". Although the author of the statement did not specify which "larger political whole" he meant, the spirit of March '68 was definitely present in his article. Writing "Paris's flirt with Bonn is also intensifying", he followed in the footsteps of the March speakers who had informed the public about the flirtation between Bonn and Tel Aviv.[369] The purpose of this alleged alliance was believed to be the same as the supposed aim of Lanzmann's film: making Poles co-responsible for the Holocaust. The Paris correspondent Marek Jaworski in the daily "Trybuna Ludu" openly stated that Lanzmann's theories are "(...) simple and already well known from the enunciations of some anti-Polish, Zionist circles."[370] Thus, Jaworski wrote what others only implied: that "Shoah" was "yet another attempt to justify Hitlerite crimes" and an invaluable support to the efforts of West German "revanchists" and revisionists.[371] Similar charges had been earlier brought against Jan Józef Lipski after the publication of his essay: "Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy" ["Two fatherlands, two patriotisms"].

In this way Poles once again believed themselves to be the victims of a campaign of calumnies and insults targeted at their reputation. As that the thread of Jewish passivity during the Holocaust appeared in the public debate over "Shoah", the heritage of March '68 turned out to be alive.[372]

Thanks to the collective effort of journalists and writers, a negative interpretation of the film "Shoah" emerged and probably dominated the social perception of the movie. Before the Polish broadcast of the film, there were very few articles that offered alternative reviews and showed Lanzmann's work in a different light. The exceptions to the rule were Jerzy Tomaszewski's articles in "Polityka" and Artur Sandauer's texts in the same weekly, although some reservations could be made as regards the latter. Both authors had seen the film,

368 M. Jaworski, *Kto na ławie oskarżonych?*, "Trybuna Ludu" 20 IV 1985, p. 6.

369 D. Luliński, *Antypolscy fałszerze historii*, "Trybuna Ludu" 2 V 1986, p. 6.

370 M. Jaworski, *Kto na ławie oskarżonych?*, Trybuna Ludu" 20 IV 1985, p. 6.

371 (PAP), *Film "Shoah" obelgą dla narodu polskiego*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 V 1985, p. 1, 5.

372 The president of the Polish American Congress stated: "Claude Lanzmann, a French-Jewish journalist and film-maker, significantly overlooked a crucial element which importantly influenced the tragic conclusion. It was an apparent inability of the Jewish leaders to comprehend the stark reality of the "final solution", and their virtually passive, almost fatalistic submission to the German terror. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-02-19/news/8601130376_1_polish-efforts-christian-poles-claude-lanzmann, See: *Kongres Polonii Amerykańskiej o filmie Shoah*, "Myśl Polska" 1-15 III 1985, p. 4.

which already distinguished them from most critics. Moreover, both criticised Lanzmann for his self-flattery, arrogance and reckless public statements. However, their review of the film was positive. Artur Sandauer admitted he had seen it three times and each time he found Lanzmann's picture shocking.[373] Jerzy Tomaszewski mentioned the tension that had accompanied him while watching the film, which, he believed, proved "the artistic success of the director". He pointed out, however, that the film was not free of "obvious inaccuracies."[374] Unlike Sandauer, he confined himself to this one statement.

The writings of Artur Sandauer included accusations against the film, which mainly referred to neglecting the topic of the Polish Righteous. Thus, his objections overlapped with what the press was publishing at the time. Public statements by Lanzmann and French press articles also went under Sandauer's blade of criticism. Sandauer suggested that the director "let himself be used as a tool in a game which is not quite clean" and was under the influence of the press campaign that was evoked by his film, which was aimed at "the whole of Poland and was a part of contemporary Western policy towards us."[375] In other words, Sandauer joined the choir of those who announced a hostile campaign aimed at Poles.

On the other hand, Adam Krzemiński and Jan Rem, whose articles were also published in "Polityka", said nothing positive about Lanzmann's film. Jan Rem – in fact Jerzy Urban, the government spokesman who used this pseudonym – criticised the picture most of all for the director's choice of Polish witnesses. He accused Lanzmann of allowing only "not very enlightened people" to speak and presenting "an intellectual ground floor, if not a basement, of the building of Polish society". Similarly to Adam Krzeńmiński, he reproached Lanzmann with bias, criticised the director for ignoring Polish help to Jews and subjecting the whole film to a theory that implied that Poles had also been responsible for the Holocaust. Urban accused Lanzmann of forgery, whitewashing the Nazis, a lack of knowledge of Polish history and "anti-Polish intentions."[376] Adam Krzemiński, who, unlike Urban, had not seen "Shoah", stated that the director "feeds his film, in cold blood, on the Polish complex of many Jews; not only to equate Polish peasants with executors but also to ignore Polish help."[377]

However, it was Jerzy Urban and Artur Sandauer who spoke out about the necessity of showing the film to a Polish audience. While Urban's intentions

373 A. Sandauer, *"Shoah" a sprawa polska*, "Polityka" 3 VIII 1985, p. 5.
374 J. Tomaszewski, *Jom Kipur w Oksfordzie*, "Polityka" 12 XI 1985, p.3.
375 A. Sandauer, *"Shoah" a sprawa polska*, "Polityka" 3 VIII 1985, p. 5.
376 J. Rem, *Szpetni i dzicy*, "Polityka" 3 VIII 1985, p. 7.
377 A. Krzemiński, *Kadisz w Polsce*, "Polityka" 11 V 1985, p. 10.

were quite particular[378], Artur Sandauer called for a national debate over "Shoah" and anti-Semitism. "To silence the debate over 'Polish anti-Semitism', which is unleashed from time to time in Western Europe, let us unleash it ourselves" – Sandauer wrote. "Let us act similarly toward Lanzmann's film! Instead of letting others discuss our drawbacks, let us discuss them on our own! Let us cease to be an insular country that is not easily influenced by the opinions of outsiders! Let us not allow others to use our understatements and embarrassments! Let us get Lanzmann's film and unleash a debate over it."[379]

On 30 October 1985, right after the prime time newscast, Polish television broadcast several large excerpts of the over nine-hour film "Shoah" that concerned Polish bystanders of the Holocaust; that is, the fragments that brought the most intense emotions. The full version could be seen in few cinemas. Thus, the majority of Polish viewers saw the version truncated according to its relevance to a Polish audience and deprived of context, which must have influenced its reception and reviews. In addition, the press campaign that had been running for several months had already defined the film as controversial, seditious and infamous.

Immediately after the broadcast there was a debate in the TV studio. Franciszek Ryszka, Andrzej Grzegorczyk, Andrzej Wasilewski, Kazimierz Kąkol, Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz and Szymon Szurmiej, a director of the Jewish Theatre, commented on Lazmann's picture. According to press articles, opinions presented in the studio did not falsify the objections against Lanzmann that had been raised earlier. Many of these accusations were repeated, for instance the non-representative, biased choice of Polish interviewees (only "primitive people"), or the fact of ignoring the Polish Righteous. Another repeated accusation was that the film "Shoah" had been made according to a predetermined thesis and that it had seriously deformed the history of Poland and its contemporary image. The TV debate resulted in a polemic in "Polityka", in which Andrzej Grzegorczyk and Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, arguing about Polish-Jewish past, formulated a few risky statements. The debate, however, avoided the main content of the film and focussed more on general topics.[380]

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378 Jerzy Urban clearly stated that broadcasting of Lanzmann's film in Poland could initiate a debate on anti-Semitism in the Polish Catholic Church; see: J. Rem, *Szpetni i dzicy*, "Polityka" 3 VIII 1985, p. 7.

379 A. Sandauer, *"Shoah" a sprawa polska*, "Polityka" 3 VIII 1985, p. 5.

380 See: A. Grzegorczyk, *Kwestia żydowska*, "Polityka" 16 XI 1985, p. 6; K. Teodor Toeplitz, *To jest kwestia ideologiczna*, "Polityka" 30 XI 1985, p. 7; Z. Kałużyński, *Odmawiam przebaczenia*, "Polityka" 7 XII 1985, p. 7; A. Grzegorczyk, *Może się dogadamy?*, "Polityka" 21-27 XII 1985, p. 7 (a polemic article, See: I. Nowakowska, *Jeszcze o "kwestii żydowskiej"*, "Więź" 1986, no 7-8, p. 94-101.)

The broadcasting of Lanzmann's film on Polish television did not contribute to a rebuttal of the opinion distributed by "Trybuna Ludu", "Rzeczpospolita", "Życie Warszawy", "Ekran" and "Film". Most likely, it merely strengthened the belief about the harmfulness of the film and the right to raise objections towards it. Thus, objections were repeated and Lanzmann's film was described as "a distortion of contemporary times, but first of all, a cruel, ominous and probably deliberate distortion of our occupational past."[381] The distortion of the past meant ignoring Polish martyrdom and the Polish Righteous and presenting Poles as indifferent towards the Holocaust. The distortion of the present referred to Lanzmann's selection of Polish interviewees, who represented "the darkest of mangles: a gossiping, silly, resentment-fed mangle from villages and little towns".[382]

The tone of the majority of press commentaries after the broadcast of "Shoah", even including the Catholic press, was similar. A "Wprost" journalist noted that one could get an impression that "one hand was holding all pens".[383] Letters by TV viewers about the film were also similar. Anna Sawisz, who analysed these letters, concluded; "The majority of viewers who responded to the film with a letter acted according to the propagandists' plan: they perceived it as an attack on Polish national honour, on the good name of a socialist country, etc." She also stated that "the Jewish topic, which was the main topic of the film, was almost completely subjected to this defensive response".[384]

However, even the limited public discourse included alternative receptions to the film, such as the articles of Jacek Kuroń in "Tygodnik Mazowsze" and Zygmunt Kałuzyński in "Polityka". Kuroń not only emphasised the difference between the war fates of Poles and Jews but also observed that being witnesses to the Holocaust made Poles injured and this "injury", according to Kuroń, was well illustrated in the film.[385]

Zygmunt Kałużyński's article, initially intended to contrast with Andrzej Grzegorczyk's text, turned out to be a comprehensive, outstanding and moving polemic against the majority of objections raised toward "Shoah". The author stated from the outset that Polish reception of the film was distorted because "at this side of the Oder we all watched this film with prejudice, nervously expecting every word, gesture and even elements of landscape as possibly insulting".

381 (Z. M), *"Shoah"*, "Życie Warszawy" 31 X – 3 XI 1985, p. 7.

382 M. Misiorny, *To nie jest film o Polakach*, "Trybuna Ludu" 31 X – 3 XI 1985, p. 8.

383 W. Kosiński, *Wokół Lanzmanna*, "Wprost", p. 31.

384 A. Sawisz, *Obraz Żydów i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w listach telewidzów po emisji filmu "Shoah"*, [in:] *"Bliscy i dalecy". Studia nad postawami wobec innych narodów, ras i grup etnicznych*, A. Jasińska-Kania (ed.), Warszawa 1992, p. 164.

385 Citation after: M. Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona...*, op. cit., p. 128.

Kałużyński did not agree that Lanzmann had planned to make a film about Polish anti-Semitism. If he had pursued such a goal, he could have presented the Kielce pogrom in his film, or other anti-Semitic acts. Instead, Lanzmann took up the challenge of describing the organised process of the Holocaust. Kałużyński also noted that Poles who appeared in the film usually expressed their grief about the tragedy that had happened before their eyes. Only a minority of Polish witnesses manifested antipathy towards Jews. Thus, Kałużyński believed the insinuations about Lanzmann presenting Poles as satisfied with the Holocaust and giving their silent consent to it to be untrue. At the same time, he firmly stated that it was not Lanzmann's fault that the eyewitnesses of the Holocaust "had not been a refined society or professors from a seminary, as the train to Treblinka had not been passing next to a university."[386]

Underground Press also joined the debate over "Shoah". "Aneks" quarterly published a highly favourable review of the film written by Timothy Garton Ash, who, referring to the opinion of John Paul II, commented on the "great moral effect" of the film.[387] He did not, however, spare critical comments and disapproved of Lanzmann's awkward public statements that had influenced the reception of his work. He also referred to common objections made against the film. Garton Ash noted that "the Polish part is historically secondary", because Poles "were neither the executioners nor the main victims in the extermination camps—Lanzmann's subject."[388] Garton Ash, however, was probably wrong in this aspect. The role of bystanders was not belittled in the film and the Holocaust was reconstructed by the director from the perspective of victims, perpetrators and witnesses. On the other hand, he was right in saying that "Shoah does not make a historical argument about the Poles and the Holocaust, in the way that it clearly does make a historical argument about the extermination process".[389] Zygmunt Kałużyński expressed an analogous opinion, noting that Lanzmann's intention (as was claimed by the director himself) was not "(...) dealing with pogroms, persecutions, Jewish suffering over generations due to spontaneous impulses of hatred – but the organised, institutionalised, bureaucratic extermination committed by Nazism."[390]

Timothy Garton Ash also dismissed the accusations that Lanzmann's concealments were believed to distort the history of occupied Poland. The key counterargument was obviously the clearly specified topic of the film. Moreo-

386 Z. Kałużyński, *Odmawiam przebaczenia*, "Polityka" 7 XII 1985, p. 7.
387 T. Garton Ash, *The Life of Death*, The New York Review of Books, 19 December 1985, p. 32-75.
388 Ibidem
389 Ibidem
390 Z. Kałużyński, *Odmawiam przebaczenia*, "Polityka" 7 XII 1985, p. 7.

ver, as Garton Ash noted, Lanzmann did not mention other issues that were essential for the complete image of the Polish-Jewish pre-war past, such as the criminal Poles who blackmailed Jews (*szmalcownik*s) or the Polish "blue police" (*Granatowa Policja*). He also did not include quotations from Kazimierz Brandys's "Warsaw Diary" of the reprehensible things people in "Aryan Warsaw" were saying. Furthermore, there is no merry-go-round[391] from Czesław Miłosz's "Campo di Fiori" and the complex issues the poem evokes.[392] This Lanzmann did not say, because his film is concerned with something completely different.

There is another finding by Timothy Garton Ash that is worth attention. He notes that "we recognise the nationalism of the conqueror. But there is also a nationalism of the victim that Poles and Jews seem to have in common. Characteristic for the nationalism of the victim is a reluctance to acknowledge in just measure the sufferings of other peoples, and an inability to admit that the victim can also victimise".[393] This rule is confirmed in almost all debates over the Polish-Jewish past, when the "reluctance to acknowledge" is demonstrated in the power of psychological repression, relativism and denial. In the same issue of "Aneks", Israel Shakak[394] and Włodzimierz Goldkorn also published their texts. Instead of their detailed analysis, I will only present one, but it is a very firm declaration by Goldkorn: "Accusations against Poles of their indifference towards the Holocaust are justified. Lanzmann's film perfectly documents the indifference and lack of understanding of what happened. However, assuming that passivity is active compliance in crime is a mistake."[395] Those who made such an assumption were the majority of Polish journalists who debated over the film, their French counterparts who drew far-reaching conclusions, and Lanzmann himself, as his public statements could suggest he considered it true. Attentive viewing of "Shoah", however, gives no reason to think so.

The debate over Lanzmann's film in Poland had two essential parts: before and after the television broadcasting. In the first stadium, not many participants saw the film at all; in the second, just as few wanted to prove their first opinion right. In addition, the director's reckless statements and commentaries in the French press seriously hindered the debate and made it go off-track. Still, there were also important and brave voices in the debate, which substantially differed from the dominating review and interpretation of the film. The very fact that Polish television broadcasted fragments of "Shoah" was significant for the pro-

391 In his poem, Miłosz described the merry-go-round in Krasiriski Square, which did not stop during the outbreak of the ghetto uprising that heralded its final liquidation.

392 T. Garton Ash, op. cit., p. 49.

393 Ibidem, p. 42.

394 I. Shahak, *Normalność w nieludzkim świecie*, "Aneks" 1986, no 41-42, p. 52-66.

395 W. Goldkorn, *Sens historii i zagłada Żydów*, "Aneks" 1986, no 41-42, p. 71.

cess of reconstructing Polish memory about the Holocaust. The Holocaust and the problem of the attitudes of Poles towards it were in the centre of public attention for a while. Through television – a medium with a wider range of influence than an underground magazine for intelligentsia – Poles were confronted with a problem that had been usually disregarded.

Obviously, it would be hard to unequivocally determine whether fragments of Lanzmann's film on Polish TV did indeed spark off a heated debate in Polish society. We do not know whether the film was discussed in "hundreds of thousands of Polish homes", as Maciej Kozłowski claimed or if it "did not, contrary to the expectations, invoke passion on a tram, in a queue or in the street", which a "Wprost" journalist suggested."[396]

It is also difficult to determine what the reception and rating of the film were. How many Poles responded according to the expectations of propagandists who had been preparing them for their viewing of this film over the previous months? In other words, to what extent were the authors of the letters to Polish television representative of Polish society? These questions will remain unanswered. One thing is certain, however: Lanzmann's film on Polish TV managed to break the "area of silence" and directed the process of reconstructing the memory of the Holocaust into the areas that had not yet been explored. Not only did the responses to the film reveal empty spaces in Polish memory, they also outlined a map of suppressed elements in the memory of the witnesses of Shoah.

3. What Błoński said in Miłosz's words

As soon as the debate over Lanzmann's "Shoah" came to an end, the problem of the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust again became the subject of public inquiry due to another event. This time, it was an article by the literary critic, Professor Jan Błoński (who died in 2009), whose article "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" was published by the weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny" on 11 January 1987.[397] The sensitive problem was raised by a Pole, not an outside stranger whose intentions could easily be interpreted as bad. In addition, contrary to Claude Lanzmann, Błoński focused almost solely on the attitude of Polish witnesses of the Holocaust and the consequences that they experienced because of what they had witnessed. Considering the manner in which the author ap-

396 M. Kozłowski, *Zrozumieć*, "Ogniwo" 1986, no 25, p. 26; W. Kosiński, *Wokół Lanzmanna*, "Wprost" 1985, p. 31.

397 J. Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 11 I 1987, p. 1,4.

proached this sensitive subject, his openness and courage in presenting facts and opinions, Błoński's article should definitely be considered groundbreaking. Thus, it is not surprising that his text and the debate over it are today considered a symbol of a shift in extracting the difficult Polish-Jewish topics from the darkness of oblivion. The significance of the article can be proven by the fact that, as Daniel Blatman noted, "it has long been a landmark in the examination of Polish-Jewish relations."[398]

What did Jan Błoński write in 1987 in "Tygodnik Powszechny"? It is impossible to summarise the profoundness of his thoughts and the virtuosity of his style in two sentences. Already in the introduction to his deliberations, Błoński alluded to Czesław Miłosz's words, whose two poems, written in the period of the Nazi occupation, "Campo di Fiori" and "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto" [The Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto] became the key point of reference and the groundwork for Błoński's article.[399] Even the title of the article referred to the second of the two poems by Miłosz mentioned above. Mentioning the poet and employing his words had a symbolic meaning. Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak noted that in the romantic tradition it was "poet: the conscience of a nation" who had the power to "notice what has been hidden from the eyes of the community and his moral dilemmas deserve attention."[400] Thus, Błoński began his article with Miłosz's words of the duty of Polish poetry to purge the burden of guilt from our native soil, which is – in his words – "sullied, blood-stained, desecrated".[401]

It is hard to disagree with Błoński's words that Miłosz did not mean Polish blood because "one can only be held accountable for the shedding of blood which is not one's own. The blood of one's own kind, when shed by victims of violence, stirs memories, arouses regret and sorrow, demands respect."[402] Miłosz also did not mean the blood of the occupier, because "killing when in self-defence is legally condoned."[403] What he meant was "Jewish blood, the geno-

398 D. Blatman, *Were These Ordinary Poles?*, "Yad Vashem Studies" 2002, no XXX, p. 67.

399 Both poems were written by Czesław Miłosz in 1943, during the occupation. They were published e.g. in the "Ocalenie" volume.

400 E. Koźmińska-Frejlak, *Świadkowie Zagłady – Holocaust jako zbiorowe doświadczenia Polaków*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", p. 189.

401 All quotations are from Jan Błoński's essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto". Fragments of Czesław Miłosz's poems and statements are quoted after Jan Błoński. See: J. Błoński, *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto*, http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/eehistory/H200Readings/Topic4-R1.html

402 Ibidem

403 ibidem

cide which – although not perpetrated by the Polish nation – took place on Polish soil and which has tainted that soil for all time".[404] Not only did Błoński call to remember the shed Jewish blood that had belonged to the former residents of the collective Polish home, he also called to cleanse and clarify the Polish collective memory of Jews and the Holocaust. Memory is at the core of our identity: "We cannot dispose of it at will, even though as individuals we are not directly responsible for the actions of the past", Błoński wrote. "We must carry it within us even though it is unpleasant or painful", he added. If, then, the Jewish blood "has remained in the walls, seeped into the soil" and "has also entered into ourselves, into our memory", then "we must cleanse ourselves, and this means we must see ourselves in the light of truth." This is how Błoński interpreted Miłosz's words and this was the postulate he formulated in his introduction: without it, "our home, our soil, we ourselves, will remain tainted."[405]

In the later part of his article, Błoński demonstrated how difficult this cleansing was and what barriers it met on the way. He used a well-known poem by Czesław Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori", which depicts the indifference of Polish society toward the hell of the ghetto residents and about the "dying alone" which "the poet's word" will bring back to memory. The symbol of this loneliness and indifference was the merry-go-round in Krasiriski Square, which did not stop during the outbreak of the ghetto uprising that heralded its final liquidation.[406] What Błoński meant, however, was not the actual content of the poem but rather the mental discomfort of its author. As Czesław Miłosz wrote, the poem was about "the act of dying from the standpoint of an observer" and hence the poet considered it "very dishonest". Błoński agreed with this observation, writing: "the piece is so composed that the narrator, whom we presume to be the poet himself, comes off unscathed. Some are dying, others are enjoying themselves, all that he does is to 'register a protest' and walk away, satisfied by thus having composed a beautiful poem. And so, years later, he feels he got off too lightly."[407]

The barriers and difficulties of the already mentioned "cleansing" were illustrated not only by the poet's dilemma. Błoński demonstrated them mainly by reconstructing an imaginary conversation between two people about anti-Semitism and the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust. The pattern of the conversation, constructed by Błoński, was based on almost ritually repeated ar-

404 ibidem

405 ibidem

406 About the symbolism and history of the mrry-go-round, see: T. Szarota, *Karuzela na Placu Krasińskich. Studia i szkice z lat wojny i okupacji*, Warszawa 2009.

407 Czesław Miłosz wrote "Campo di Fiori" while witnessing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and its liquidation. These were the events that inspired him.

guments, accusations, rationalisations and denials. In short, the author created a standard model of conversation based on the common experience of discussing Polish-Jewish topics. Anyone who has ever participated in such a conversation, particularly if asked about Polish anti-Semitism by a foreigner, will probably find him or herself as the interlocutor in Błonski's dialogue. Certainly, they will also be able to imagine the content and course of the conversation. Błoński recapitulated this half-imagined, half-real conversation writing: "And so on, indeed, endlessly" and suggested that academic debates resembled this discussion. What is the most important, however: according to Błoński, the inability to discuss Polish-Jewish relations in a meaningful and constructive way results from the burden of guilt Miłosz wrote about.

Jan Błoński referred to Czesław Miłosz's poetry once more in his text. This time it was a poem written during the occupation, entitled: "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto". The poem is very metaphorical, odd and, one might even say, psychedelic. It begins with the image of the destruction of a city. The poet is as if in its ruins, under the ground, among buried human bodies, when a weird figure appears; a "guardian mole" who is boring a tunnel with a torch fastened to his forehead: "He touches buried bodies, counts them, pushes on. He distinguishes human ashes by their luminous vapour/ The ashes of each man by a different part of the spectrum." The poet fears the "guardian mole" and confesses his fear: "I am afraid, so afraid of the guardian mole/ He has swollen eyelids, like a Patriarch/Who has sat much in the light of candles/Reading the great book of the species./ What will I tell him, I, a Jew of the New Testament/Waiting two thousand years for the second coming of Jesus?/Broken body will deliver me to his sight/And he will count me among the helpers of death:/The uncircumcised."

Obviously, everyone has a right to their own interpretation of this terrifying poem by Miłosz. Everyone can also give an individual answer to the question of who the "guardian mole" is. However, for the purpose of this book, it is only Błońki's interpretation that is necessary. Miłosz himself suggested that the "guardian mole" had Jewish features and Błoński did not fail to note it. In Błoński's opinion, there are two fears in the poem. First is the fear of death in a similar way to those buried alive in the cellars of the ghetto. In other words, it is the "Poor Christian's" fear of the same fate that Jews suffered. But there is also a fear of the guardian mole. Who is he, according to Błoński, and what does the fear of him represent? Błoński's answer is fundamental: "This mole burrows underground but also underneath our consciousness. This is the feeling of guilt which we do not want to admit". The fear felt by the "Poor Christian" is "muffled, hidden even from himself--he feels the fear that he will be condemned (...) It is the mole who condemns him, or rather may condemn him, this mole who sees well and reads 'the book of the species'. It is his own moral conscience that

condemns (or may condemn) the poor Christian. And he would like to hide from his mole-conscience, as he does not know what to say to him."

Having said so, Błoński came back to his imaginary conversation about Polish-Jewish relations, Polish anti-Semitism and the attitude of Poles towards the Holocaust. He came back to point out that the arguments of the Polish interlocutor revealed the same fear that troubled the "Poor Christian". It was the fear that he might be counted among the helpers of death by the "guardian mole". This fear, according to Błoński, is so strong that we do everything possible not to let it out, or we dismiss it. It manifests itself in the Polish-Polish and Polish-Jewish discussions on the subject of anti-Semitism or the Holocaust. If only some event or fact "puts us in a less-than-advantageous light", "desperate attempts to minimise it, to explain it away and make it seem insignificant" start to emerge. This is because we greatly fear accusations. "We fear that the guardian mole might call to us, after having referred to his book: 'Oh, yes, and you too, have you been assisting at the death? And you too, have you helped to kill?' Or, at the very least: 'Have you looked with acquiescence at the death of the Jews?'"

However, anyone who believed that Blonski had accused Poles of complicity in the Holocaust would be wrong. Blonski only wanted to say that we – Poles – do everything we can not to confront these questions for the sake of our good name and the good name of our nation. We dismiss them as "unacceptable" although they have to be asked. Once they are asked, we have the answers and rationalisations ready: everything for the sake of our national good name. Analysing Polish-Jewish past, "we want to derive moral advantages from it. (...)We want to be absolutely beyond any accusation, we want to be completely clean. We want to be also--and only--victims." This concern is, however, Błoński continued, "underpinned by fear--just as in Milosz's poem--and this fear warps and disfigures our thoughts about the past", which is "immediately communicated to those we speak to". Therefore, "we prefer not to speak of it all" or "we speak of it only in order to deny an accusation". It will not be easy, however, to get rid of the fear of the guardian mole, which is drilling the conscience. Exorcisms will not help whatsoever. Neither can we get rid of the fear – Błoński noted – "by forgetting about the past or taking a defensive attitude towards it". He firmly stated that "we must face the question of responsibility in a totally sincere and honest way" although "it is one of the most painful questions that we are likely to be faced with". And Błoński did face it. He also postulated that we should imitate the way the Catholic Church had dealt with their own attitude towards Jews and stop "haggling, trying to defend and justify ourselves", "stop arguing about the things that were beyond our power to do, during the occupation and beforehand". We must stop, Błoński demanded, and "place blame on political, social and economic conditions". We must honestly answer the question: did

Poles jointly and severally help Jews during the Holocaust when the Nazis were killing them in front of their eyes? How many were quietly satisfied? How many helped the occupiers? How much did the pre-war anti-Semitism influence later indifference? We must frankly answer these questions and many others, such as those concerning the postwar violence experienced by the Holocaust survivors in Poland. In other words, according to Błoński: "instead of haggling and justifying ourselves, we should first consider our own faults and weaknesses. This is the moral revolution that is imperative when considering the Polish-Jewish past. It is only this that can gradually cleanse our desecrated soil." Thus, Błoński postulated that we should acknowledge and confess our blame. He also asked himself the question that the guardian mole prompted: "Full responsibility? Also a shared responsibility for the genocide?"

Błoński's answer was partly close to Karl Jasper's idea of "metaphysical guilt" that he presented in his famous essay: "The question of German guilt" – but only partly. Błoński did not say anything about Polish complicity and none of his words entitles the reader to draw such conclusions. He spoke, however, of our "shared responsibility". Here is what he exactly said:

My answer is this: participation and shared responsibility are not the same thing. One can share the responsibility for the crime without taking part in it. Our responsibility is for holding back, for insufficient effort to resist. Which of us could claim that there was sufficient resistance in Poland? It is precisely because resistance was so weak that we now honour those who did have the courage to take this historic risk. It may sound rather strange, but I do believe that this shared responsibility, through failure to act, is the less crucial part of the problem we are considering. More significant is the fact that if only we had behaved more humanely in the past, had been wiser, more generous, then genocide would perhaps have been 'less imaginable', would probably have been considerably more difficult to carry out, and almost certainly would have met with much greater resistance than it did. To put it differently, it would not have met with the indifference and moral turpitude of the society in whose full view it took place.

According to Błoński, this shared responsibility does not relate only to Poles but also to all Europeans and the whole Christian world. Shared responsibility is our common responsibility. However, it falls on Poles in particular, for it was in Poland where the greatest number of Jews lived and where the main arena of the Holocaust was located by the Nazis, which consequently made Poles direct witnesses. Therefore, Błoński wrote of himself and his countrymen: "we had the greatest moral obligation towards the Jewish people. Whether what was demanded of us was or was not beyond our ability to render, God alone must judge

and historians will continue to debate. But, for us, more than for any other nation, Jews were more of a problem, a challenge that we had to face".

Almost at the end of his article, Jan Blonski, who called the Polish pre-war anti-Semitism "particularly virulent" asked yet another important question: did it lead us to participate in genocide? The negative answer he gave finished the article and was as crucial as the idea of shared responsibility that Błoński outlined. Here is what he wrote at the end:

> No. Yet, when one reads what was written about Jews before the war, when one discovers how much hatred there was in Polish society, one can only be surprised that words were not followed by deeds. But they were not (or very rarely). God held back our hand. Yes, I do mean God, because if we did not take part in that crime, it was because we were still Christians, and at the last moment we came to realize what a Satanic enterprise it was. This still does not free us from sharing responsibility. The desecration of Polish soil has taken place and we have not yet discharged our duty of seeking expiation. In this graveyard, the only way to achieve this is to face up to our duty of viewing our past truthfully.

These long quotations from Błoński's article, as well as their detailed analysis were intended to demonstrate the ground-breaking status of the essay, which was published in 1987. It was ground-breaking because Błoński bravely raised a moral problem that was important for Poles and offered a completely new way of discourse related to Polish-Jewish relations; his article became a catalyst for the process of reconstruction of Polish collective memory about Jews and the Holocaust. This was because the author went far beyond schematic rules of the propagandist public discourse and changed the direction of the debate. He neither accused nor defended. He never accused Poles of complicity in the Holocaust, which happens sometimes in the West, but neither did he limit his considerations to an apotheosis of the Polish Righteous. He did not give a false impression that most Poles provided aid to Jews. He also did not try to hide the indifference of Polish bystanders behind the trees of Yad Vashem. In addition, he never depicted the image of the pre-war Poland as a Polish-Jewish idyll and heaven for Jews. In short, Błoński did not soothe the national conscience by saying the Jewish problem did not exist as Polish problem.

On the contrary, the author pointed at the moral significance of the attitudes of Poles to the Holocaust and to Jews, before and after the war. "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" leaves no doubt that dealing with the moral problem recognised by Błoński, which had not been discussed or analysed, poses a significant challenge for Polish society to face. Hence, Błoński's language – which Michał Głowiński noted twenty years later – was "neither the language of accusation nor of apology (...) nor the language of a polemic with accusations nor polemic

with apology. (...) He consequently used the language of morality to discuss the problem of Polish-Jewish relations."[408]

The "language of morality", proposed by Jan Błoński, and the content of "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto", written in this language, met diverse social response. Since then, Błoński's attitude and perspective have had epigones as well as critics, who consider the essay to be an example of detrimental historical determinism. As one can easily guess, almost immediately after its publication, in January 1987, those who regarded the taboo-breaking article as unjust, unfair and seditious spoke with a loud voice. This was also the tone of opinions expressed in the official communist press. The journalists who formulated them unanimously repeated almost all of the accusations that had earlier been made against Lanzmann for his film "Shoah" and Jan Józef Lipski for his essay "Two Fatherlands, two Patriotisms".

Leaving their detailed reconstruction aside, it is enough to say that Błoński's essay was first of all seen as departing from the historical truth, undermining the difficulty of living conditions under the Nazi occupation, belittling their martyrdom and disregarding the heroism of Poles who commonly provided aid to Jews. Critics noted that the image of Polish-Jewish relations, which had been good for years – Poland had been the mythical *Paradisus Judaeorum* – was completely falsified in the article. Błoński was accused of burdening Poles with the responsibility for the Holocaust and thus favouring West German "revanchists" who, according to the propagandist enunciations, still wished to classify Poles as the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Additionally, the word "anti-Polish" was endlessly repeated in the public discourse and became a very useful term to describe the crime of the author and his work.

It was not the communist press that became the main arena of the very emotive discussion that Błońki's essay had provoked. The debate was held mainly in the Catholic press, mostly in "Tygodnik Powszechny" weekly, which had published "The Poor Poles". After publication, many letters arrived to the editorial office, which inclined the chief editor, Jerzy Turowicz, to state that no other problem had evoked such a lively response.[409] Needless to say, from all the letters sent to "Tygodnik Powszechny", not each and every opinion was published. Moreover, not every author agreed with the content of "The Poor Poles". According to Jerzy Turowicz, who recapitulated the discussion, the majority of letters and articles expressed "a critical stance towards Błoński's statements".[410]

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408 M. Głowiński, *Esej Błońskiego po latach*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2006, no 2, p. 15-16.

409 J. Turowicz, *Racje polskie i racje żydowskie*, "Tygodni Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 1.

410 Ibidem

A significant example of a publically expressed critical opinion was an article by the lawyer Władysław Siła-Nowicki, which can be, with high probability, considered the representative voice of the vast majority of Polish society. According to Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak, the letters to "Tygodnik Powszechny" can demonstrate that the readers strongly backed Siła-Nowicki in his polemic with Błoński. It is thus worth considering what Władysław Siła-Nowicki wrote in his article, entitled: "Janowi Błońskiemu w odpowiedzi" [In Response to Jan Błoński].[411]

In an annotation to the article by Władysław Siła-Nowicki, the editors of "Tygodnik Powszechny" distanced themselves from its content, noting that: "a number of theories included in this article are at least debatable" and that the author "interpreted the article "Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" too one-sidedly. Indeed, the article contained things one might want to isolate oneself from. In the first words of his polemical text, Władysław Siła-Nowicki stated that Błoński's text may be interpreted as an unintended "approval and quintessence" of the incessant "anti-Polish propaganda" led by the enemies of the whole Polish nation more than the enemies of the government and the system. He also perceived the publication itself as very dangerous because of the sources of the validation of Błoński as an outstanding literary critic and the fact that his essay was published in an important Catholic magazine. "God, forgive him for he knows not what he does" – lamented Władysław Siła-Nowicki over what Błoński and the magazine did.

Władysław Siła-Nowicki accused Błoński of a far-fetched over-interpretation of Miłosz's two poems and of using the poet's words for an unmerited cause. He also did not like the fact that Błoński used the first person plural and spoke in the name of the nation as the collective subject. In the opinion of Władysław Siła-Nowicki, Błoński should have spoken "in his own name", considering that the language he used was the language of "mortal enemies and slanderers" of the community he addressed and in the name of which he spoke. Nowicki regarded Błoński's views as "dangerous and harmful" and contrasted them with his own vision of Polish-Jewish relations in the interwar period and in occupied Poland.

According to Władysław Siła-Nowicki, Poland had always been a tolerant country, which is why so many Jews had lived there before the war. However, they lived their lives in separation from Poles and their isolation was by their own choice, dictated by the need to preserve their autonomy and identity. According to Władysław Siła-Nowicki, Jews, forced to live in diaspora, had to

411 All the quotations can be found in the article and the editorial: W. Siła-Nowicki, *Janowi Błońskiemu w odpowiedzi*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 22 II 1987, p. 3.

"maintain their separateness", "create their own community" and love it more "than the host community." They also had to care about the interests of this community in the first place if they wanted to ensure its duration and continuity. Siła-Nowicki "knew from experience" that there had been hardly any anti-Semitism in pre-war Poland and that Jews had immaculate living conditions. He also never came across the venomously anti-Semitic journalism that Błoński had described. Although Siła-Nowicki admitted there had been incidents of feuds, he also claimed they had resulted from the great number of Jews and the conflict of interest. He denied the words of Błoński, who said that Jews had been treated as "second category citizens", and maintained that their situation had been very good. For instance, Jews dominated wholesale and retail trade, controlled "a disproportionate part of wealth", and had better access to education than city citizens: the percentage of Jews with secondary and tertiary education was higher than the percentage of educated Poles (in relation to the number of Jews and Poles respectively). Jews also dominated certain professions, particularly those relating to law (barristers) and medicine (doctors).

According to Władysław Siła-Nowicki, all the above-mentioned facts must have inevitably led to conflicts and indeed they did. The author was "disgusted" at the anti-Semitic incidents at Polish universities, ghetto benches, *numerus clausus* and *numerus nullus*, but, as he stated, they were only "a frolic, child's play" in comparison to what was happening in Germany at the time. Besides, one could end up "in the can" for such behaviour. By the way, Siła-Nowicki considered these discriminatory practices as somehow "natural" for "a society to defend itself against the numerical domination of its intelligentsia". In other words, according to the author, these incidents had not stemmed from anti-Semitism but necessary defence and national instinct for self-preservation.

When the Nazi occupation started, Polish and Jewish communities had not been living together but next to each other. According to Siła-Nowicki, this was a result of the Jewish tradition of integrism and isolationism, which they had cultivated after hundreds of years of living in diaspora. The author added that the two communities adopted two completely different attitudes towards the occupier. Poles created an underground state, devoted themselves to active, military resistance against the Nazi, and, full of dedication, gave their lives for their country. Jews, on the other hand, were failed by their own self-preservation instinct as they sought rescue in passiveness and submission to the restrictions imposed by the occupiers. They did not shoot at Germans or at Jewish police in ghettos; they did not attempt to escape, being escorted from "this town or another" to railways stations "by a few, sometimes six, sometimes four guards armed with ordinary rifles". The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was their only heroic act. Jewish passiveness, according to the author, was "the first and key obstacle that

prevented Poles from helping Jews". Nevertheless, even if Poles could hardly do anything to help Jews, they did everything they possibly could.

In sum, Władysław Siła-Nowicki regarded all of Błoński's statements as unjustified and he rejected the "language of morality" proposed by the critic. He copied the same defensive stand of the imaginary, schematic dialogue described and undermined by Błoński in his essay "The Poor Poles..." Not only did Siła-Nowicki not notice anything inappropriate or incriminating about pre-war anti-Semitism, he even claimed it had never existed. He also denied the indifference of the majority of Polish society towards the Holocaust, arguing that we helped Jews as much as we could. In contrast to Błoński, who never attempted to soothe national conscience but called for examination of it, the words of Siła-Nowicki confirmed the Polish conviction that their nation was immaculate. "I am proud", he wrote, "of my nation's stance in every respect during the period of occupation and in this I include the attitude towards the tragedy of the Jewish nation. Obviously, attitudes towards the Jews during that period do not give us a particular reason to be proud, but neither are they any grounds for shame, and even less for ignominy. Simply, we could have done relatively little more than we actually did, including the attitude to the tragedy of the Jewish nation." Those who should be ashamed, according to Władysław Siła-Nowicki, were the Jews from the United States, who remained passive and indifferent in the face of the horror experienced by their brothers, and not the Poles who struggled, suffered and gave aid to Jews to the best of their abilities. Siła-Nowicki eagerly appreciated the war martyrdom of his own nation and accused Błoński of depicting only its alleged flaws and defects while ignoring its suffering and heroism.

The polemic article of Władysław Siła-Nowicki, an educated man, a barrister in political trials and a declared anti-communist was (and still is) an illustrious example of the stereotypical thinking about Polish-Jewish topics. Its content clearly shows how deeply and strongly these stereotypes have been rooted in mentality and language; how significantly they influence the way people think about these issues. It also demonstrates that education does not impregnate the immensity of this influence.

Needless to say, the language used by Władysław Siła-Nowicki was not new. It belonged to the repertoire of the nationalist Right, who had spoken it particularly loudly in the interwar period. Siła-Nowicki had then made a name for himself as a journalist of the "Prosto z mostu" magazine, which had not avoided anti-Semitic content. However, it is easy to notice that his style and arguments corresponded with the nationalistic and anti-Semitic tone in which the communists had used when referring to the Polish-Jewish themes, and which had been present in the public discourse for some time. However, Władysław Siła-Nowicki was never influenced by the corrupting communist propaganda.

Michał Głowiński brilliantly noted that although the author "wrote according to rules shaped by the nationalist Right, he used his own language" and did not need to borrow from anyone. On the contrary, it was communist authorities who, for some time, had been taking over "the rules of the rightist discourse and, consequently, its obligatory thinking patterns". In other words, the style and arguments used by Władysław Siła Nowicki were very similar to what the official press was publishing at the time because communists had taken over the rhetoric that was typical for nationalist thought".[412]

Siła-Nowicki's article met with a favourable response from the majority of the readers of "Tygodnik Powszechny", who wrote letters to the weekly expressing their opinion on the matter. The 180 letters sent by the readers were analysed by Ewa Koźmińska-Frejlak in her master thesis. The authors were usually well educated and for various reasons interested in the subject of Polish-Jewish relations during and after the war. Koźmińska-Frejlak divided the letters into two categories: "pro-Błoński" and "pro-Siła-Nowicki" and demonstrated significant differences between the authors' perspectives regarding Polish-Jewish relations during the Nazi occupation. Błoński's advocates accepted the language of morality and ethic that he had proposed. They perceived the Holocaust as a singular and unprecedented event in the history of humankind. They were also ready to acknowledge and confess the Polish guilt related to Jews, and never denied it. They agreed with the image of the Polish-Jewish past presented by Błoński. The protagonists of Władysław Siła-Nowicki, on the other hand, took a completely different approach. It is important to note, however, that this group was less homogenous and the argumentation (or its style) varied to some extent. Nevertheless, they mostly refused to acknowledge Shoah as a particular or distinctive event. Moreover, they interpreted Błoński's essay as anti-Polish and dangerous for the Polish reason of state. They strongly rejected the suppositions and arguments of the author and disagreed with his key conclusion. In addition, they presented a completely different image of the Polish-Jewish past. They also took the defensive position that Błoński had criticised when he wrote: "instead of haggling and justifying ourselves, we should first consider our own faults and weaknesses".[413]

Siła-Nowicki's text met with a critical response from other participants in the debate held by "Tygodnik Powszechny" on Błońki's essay. Suffice to say

412 See: M. Głowiński, *Esej Błońskiego...*, p. 18-19.

413 See: E. Koźmińska-Frejlak, *Polsko-żydowskie rozrachunki wojenne. Wyzwania Holocaustu. Analiza listów do redakcji "Tygodnika Powszechnego" nadesłanych w odpowiedzi na dyskusję Błoński-Siła-Nowicki*, maszynopis, Instytut Socjologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1992.

that Kazimierz Dziewanowski fiercely criticised the polemical language of Siła-Nowicki.[414] Stanisław Krajewski noted that Siła-Nowicki was "insensitive to the Jewish fate" and "guarding Polish honour, settled himself into the defensive position".[415] Jerzy Jastrzębowski decided that the outstanding lawyer had failed to understand the "language of morality" proposed by Błoński and also did not notice either the significance of the moral attitude Błoński postulated nor the necessity of moral revolution that Błoński proclaimed.[416]

Teresa Prekerowa, the author of a number of important publications regarding the help given by Poles to Jews during the war, also took the floor. In her objective and fact-based polemic, she demonstrated how modest the scale of this help had been and what a minimal part of Polish society had been involved in it. She asked rhetorically: "Does the achieved result – 2% of the society [who helped Jews: author's note] allow one to claim that 'we could have done relatively little more than we actually did?' I have considerable doubts." Teresa Prekerowa also wrote about the indifference of the majority of Polish society towards the Holocaust and noted various manifestations of the disgraceful attitudes of Poles to Jews during the war. In addition, she reviewed the stereotype of Jewish passivity, which she found comfortable but fundamentally wrong. Moreover, Prekerowa called this accusation of passivity "stern", as it was formulated by a society that valued resistance to violence very highly and that made it its national feature.[417]

The abovementioned critics of Władysław Siła-Nowicki's text acknowledged and respected Błoński's article even if they did not agree with every single statement it included. They agreed, however, that Błoński raised an extremely important subject and identified a problem that had not been openly named so far, broke the conspiracy of silence and violated a national taboo. Stanisław Salmonowicz described the essay "The Poor Poles" as "bitter" but "hugely important" and, similar to other debaters who accepted the "language of morality" proposed by Błoński, developed some of the author's ideas and argued with others.[418]

Janina Warlewska presented a similar opinion in a very personal article, in which she wrote about her dilemma between the standpoint of Siła-Nowicki and Błoński. The dilemma was whether to take a defensive position or to confess to

414 K. Dziewanowski, *Proszę nie mówić za mnie*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 2.

415 E. Berberyusz, *Czarna dziura*, rozmowa z S. Krajewskim, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 4.

416 J. Jastrzębowski, *Na różnych płaszczyznach*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 5.

417 T. Prekerowa, *"Sprawiedliwi" i "bierni"*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 29 III 1987, p. 3.

418 S. Salmonowicz, *Głębokie korzenie i długi żywot stereotypów...*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 8 II 1987, p. 4.

complicity and the sin of omission. Warlewska finally decided on the latter.[419] Ewa Berbyreusz took a similar position, thanking Błoński for making her realise her complicity with more clarity. She finished: "I accept the message of the article: let us stop haggling about extenuating circumstances, let us stop arguing and bow our heads instead."[420]

The article that finished the debate over Jan Błoński's essay in "Tygodnik Powszechny" was Jerzy Turowicz's "Racje polskie i racje żydowskie" ["Polish arguments and Jewish arguments"]. The chief editor summarised the main threads of the discussion, which included readers' letters. At the same time, Turowicz did not avoid presenting his own opinion about Błoński's article, which he regarded as "not only right but also very necessary". He disagreed with the accusations of its "anti-Polish" character and defended its main arguments. In addition, he explained the meaning of the term "shared responsibility" used by Błoński, which had been often wrongly interpreted as acknowledging Polish complicity in the Holocaust. Turowicz also denied the sameness of the war fate of Poles and Jews, which had been often suggested and not only in this particular debate. He did not share Siła-Nowicki's peace of mind regarding the non-existence of pre-war anti-Semitism and that Poles did everything they could to help Jews.

However, Turowicz also had reservations regarding Błoński's words: "if we did not take part in that crime [the Holocaust – author's note], it was because we were still Christians", God held back our hand". Turowicz considered these words to be an unfair and undeserved accusation, because, he stated, "Despite everything, there was no possibility of our complicity in the genocide. However, it does not mean that the problem of shared responsibility did not exist".[421] By the way, Jan Błoński explained a few times that he acknowledged his mistake for using metaphors to describe a sensitive matter instead of formulating his thought precisely.

This one and only bone of contention did not influence the general, high opinion of Turowicz regarding "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto". Turowicz was in fact one of the most devoted advocates of Jan Błoński in the course of the debate. Closing the debate in "Tygodnik Powszechny" Turowicz wrote: "and if our whole discussion contributes to a collective examination of conscience, to rejection of the belief that since we were victims we are innocent, if it helps to deepen our moral sensitivity, it will mean this discussion was necessary. The

419 J. Walewska, *W jakimś sensie jestem antysemitką*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 3.

420 E. Berberyusz, *Wina przez zaniechanie*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 22 II 1987, p. 3.

421 J. Turowicz, *Racje polskie i racje żydowskie*, "Tygodni Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 1, 4.

change of mentality and attitudes achieved in this way and the new awareness of the problem will help to develop Polish-Jewish dialogue. The aim will be better communication, elimination of prejudice and misunderstandings. (...) That is why – despite the claims of some of our readers – we will sometimes write about the Polish-Jewish and Christian-Jewish problems in 'Tygodnik Powszechny'".[422]

As Antony Polonsky noted, "Jan Błońskis's article 'The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto' sparked off what has certainly been the most profound discussion since 1945 of the Holocaust in Poland.[423] It demonstrated how deeply the anti-Semitic clichés and the stereotypes about Polish-Jewish relations were rooted in the Polish language. It also revealed serious distortions of Polish collective memory, which had established themselves over the previous decades. In other words, the debate disclosed the "hidden complex of the Polish mind", as Andrzej Bryk called the difficult "Jewish question";[424] it revealed what it was and where it was located. At the same time, it demonstrated that few members of the Polish intelligentsia were able to speak the language proposed by Błoński and respond to the challenge of the "moral revolution" he postulated, cease the never-ending haggling and bidding and "consider our own faults and weaknesses." Apparently, the Polish intelligentsia were not yet prepared for such a step, although the first wise and important voices could be heard. One way or another, Jan Błoński started a debate on the shared moral responsibility of the Polish nation regarding the Holocaust. Thus, he was the first to expose himself to attacks and judgements by the "true Poles", whose rhetoric, in its unmodified version, makes itself felt even today whenever the topic of the difficult Polish-Jewish past appears in a public debate. Błoński's essay undoubtedly has been essential for the modern history of our conscience.

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The last decade of the People's Republic of Poland included various attempts to break the long and bothersome silence on Jews, the Holocaust and the Polish-Jewish past. One could notice manifestations of this complex process of memory reconstruction in bookshops, where academic literature on the subject, memoirs of the Holocaust survivors and books evoking the pre-war world of Polish Jews appeared on the shelves. To some degree, the state's monopoly on the organisation of the commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was

422 J. Turowicz, *Racje polskie i racje żydowskie*, "Tygodni Powszechny" 5 IV 1987, p. 4.

423 A. Polonsky, *Introduction* [in:] *My Brother's Keeper. Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, A. Polonsky (ed.), Routledge, Oxford 1990, p. 1.

424 A. Bryk, *The Hidden Complex of Polish Mind* [in:] *My Brother's ...*, p. 171.

broken and the alternative commemorations should certainly be seen as meaningful events. Activists of Polish democratic opposition demanded that the Holocaust and its victims be remembered. So did John Paul II, whose words spoken during the visit in Auschwitz were indeed groundbreaking. Polish intellectuals also gave their opinion in brave essays in which they dealt with the difficult problem of anti-Semitism and the attitudes of Poles to the Holocaust.

The most important events regarding the processes of the reconstruction of the memory of Jews and the Holocaust were certainly the first, timid public debates over Lanzmann's film and Blonski's essay. It is easy to notice, however, that apart from the attacks before and after the premiere of "Shoah", their range was limited. The debate was held by the same intellectuals who also read the essays of Aleksander Smolar, Jerzy Jedlicki and Jan Józef Lipski. Therefore, it is impossible to agree with a journalist of "Trybuna" who stated over a decade after the publication of "The Poor Poles..." that it had sparked "a national debate on the Polish-Jewish relations during the Hitlerite occupation".[425] In the ruling political regime, a national, common debate including various social environments was simply impossible. Nevertheless, the discussions described above are undeniable proof that such a debate could, in a limited way, take place at the time. They also demonstrated that the most important obstacle preventing Poles from facing their pre-war attitude to Jews and the attitude of Polish society to the Holocaust were mental barriers and prejudices.

In the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland, there was a breaking of the conspiracy of silence and the first symptoms that signalised the important process of the reconstruction of the Polish memory of Jews and the Holocaust appeared. Inauguration of this process undoubtedly took place thanks to a group of Polish intellectuals who made a brave attempt to face the difficult heritage of the Polish-Jewish past. The communist political elite did not participate in the process but neither did they block it, which the debate over Błońki's essay in "Tygodnik Powszechny" can prove. In addition, the broadcast of "Shoah", a film that reminded Poles of the Holocaust and presented its Polish witnesses, would not have been possible without the consent of Polish authorities.

425 A. Budzyński, *Potrzeba innej odwagi*, "Trybuna" 24-25 III 2001, p. 14.

Chapter III
The national debate on the crime in Jedwabne

1. The antecedents and the structure of the debate

In May 2000, the book by Jan Tomasz Gross entitled "Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland" was released by Pogranicze Publishing House.[426] Its author addressed the subject of the crimes committed by the Polish citizens of Jedwabne village against their Jewish neighbours. The publication of the book, and the events it depicted, sparked off a stormy and multi-threaded national debate. This became the longest and most intense debate about the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust and pre-war Polish-Jewish relations that had ever taken place in Poland and the one involving the greatest number of participants.

Additionally, its uniqueness stemmed from the type and importance of the problem that Poles had to face. Claude Lanzmann and his "Shoah" had already mentioned the sensitive topics of pre-war Polish-Jewish relations and Poles as witnesses of the Holocaust. Jan Błoński in his brilliant essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" had brought public attention to the Polish shame of indifference towards dying Jews, and conflicts over the Auschwitz concentration camp upset the self-image of Poles as the main – if not the only – victims of the Nazis. However, Jan Tomasz Gross was the one who confronted Poles with the problem of direct Polish involvement in the Holocaust. Thus, as Sławomir Sierakowski noted, the debate on the Jedwabne massacre was "an attempt to imagine oneself in the role of 'executioner'."[427]

The problem of Polish involvement in the Holocaust had already appeared in public discourse some time earlier. It was raised by a young historian, Michał Cichy, whose review of Calel Perechodnik's wartime diaries was published by the daily newspaper, "Gazeta Wyborcza" in December 1993[428]. Depicting the wartime experiences of the author, Cichy noted that Perechodnik, who managed

426 J. T. Gross, *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*, Sejny 2000 [English: Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, first published: 2001, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press]

427 S. Sierakowski, *Chcemy innej historii*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 VI 2003, p. 15.

428 See: C. Perechodnik, *Czy ja jestem mordercą?*, Warszawa 1995.

to outlive other members of his family by two years, "lived through the Warsaw Uprising, when the AK [Polish resistance Home Army] and the NSZ [National Armed Forces] wiped out many survivors of the ghetto."[429] These unsettling words reached their readers a few months before the planned commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising and sparked a very strong response. Numerous readers expressed their indignation in letters, often in an anti-Semitic tone, sent to the editorial office of "Gazeta Wyborcza". Cichy's words were considered a lie, an insult to the memory of the insurgents, and above all, an attack on one of the key events of the Polish "historical canon" which held a place of honour in the collective memory of Poles.

In response to the wave of protests, the editors of "Gazeta Wyborcza" described Michał Cichy's words as an "unacceptable generalisation".[430] Answering to these accusations, Cichy published an article in "Gazeta Wyborcza" in which he presented all the documents and testimonies on which he based his "unacceptable generalisation" (for which he also apologised). However, in his article, "Poles and Jews: Black Pages in the Annals of the Warsaw Uprising", the author demonstrated that during the uprising, AK soldiers murdered around 20-30 Jews.[431] The article, prefaced by Adam Michnik[432], evoked a stormy debate, not only among readers of "Gazeta Wyborcza", but also by readers of other Polish newspapers.[433] As the psychologist Michał Bilewicz aptly noted: "It was the biggest blow struck at the social memory, cultivated by Poles, of the occupation years", and at the "sanctum sanctorum of Polish national identity".[434] As it turns out, Cichy's text and the discussion over it were a "dress rehearsal" for the stormy debate on the Jedwabne massacre.[435] Undeniably, it was the first public debate in which the Polish nation faced a new role, which was not about contemplating the wrongs done to the Polish nation as cultivated in Polish historiography: not the role of victims, but perpetrators who murdered Jews during the Holocaust.

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429 M. Cichy, *Wspomnienia umarłego*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 15 XII 1993, p. 4.

430 Such an opinion was expressed in the editorial preface to article by Michał Cichy. See: M. Cichy, *Polacy-Żydzi: czarne karty Powstania*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 29 I 1994, p. 13.

431 Ibidem, p. 13

432 A. Michnik, *Polacy-Żydzi: czarne karty powstania*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 29 I 1994, p. 12.

433 A selection of articles discussing Cichy's text was published by "Midrasz" magazine. See "Midrasz" 2007, No. 3.

434 M. Bilewicz, *Wyjaśnianie Jedwabnego: antysemityzm i postrzeganie trudnej przeszłości*, [in:] *Anysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań*, I. Krzemiński (ed.) Warszawa 2004, p. 251.

435 P. Paziński, *Przeprosiny za "czarne karty"*, "Midrasz"2007, No. 3, p. 8.

The debate about Cichy's article is different from the debate over the Jedwabne massacre because of the completely different character and scale of the events and, in particular, because of the limited scope and short duration of the former debate. Nonetheless, the debate did happen and the defenders of Poland's good name had a good chance to mobilise while Michał Cichy, the young adept of history, "the teacher of life", was subjected to the criticism of experienced and respected historians and learnt how high the price is for an "untimely" publication in Poland.[436]

There is also a supplement to this story. Very unexpectedly, after 13 years, Michał Cichy decided to apologise for his article. "I Apologise to the Insurgents", published in the Christmas edition of the "Gazeta Wyborcza" daily, not only withdrew from some of his previous claims, but also expressed a form of self-criticism.[437] The content of this intriguing confession caused nothing less than astonishment and confusion among those who considered his original article and the debate over it to be a symbol of courage and honesty in Polish discourse on the disgraceful attitudes of Poles toward Jews during the Holocaust. Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz could not hide his amazement, pointing out that the author "need not have apologised" because the murders of Jews during the Uprising "were facts".[438] Neither could Helena Datner, who commented on the author's confession in an issue of "Midrasz" magazine devoted to this apology: "it increases the feeling of hopelessness if the author draws unexpected conclusions from his own, dramatically true diagnosis of the situation and while apologising to some [insurgents – author's note], he sentences others [Jews – author's note] to non-existence".[439]

There were some readers, however, who welcomed this apology with enthusiasm, as if it were the return of the prodigal son who finally understood that

436 Joanna Tokarska-Bakir paid attention to it in her brilliant critique regarding "the responsibility of Polish historians for what Poles do not know about the Holocaust". According to Tokarska-Bakir, this responsibility concerns, above all, "the sin of omission, which may be a consequence of the historians' innate caution, discouraging them from certain topics (...) Historian, as well as every other academician, above all wants to be 'serious'. 'Serious' in Poland means 'uncontroversial'. The uncontroversial Polish historian looks with indulgence at those who are in a hurry". J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste. Eseje i studia*, Sejny 2004, p.14.

437 See M. Cichy, *Przepraszam powstańców*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 23 XII 2006, p. 16; Michał Cichy justified his decision to make a public apology and self-criticise in an interview given to Stanisław Tekieli, See: *Z Michałem Cichym rozmawia Stanisław Tekieli,* "Midrasz" 2007, No. 3, p. 21-24.

438 E. Koźmińska-Frejlak, P. Paziński, Sprawiedliwy z Żoliborza, rozmowa z K. Dunin-Wąsowiczem, "Midrasz" 2007, No. 1, p. 24

439 H. Datner, *O pewnych przeprosinach*, "Midrasz" 2007, No. 3, p. 25.

national sanctities are not to be sullied. From such a perspective, Piotr Semka named Cichy's apology "the best Christmas gift for many Warsaw insurgents".[440] The critics of "Gazeta Wyborcza", who regard the newspaper as Philo-Semitic or simply Jewish, the opponents of the idea of engaging with the difficult Polish-Jewish past and ordinary anti-Semites were also given another present by Cichy: this was the interview that he gave to Cezary Michalski for the "Dziennik" daily.[441] The interview itself and the discussion around it are a different and more complex story, although Michał Cichy did refer to "The Black Pages...", saying: "There is the truth of facts, and the truth of facts is that all the Jews shot by people with AK and NSZ badges, whom I described, were shot indeed. But there is also the spiritual and symbolic truth which is as follows: this text should not have been published in 1994 in the 'Gazeta Wyborcza' daily, on the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising".[442] It was not only Michał Cichy who learned how high the price for an "untimely" publication in Poland was. Jan Tomasz Gross also realised that, but fortunately he never apologised. Incidentally, "Neighbors" was not Gross' first publication released in Poland that touched on the problem of the difficult Polish-Jewish past and sparked off a debate. A selection of essays published a few years before, entitled "Ghastly decade: Three essays on stereotypes about the Jews, Poles, Germans, and Communists" in which Gross wrote about the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust, anti-Semitism during the German occupation and the stereotype of "Jewish communists" [żydokomuna], are still present in Polish minds.[443] However, the discussion about "Ghastly decade" involved only a narrow circle of intellectuals.[444]

It was not until the publication of "Neighbors", which Ilya Prizel found to be one of the most important events in recent historiography, that a debate was sparked off, drawing the attention of Polish and international public opinion and involving numerous participants of different professions.[445] Jan Tomasz Gross had, however, mentioned the Jedwabne massacre in his earlier article published in a multi-authored book: "Non-provincial Europe". The book was dedicated to

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440 P. Semka, *Prezent dla powstańców*, "Rzeczpospolita" 27 XII 2006, p. XI.

441 See. C. Michalski, *Wojna pokoleń przy użyciu cyngli,* an interview with M. Cichy, "Dziennik" 21 II 2008.

442 Ibidem

443 See. J. T. Gross, *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939-1948*, Kraków 1998.

444 See: *Polacy i Żydzi w "Upiornej dekadzie"*, "Więź" 1999, No. 7, p. 4 -22.

445 I. Prizel, *Jedwabne: Will the Right Question be Raised?*, "East European Politics and Societies" 2002, vol. 16, No. 1, p. 278.

Prof. Tomasz Strzembosz, who later turned out to be one of the staunchest adversaries of Gross.[446]

Other historians, journalists and witnesses had also mentioned beforehand that about 1,600 Jews, citizens of Jedwabne, had been burnt in a barn. Not all of them, however, pointed at Poles as the direct perpetrators and their reports never became a subject of public debate and popular accounts.[447] The historian Szymon Datner mentioned the Jedwabne massacre in his article published in 1966 in "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" ("The Jewish History Quarterly") but he avoided answering the question, 'who carried it out?'[448], as did the authors of a reportage "...aby żyć" ["...in order to live"] published by the "Kontakty" weekly on 10 July 1988.[449] The answer was provided by the "Yedwabne. History and Memorial Book" published in 1980 in the USA and Israel, which included testimonies of the eyewitnesses of the massacre who pointed to Polish citizens of Jedwabne as the perpetrators.[450] It was also signalled in a documentary by Agnieszka Arnold titled: "...Gdzie mój syn najstarszy Kain?" ["Where is my eldest son, Cain?"], broadcast on Polish public television (TVP 1) on 18 April 1999. The documentary, concerning wartime Polish-Jewish relations, included a part about Jedwabne. In her film, Agnieszka Arnold used extensive quotations from a testimony about the Jedwabne pogrom given by Szmul Wasersztajn before the Jewish Historical Commission in Bialystok. Agnieszka Arnold verified the information contained in the testimony by talking to the citizens of Jedwabne who, as it turned out, knew very well about the massacre.[451]

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446 See: J. T. Gross, *Lato 1941 w Jedwabnem. Przyczynek do badań nad udziałem społeczności lokalnych w eksterminacji narodu żydowskiego w latach II wojny światowej*, [in:] *Europa nieprowincjonalna. Przemiany na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, K. Jasiewicz (ed.), Warszawa 1999.

447 A detailed analysis of who, where, when and what wrote or spoke about the Jedwabne massacre and how it was interpreted has been presented by Tomasz Szarota. See: T. Szarota, *Mord w Jedwabnem. Dokumenty, publikacje i interpretacje z lat 1941-2000*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego. Studia*, P. Machcewicz, K. Persak (ed.),Warszawa 2002, Vol. 1, p. 461-489.

448 See: Sz. Datner, *Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w okręgu białostockim*, "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" 1966, No. 4, p. 3-50.

449 D. i A. Wroniszewscy, *...aby żyć*, "Kontakty" 10.VII.1988, p. 6. Quotation after: T. Szarota, *Mord w Jedwbnem...*, p. 480.

450 Publishing memorial books of this kind, [Yiddish: jizkor-buch], was a particular way for Landsmanschafts to commemorate killed Jewish townsmen after World War II. The memorial book devoted to Jews from Jedwabne is available online: www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Jedwabne [accessed: 10.V.2007].

451 Agnieszka Arnold made a film titled "Neighbors", which was devoted to the events of 10 July 1941 in Jedwabne. Jan Tomasz Gross used the same title with her consent.

It was this testimony, given by the eyewitness Szmul Wasersztajn on 5 April 1945 and available in the archive of the Jewish Historical Institute, that Jan Tomasz Gross used as one of his essential sources when writing "Neighbors". Clearly, it was not the only source. Gross, apart from the memorial book devoted to the Jews from Jedwabne and the accounts given by the characters of Agnieszka Arnold's documentary, also used files from two legal proceedings taken in Poland after the war.[452] In addition, he went to Jedwabne and talked to its inhabitants. Among them were the elderly, who remembered the massacre, and the young, who inherited knowledge of it. As one can easily guess, not everyone was willing to speak about it and not everyone shared a belief in the liberating force of the truth. Consequently, they constructed narratives about events that happened in Jedwabne on 10 July 1941 in a way that was comfortable for them and for the Polish nation. Many of them did much to preserve the meaning of the words inscribed on the stone monument funded in 1963 by the Łomża section of ZboWiD [The Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy] to the memory of the Jews murdered in Jedwabne. The inscription read: "Site of a massacre of the Jewish population. The Gestapo and Nazi military police burned 1,600 people alive on 10 July 1941".

The macabre crime described in "Neighbors", as well as attributing the perpetration to Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne, turned out to be a real shock for Poles. Nonetheless, it was nominated for the 2000 Nike Literary Award. Lidia Burska, who discussed the nominated works, aptly observed, however, that "Neighbors" was not among them as a book of exceptional literary value but rather as a "conscience-pricking book" whose "task was to change something in our consciousness". Małgorzata Dziewulska expressed a similar opinion, stating that "'Neighbors" was not a personal opinion expressed in a literary form but a historical intervention into the conscience of every one of us individually and all of us as a community.[453]

Gross's book is definitely not a personal literary statement of the author and, generally, it is difficult to classify it unequivocally within one genre. In fact, it has been classified in different ways: as an academic monograph, a his-

452 See: K. Persak, *Akta procesu z 1949 roku dwudziestu dwóch oskarżonych o udział w zbrodni na ludności żydowskiej w Jedwabnem*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego. Dokumenty...*, p. 415-713; K. Persak, *Akta procesu z 1953 roku Józefa Sobuty oskarżonego o udział w zbrodni na ludności żydowskiej w Jedwabnem*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego. Dokumenty...*, p. 713-817; K. Persak, *Akta śledztwa z lat 1967-1974 prowadzonego przez Okręgową Komisję Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Białymstoku w sprawie zbrodni na ludności żydowskiej w Jedwabnem*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego. Dokumenty...*, p. 817-863.

453 *Laureat zawsze cierpi. Nagroda "Nike" 2001*, (editorial interview), "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, No. 10, p. 69.

torical essay, a documentary reportage, historical journalism, but also a parable or a morality play. Some, e.g. reviewers and journalists motivated by a desire to belittle the publication, regarded it with disdain as a poor quality historical journalism devoid of cognitive value. For others, the dilemma of how to categorise Gross's book partly resulted from its structure. Gross's book seems to consist of two parts although in fact it is not formally divided into two. This duality was apparent in Dorota Kawczyńska's words when she wrote: "it combines the features of a historical description and an analysis of actual events as well as of a historical-philosophical treatise of a universal character."[454]

The first part of "Neighbors" consists of "the historical description and the analysis of actual events" which occurred in Jedwabne on July 10, 1941 after the Soviet occupation of those lands had come to an end. According to Jan Tomasz Gross's findings, this was the day when many Polish residents of Jedwabne, "roughly 50 percent of the adult men", participated in a bestial murder of Jews.[455] Gross pointed at the mayor of the time, Marian Karolak, as the one who coordinated the massacre. He also listed the names of others, the most distinguished anti-heroes of the crime.[456] It was on the mayor's order that on 10 July, before noon, the majority of Jews from Jedwabne were rounded up in the square in front of the town hall, ostensibly for some cleaning duty. In the meantime, however, the rest of Jedwabne became an arena of savage acts committed by Polish neighbours. Gross writes: "On this day a cacophony of violence swept through the town. It unfolded in the form of many uncoordinated, simultaneous activities over which Karolak and the town council exercised only general supervision (...). They monitored progress and made sure at critical junctures that the goal of the pogrom was advanced. But, otherwise, people were free to improvise as best they knew how."[457]

In a few pages of his book, Gross reconstructed the chaos of the pogrom, the individual initiatives taken by the locals, and how, all day long in Jedwabne, in different parts of the town and in different ways, Jews were being murdered by their Polish neighbours. Finally, however, Polish torturers realised that this method of killing was not effective and would not let other locals finish their work before dawn, which was the time limit set by the German troops stationed in Jedwabne. Instead, they decided to kill all the remaining Jews by burning them alive, in the same way as in Radziłów a few days earlier. Gross also wrote

454 D. Krawczyńska, *Prawdy ukryte na powierzchni*, "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, No. 1, p. 89.

455 J. T. Gross, Neighbors: *The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, Poland, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 87.

456 Ibidem, p. 73, 76, 77.

457 J. T. Gross, *Neighbors....*, p. 95.

that "carts full of people from nearby villages" who found out about the Jedwabne pogrom on 10 July 1941, "had been converging on the town since early dawn" and that probably, "some of these people were veterans of other pogroms that had recently been carried out in the vicinity."[458] Let us turn, however, to the culmination of the Jedwabne pogrom.

After the barn was chosen, all Jews brought to the square who were still alive were driven into it. Beaten and ridiculed by the neighbours who were escorting them, the Jews were forced to carry around Lenin's statue, which was broken into pieces, and to sing "The war is because of us, the war is for us". "A thick crowd" shoved the Jedwabne Jews inside the barn. The barn was doused with kerosene and lit.[459] On that day, Gross claims and the above-mentioned stone monument confirms, about 1,600 Jews were murdered. Only a few more than a dozen survived, including seven who were hidden in the nearby Janczewo by the Wyrzykowski family. Thus, as Gross noted, on 10 July 1941 in Jedwabne, a mass murder took place "in a double sense, on account of both the number of victims and the number of perpetrators."[460]

In the historical part of his book, which reconstructs the events from several decades ago, Jan Gross raised an important, unavoidable question which (not without a reason) was the main subject of the debate that followed the publication of "Neighbors". Clearly, it is the question of the German presence in Jedwabne and their participation in the collective murder of 10 July 1941. On the basis of available sources, particularly Szmul Wasersztajn's testimonies, Gross claimed that on the day of the pogrom or the day before, a few Germans, probably Gestapo men, arrived in town "by taxi". Moreover, there was "an outpost of German gendarmerie, staffed by eleven men".[461] Therefore, on the ill-fated day there were hardly any Germans in Jedwabne, maybe a few more than a dozen – at least according to the picture given by Gross's "Neighbors".

Jan Tomasz Gross has never denied that "the town council signed some agreement with the Gestapo".[462] What kind of agreement this was and what it concerned, we do not know for the lack of reliable sources. It seems, according to one account that "the municipal authorities were given a certain amount of time – eight hours (…) to get rid of the Jews as they pleased."[463] But who took the initiative to commit the mass murder? Clearly, Gross formulated such a question but he did not find a definitive answer: "Where the initiative came from

458 Ibidem, p. 90.
459 Ibidem, p. 99.
460 Ibidem, p 87.
461 Ibidem, p.76.
462 Ibidem, p.75.
463 Ibidem, p. 76.

– whether it originated with the Germans (as Wasersztajn suggested, saying: 'such an order was issued by the Germans') or with the town council of Jedwabne is impossible to settle once and for all. But it is also an academic question, since both sides apparently quickly agreed on the matter and on the method of its implementation."[464]

Nevertheless, Gross excluded the possibility that the Germans participated in the implementation of the massacre, noting that "As to the Germans' direct participation in the mass murder of Jews in Jedwabne on July 10, 1941, […] one must admit that it was limited, pretty much, to their taking pictures."[465] Analysing testimonies from the Łomża trial, however, he also signalled that individual gendarmes (witnesses frequently spoke of one) accompanied the members of the town council ordering the Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne to watch over Jews gathered in the square and then to escort them to the barn. Gross also determined that it was the Germans who were the "undisputed bosses over life and death in Jedwabne" and "they were the only ones who could decide the fate of the Jews. It was within their power also to stop the murderous pogrom at any time. And they did not choose to intervene".[466] As a matter of fact, assuming that the Jedwabne massacre was not initiated by the Germans, but by the Polish neighbours, it was only Germans in occupied Poland who could have intervened and prevented it. Besides, as Jan Tomasz Gross also noted, had Hitler's mind not given birth to the satanic idea of the Holocaust, had the war not broken out, had the Nazis not invaded Poland or occupied Jedwabne, the Jews of Jedwabne would not have been murdered by their neighbours. Therefore, Gross concluded, "the tragedy of Jedwabne Jewry is but an episode in the murderous war that Hitler waged against all Jews"[467].

In any case, Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne and its environs, and not the Germans, were direct perpetrators of the massacre and it was their motivations that Gross found puzzling. Was it some sort of atavistic anti-Semitism seeping from the pages of "Rycerz Niepokalanej" [a Polish Catholic monthly] and present in the ideology of the National Democrats? Or was it just greed and desire to take over Jewish possessions? Gross does not give a definite answer, although, apparently, he seems inclined to choose the latter.[468]

All this Jan Tomasz Gross wrote in the first part of his book, including a historical reconstruction and description of the events that occurred on 10 July

464 Ibidem, p. 77.
465 Ibidem, p. 78.
466 Ibidem, p. 77.
467 Ibidem, p. 78..
468 Ibidem, p. 110.

1941. The other part can be seen as a sort of historical-philosophical commentary or treatise with a universal meaning. Of numerous considerations given to the subject, two deserve particular attention as they both became the subject of public debate in Poland: collective responsibility and the necessity for a new approach to primary and secondary sources.

Considering the crime committed by Poles in Jedwabne as well as other crimes against Jews committed by Poles during the occupation and, generally, the disgraceful attitudes of Polish society towards dying Jews, it is no surprise that Jan Tomasz Gross raised the problem of collective responsibility. However, he was far from identifying it with collective guilt. "When reflecting about this epoch, – Gross notices – we must not assign collective responsibility. We must be clearheaded enough to remember that for each killing only a specific murderer or group of murderers is responsible."[469] The author, however, raises another question which is worth quoting: "Can we arbitrarily select from a national heritage what we like, and proclaim it as patrimony to the exclusion of everything else? Or just the opposite, if people are indeed bonded together by authentic spiritual affinity – I have in mind a kind of national pride rooted in the common historical experiences of many generations – are they not somehow also responsible for the horrible deeds perpetrated by members of such an 'imagined community?'"[470]

The answer he gave can be summarised as follows: despite the fact that everyone lives and acts according to their own responsibility and their own actions, "our deeds and omissions contribute to common tradition and patrimony, preserved and shaped in collective memory". Therefore, when glorifying Frédéric François Chopin or John Paul II and regarding them as "ours" we should also be aware of the fact that "mass murders" committed by Karolak, Laudanski and other "anti-heroes" from Jedwabne concern all of us and burden us all in a way. They are also "ours".[471]

The problem is, many participants in the debate on "Neighbors" seemed to omit these aspects of Gross's considerations, focusing on and quoting only a fragment of the last sentence of Gross's book [the Polish edition] in which he stated that 1,600 Jedwabne Jews were murdered by "society" [społeczeństwo"][472]. This quotation, taken out of context, was used to prove the wickedness of Gross's accusations against Poles. Moreover, it was intended to cast him in a role of a ruthless advocate of the rule of collective responsibility. Indeed he had

469 Ibidem, p.134
470 Ibidem, p. 135
471 *Sąsiedzi*, p. 98-99
472 Ibidem, p. 170.

used the term, but in a completely different context, analysing responsibility without guilt.

In the second part of "Neighbors", Jan Tomasz Gross also raised the problem of *terra incognita* and the distortions in Polish historiography, postulating "revision in the approach to sources".[473] In Gross's opinion, the Jedwabne massacre "opens up the historiography of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War" and "sedatives that were administered" by historians and journalists for several dozen years "have to be put aside"[474]. The image of the German occupation painted by them, in which Polish Jews were murdered solely by Germans assisted by Latvians, Ukrainians and *szmalcownik*s, could no longer be sustained. According to Gross, this "opening", symbolised by the public disclosure of the Jedwabne massacre, calls for a rethinking of both wartime and postwar Polish history or, as he wrote elsewhere, for a retelling of the history in order to be able to get it back.[475]

To fill in the blanks in historiography, Gross postulated revision in the approach to sources. He wrote about himself and other historians dealing with World War II: "When considering survivors' testimonies we should be well advised to change the starting premise in appraisal of their evidentiary contribution from a priori critical to in principle affirmative. By accepting what we read in a particular account as fact until we find persuasive arguments to the contrary, we would avoid more mistakes than we are likely to commit by adopting the opposite approach, which calls for cautious skepticism towards any testimony until an independent confirmation of its content can be found."[476]

Such an approach, in Gross's opinion, can be principally justified by two arguments. One concerns the above-mentioned "blank pages" in Polish historiography and the shortcomings of historical studies – such as the fact that so far there have been no publications concerning the participation of the Polish population in the Holocaust of Polish Jewry even though there would be sufficient sources. In the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw alone one can find over seven thousand depositions collected directly after the war from survivors of the Holocaust who told their wartime biographies.[477]

The other argument supporting the new approach refers to the very nature of the sources, that is, the "very immanent character of all evidence about the destruction of Polish Jewry".[478] All the collected depositions were given not by a

473 Ibidem, p. 141.
474 Ibidem, p. 138.
475 Ibidem, p. 117.
476 Ibidem, p. 140.
477 Ibidem, p.141.
478 Ibidem, p. 141.

representative sample of the Jewish fate but "by a few who were lucky enough to survive".[479] Gross observes: "it is all skewed evidence, biased in one direction: these are all stories with a happy ending".[480] In addition, "statements from witnesses who have not survived – statements that have been interrupted by the sudden death of their authors, who therefore left only fragments of what they wanted to say" are also "incomplete". That is why, Gross notes, "we must take literally all fragments of information at our disposal"[481].

The publication of Gross's "Neighbors" in May 2000 sparked off the deepest and most significant public debate, which Joanna Michlic named "the most profound battle over the memory of Polish-Jewish relations and the Polish collective self-image."[482] It was compared to the discussion in Germany initiated by Daniel Goldhagen's book, "Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust"[483]. Andrzej Leder raised a question in "Res Publika Nowa" journal, "Could the Jedwabne Pogrom be a Polish Dreyfus affair?"[484]. As a matter of fact, it was difficult not to notice that the Polish release of "Neighbors" was a significant editorial and academic event. Also, the debate that it sparked off became an important social fact that influenced the self-image of Poles and their attitude towards their own past. It was not only debaters who highlighted it but also the authors of scholarly analyses of the debate, which were conducted after the discussion came to an end.[485]

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479 Ibidem, p.142.

480 Ibidem, p.141.

481 Ibidem, p. 142.

482 J. Michlic, *Coming to Terms with "Dark Past": The Polish Debate about the Jedwabne Massacre*, "Acta. Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism" 2002, No. 21, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, p. 7.

483 D. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and The Holocaust*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1996.

484 A. Leder, *Jedwabne: polska sprawa Dreyfusa?*, "Res Publica Nowa"2001, No. 7, p. 13-19.

485 See: J. Michlic, *Coming to Terms with the "Dark Past": The Polish Debate about the Jedwabne Massacre*, "Acta. Analysis of Current Trends in Anti-Semitism" 2002, No. 21, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; A. Polonsky, J. Michlic, *The Neighbors Respond. The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004; P. Ciołkiewicz, *Debata publiczna na temat mordu w Jedwabnem w kontekście przeobrażeń pamięci zbiorowej*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny" 2003, No. 1, p. 285-306; P. Ciołkiewicz, *Poszukiwanie granic odpowiedzialności zbiorowej. Debata o Jedwabnem na łamach "Gazety Wyborczej"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2004, No. 1, p. 122-141; S. Zgliczyński, *Antysemityzm po polsku*, Warszawa 2008, p. 74-96; S. Kapralski, *Trauma i pamięć zbiorowa. Przypadek Jedwabnego*, [in:] *Stawanie się społeczeństwa. Szkice ofiarowane Piotrowi Sztompce z okazji 40-lecia pracy naukowej*, Kraków 2006.

Historians and other researchers, journalists, politicians, state and Church representatives all participated in the debate about "Neighbors", as did Polish symbolic elites and active participants of public life and even named and anonymous Poles, who sent letters to different newspapers or magazines. For almost two years, the debate continued in numerous Polish dailies, weeklies and monthlies, on the radio and on TV. Gross's book inspired hundreds (or maybe even thousands) of discussions, reviews, critical articles, essays, columns, interviews, reports of editorial discussions, and declarations by various personas and organisations. It would be impossible to count all the interviews, commentaries, radio or TV discussions. Moreover, the release of "Neighbors" contributed to several important discursive events in which the leading roles were played by state and Catholic Church officials. On 10 July 2001, in Jedwabne, on the 60th anniversary of the pogrom, ceremonies were held with the Polish president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski in attendance, and on 27 May 2001 a special penitential Mass was celebrated at the Church of All Saints in Warsaw. During the ceremony, Church officials apologised to God for the Jedwabne massacre. Both events were widely commented upon.

Clearly, the debate about the Jedwabne massacre went through different stages and had certain dynamics reflected in the number of articles, controversial statements and the above-mentioned contentious events. Researchers who analysed the trajectory and dynamics of the "Neighbors" debate distinguished its several stages in a few different ways.

Paweł Ciołkiewicz differentiates three such stages. The first began with the publication of Gross's book in May 2001 and lasted until November. It was in this period that the first approaches towards the Jedwabne pogrom crystallised, and although initial press reportages appeared, generally, relatively little was written about it. At this stage of the debate, voices were dispersed, and for this reason Ciołkiewicz named it a "scattered stage".

The second stage began in November 2000 and lasted until April 2001. During this period, newspapers such as "Gazeta Wyborcza" and "Rzeczpospolita" started a regular discussion. Both dailies frequently published numerous articles and a lot of information regarding Gross's book. In a way, they became central actors of the debate and other disputers started to refer to them. More and more articles on the subject were also published in other newspapers and magazines, such as: "Polityka", "Wprost", "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Nasz Dziennik", "Życie" and "Najwyższy Czas". After some time, the viewpoints polarised. Ciołkewicz distinguishes two sides: "the main arena" and "the alternative arena" of the debate, using the domineering attitude towards the participation of Poles in the Jedwabne pogrom as a criterion for the division. While in the "main arena" ("Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wprost", "Polityka", "Rzeczpospolita", "Tygodnik

Powszechny", "Znak") Polish participation is generally not denied, in the "alternative arena" ("Nasza Polska", "Myśl Polska", "Najwyższy Czas", "Nasz Dziennik", "Życie", "Niedziela", "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy") the dominating opinion is that Poles were either not involved in the crime or that they were forced to commit it.

Paweł Ciołkiewicz considers the beginning of the third phase to be the publication of "Inny obraz sąsiadów" ["A Different Picture of Neighbors"] by Tomasz Strzembosz in April 2001 in "Rzeczpospolita". The article inaugurated a polemic between Gross and Strzembosz, to which many debaters referred by commenting on it and arguing about the versions of history presented by the two historians. Ciołkiewicz named this phase "the two standpoints stage" and regarded the ceremonies at the 60th anniversary of the pogrom on 11 July 2001 as the end of this stage. "Since then", he stated, "the debate has weakened (when measured by the number of articles devoted to Jedwabne) and it is undoubtedly entering a new stage".[486]

A slightly different chronological categorisation of the debate about "Neighbors", with regard to its trajectory and dynamics, was offered by Joanna Michlic. Similarly to Ciołkiewicz, she regards the release of Gross's book as the beginning of the early stage of the debate and justifies this choice likewise. The second stage, labelled by Michlic as "intensification of the debate", lasted between November 2000 and May 2001. It was in November 2000 when "Gazeta Wyborcza" published Jacek Żakowski's article titled "Każdy sąsiad ma imię" ("Every Neighbour Has a Name"), which sparked off fierce criticism. Besides, as one can guess, the second stage is also marked by numerous articles and commentaries published at the time and in the heat of the discussion. The debate indeed intensified.

The third stage distinguished by Michlic was marked by discussions of the penitential Mass celebrated at the Church of All Saints in Warsaw in May 2001 and the commemorative ceremony of 10 July 2001 involving the President, Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Both events aroused strong emotions, elicited various responses and were broadly commented upon for a long period of time. For that reason Joanna Michlic situated this stage between May and September 2001.

The last stage distinguished by Michlic ran between October 2001 and July 2002 and was characterised by a relatively small number of publications about "Neighbors" in comparison to the previous stages. Nonetheless, it was during this period that the investigation into the Jedwabne pogrom, held by the Main Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation of the Insti-

486 See P. Ciołkiewicz, *Debata publiczna na temat mordu w Jedwabnem w kontekście przeobrażeń pamięci zbiorowej*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny" 2003, No. 1, p. 294-296.

tute of National Remembrance (IPN), was most discussed and written about. It was also the time when Leon Kieres, the president of the Institute, presented the annual IPN report to the Parliament (Sejm) and thereby sparked off a heated parliamentary debate. The event of this period most commented upon, however, was the presentation of the final findings of the IPN investigation by prosecutor Radosław Ignatiew, who supervised the inquiry. Prosecutor Ignatiew informed the public opinion about the final findings on 9 July 2002.[487]

All the threads and events constituting respective stages of the debate will be developed and described later in this chapter. The analysis of the public debate elicited by "Neighbors" will not, however, follow its chronology or dynamics (although, clearly, it would be difficult to ignore them). I will, rather, analyse the topics of the debate, present controversial elements and, above all, reconstruct various standpoints.

I consider the publication of the Polish edition of "Neighbors" in May 2000 as the beginning of the debate and the presentation of the final findings of the IPN investigation by prosecutor Radosław Ignatiew in July 2002 as its end. In December 2002, the Institute of National Remembrance published a selection of documents under the title "Wokół Jedwabnego" (English: "Around Jedwabne"). This monumental, two-volume publication consisting of studies and documents became a sort of "white paper" on the Jedwabne pogrom and the outcome of the finished investigation into this case. [488]

Reconstruction of the discussion about Gross's findings and opinions, which was held by professional historians, is proposed herein as a starting point of the analysis of the debate around "Neighbors". Pointing at important gaps and distortions in prevailing Polish historiography and postulating radical changes in the approach to sources, Gross himself provoked them to participate in the debate. It would be difficult to disagree with Tomasz Szarota's findings, who stated that however visible the historians' participation in the debate was, it did not dominate the discussion – but there are still two reasons why I believe it was important.[489] Firstly, it was historians who, owing to their profession, were considered by most participants and by the public particularly entitled to be involved in the polemics against Gross and to criticise his book. They were regarded as experts with the right competences and academic tools. Besides, as

487 See J. Michlic, *Coming to Terms with "Dark Past": The Polish Debate about the Jedwabne Massacre*, "Acta. Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism" 2002, No. 21, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, p. 11-13, 22, 19-31.

488 P. Machcewicz, K. Persak, (ed.), *Wokół Jedwabnego. Studia, Vol. 1*, Warszawa 2002; P. Machcewicz, K. Persak, (ed.) *Wokół Jedwabnego. Dokumenty, Vol. 2*, Warszawa 2002.

489 T. Szarota, *Debata narodowa o Jedwabnem*, "Więź" 2001, No. 4, p. 38.

Andrzej Leder aptly noted, it was mostly them who had the power of "reviving the events" and who could somehow decide "what sort of killer figure would emerge in front of us here and now".[490] In the end, however, they did not actually have the power to influence who would be trusted by the participants and the public and what sort of "killer figure" would appear in front of their eyes.

We thus move towards another argument supporting the significant role of historians in the debate about the Jedwabne pogrom. Almost every participant (and probably also the public) had "their own" historian adopting a certain standpoint on the issue. In addition, the attitudes and intentions of particular historians were evaluated and verified during the debate.

Another area of the analysis of the debate around "Neighbors" is the response to the Jedwabne pogrom from other participants in the debate. The standpoints revealed in the course of the debate can be categorised according to the characteristic attitudes/narratives of the participants.

The first narrative can be labelled "a moral discourse". This label is not in the least accidental – it refers to the groundbreaking and continually discussed essay "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" written by Jan Błoński, the outstanding literary critic. In his essay, Błoński proposed an approach to the troubled history of Polish-Jewish relations and to anti-Semitism, which promised to change the prevailing attitude – a never-ending process of listing damages and sorrows, mutual reproaching for sins and the use various defensive strategies.[491] Clearly, the new attitude proposed by Błoński evoked the necessity of adapting a language, which I will call here "the language of morality". As Michał Głowiński noticed in his article, Błoński's essay was written in this very language.[492]

The attitude of the debaters who spoke this language can be also described as self-critical or "affirmative", as Andrzej Paczkowski suggests.[493] Affirmative debaters agreed with Gross, supported the arguments developed in his book and dismissed the critical remarks concerning "Neighbors" and its author. They claimed that in the light of revelations of the massacre, factual details and meth-

490 A. Leder, *Jedwabne: polska sprawa Dreyfusa?*, "Res Publica Nowa"2001, No. 7, s. 16-17.

491 See: J. Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto*, "Tygodnik Powszechny", No. 11/I/1987, p. 1-4.

492 Michal Głowiński commented on the language of Błoński's essay saying it was "neither a language of accusation nor a language of apology (...), nor a language of polemics with accusations nor a language of accusations of the polemics (...). He [Błonski] speaks about the problem of Polish-Jewish relations and about the Polish view of the Holocaust in a language of morality". M. Głowiński, *Esej Błońskiego po latach*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2006, No. 2, p. 16.

493 A. Paczkowski, *Debata wokół "Sąsiadów": próba wstępnej typologii*, "Rzeczpospolita", 24 III 2001, p. 16.

odological shortcomings are less important. They placed emphasis on the moral aspects of revealing the Jedwabne pogrom and the consequences of this revelation for Poles.

The attitude of the debaters who took defensive positions will be a separate subject of analysis. I call their approach a "defence of the Polish innocence paradigm", while stressing that this stance is not at all homogenous but that there are significant differences of cognitive perspectives. According to Sławomir Sierakowski, the Jedwabne question divided debaters and society into "well-informed citizens" and "humiliated patriots"; however, this seems to be too simple a bipolarity.[494] Both groups had their own divisions and "well-informed citizens" often adopted the positions of "humiliated patriots".

Therefore, It should be firmly stated that defensive attitudes revealed during the debate can be divided into two types: moderate and radical defence or moderate and offensive defence. While debaters from the former group usually did not question the participation of Poles in the Jedwabne pogrom but demonstrated various extenuating circumstances and searched for them with stronger or weaker determination, the latter minimised the participation or even called it into doubt. In addition, they considered Gross's publication to be a part of a wider attack against Poland and Poles and they in turn responded with an attack. They often used anti-Semitic rhetoric and beneath the surface of their formulated opinions, numerous stereotypes and prejudices were hidden. Discourses corresponding to these two defensive attitudes could be respectively named a "yes, but" and a "no, it's them" discourse.

The last aspect under consideration will be the debaters' responses to the two acts of apology for the Jedwabne massacre. One was initiated by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the other by the Cardinal-Primate of Poland, Józef Glemp; that is, by the highest state and Church officials. Debates and conflicts concerning these events, that is, "reconciliatory practices" as Bjoren Krondorfer would call them, or "political rituals of atonement" using Hermann Lübbe's terminology,[495] will be discussed. As one might expect, the initiatives provoked very diverse responses and judgements, from total approval to accusations of high treason.

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494 S. Sierakowski, *Chcemy innej historii*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 VI 2003, p. 15; using the term "well-informed citizens" in inverted commas, Sławomir Sierakowski must have referred to Alfred Schütz and his essay: *The Well-Informed Citizen. An Essay on the Social Distribution of Knowledge*, "Social Research", No. 13/1946, 463-78.

495 See: B. Krondorfer, *Remembrance and Reconciliation: Encounters Between Young Jews and Germans*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1995, p. 20; B. Korzeniewski, *Polityczne rytuały pokuty w perspektywie zagadnienia autonomii jednostki*, Poznań 2006, p. 19-20; K. Wigura, *Wina narodów. Przebaczenie jako strategia prowadzenia polityki,* Gdańsk-Warszawa 2011, p. 35-67.

2. Historikerstreit in Polish

Gross's revelations of the crime committed in Jedwabne and his criticism of the omissions in prevailing Polish historiography provoked many Polish historians into a discussion. Although both parts of "Neighbors" were discussed, the way Gross presented the massacre and its circumstances dominated the debate. The structure of the debate mirrored the structure of the book and the problems raised by Gross.

The historians' dispute obviously had its own trajectory, dynamic and turning points. It was determined to a large degree by a succession of new discoveries, documents and information that appeared during the course of the investigation into the Jedwabne massacre led by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN).[496] The results of the investigation were instantly commented upon and used by the historians. Some of the information and documents, and the preliminary hypotheses based on them, were subsequently found to be false and aroused only temporary emotions. Thus, the analysis of the historians' reactions to each and every new piece of information would be meaningless.

The greatest influence on the course of this debate stemmed, however, from the presentation to the public by historians of the professional opinions and studies of the problem Gross had raised. Besides, it was historians, as experts, who disputed the methodological construction of "Neighbors" – although they finally reached agreement on this matter.

The historians' dispute about "Neighbors" was initiated by the discussion between Tomasz Szarota and Jan Tomasz Gross in "Gazeta Wyborcza" daily. In an interview given to Jacek Żakowski, Szarota did not question elementary facts presented in Gross's book but considered them shocking, irrefutable and requiring a change in the prevailing "opinions about the attitudes of Poles during World War II".[497] Consequently, he regarded the publication of "Neighbors" as

496 31 August 2001, the head of the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, Witold Kulesza, commissioned the IPN branch in Białostockie to start an investigation into the Jedwabne massacre. Radosław Ignatiew was appointed public prosecutor in the case. During the investigation, a few dozen witnesses were examined, archive materials were analyzed, both Polish (IPN Archive, New Files Archive, Public Archives in Bialystok, Elk and Łomża, Jewish Historical Institute Archive) and foreign (Ludwigsburg, Freiburg, Berlin, Jerusalem, Minsk, Grodno); there was also an exhumation in Jedwabne. Documents and scientific studies related to the investigation were discussed and published. See: P. Machcewicz, K. Persak (ed.), *Wokół Jedwabnego. Studia, vol. 1,* Warszawa 2002; (Idem), *Wokół Jedwabnego. Dokumenty, vol. 2*, Warszawa 2002.

497 J. Żakowski, *Diabelskie szczegóły*, interview with T. Szarota, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 18-19 XI 2000, p. 10-12.

Gross's undoubted contribution since the author had initiated a discussion on an important but neglected subject that should be studied rather than avoided. Szarota, however, cast doubts on Gross's academic reliability and accused him of writing "Neighbors" too hurriedly and of studying "the Jedwabne question" too superficially. His remarks referred mostly to the sources Gross included or omitted, as well as to Gross's lack of response or inadequate response to questions Szarota regarded as significant.

As for the sources used by the author to reconstruct the events in Jedwabne, Szarota's doubts concerned the accounts provided by the survivors of the massacre, stored in the Jewish Historical Institute and written in the Memorial Book of Jedwabne Jews. Szarota agreed with Gross that "in 1945, the survivors could not have lied" but suggested that they might have been wrong about some details owing to the emotions raised by the tragic stories they were telling. He also criticised Gross for not including in his book Szymon Datner's article on the Jedwabne massacre, published in "Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego" (Jewish Historical Institute Quarterly), or the publication by Waldemar Monkiewicz, the prosecutor in the Jedwabne trial of 1949. In his article (published in 1983) the prosecutor argued that on the day of the massacre, over 200 Germans, commanded by Wolfgang Birkner from the Warsaw Gestapo, arrived in Jedwabne in army trucks. They were supposed to co-found the so-called Commando Bialystok, with Birkner in command, which according to Monkiewicz participated in other murders of Jews in the region.[498]

According to Tomasz Szarota, Gross should not have ignored this information but should have tried to obtain the documents that could prove the presence of Germans in Jedwabne and their role in the pogrom. He should have researched the materials in order to establish whether the massacre was committed spontaneously by neighbours with the consent of the few Germans who were in the town or by "some scum commanded and inspired by a German commando sent to Jedwabne".[499] According to Szarota, the author of "Neighbors" also belittled the effect of the Soviet occupation of the area and one of the interpretations of the hatred towards Jews, according to which it was revenge for the attitude of some of them under Soviet rule. Although he agreed with Gross that Jews had also been victims of the Soviet system and that to generalise their attitude might

498 Ibidem.

499 Szarota stated that ""every solid historian" would try to find these documents before publishing a book, while "Gross as a sociologist and a journalist must have decided it was not necessary to explain the case". He also claimed, however, that even if it had been established that the order to kill Jedwabne Jews had been given by the Germans, it would not have "devaluated the horrible meaning of the facts" but "significantly modified them". J. Żakowski, *Diabelskie...*, p. 10-12.

stereotype them, in his opinion such a "generalised observation" supported by individual experiences became a source of hatred and violent acts against Jews.[500]

Tomasz Szarota also pointed out other pieces of information missing from "Neighbors" and at the hastiness of the author's conclusions but he never questioned that the massacre in Jedwabne had been committed by Poles. He recommended further research and his main message could be summarised with his own words: "That Poles murdered is indisputable. But to fully understand what happened, one should study the circumstances in detail. What Gross wrote in 'Neighbors' is enough to shake our conscience. But to understand the whole situation, one has to know the details. Every historian knows that the devil is in details".[501]

In response to the interview with Tomasz Szarota, Jan Tomasz Gross published an article, also in "Gazeta Wyborcza", with a meaningful title "Mord 'zrozumiały?'" ("'Comprehensible' Murder?").[502] Gross undermined the significance of prosecutor Monkiewicz's publication, arguing that he had "nothing to say about what happened in Jedwabne and was only presenting his own deductions", which were not confirmed by eyewitnesses, or Jedwabne inhabitants. Besides, Gross stated, Monkiewicz was not actually the prosecutor in the Łomża trial. The author agreed, however, that the "Jedwabne affair" could be analysed "more painstakingly" and the book could have been written less hurriedly. He regretted not having noted Datner's article which, he said, only confirmed his thesis. He noticed, however, that it would also be possible to read "Neigbours" more painstakingly and less hurriedly. The last comment is obviously directed at Tomasz Szarota, who accused Gross of not including some information and of presenting argumentation that was not well-grounded. Gross also dismissed Szarota's question about why Jedwabne Jews on this day did not attempt "to defend themselves or even to flee", finding it "entirely unhistorical". [503]

In response, Tomasz Szarota admitted his minor mistake of attributing the role of the prosecutor in the 1949 Łomża trial to Monkiewicz. However, he repeated his suggestion for further research, which could help determine the Germans' role in the pogrom and understand what happened on 10 July 1941 in Jedwabne. In his polemic, Szarota included two significant statements that clearly defined his standpoint. Firstly, he classified "Neighbors" among classic liter-

500 Ibidem.

501 Ibidem.

502 J. T. Gross, *Mord "zrozumiały"?*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 25 XI 2000, p. 14, see also: http://wiez.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/article/11.html

503 Ibidem.

ary works, such as "Campo di Fiori" by Czesław Miłosz, "Medallions" by Zofia Nałkowska, "Życie na niby" ("Life As If") by Kazimierz Wyka and "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" by Jan Błoński, which "becoming popular, are persistently referred to in continuing discussions." Secondly, he again categorically stated that it was Gross who was right about the perpetrators of Jedwabne murder and not Monkiewicz, who pointed at the Germans.[504]

The polemic between Tomasz Szarota and Jan Tomasz Gross inspired other historians to join the debate surrounding "Neighbors", to point at numerous circumstances or details Gross had overlooked, to criticise his methodology, the theories he had formulated or conclusions he had drawn. Although all of them stressed they only wanted reliable research in order to get closer to the truth, it is difficult to trust these declarations. Their statements repeatedly disclosed quite a different reason for their involvement in the debate, which was a personal desire to protect the good name of the Polish nation. In order to achieve this, they attempted in various ways to (more or less) belittle Gross's book and his findings. In addition, they looked for various extenuating circumstances and arguments that could mitigate the blame. They also insisted, however, that they did not question the crime but condemned it and all they wanted was to get the full picture of the events and the truth – exact and historical, not some comfortable truth, of course.

Among the historians adopting a defensive position in the debate about "Neighbors", one could find Tomasz Strzembosz, Piotr Gontarczyk, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Bogdan Musiał, Leszek Żebrowski, Marek Wierzbicki, Adam Cyra, Sławomir Radoń and Krzysztof Jasiewicz. Their articles were usually published in popular national daily newspapers such as "Rzeczpospolita", "Życie", "Nasz Dziennik", but also in magazines. It is important to analyse these articles and the press interviews with their authors to find out the content and the form of their criticism for "Neighbors".

The main objections to Gross's book that the above-mentioned historians raised concerned historical sources. They pointed at sources that Gross overlooked but should have included, and doubted the validity of the sources on which "Neighbors" had been based. As for the former, most of these were documents of the Jedwabne murder accessible in German archives. The critics accused Gross of not following the trace of Monkiewicz's publication and not verifying the question of the German presence in Jedwabne and their role in the events. Other sources that the author did not study (but should have) were documents and testi-

504 T. Szarota, *Czy na pewno już wszystko wiemy?*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2-3 XII 2000, p. 21.

monies about Polish-Jewish relations under the Soviet rule, particularly those concerning how the Jews acted at the time.

Much more serious objections, however, concerned the sources Gross had actually used but which were almost unanimously discredited by his critics. Tomasz Strzembosz, as well as Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk and Sławomir Radoń expressed their doubts about the credibility and thus significance of the documents from the investigations of 1949 and 1953. They noted the haste of the investigation led by the Security Service (UB) as well as the use of torture, which forced the accused to change the testimonies they had previously given. However, the key argument used by the critics to discredit these sources was their very origin. For example, Tomasz Strzembosz commented that he considered the value of UB materials to be "particularly low, because people could have said exactly what they were told."[505]

All the above-mentioned historians also questioned the credibility of the accounts of survivors of the massacre. Some of them considered the key witness Szmul Wasersztajn's testimony to be not entirely reliable. Adam Cyra stressed that Wasersztajn was a "long-time UB officer in Łomża"[506]; Marek Chodakiewicz suggested the account was not even Waserszatajn's but given by "a woman related to NKVD"[507]; and Tomasz Strzembosz described Wasersztajn's account as "too lengthy, too ample, too omniscient" and therefore raising reasonable doubts.[508]

A generalising opinion about the accounts of the Holocaust survivors was expressed by Piotr Gontarczyk, who claimed that the various historical commissions that had acquired testimonies "cared about their political or propagandist interests more than the truth" and, besides, these sources contained "huge emotional baggage and hasty judgments resulting from dramatic experiences". Gontarczyk also questioned the value of the accounts written after the war in the USA – he did not consider them as narratives of "the bygone reality" but rather "an opportunity to express dislike or simply hostility towards Poland and Poles, so called 'anti-Polonism'".[509] It is safe to say that by writing this he also meant one of the sources used by Jan Tomasz Gross, that is the Yedwabne History and Memorial Book edited in the USA. Anyway, this source was openly criticised by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, who claimed that all the memorial books he had

505 E. Isakiewicz, *Szubienica i huśtawka*, an interview with T. Strzembosz, "Gazeta Polska", 17 I 2001, p. 12.

506 A. Cyra, *Zapomniana relacja*, "Nasz Dziennik", 29 III 2001, p. 11.

507 M. Rutkowska, *Jedwabne to dopiero początek*, interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, "Nasz Dziennik", 3-4 III 2001, p. 15.

508 E. Isakiewicz, *Szubienica i huśtawka...*, p. 12.

509 P. Gontarczyk, *Gross kontra fakty*, "Życie", 31 I 2001, p. 16.

ever read were similar and contained "almost always the same accusations against Poles". He also questioned the testimonies of Jewish witnesses who "very often emphasise Polish collaboration in the massacre and their co-responsibility for the Holocaust". He also suggested, like Gontarczyk, that Jewish historical commissions had acquired the accounts of Holocaust survivors after the war acting under special instructions and that part of these accounts served "communist propaganda or even UB activity", not science.[510]

The historians who took the defensive stand and doubted the reliability of the Holocaust survivors' accounts also referred to Gross's affirmative approach to these testimonies. Marek Wierzbicki suggested that the author's choice of historical sources had been arbitrary and biased. While he acknowledged and affirmed survivors' accounts of the anti-Semitic attitudes of Poles before the German occupation, Gross did not recognise or give credibility to the accounts by Poles of the "pro-Soviet and anti-Polish attitude of Jews before the Soviet occupation".[511] Piotr Gontarczyk even reviewed Gross's approach "against the principles of the historical profession", stating that sources should be studied objectively "regardless of the author's ethnic origin."[512] Similarly, Marek Jan Chodkiewicz postulated that Jewish memories should be treated and verified the same way as any other account, saying: "This group [Jews – author's note] must not be academically differentiated by the arbitrary 'affirmation' of their testimonies."[513]

The one who gave the greatest deal of attention to Gross's new approach to sources, however, was Bogdan Musiał. In his article titled "Histografia mityczna" ("Mythical Historiography") Musiał considered the topic of the Americanisation of the Holocaust and the process of making the Holocaust American Jewry's "substitute religion", which cemented their community and common identity in an era of the disintegration of traditional social bonds. According to the author, the existence of such a phenomenon can be observed in the processes of sacralisation, instrumentalisation, commercialisation and politicisation of the Holocaust. In his opinion, one of the doctrines of this lay-religion of the Holocaust is "the uncritical approach to the accounts of its survivors". Hence, Musioł

510 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Kłopoty z kuracją szokową*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 I 2001, p. 13.

511 T. M. Płużański, *Wybiórcze traktowanie źródeł*, an interview with M. Wierzbicki, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 9, p. 15.

512 "Did the author of Neighbors – Gontarczyk asked – consider for a moment what would happen if an author of a unique account turned out to be of unknown or uncertain origin? Should we then search for other accounts or for the witness's birth certificate?" P. Gontarczyk, *Gross kontra fakty*, "Życie" 31 I 2001,

513 M. Rutkowska, *Jedwabne to dopiero początek*, an interview with M.J. Chodakiewicz, "Nasz Dziennik" 3-4 III 2001, p. 15.

did not regard Gross's postulate to be a new, revealing "pattern to follow in Holocaust historiography" but only a repetition of "a doctrine already in force in the USA". What is more, this doctrine is harmful because, Musiał writes, a scholar should be characterised by "professional scepticism and careful analysis of any account" instead of the affirmative approach to the Holocaust survivors' testimonies, proposed by Gross.[514]

Apart from Gross's approach to sources, the above-mentioned historians also pointed at other drawbacks of his book. The main objection they raised was the lack of a reliable answer to the question of the participation and role of Germans in the Jedwabne pogrom. The critics generally did not question the participation of a certain number of Poles in the massacre, often stressing it was only "the dregs of society", but it was Germans to whom they attributed the inspiration for the crime, as well as its organisation and supervision. There were exceptions, however. In one of the interviews, Tomasz Strzembosz expressed his doubts about the assertion that Jedwabne Jews had been murdered by Polish hands, saying he was in possession of materials that allowed him to think that it had been Germans, not Poles, who had burnt the Jews in the barn.[515] Leszek Żebrowski also pointed at Germans as the direct perpetrators of the massacre. [516]

Another objection against "Neighbors" and its author was that he had abstracted the Jedwabne pogrom and Polish-Jewish relations from a wider historical background – only sketching the context cursorily, if not completely ignoring it. What the critics meant were not the pre-war Polish-Jewish relations, but rather the period of Soviet occupation of Jedwabne and other lands in the northern east of Poland. According to them, it was the events from this period that could provide a more convincing explanation for the Jedwabne crime than either anti-Semitism or the desire for profit. The significance of these events and their explanatory power were recklessly belittled by Gross, they said, and Piotr Gontarczyk even called it "one of the major drawbacks" of the book.[517]

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514 B. Musiał, *Historiografia mityczna*, "Rzeczpospolita" 24 II 2001, p. 11.

515 E. Isakiewicz, *Szubienica i huśtawka*, an interview with T. Strzembosz, "Gazeta Polska" 17 I 2001, p. 12.

516 W. Moszkowski, *Jedwabnym szlakiem kłamstw*, an interview with L. Żebrowski, "Nasz Dziennik" 31 III-1 IV 2001, p. 1, 14-15.

517 P. Gontarczyk, *Gross kontra fakty*, "Życie" 31 I 2001, 15; Actually it's not quite true because "Neighbors" contains a short passage entitled "Soviet occupation, 1939-41". However, Gross left out an in-depth analysis of what had happened in Jedwabne under Soviet occupation and on the basis of a few accounts and documents he drew a conclusion that there is no reason to single out Jedwabne as a place where relationships between Jews and the rest of the population were more antagonistic than anywhere else at the time.". J. T. Gross, *Neighbors...*, p. 33.

Both Gontarczyk and all other above-mentioned historians stressed that it had been acts of Jews under the Soviet occupation that had generated or intensified Polish hatred towards them. The Soviet occupation was a time when Jews became engraved into Polish memory as the traitors of the Polish nation and brutal torturers who had cordially welcomed Soviet occupiers, collaborated with them and helped them organise the expulsions of Poles. The evidence for these events was supposed to be found in the accounts of Polish witnesses, but was ignored by Gross. It was for instance Marek Wierzbicki who spoke about Soviets and Jews collaborating and equally enjoying Polish tragedies. He also claimed that even in September 1939, Jews revealed "very strong feelings of hostility towards Poland and the Polish nation".[518] Other historians also suggested that any analysis of the Jedwabne crime should include the thread of the Polish revenge for the attitudes of some Jews under Soviet occupation and it should not ignore Polish accounts of these disgraceful attitudes – which Gross's investigation did, by ignoring these accounts and these facts.

The main advocate of such an opinion and the main critic of Gross's omissions and play-downs was Tomasz Strzembosz, who expressed his views in an article under the very meaningful title: "Przemilczana kolaboracja" ["The Ignored Collaboration"]. In the introduction he declared: "Nothing can justify killing men, women and children only because they represent some social class, some nation or some religion, for any application of justice must have an individual character". The author then presented the multitude of miseries Poles suffered under the Soviet occupation, also because of the Jews who actively and eagerly collaborated with Soviet occupiers. He wrote about the Jewish population who "participated en masse in giving welcome to the invading army and in introducing the new order, also by violent means", which was "confirmed by thousands of Polish, Jewish and Soviet testimonies." He wrote about Jews who "undertook acts of rebellion against the Polish state", "executing the representatives of the Polish state authority, and attacking (…) units of the Polish Army", Jews "wearing red armbands and armed with rifles" who "in large numbers took part in the mass arrests and deportations", etc. Moreover, based on a few accounts acquired in the 1990s, he claimed that Jedwabne Jews had also followed this type of attitude of Jewry under the Soviet occupation.[519]

Despite Strzembosz's standpoint expressed in the introduction, the article could have made an impression on its reader that it was an expiation of guilt and that the author attempted to dissolve the crime in an ocean of mutual, Polish-

518 T.M. Płużański, *Każdy morderca ma imię*, an interview with M. Wierzbicki, "Najwyższy Czas!" 10 III 2001, p. XXVIII.

519 T. Strzembosz, *Przemilczana kolaboracja*, "Rzeczpospolita" 27 I 2001, p. 9-10.

Jewish bad deeds. One of those who got such an impression was the historian Israel Gutman. He noted that indirectly, in some way, the expressions used in the article "suggest some sort of calculation about Jedwabne: you to us, we to you!" Moreover, Gutman noticed that the "rumours and vague accusations Strzembosz constantly quotes are flights of the imagination and are not worth referring to."[520] The commentary provoked Strzembosz to respond and "Więź" magazine became a battleground for the two historians.[521]

To conclude, historians who took a defensive stand criticised "Neighbors" mostly for methodological mistakes, sources of uncertain reliability, for ignoring important sources and belittling the historical context of the events. Sławomir Radoń accused Gross of "a lack of academic reliability" and of jumping to conclusions. He also suggested that his book equated Poles and Germans as the perpetrators of the Holocaust.[522] Piotr Gontarczyk accused the author of using "undocumented statements and facts", a "biased choice of sources", ignoring or altering whatever challenged his theories and building the historical narrative "on the basis of stereotypes, prejudice and ordinary gossips". For all these reasons, he stated in the last words of his article that "Jan Tomasz Gross's book cannot be the basis of any serious debate about our history".[523]

These and similar objections towards Gross were also raised by his other declared critics. Unlike Tomasz Szarota, who classified Gross's book among "The Poor Poles…" by Błoński or "Campo di Fiori" by Miłosz, due to its significance, some compared "Neighbors" to the article by Michał Cichy, "Czarne karty powstania" [524] ["The Black Pages of the Uprising"] and Gross to Daniel Goldhagen.[525] These comparisons, obviously, never referred to the academic achievements of the authors but rather to their alleged offhandedness, lack of academic credibility and a reckless way of formulating opinions. Bogdan Musiał compared "Neighbors" to the controversial German exhibition from 1995, "Wehrmacht crimes 1941-1944" which, according to him, "after a detailed analysis of photographs and documents" turned out to be a "primitive manipulation of the sources" and an example of "how often facts are subjected to ideological

520 I. Gutman, *Krzyk i cisza*, "Więź" 2001, No. 4, p. 35.

521 See T. Strzembosz, *Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha*, "Więź" 2001, No. 6, p. 92-97; I. Gutman, *"Oni" i "my"*, "Więź" 2001, No. 8, p. 22-32.

522 R. Graczyk, *Pochopne sądy Grossa*, an interview with S. Radoń, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 20-21 I 2001, p. 25.

523 P. Gontarczyk, *Gross kontra fakty*, "Życie" 31 I 2001, 15-16.

524 See W. Moszkowski, *Jedwabnym szlakiem kłamstw*, an interview with L. Żebrowski, "Nasz Dziennik" 31 III-1 IV 2001, p. 14.

525 See N. Finkelstein, *Goldhagen dla początkujących*, "Rzeczpospolita" 20 VI 2001, p. 9-10.

pressure". Musiał suggested that this should not be forgotten in the debate about Jedwabne.[526]

Between May 2000 and March 2001, more historians joined the abovementioned debaters. Some, like Tomasz Szarota, postulated the necessity of further research and expressed their objections towards Gross's book by referring mostly to missing sources, to methodological problems or ignoring circumstances they found important. Paweł Machcewicz, for example, pointed out the materials Gross had never found but should have, and criticised simplifications and generalisations made by the author. Machcewicz accused Gross of not reflecting enough on the role of Germans in the Jedwabne events. Moreover, the historian noted, the author had never provided an answer to the question of the motives of the crime, while according to Machcewicz one of the key motives must have been the revenge on Jews for their "collaboration with the Soviet occupiers".

Although many of Machewicz's objections had already been raised by other critics of Gross, whom I quoted earlier in this book, the context was different: the tone of his statement was more moderate, less aggressive and definitely less defensive. Machcewicz never doubted that "Jedwabne Jews had been killed by their Polish neighbors" and that the possible German inspiration or the revenge motive could not change "the moral judgment of what happened in Jedwabne" nor "justify the murderers". He found that Gross's book was needed, for "shaking our consciences" and making it necessary to deconstruct the heroic image of Poles under German occupation, in which, until then, there had been no space for the participants of anti-Jewish pogroms or szmalcowniks. He was concerned, however, what the reception of "Neighbors" would be in Germany and in the USA, when the book was translated into other languages. He also wondered whether Gross's intrepid book would not interrupt Polish-Jewish dialogue because of its simplifications and generalisations or whether it would not postpone "the moment Poles are ready to confess their sins". [527]

In other words, there were different forms of criticism towards "Neighbors" and various responses by historians to the crime it had revealed. Among the most radical critics and the most determined protectors of Poland's good name were undoubtedly Jerzy Robert Nowak and Ryszard Bender. Although other historians aspired to be members of this group and, on the basis of what they wrote, could be assigned to it, the two scholars mentioned above distinguished themselves as particularly virulent, basing their opinions on anti-Semitic clichés and often using anti-Semitic rhetoric. Their standpoint towards Gross's book could be summarised in one sentence: the Jewish historian Gross wrote a book made

526 B. Musiał, *Historiografia mityczna*, "Rzeczpospolita" 24 II 2001, p. 11.

527 P. Machcewicz, *W cieniu Jedwabnego*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 XII 2000, p. 7.

up of lies and slanders, which is another proof of the common western phenomenon – anti-Polonism, and whose main aim is to hold Poles co-responsible for the Holocaust, label them as genetically anti-Semitic and force them to pay damages and give the Jewish possessions back.

There were also historians whose evaluation of the methodology of "Neighbors" was utterly different or who completely ignored this aspect of the book, focusing on the meaning and contexts of the revealed massacre. According to some of them, "technical" flaws of the book, discussed in public, were often of secondary importance and seen as a secondary concern.

Gross's book was, for example, regarded as "an example of good methodology" by Andrzej Żbikowski. In his opinion, "Gross conducted a very careful analysis of the available sources, examined the dynamics of the events, reconstructed the most dramatic moments and determined the perpetrators of the murder". According to Żbikowski, there was little to add to Gross's findings until new sources were discovered which would correct Gross's thinking and narration. In his article, Żbikowski disagreed with the theory of revenge for Jewish actions under the Soviet occupation, which was popularised by other historians. While he did not question the fact that some Jews had indeed supported the new rule, had been active in its structures and co-founded the apparatus of violence, he stressed that there had not been many of them and their attitude had not been the reason for pogroms in the Bialostockie region, including the Jedwabne pogrom. On the basis of analysis of the accounts available in the Jewish Historical Institute he argued that "all murderers used the popular belief in the Jewish collaboration with the Soviets as a pretext to rob and murder with impunity."

Żbikowski referred to the act of questioning the accounts of the Jewish survivors and searching for evidence of a German presence in Jedwabne as "burying one's head in the sand". Neither the German presence nor their granting of permission for killing Jews could change Żbikowski's opinion that Germans had not forced the Jedwabne inhabitants to murder their Jewish neighbours.[528] The conclusion of Żbikowski's words was quite clear: it must have been the locals who wanted it.

A similar opinion was expressed by Jolanta Żyndul in her analysis of the mechanism of pogroms based on the example of the Przytyk pogrom. She argued that it mattered little whether pogroms were organised or spontaneous or what their motives were. Even if in some cases a pogrom was indeed revenge, the crowd did not search for factual perpetrators of treason or crime, but instead punished the whole Jewish community. Rather, it was the circumstances that mattered each time. It was important whether "the atmosphere of antipathy in a

528 A. Żbikowski, *Nie było rozkazu*, "Rzeczpospolita" 4 I 2001, p. 7.

given community was strong enough to make relatively calm people assault, beat without restraint or even kill every Jew who was within their reach". And so it was in Jedwabne, according to Jolanta Żyndul. Even if revenge for Jewish "collaboration" under the Soviet occupation played some part, the vindictive crowd did not look for the actual traitors but punished the whole Jewish community of Jedwabne.[529]

Another historian, Marcin Kula, shared this view. Even if the Jedwabne pogrom had been inspired by the Germans, their inducement must have met "favourable conditions", Kula wrote, interpreting the Jedwabne murder as an "extreme display of hatred", characteristic of the "Eastern European Plain" – the "traditional" area of pogroms. Another cause of the pogrom, according to Kula, apart from the favourable conditions to kill Jews, was rooted in the Christian command to love applying only to "their people" and excluding Jews. Poles and Jews were "neighbours" only in "the spatial sense", but in fact there was distance and strangeness between them.[530]

Analogously, another debater, Israel Gutman, stated that Jedwabne citizens who had murdered Jews had not perceived them as human beings. They were fed with pre-war anti-Semitism, according to which Jews posed a threat that one should be rid of. Under the favourable circumstances created by the Germans who "made the basis for evil and murder", Jedwabne citizens "felt they could commit it". According to Gutman, they took advantage of the situation and murdered their Jewish neighbours who were "beyond the area of moral responsibility".

Gulman also argued with Tomasz Szarota's opinion, presented in "Gazeta Wyborcza" daily, that one should first find out the "devilish details" to reconstruct the full picture of the Jedwabne massacre and to understand it properly. In Gutman's opinion, "in such terrible events people are devilish and not details" while the details Szarota demanded to take into account were classified by Gutman as wishful thinking. Although Gutman never regarded "Neighbors" as complete, elaborate or answering all possible questions, he was certain about one thing: the disclosure of the Jedwabne massacre made Błoński's statement "we didn't take part in the genocide"[531] invalid.

All the above-mentioned views of the historians who took different stands in the debate about "Neighbors" were presented in public discourse between May 2000 and March 2001. The time frame is important because at the end of March 2001, there was an important turning point in the historical dispute and, in gen-

529 J. Żyndul, *Jeśli nie pogrom, to co?*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 8 III 2001, p. 18.

530 M. Kula, *Ludzie ludziom*, "Rzeczpospolita" 17-18 III 2001, p. 8-9.

531 J. Błoński, *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto*, op. cit.

eral, in the trajectory of the Jedwabne debate. Namely, the historians were granted access to the files from the 1949 Łomża trial of the Jedwabne murderers. Until then, the documents could not be used for two reasons: first, the Main Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, which kept the files, was in the process of liquidation and reorganisation; second, the files were later taken over by the prosecutor Radosław Ignatiew, who held the inquiry into the Jedwabne case.[532] It was these files that Jan Tomasz Gross used as one of the sources on which he based his book. No other historian taking part in the debate analysed them or even had access to them for some time. Jan Tomasz Gross accessed the archives of the Main Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation when they were officially not accessible because of the liquidation of the Main Commission and the transfer of archives to the newly created Institute of National Remembrance. It was possible for him due to Andrzej Paczkowski, who he thanked in one of the footnotes in "Neighbors".

For this reason, historians claimed that Jan Tomasz Gross had been in a privileged position – Tomasz Strzembosz emphasised the author had been in the possession of "secret knowledge" that no one else had access to. He could thus legitimise the course of events depicted in "Neighbors", invalidate counterarguments and close his adversaries' mouths.[533] As soon as the court records were accessible, the historians quickly caught up and undermined the credibility of Gross's findings on the basis of the new materials. Tomasz Strzembosz did it in an article published in "Rzeczpospolita" daily, entitled "Inny obraz sąsiadów" ["A Different Picture of Neighbors"] as did Piotr Gontarczyk in his article "Gross przemilczeń" ["Gross's Concealments"], published in "Życie" daily.[534]

What both historians concluded from the court records was that the analyses of the witnesses' and defendants' testimonies about the Jedwabne massacre contradicted Gross's main theory and allowed the opposite reassessment of the Jedwabne events. Quoting extensively from the testimonies, both Strzembosz and Gontarczyk decided that the key role in the Jedwabne massacre was played by the Germans. The content of the testimonies was supposed to confirm that it

532 E.g. Paweł Machcewicz mentioned it during a discussion held in "Rzeczpospolita" editorial office. See *Jedwabne, 10 lipca 1941 – zbrodnia i pamięć*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 III 2001, p. 12-16.

533 T. Strzembosz, *Inny obraz sąsiadów*, "Rzeczpospolita" 31 III 2001, p. 9-11; This issue was also raised by some participants in the debate about the Jedwabne massacre held in the "Rzeczpospolita" editorial office. See *Jedwabne, 10 lipca 1941 – zbrodnia i pamięć*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 III 2001, p. 12-16.

534 See T. Strzembosz, *Inny obraz sąsiadów*, "Rzeczpospolita" 31 III 2001, p.; P. Gontarczyk, *Gross przemilczeń*, "Życie" 31 III – 1 IV 2001, p. 11-13.

was Germans who, along with the town authorities, participated in escorting the Jews in the square and guarding them; they were also supposed to have forced the Poles to seize the victims from town. Both historians also tended to agree that on the day of the massacre there had been more Germans than the mere dozen or so which Gross claimed; what is more, their role had not been limited to "filming". Germans, Gontarczyk wrote, "were initiators and the causative force behind the Jedwabne tragedy. It was they who dragged Poles out of their homes, and stood behind Karolak, Bardoń and their companions".[535]

Tomasz Strzembosz went even further in his conclusions, claiming that Germans were not only "inspirers, organisers and co-perpetrators" but it was they, not Poles, who burned the Jews in the barn. It did not seem possible to Strzembosz that "Germans, who controlled the whole preparation processes, left the ultimate execution of the murder to Poles".[536] What role did Poles play in the Jedwabne crime then? According to Piotr Gontarczyk, "a few people" participated voluntarily and their motive was revenge for the Jewish attitude under Soviet occupation and "the savagery of war". The remaining Poles – "at least a dozen or so" – were forced by the Germans to "gather" Jews in the square, guard them and, later, to escort them to the barn. According to Gontarczyk, there were still those in this group who escaped, not willing to carry out their task, and those who helped the Jews. None of them was ever "aware of the tragic fate of their neighbors".[537] Tomasz Strzembosz's view of the Polish role in the massacre was similar. He emphasised the small number of Polish co-perpetrators and that they acted under German duress.[538]

Both historians accused Jan Tomasz Gross of manipulation. According to them, Gross ignored the testimonies of the witnesses and defendants from the 1949 trial, which contained statements of the causative role of the Germans, and he had included only those blaming Poles. In other words, his choice of sources was subordinate to the theory that Jedwabne Jews were murdered by

535 P. Gontarczyk, *Gross przemilczeń*, "Życie" 31 III – 1 IV 2001, p. 12.

536 T. Strzembosz, *Inny obraz sąsiadów*, "Rzeczpospolita" 31 III 2001, p. 9; According to Tomasz Strzembosz, the theory that it was Germans who burned the Jews in the barn was grounded in one of the accounts, and supported by the fact that the shells, found at the massacre site during the exhumation could have belonged only to Germans who had been the only ones equipped with firearms. Further investigation, however, demonstrated that the shells probably originated from weapons used during World War I. See P. Semką, *Mijanie się z faktami*, an interview with T. Strzembosz, "Życie" 31 III – 1 IV 2001, p. 13.

537 P. Gontarczyk, *Gross przemilczeń*, "Życie" 31 III – 1 IV 2001, p. 12.

538 P. Semka, *Mijanie się z faktami*, an interview with T. Strzembosz, "Życie" 31 III – 1 IV 2001, p. 13.

the "Polish society". Other sources used by the author were supposed to back up this critique: their value had been already undermined by Gontarczyk, Strzembosz and other historians. The two scholars criticised them again, adding that Szmul Wasersztajn could not have been an eyewitness to the events he had spoken of in his account; some of the witnesses Gross referred to had not been in Jedwabne that day; someone counted by Gross as a perpetrator had been severely ill on the day in question and had not left their home and therefore could not have participated in the massacre, etc. All of these minutely-listed shortcomings and inaccuracies served only one purpose: to make Gross's findings invalid and prove that this sociologist, who was not a historian, simply made a mistake. His main and conscious – as was highlighted – mistake was thought to be his wrong assessment of the role the Germans played in the Jedwabne crime. The consoling discovery that Gross had made a mistake was announced in a triumphant and relieved tone by Tomasz Strzembosz, whose article "Inny obraz sąsiadów" ["A Different Picture of Neighbours"] proclaimed: "And so: the Germans!"[539]

"And yet, Neighbours" – Jan Tomasz Gross answered in his article under the same title ["A jednak sąsiedzi"] and a few other texts published in Polish press. The author disputed the assertions made by Strzembosz and Gontarczyk and other objections raised by his adversaries.[540] Gross pointed out that he had never ignored any accounts and that he had highlighted in his book that more than ten Germans were in Jedwabne that day and some of them, along with local authorities, participated in recruiting Poles to escort the Jedwabne Jews to the square and to guard the Jews rounded up there. Gross based his depiction of the role played by the Germans on the accounts of the witnesses and defendants of the Łomża trial. Because of this, the author stated that Tomasz Strzembosz could find these testimonies in "Neighbors" and that neither Strzembosz nor Gontarczyk had discovered anything new. Quoting himself, Gross also reminded that he had noted in "Neighbors": "At the time the overall undisputed bosses over life and death in Jedwabne were the Germans. No sustained organized activity could take place there without their consent. They were the only ones who could decide the fate of the Jews. It was within their power also to stop the murderous pogrom at any time. And they did not choose to intervene."[541]

539 T. Strzembosz, *Inny obraz sąsiadów*, "Rzeczpospolita" 31 III 2001, p. 9.

540 J. T. Gross, *A jednak sąsiedzi*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 IV 2001, p. 10-11;

541 J. T. Gross, *A jednak sąsiedzi*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 IV 2001, p. 10; J. T. Gross, Neighbors..., p. 77.

Therefore, Jan Tomasz Gross called Tomasz Strzembosz's revelations "empty words" serving only "to mess with people's minds".[542] Court records which Strzembosz used to sketch his "Different Picture of Neighbours" had been included in Gross's book. Besides, as Gross noted, they referred only to "one phase of the murder" which was "the way some of the defendants had got to the square".[543] Moreover, Gross observed, court testimonies differed from those acquired during the investigation process. The latter were ignored by Strzembosz, who considered them forcefully extorted.[544] In any case, Gross's main conclusion was that his theory had not been undermined whatsoever. Admittedly, he acknowledged a few minor mistakes; however, in his opinion, they were insignificant for the key findings of "Neighbors". Jedwabne Jews had been murdered by their Polish neighbours who had not been forced to do so, he repeated once more.[545]

Jan Tomasz Gross did not, however, confine himself to defending his book from the attacks of its leading critic, Tomasz Strzembosz. The author also asked how it was possible that his adversary, who had been professionally researching the period of the occupation in Białostockie and Podlaskie regions for many years, had never mentioned the fate of Jedwabne Jews or the fate of the Jews from the whole region in any of his works. Did his silence stem from ignorance? Or did Strzembosz know but decided not to write anyway? Gross never answered these questions directly, although he was clearly inclined to give a positive answer to the last one. Considering previous statements given by Strzembosz and concerning the Jedwabne massacre, particularly his article "The Ignored Collaboration", Gross called him "an author full of prejudice" and accused him of using anti-Semitic clichés and generalisations on the subject of Jewish attitudes under Soviet occupation.[546] He also stated that both Tomasz Strzembosz and other authors of "right-wing, national orientation" tried to "divert attention from the horrendous Jedwabne massacre, shifting the debate to the 1939-1941 period".[547] Besides, according to Gross, they never wanted the truth about Jedwabne and only wanted to keep the status quo: the perception of the occupation period based on an irrefutable axiom that Poles fought and suffered while Jews were killed by the Germans and only by the Germans. In one of the

542 P. Wroński, *Podtrzymuję swoje tezy*, an interview with J. T. Gross, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 3 IV 2001, p. 16.

543 Ibidem

544 J. T. Gross, *A jednak sąsiedzi*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 IV 2001, p. 10-11.

545 See: J. Pleszczyński, *Nie zlekceważyłem żadnych relacji*, an interview with J. T. Gross, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 30 III 2001, p. 3.

546 J. T. Gross, *A jednak sąsiedzi*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 IV 2001, p. 12-13.

547 Ibidem, p. 13.

interviews, Gross reproached Strzembosz for "trying to belittle the case and demonstrate that the Jedwabne pogrom was no different from any other murders of Jews committed in the region".[548]

After the polemic provoked by Tomasz Strzembosz and seconded by Piotr Gontarczyk, Jan Tomasz Gross stopped expressing his opinions in public for a longer time and the debate carried on without him. Before that, asked by a journalist whether the meaning of "Neighbors" might change because of the ongoing investigation, such as the exhumation of the bodies of the Jews burnt in the Jedwabne barn, the searching of archives and debates in general, he gave the opinion that even if the number of victims was established and lowered it would not change the fact that the whole population of Jedwabne Jews had been murdered by their Polish neighbours.[549] His predictions proved to be true; however, he desisted from further discussion.

Among those who continued to participate in the debate, a clear division emerged between the supporters of Jan Tomasz Gross's stand and those who considered Tomasz Strzembosz the authority in the Jedwabne case. Not without reason did Paweł Ciołkiewicz name this stadium of the debate, inaugurated by the Strzembosz versus Gross polemic, "the two-stands phase".[550] Although other historians also participated in the debate and argued with one another, they usually repeated, developed or completed the theories of the two scholars. They used similar narratives, taking either Gross's or Strzembosz's stand. Almost until the very end of the debate, these two views on the Jedwabne massacre were reproduced in the public discourse by the multi-voiced participants. Therefore, the public image of the pogrom and its social representations originated from trusting one of the two historians or putting one's faith in other participants of the debate who also supported one of the two. That is why the role of historians in the debate should not be belittled even if their voices were not unanimous and sometimes drowned out.

3. Jedwabne in the moral discourse

Earlier in this book, I defined moral discourse as a particular attitude typical to some of the participants of the debate about "Neighbors" and the rhetoric style

548 P. Wroński, *Podtrzymuję swoje tezy*, an interview with J. T. Gross, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 3 IV 2001, p. 16.

549 J. Pleszczyński, *Nie zlekceważyłem żadnych relacji*, an interview with J. T. Gross, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 30 III 2001, p. 3.

550 P. Ciołkiewicz, *Poszukiwanie granic odpowiedzialności zbiorowej. Debata o Jedwabnem na łamach "Gazety Wyborczej"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2004, No. 1, s. 125.

related to it. Such a definition neither determines the morality of the participants nor is it evaluative– its function is purely analytical. In order to grasp the specific moral discourse of the debate, I propose to focus on a few questions raised by the participants: first, the evaluation of Jan Tomasz Gross's book and the meaning assigned to its publication; second, the attitude towards the crime revealed in "Neighbors" and the facts related to it; third, the confession of Polish sins as a result of this revelation; and finally, the problem of the collective responsibility for the sins of our ancestors.

In the moral discourse, the historical sources on which "Neighbors" was based were never questioned. Rare comments on the author's methodological mistakes were not usually regarded as significant compared to the scale of the Jedwabne massacre. Moreover, it was highlighted that "Neighbors" was intended to provoke a discussion that had not yet been initiated by any of the balanced and elaborate but unnoticed publications by other authors, which also touched on the sensitive topic of the Polish-Jewish past. Gross's methodology, by the way, was considered innovative in Polish historiography and his proposal to revise the approach to sources gained its followers. Joanna Tokarska- Bakir saw it as a type of remedy for the gaps in Polish collective memory, which is "a place where there are no Jews". She added that "we all need a revision in the approach to sources". However, she noted, "the new approach to sources" proposed by Gross could persuade only someone who was already convinced for some time: for example, the addressee of Jan Błoński's essay "Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto".[551] Generalising, one could say that in the moral discourse, assessment of the methodological aspect of "Neighbors" was almost completely absent. Gross's book was evaluated in terms of its significance for Polish readers and the debate it sparked off.

Numerous debaters emphasised that "Neighbors" evoked shock in Poland and was personally shocking for them, too. That is why they interpreted its release and the public debate around it as a turning point or a breakthrough. While Marek Ostrowski pointed out that revealing the Jedwabne crime was "a turning point in Polish-Jewish relations"[552], some stressed that Jedwabne was not a Polish-Jewish problem but solely a Polish one and Poles should deal with it by themselves. Michał Głowiński and Paweł Śpiewak emphatically stated that, as did Adam Krzemiński, who emphasised that "the present debate about the Jedwabne pogrom sets a turning point for Polish self-awareness".[553]

551 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Obsesja niewinności*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13 I 2001, p. 13.

552 M. Ostrowski, *Dobrzy ludzie siedzą cicho*, "Polityka" 21 IV 2001, p. 38.

553 See A. Krzemiński, *Inna zemsta, inne wesele*, "Polityka" 28 VII 2001, p. 45-46.

Revealing the Jedwabne massacre was considered as a problem but also a challenge that Poles – and others – had to face. The debate over the Jedwabne pogrom was said to "allow for catharsis"[554]; to be "the national therapy"' "the most important exam Poles have faced for the last decade"[555]; "the training ground to exercise Polish mentality"[556]; "the first attempt to look in the mirror after 55 years"[557]; or "the measure of Polish souls and characters, a great confessional and a collective shrink's couch".[558] Some of the participants perceived the debate as a continuation of the discussion about Polish attitudes to the Holocaust, inaugurated by Błoński's essay, and they compared the significance of Gross's book to "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto". "Neighbors" was also situated next to other literary works, Polish and foreign, that handled a difficult past. The journalist Jerzy Sławomir Mac was certainly correct when he claimed that, in contrast to the debate sparked off by Błoński's essay, involving only a narrow circle of intellectuals, the discussion about Jedwabne "reached a wide audience".[559] It was also rightly noticed that while Błoński in his essay confronted Poles with the problem of the indifference of Polish eyewitnesses of the Holocaust, Jan Tomasz Gross went much further in raising the problem of Polish participation in the Holocaust, confronting us with a much more difficult and as yet unknown truth.

Thus, in the moral discourse, some sort of gratitude – for lack of a better term – was expressed to Gross for forcing Poles to engage in a necessary and long-postponed exploration of their own past and to redefine their national identity. In other words, Poles were forced to verify the dominant paradigm in Polish historiography and consciousness, according to which they had only ever been victims and had never hurt anyone in the past. The ultimate end of this paradigm was described by the journalist Halina Bortnowska and the historian of ideas, Marcin Król, who announced "the end of a possibility for Poles to think about themselves" in such a way.[560] To quote Adam Michnik, In "Neighbors", Gross

554 A. Sabor, ks. A. Boniecki, *Głęboki wymiar pamięci*, an interview with L. Kieres, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 17 VI 2001, p. 11.

555 A. Magdziak-Miszewska, *Najpoważniejszy egzamin*, "Więź" 2001, No. 4, p. 48

556 P. Pytlakowski, *Wasze ręce mają znaki*, "Polityka" 17 III 2001, p. 15.

557 W. Amiel, *Prawda lustra*, "Wprost" 4 II 2001, p. 30.

558 J. S. Mac, *Test z Jedwabnego*, "Wprost" 18 III 2001, p. 74.

559 J. S. Mac, *Test z Jedwabnego*, "Wprost" 18 III 2001, p. 74

560 See H. Bortnowska, *Gdy sąsiad nie ma imienia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 27-28 I 2001, p. 24; Such a words were used by Marcin Król during the editorial discussion on pages of "Res Publica Nowa". *See Akt skruchy i co dalej?*, "Res Publica Nowa" 2001, No. 7, p. 7.

revealed "this snippet of the truth we never wanted to hear about. This truth is bitter, bitter as medicine – unpalatable, painful but needed".[561]

Many other debaters wrote about the need for publications that expose the painful truth. For them, the debate inspired by Gross's "Neighbors" was a landmark that provoked national introspection and had therapeutic value. Within the moral discourse, there was no doubt that Gross's book was needed because it forced Poles to necessarily and publicly account for their difficult past and to purify their collective memory. Some lamented that the book had not been written by a Polish writer or that a similar debate had not been held earlier. Distrust for the state of Polish historiography was expressed: Polish historians were criticised for their negligence, and history textbooks for their heroic and martyred vision of national history. In this context, by revealing the Jedwabne massacre and provoking a national debate, Gross's book was considered an even greater contribution. This "irrefutable" value was often mentioned in the moral discourse while little attention was paid to analysis of the methodological aspects of the book.

Such an approach to the meaning and value of "Neighbors" is not, however, a distinguishing criterion of the moral discourse (at least not the only one); it fails to demonstrate the unique character of this discourse that is different from other narratives. A key criterion is surely the attitude of debaters towards the crime described by Gross and to the facts related to it. In the moral discourse, Polish participation was never questioned, belittled or excused by extenuating circumstances. On the contrary, representatives of the moral discourse disapproved of all those who attempted to play down Polish participation in the crime in the name of a discourse of innocence. In other words, the moral discourse related to the Jedwabne pogrom was a discourse without any "yes, but" – a "but" which often marks anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Unlike other participants, debaters using the moral discourse did not magnify the role of the Germans in the Jedwabne massacre; their presence, inspiration or possible co-participation was considered neither an extenuating circumstance nor an excuse. Therefore, they did not support historians searching for evidence that the German role had been crucial or that there had been more Germans than Gross suggested or that the role of Poles in the crime was minor.[562] The debaters perceived the role played in the murder by the Germans in the same way as the

561 A. Michnik, *Rachunek polskiego sumienia*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 IX 2001, p. 7.

562 Reverend W. Lemański used the term "devil's arithmetic" to describe the practice of overestimating the number of Germans present in Jedwabne and underestimating Polish presence and perpetration in the crime. W. Lemański, *Chrystus w zgliszczach stodoły*, "Więź" 2001, No. 6, p. 80.

author did. Therefore, they wrote about "a pogrom licensed by the German occupier"[563] or about a murder committed by Poles with "presumably little" participation of the Germans.[564] German patronage, inspiration or obvious permission were not excluded but perceived as having nothing to do with the fact that the role of murderers was played by the local, Polish residents. Unlike the other narratives I will later analyse, the moral discourse labelled Poles as murderers and the German role as peripheral. This bitter truth was indisputable.

Not only did the moral discourse never shift the burden of the murder to the Germans, there were also no attempts to make this murder easier to bear by categorising the Polish perpetrators as anti-Semitic, primitive scum or a social margin. If the perpetrators were removed beyond the borders of the national community, assigned a marginal status and deprived of Polish nationality, all the remaining, non-anti-Semitic, cultured and good Poles, city dwellers and university graduates could sigh with relief since they had nothing to do with the Jedwabne massacre. The temptation of such thinking was interpreted as an easy escape from the sense of responsibility and a comfortable ritual of washing hands. Therefore, one of the journalists noted that in a barn in Jedwabne "not a margin but a strap of the Polish nation burned a part of the Jewish nation."[565]

In addition, the motive of revenge on Jews for their attitude under the Soviet occupation – an avenue of interpretation proposed by Tomasz Strzembosz and used by other debaters – was viewed as an attempt to find extenuating circumstances. This particular deductive system was interpreted as an endeavour to excuse or even justify the murderers and to shift the blame to the victims. There was no acceptance for attempts to de-emphasise the necessity of a moral appraisal of the murder committed by Poles by referring to the alleged motive of revenge and thereby shunting aside the debate over it.

There were some who became involved in a polemic against Strzembosz's theory that attempted to excuse the murder in its context. They questioned the validity and sense of his arguments and accused the academic, who had analysed the Białostockie region under the occupation, of ignoring the wartime history of Jews in the region ("he failed to link the history of Jews with the history of Poland"[566]). Artur Domosławski even risked an analysis of the stand taken by Strzembosz in the debate over "Neighbors" from the perspective of the author's personal biography, which received criticism, not only from those who identi-

563 H. Bortnowska, *Gdy sąsiad nie ma imienia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 27-28 I 2001, p. 24.

564 S. Musiał, *Jedwabne to nowe imię Holokaustu*, "Rzeczpospolita" 10 VII 2001, p. 12.

565 W. Kuczyński, *Płonąca stodoła i ja*, "Wprost" 25 III 2001, p. 56.

566 J. Lewandowski, *Historia Polski po Jedwabnem będzie wyglądała inaczej*, "Rzeczpospolita" 15 II 2001, p. 7.

fied with Strzembosz's views.[567] Much more often, however, the disputants pointed out that whether the Jedwabne victims had been treated as "recent supporters of the Bolshevik rule" or "local representatives of little business" or even as someone else, did not matter at all. "Any attempts to calculate mathematical proportions for such feelings", wrote Archbishop Józef Życiński, "are automatically doomed to fail. They contribute little to the moral appraisal of the situation as it would be mad to think there are any reasons that can justify the collective burning of human beings in barns".[568] Similar views were shared by other debaters, who found the motives of the crime insignificant as none of them could explain the murder, Revenge on neighbours was no justification.

In the moral discourse, criticism was also directed at what Piotr Pytlakowski described as "coldness" in the debate, that is, technical and mathematical deliberations about the number of Jews murdered in Jedwabne.[569] It was often noted that any sort of calculations related to counting victims or – as Agnieszka Arnold named it – "the cynical counting of skeletons" served only to belittle Gross's findings or sometimes even to reduce the scale of the massacre.[570] What was found particularly outrageous and immoral were speculations about the size of the barn – whether it had been large enough to fit the number of Jews suggested by Gross and inscribed on the Jedwabne monument.

Therefore, a great dose of scepticism, not to say disapproval, was expressed about the exhumation of the bodies of Jews burnt in the Jedwabne barn, initiated by the Institute of National Remembrance.[571] This scepticism or disapproval

567 See A. Domosławski, *Kustosz Polski niewinnej*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19-20 V 2001, p. 14.

568 J. Życiński, *Banalizacja barbarzyństwa*, "Więź" 2001, No. 3, p. 28.

569 P. Pytlakowski, *Wasze ręce mają znaki*, "Polityka" 17 III 2001, p. 16.

570 J. Paradowska, *Liczenie szkieletów*, an interview with A. Arnold, "Polityka" 14 IV 2001, p. 17.

571 The exhumation conducted during the IPN investigation was the subject of justified controversies. Jewish law (Halakha) forbids disturbing the peace of the deceased and allows exhumation only in a few circumstances treated as a state of necessity. They did not apply to the case in Jedwabne. Therefore a conflict arose between the Halakha and the Polish legal procedures that order exhumation in such cases. Eventually, the Warsaw and Łódź rabbi Michael Schudrich (who could not consent to exhumation for religious reasons) and the Minister of Justice Lech Kaczyński reached a compromise. Exhumation was decided to be conducted only partially, by only exposing the corpses of the murdered without disturbing or extracting them. In addition to IPN prosecutors and experts, Michael Schudrich, rabbis from Great Britain and Israel as well as experts on Halakha burial law participated in the exhumation. The results of the exhumation indicated that there had been about 200-250 victims in two graves – one inside the barn and another placed along its foundations. As the chief of the IPN investigation department,

stemmed mainly from a conviction that the main aim of supporters of the exhumation was not the IPN investigation and the discovery of the historical truth, but rather to disprove the number of victims (questioned since the very release of "Neighbors") in order to belittle Gross's theories. That is why Konstanty Gebert warned against an exploitative attitude to the bodies of murdered Jews, intended to convince those who remained unconvinced and to help change the opinions of people "of bad will and a dirty conscience".[572] The journalist Józefa Hennelowa added that for people who demanded the exhumation most fiercely, the number was the most important, as if a smaller figure "could change anything about our guilty conscience for those who committed it [the pogrom – translator's note]". She also noticed that beforehand, no one had questioned the figure of 1,600 victims inscribed on the Jedwabne monument because at that stage the blame was attributed to the Nazis, about which the inscription on the monument informed.[573] In the moral discourse, it was considered obvious that the mercifully lower number of victims could neither change the moral appraisal of the murder committed by Poles nor question Gross's main theory.

Considering what has been said so far about the moral discourse and its approach to the attempts to find extenuating circumstances for the Polish perpetrators of the Jedwabne crime, it seems that one thing needs further explanation. One might think that the criticism towards the endeavours undertaken to reduce the role and participation of Poles in the crime meant that historical research and the IPN investigation were considered insignificant. Nothing could be further from the truth. The need for further research was often mentioned and treated as the responsibility of historians and investigators. There were no doubts within the moral discourse, however, that the current knowledge of the Jedwabne massacre was enough to view Poles as perpetrators and draw correct conclusions from this knowledge. Thus, if some historians were criticised *ad personam*, it was only for their blind determination in the search for any evidence of extenuating circumstances intended to confirm Polish innocence. This attitude of some

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Witold Kulesza, stressed, this was only an approximate number because the exhumation had not been completed. Moreover, the presence of other corpses buried elsewhere in Jedwabne could not be ruled out. Thus, the exhumation significantly revised the number of 1,600 victims given by Gross and inscribed on the monument in Jedwabne. There were also numerous gun shells around the barn and one on the corpse of a victim. In the grave inside the barn a partly melted bullet jacket was also found. Some people believed these findings to be an obvious proof of the German participation in the massacre. However, these hopes proved to be vain.

572 K. Gebert, *Ekshumacja*, "Rzeczpospolita" 15 VI 2001, p. 9.

573 J. Hennelowa, *Ciszej nad Jedwabnem*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 3 VI 2001, p. 3.

historians and other debaters who "fanatically supported them" was considered a significant barrier to the recently started self-examination.[574]

Polish self-examination and the confession of crimes against Jews are an important element of the debate that helps to strengthen and more precisely define the border between the moral discourse and other narratives about Jedwabne. The moral discourse considered the revelation of the Jedwabne crime by Jan Tomasz Gross to be a necessary confrontation with a difficult past, hitherto shrouded in silence and rejected. Literally and symbolically, Jedwabne was viewed as a challenge to see all the dimensions of the national past in full light. Also, it was regarded as an opportunity to enrich the cognitive perspective by noticing different attitudes of Poles towards Jews: not only those that make us proud but also those that bring shame and dishonour and to see ourselves in a new role: not as victims, but the culprits of someone else's misery. In other words, Jedwabne was considered a necessary stimulus and imperative for complete Polish self-knowledge.

Therefore, users of this discourse called for re-evaluating the past, for a national self-evaluation and for acknowledging and confessing Polish sins. This process was considered necessary, not only for the sake of the international image of Poland and Poles, but primarily for the national community, which should learn the truth about itself and be able to speak about it. Quoting Dariusz Czaja, "sins never confessed and atrocities never realised do not descend into nothingness. They are stuck in the subconscious, corrupting it from the inside."[575]

It was reminded, however, that this way of dealing with the past is not a Polish specificity: many other nations had to deal with their burdensome legacy. Poles were neither the first nor the last to experience the revenge of suppressed memory, to face the truth of the past and to recall from oblivion what would be comfortable to forget. These issues were also the aims of a series of interviews conducted by Jacek Żakowski for "Gazeta Wyborcza" daily, with historians, sociologists and philosophers (e.g. Paul Ricoeur, Yehuda Bauer, Charles Maier) about the rising wave of historical revisions and accounting for history in different parts of the world, about a sudden revision of the difficult past and the mechanisms to handle it. In the moral discourse, there were attempts to outline which conditions would give the opportunity to confess sins in an honest way. A key condition was what Jan Błoński suggested in his essay: stop listing sorrows and beating the breasts of others. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, for example, pointed out that all previous debates over Polish-Jewish relations in the context of the

574 Z. Nosowski, *W perspektywie sumienia*, "Więź" 2001, No. 6, p. 72.

575 D. Czaja, *To nie "oni", niestety*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16-17 12 2000, p. 21.

Holocaust used to change into a "confession of someone else's sins".[576] They were held in a "yes, but" mode in which everything that was said after "but" depreciated, deadened or invalidated "yes". Some debaters also emphasised that masking/hiding Polish sins with the glory of Polish Righteous Among the Nations was meaningless because – as one of the journalists noticed – "the good does not cancel out the evil" and "history is not arithmetic".[577]

Users of the moral discourse did not restrict themselves to the calls for Polish self-examination, declaration of guilt or the conditions of an honest confession of national sins against Jews, but instead started this confession. The Jedwabne massacre was defined as an end of the myth of Polish innocence, as a "new truth about our nation" [578] and as "a goodbye to the messianic myth of the 'Christ of Europe'".[579] It was emphasised that so far, *szmalcownictwo* [demanding money from Jews under threat of informing Nazis about them] had been considered the worst atrocity in the spectrum of Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust and even this phenomenon had been often marginalised. The Jedwabne pogrom made *szmalcownicy* yield their victory palm of Polish dishonour and see Poles in an unknown role, which had always been strongly denied. "Jedwabne", reverend Stanisław Musiał wrote, "is a new name for the Holocaust" [580]. He was not the only one to draw such bitter conclusions from the book. The journalists wrote about "our genocide"[581], "a genocide committed by Polish hands"[582], or simply "a participation in the Holocaust".

The Jedwabne case served also as a stimulus to more general deliberations about Polish-Jewish relations in Poland in the interwar period, particularly about the problem of anti-Semitism. Many debaters tended to think that it was the anti-Semitism, flowing from church pulpits and Catholic press and inscribed into the National Democrats' ideology that contributed to the fact that in Jedwabne, Polish neighbours burnt their Jewish neighbours in a barn. The contribution of anti-Semitic rhetoric – tolerated, nearly omnipresent and legitimised also by the authority of the Church – created an environment conducive to the incubation of murderous instincts and an atmosphere of an implied consent to kill. That is why some looked for the origin of Jedwabne pogrom in this very atmosphere. For example, Krystyna Skarżyńska tended to agree with Gross that the Jedwabne Jews were murdered by "society"; she noted that, in the light of psychological

[576] J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Obsesja niewinności*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13-14 I 2001, p. 22.

577 M. Zieleniewski, *Brakujące ogniwo*, "Wprost" 28 I 2001, p. 3.

578 S. Musiał, *Dla Gazety*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 14 III 2001, p. 2.

579 A. Szostkiewicz, *Inna zemsta, inne wesela*, "Polityka"28 VII 2001, p. 45.

580 S. Musiał, *Jedwabne to nowe imię Holokaustu*, "Rzeczpospolita" 10 VII 2001, p. 12.

581 W. Kuczyński, *Płonąca stodoła i ja*, "Wprost" 25 III 2001, p. 56.

582 W. Amiel, *Prawda lustra*, "Wprost" 4 II 2001, p. 30.

knowledge, "it is very likely that people murdering their Jewish neighbours had a sense of support from their neighbours and authorities who – as they believed – thought similarly to them. They could have even thought they were completing a mission as the only virtuous and truly Catholic Poles, the only righteous".[583]

The self-examination in the moral discourse also included confessing other sins committed by Poles against Jews, such as other pogroms. Confessions were accompanied by a polemic against the national myth of an innocent victim: the myth of Poland as a "Christ of Europe" and a country that was solely aggrieved and that suffered. Blind defence of the paradigm of national innocence was seen as a result of this powerful auto-stereotype constituting Polish identity and posing a serious barrier to acknowledging and confessing Polish sins. In other words, the almost panicky "innocence obsession"[584] was seen as a dam, separating Poles from the purifying truth about themselves; an obstacle standing in the way to the multi-dimensioned past.

The reckoning with the Jedwabne massacre and other Polish sins against Jews, postulated and carried out in the moral discourse, resulted from the belief that even if individual responsibility and personal blame for the pogrom rested with its direct perpetrators, the burden is placed on the whole national community. Among the users of the moral discourse, there was no doubt that the Jedwabne murders also burdened contemporary Poles and, in some way, made them responsible for it. Although there were different definitions of such responsibility, it would be hard to disagree that there was an implied community of sense regardless of the diversity of terminology.

Therefore, the moral discourse included terms such as "responsibility", "collective responsibility", "responsibility for the community", "national responsibility" and, the most frequent, "moral responsibility" for the deeds committed by the members of the national community we all belong to. At times, however, the term "responsibility" was given up. Wojciech Sadurski questioned its usability in the context of the debate, arguing that what stems from accepting responsibility are "some duties of practical action, compensation for damages or punishments" while when it comes to Jedwabne it would be better to speak of shame and to use the first person singular.[585] Jan Nowak-Jeziorański also used the word "shame" in writing about a "sense of national shame for disgraceful deeds" and

583 K. Skarżyńska, *Zbiorowe wyobrażenia, wspólna wina*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 25 XI 2000, p. 16.

584 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Obsesja niewinności*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13-14 I 2001, p. 22.

585 W. Sadurski, *Duma, wstyd i Jedwabne*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 3-4 III 2001, p. 22.

about the necessity of confessing to "Polish Cains".[586] Others, who avoided the word "responsibility" without giving any specific reason, used such phrases as: "the burden of the legacy of blame"[587], "the burden of the blame for crimes" [588] or "the burden of our ancestors' sins"[589] and believed that collective memory should include not only remembering national heroes, glorious events and honourable achievements but also the memory of murderers and national disgrace.[590] Sometimes, however, acknowledging responsibility or accepting the burden of blame for the Jedwabne massacre was expressed by saying "we" instead of "them". "We, fellow brothers of murderers" – signatories of the letter "To the Jedwabne Jews" wrote.[591]

The debaters used some varieties of the term "responsibility" to make it clear that what they meant was neither a legal definition of this word nor the individual and direct responsibility of the contemporary generations for their ancestors' guilt. These debaters who never used the term were exempt from such explanations. This way or another, both groups spoke of the same thing, that is, of the duty of burdening a nation as a collective subject to accept its legacy in its full and heterogeneous form: not only our ancestors' merits but also their guilt. It was stressed that the privilege of enjoying the part of the national heritage that is a cause for pride requires taking on the duty to accept the inglorious part of the inheritance: the embarrassing and troublesome past. This question was raised by the Executive Board of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) in its open letter to "the members and sympathisers of SLD"[592], and the then prime minister Jerzy Buzek stated that although the Jedwabne massacre had been committed "neither in the name of the Polish nation nor the Polish state", as a nation, "if we have a right to be proud of the Poles who risked or even gave their lives to save Jews, we also have to acknowledge the guilt of those who participated in murdering them."[593]

Other debaters also referred to such a "conditional", let us say, right to be proud of the Polish Righteous Among the Nations or other great Poles such as

586 J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Potrzeba zadośćuczynienia*, "Rzeczpospolita" 26 I 2001, p. 5.
587 H. Bortnowska, *Białe nasiona*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 29 IV 2001, p. 5.
588 (ks.)W. Lemański, *Chrystus w zgliszczach stodoły*, "Więź" 2001, No. 6, p. 83.
589 (ks.)M. Czajkowski, *Czysta Nierządnica*, "Tygodnik powszechny" 27 V 2001, p. 1.
590 K. Janowska, P. Mucharski, *"Świadkowie"*, an interview with M. Edelman, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 25 III 2001.
591 *Do Żydów w Jedwabnem*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13 IV 2001, p. 2.
592 See *Dziedziczymy nie tylko chwałę, List otwarty do członków i sympatyków SLD*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16 III 2001, p. 4.
593 *Oświadczenie premiera*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 7 III 2001, p. 1.

John Paul II, Frédéric Chopin, Nicolaus Copernicus and Hugo Kołłątaj as well as nameless Polish heroes.

The idea of the responsibility of the Polish national community for the sins of previous generations, accepted and postulated by the moral discourse, resulted from acknowledging the consequences of belonging to this community: privileges as well as duties and obligations. Janusz Majcherek stressed that this rule applied also in relation to other communities, religious for example, with which we identify and which we choose or affirm the choice once made for us (e.g. baptism).

In each case, being a part of a community involves taking some obligations and "joint participation", Majcherek pointed out, "means joint responsibility – unless it is enforced."[594] Dawid Warszawski wrote about it in the first person singular, declaring: "the same degree to which I identify with a community, I bear – knowingly and wilfully – the responsibility for its actions, good and bad, now and in the future."[595] Other debaters also had similar arguments.

In other words, the discussions about Polish responsibility for Jedwabne held in the moral discourse defined responsibility as following from belonging to a national community. Thus, the journalist Janusz Majcherek considered a paradox in which the same people who emphasised their close connection with the nation and with the Catholic Church as particularly significant communities, and whose identity was defined though these communities, tried to absolve themselves from the sense of shared responsibility for the Polish murderers from Jedwabne.[596] In the moral discourse, however, the contrary was the case: the inclusion of knowledge about the Jedwabne massacre and about other Polish sins in the collective memory of Poles was considered necessary for Polish national identity. As Dariusz Czaja noted, fragmentary and imputed collective memory leads to a "cripple identity" – individual as well as collective.[597] Completing and correcting this memory was seen as sine qua non to strengthen national identity for Poles' own sake.

Everything said so far about the moral discourse proves its specificity and dissimilarity to the stand and rhetoric of other participants of the Jedwabne debate. This difference will become even clearer against a background of the opinions formulated by the opponents. Sometimes they emphasised it themselves, naming the dispersed voices of the moral discourse "flagellants".

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594 J. A. Majcherek, *Kto jest z ojczyzny mojej*, "Rzeczpospolita" 12 V 2001, p. 8-9.

595 D. Warszawski, *Odpowiedzialność i jej brak*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 9-10 XII 2000, p. 20.

596 J. A. Majcherek, *Kto jest z ojczyzny mojej*, "Rzeczpospolita" 12 V 2001, p. 8-9.

597 D. Czaja, *To nie "oni", niestety*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16-17 XII 2000, p. 21.

4. The defence of the Polish innocence paradigm

Among the responses to the release of "Neighbors" and the revelation of the massacre committed in Jedwabne, one could also observe in the public debate both strong and weak mechanisms of self-defence and repression. As they differed in some aspects, it would be hard to assume their complete homogeneity. Andrzej Paczkowski was surely right to introduce a classification of the defensive attitudes revealed during the Jedwabne debate into "open", "closed" and "rejecting".[598] Without doubt, Joanna Michlic was also right when she classified the "defensive camp" into a "soft" and a "hard" side, on the basis of the possible inclinations to use anti-Semitic rhetoric and the attitude to the key theories proposed in Jan Tomasz Gross's book.[599]

Without question, the debaters from the defensive camp differed according to the type of rhetoric they used, the contexts they referred to and, above all, their attitude to Gross's book and their level of acceptance of the theories it presented. Besides, one would not expect that most of the articles published in periodicals of evidently national-Catholic origin, such as "Nasza Polska", "Myśl Polska", "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowego", "Nasz Dziennik" would be accepted and published in more moderate "Życie" and "Tygodnik Solidarność". Also, there are differences between the rhetoric of Antoni Macierewicz, Ryszard Bender and Jerzy Robert Nowak, who expressed radical views, and the rhetoric of Ryszard Bugaj and Tomasz Strzembosz, who tried to maintain moderation. One could observe, however, that the defensive camp shared many views and suggestions and that sometimes, hidden below moderate and measured narrations, there were radical opinions formulated directly, openly and firmly. Moreover, in many cases it would be difficult to demarcate a boundary between a "soft" and a "hard" defensive attitude – for example, in the case of debaters who tended to acknowledge some participation of Poles in the Jedwabne massacre but at the same time used openly anti-Semitic clichés.

Therefore, considering all that have been said, I propose to describe this heterogeneous defensive discourse by defining its characteristic ways of invalidating "Neighbors" and the knowledge this book delivers: attempts to discredit the value of the content of Gross's book and its author; attempts to question the major theory of the voluntary participation of Poles in the Jedwabne crime, presented in "Neighbors"; and various ways of presenting extenuating circumstances for Polish perpetrators. An issue deserving special attention is an aggressive

598 See A. Paczkowski, *Debata wokół "Sąsiadów": próba wstępnej typologii*, "Rzeczpospolita" 24 III 2001, p. 16.

599 See J. Michlic, *Pamięć o mrocznej przeszłości. Intelektualiści o Jedwabnem*, "Midrasz" 2003, No. 4, p. 34-35.

defence which was characteristic/typical for this discourse, and which consisted in the "confession of someone else's crimes" – that is, giving an answer to the question: What should Jews apologise to Poles for? Moreover, one should not ignore a very specific interpretive pattern that is characteristic of the "defensive camp", which I will call "a conspiracy theory".

The processes of discrediting "Neighbors" were noticeable, for example, in what the book was called, such as: "a journalistic text",[600] a "para-historical" book,[601] a "pseudo-scientific humbug",[602] an "outwardly scholarly elaboration",[603] a "dishonourable lampoon",[604] "a crowning achievement of anti-Polonism in recent years",[605] a "martyrological-fiction".[606] The list could definitely be longer. In the defensive camp, no one appreciated the value of "Neighbors" – by comparing it with Błoński's memorable essay, for example. If some analogies were made, the book was rather compared with "The Painted Bird" by Jerzy Kosiński, that is, a symbol of anti-Polish literary fiction in the nationalist discourse.

In this manner, "Neighbors" was deprived of academic status and, as a result, of a cognitive value. A journalist from the right-wing weekly, "Nasza Polska", even noted that Leszek Bubel [a journalist and publisher of anti-Semitic press; author's note] was also perfectly able to "feign reliable academic research" with a few annotations.[607] As with historians representing the defensive attitude, the defensive camp pointed at methodological mistakes committed by the author: mostly omitting certain sources (e.g. the findings of prosecutor Waldemar Monkiewicz, failing to search through German archives) or selective use of the sources. The last objection concerned mostly the testimonies from the 1949 Łomża trial of the Jedwabne murderers. During the trial, some witnesses and defendants unequivocally pointed at the role of the Germans as inspirers and executors of the murder on Jedwabne Jews. Gross was accused of ignoring these elements of the testimonies as they conflicted with his main theory that Poles were the ones who committed the murder.

Mostly, however, it was the testimony of Szmul Wasersztajn that was questioned. Wasersztajn was presented as an unreliable witness due to his work in the security police after the war. The trust that the right-wing press put in the document from the Stalinist period in Poland, while deprecating Szmul Waser-

600 P. Semka, *"Sąsiedzi": koniec czy początek?*, "Życie" 2 III 2001, p. 16.
601 A. Wernic, *Człowiek honoru*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 18, p. 19.
602 A. Echolette, *Gross pod murem*, "Nasza Polska" 19 VI 2001, p. 8.
603 Z. Szuba, *Jak zaszczuto ludzi w Jedwabnem*, "Myśl Polska" 18 III 2001, p. 8.
604 (WAB), *"Nie jesteśmy sami!"*, "Myśl Polska" 10 VI 2001, p. 3.
605 M. Piskorski, *Sabat bez Grossa*, "Myśl Polska", kwiecień-maj 2001, p. 2.
606 J. Pawlas, *Dialog*, "Nasz Dziennik" 19 IV 2001, p. 11.
607 J. Womalski, *Fałszywe dowody, fałszywe zeznania*, "Nasza Polska" 19 VI 2001, p. 7.

sztajn as a security police officer, is puzzling. In "Nasz Dziennik" daily there was even a caricature of Jan Tomasz Gross sitting in an armchair and looking like an Orthodox Jew while two bow to him and kiss his feet. The caption said: "Brilliant! A testimony of one security police officer was enough to vilify a whole nation!"[608]

The defensive camp did not accept by any means Gross's postulate of a "new approach to the sources", which they found abused the elementary demands of academic reliability and whose premises were considered racist because they favoured victims of the Holocaust, that is, Jewish witnesses and Jewish sources. One of the "Najwyższy Czas!" journalists even stated that instead of "a new approach to the sources", Gross's methodological directives should be called "a triumphal return to the Nuremberg Laws".[609] While criticism towards Gross's methodological mistakes, his selective attitude to historical sources, hasty generalisations and biased conclusions were characteristic of the whole defensive camp, it was only its radical wing that attempted to prove the anti-Polish and lampooned nature of the book. Although the reasons for using such terminology are intuitive and easy to understand, they will be précised later in this chapter. It is worth mentioning here, however, the ways in which the authority of the author of "Neighbors" was questioned.

The key method of deprecating Jan Tomasz Gross was stressing that he was not a professional historian but a sociologist, which was obviously supposed to prove his lack of competence and explained the scholarly offhandedness of which he was accused. The author was also called "an amateur historian", "an ahistorian",[610] "a pseudo-historian",[611] "lying-professor",[612] "a provincial American sociology professor",[613] "a journalist",[614] "a spiritual father of Jedwabne",[615] "an anti-Pole",[616] or a "scholar", but always in inverted commas.[617] An impressive list of epithets describing Gross's attitude was presented by Jacek Wagner in "Tygodnik Solidarność" weekly. One could find such descriptions as:

608 See "Nasz Dziennik" 24 V 2001, p. 16.
609 L. Stępniewski, *Cud Purymowy i inne historie*, "Najwyższy Czas!" 7 IV 2001, p. XXXIV.
610 P. Jakucki, *Nagonki ciąg dalszy*, "Nasza Polska" 3 IV 2001, p. 1.
611 P. Mikucki, *Historia, czy dyletanctwo?*, "Nasz Dziennik" 7 VI 2001, p. 3.
612 J. M. Jaskólska, *Sąsiedzi sąsiadów*, "Nasz Dziennik" 9-10 VI 2001, p. 28.
613 J. Womalski, *Fałszywe dowody, fałszywe zeznania*, "Nasza Polska" 19 VI 2001, p. 7
614 J. Wegner, *Antypatie Grossa*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 33, p. 20.
615 R. Pazio, *Kości zostały rzucone*, "Najwyższy Czas!" 21-28 VII 2001, p. XII.
616 J. R. Nowak, *Dyletanci atakują. Jedwabne a zbrodnie na kresach*, "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy" 10 III 2001, p. 14
617 M. Pigalski, *Szalbierstwo*, "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy" 12 V 2001, p. 3.

"an apostate, renegade, traitor and turncoat, an advocate of someone else's interests, a bird that fouls its own nest, etc."[618]. All of them were aimed at portraying Gross's attitude to the nation he came from. Other epithets referred to the lies the author supposedly enclosed in his book: "an obscene liar",[619] "a notorious humbug",[620] "an impostor from Overseas"[621] or "the chief calumniator".[622] Even the popular saying "to lie like a dog" was replaced with a new, spontaneously created version: "to lie like Gross".[623]

Moreover, Gross's own biography was supposed to be an element discrediting his book, which Antoni Zambrowski tried to prove in an article in "Tygodnik Solidarność" and an interview in "Najwyższy Czas!" weekly. Zambrowski suggested that Jan Tomasz Gross, arrested in 1968, "broke during interrogation and incriminated his friends".[624] The defensive camp, often employing the anti-Semitic rhetoric, did not fail to reproach Gross for his Jewish roots, which was obviously supposed to be significant for the debate about "Neighbors". Gross's origin was believed to confirm the anti-Polish attitude of Jews (particularly American Jews), which was taken as an axiom: in other words, the example of Gross provided evidence for an implicit rule and vice versa. As a resident of the USA, Gross met all necessary criteria of the supposed hostile attitude of Jews to Poland and Poles and his origin fully explained his "true" intentions. Also, it was noted that he was an author of a "number of anti-Polish books"[625] and was generally known for his negative attitude to Poles and, particularly, to the Catholic Church. Negative attitude of Jews towards Christianity and the Church were suggested as well. Nevertheless, the defenders of the Polish innocence paradigm mainly tried to undermine the key thesis of Gross's book regarding the participation of Poles in the Jedwabne massacre. There were attempts to diminish the participation and the blame of the inhabitants of Jedwabne, mostly by minimising or even negating this participation in various ways.

The whole "self-defence camp" agreed wholeheartedly that Germans must have been the chief architects of the murder and it had been their inspiration that

618 J. Wegner, *Antypatie Grossa*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 33, p. 20.
619 W. Wybranowski, *Jedwabne – dobry geszeft*, "Nasz Dziennik" 7 XI 2001, p. 16.
620 W. Wybranowski, *Krokodyle łzy Grossa*, "Nasz Dziennik" 3 VII 2001, p. 16.
621 J. R. Nowak, *Dyletanci atakują. Jedwabne a zbrodnie na kresach*, "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy " 10 III 2001, p. 14.
622 J. R. Nowak, Zapomniany heroizm Jedwabnego, "Niedziela" 17 VI 2001, p. 8.
623 A. Zambrowski, *Gross kłamstw*, "Najwyższy Czas" 15 IV 2001, p. XV.
624 See A. Zambrowski, *Źdźbło w cudzym oku*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 32, p. 19; T. M. Płużański, *Od sypania do "Sąsiadów"*, an interview with A. Zambrowski, "Najwyższy Czas!" 30 IX 2001, p. XI-XII.
625 W. Wybranowski, *Krokodyle łzy Grossa*, "Nasz Dziennik" 3 VII 2001, p. 16

made it all happen: they were supposed to be the coordinators and at least direct participants of the pogrom. Therefore, any spontaneous participation of Polish neighbours in the crime was out of the question, not to mention a rank-and-file initiative. The Polish role in this German scenario was described by the defensive camp in at least two different ways. Those who were inclined to acknowledge Polish voluntary participation stressed that those Poles had been a small and vicious margin or, as a "Życie" journalist noted, they represented the local "mob".[626] Guided by the desire for a quick profit and/or revenge for Jewish attitude under Soviet occupation, they played the role of "avengers-volunteers".[627]

Oftentimes, however, Polish participation in the crime was depicted not as voluntary, but forced by the Germans: executing commands was necessary as disobedience meant death. Besides, some strongly stressed that Polish participation had not involved the act of murder but only its organisation; moreover, Poles had not even been aware of the aim of the preparations that they had been forced to participate in by the Germans. Therefore, they played their auxiliary role unwittingly and, for certain, unintentionally.

Needless to say, these two variants of the Polish role in the Jedwabne pogrom, observable in the defensive camp, were only ideal types. To begin with, the boundaries between them are blurred. Their characteristic narratives frequently coexisted in the opinions expressed by the debaters and took on hybrid shapes, such as an assumption of a spontaneous involvement in the crime by some Poles, motivated by revenge, and a forced help of other Polish participants. Anyway, the defendants of Polish innocence considered Germans to be the inspirers, organisers and at least the main co-perpetrators of the murder in Jedwabne, as if the drama involved only them and the murdered Jews. Sometimes, Polish participation was denied completely, and Germans were made out to be the only ones responsible for initiating and realising the plan for the extermination of the Jedwabne Jews.

Hence, the debaters from the defensive camp referred to the historians who also represented this trend and argued the key role of the Germans in the Jedwabne crime, minimised the role of Poles and wrote much about the disgraceful attitudes of Jews under the Soviet occupation. The unchallenged authority for the whole "self-defence camp" was undoubtedly Tomasz Strzembosz, whose opinions and statements were set against Gross's views, unmasking his "distortions" and refuting his theories. Also Piotr Gontarczyk, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and historians more radical in their views, such as Leszek Żebrowski and

626 R. Krasowski, *Jedwabny supeł*, "Życie" 9 III 2001, p. 14.

627 R. Włast Matuszak, *Bajka o złotej rybce*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 32, p. 18.

Ryszard Bender, played a similar role of academic authorities whose texts invalidating the findings of Jan Tomasz Gross could be quoted. The true oracle for the radical wing of the self-defence camp, however, was Jerzy Robert Nowak. His numerous articles and commentaries were systematically published in "Głos", "Nasz Dziennik" and the Catholic weekly "Niedziela", in which the author initiated a whole series of publications, titled: "100 kłamstw Jana Tomasza Grossa" [eng. "100 Lies of Jan Tomasz Gross"], later released as a book[628]. It was not the only book undermining almost everything Gross stated in "Neighbors" and exposing the "implicit intentions" of the author, which was released during the debate[629].

The defenders of Polish innocence faithfully supported those historians who attempted to demonstrate that the German role in the Jedwabne massacre was not limited to taking photographs and filming. Although new circumstantial evidence that appeared in the course of the investigation was never confirmed, it was used, together with documents which never truly undermined Gross's key findings and were not contradictory to them, as a pretext to triumphantly reinterpret the events, with a sense of relief. These processes are noticeable if only in the titles of press articles: "Germans were there",[630] "Germans burnt...",[631] "The murder was committed by Germans",[632] "Germans were in Jedwabne",[633] "Great mystification",[634] "Without Polish Participation",[635] "Innocent nation" and "Gross was wrong".[636] Certainly, Gross's book contained some proven inaccuracies and mistakes, one of which even resulted in a libel action brought against him. These did not, however, concern his key findings. Anyway, each mistake or inaccuracy was greeted with enthusiasm by the defensive camp and treated as evidence of Gross's lies and his false, unsubstantiated accusations.

The crowning evidence of Gross's 'falsification' and, at the same time, of Polish innocence and German perpetration, was supposed to be the results of the

628 See J. R. Nowak, *Sto kłamstw J. T. Grossa o Jedwabnem i żydowskich sąsiadach*, Warszawa 2001.

629 See J. Wysocki, *Jedwabne kłamstwa*, Koszalin 2001; H. Pająk, *Jedwabne geszefty*, Lublin 2001; L. Niekrasz, *Operacja "Jedwabne". Mity i fakty*, Wrocław 2001; E. Marciniak, *Jedwabne w oczach świadków*, Włocławek 2001.

630 W. Kaminski, *Niemcy tam byli*, "Życie" 16 III 2001, p. 1.

631 A. Gryczka, *Niemcy spalili...*, "Życie" 27 III 2001, p. 1.

632 (H.P.), *Zbrodni dokonali Niemcy*, "Nasz Dziennik" 17-18 III 2001, p. 16.

633 T. M. Płużański, *Niemcy byli w Jedwabnem*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 13, p. 13.

634 K. Karsicki, *Wielka mistyfikacja*, "Nasza Polska" 3 IV 2001, p. 1, 8-9.

635 M. Wójcik, *Bez udziału Polaków*, "Nasz Dziennik" 27 III 2001, p. 1, 2.

636 K. Wełnicki, *Gross się pomylił*, "Nasz Dziennik: 25 III 2001, p. 2.

exhumation undertaken by IPN, which discovered that about 200-250 bodies had been buried at the site of the burnt barn. Moreover, in the vicinity of the barn, numerous shells and a bullet fragment were found in the collective grave. In the opinion of the defenders of Polish innocence, the reduction of the 1,600 victims Gross had reported was a crucial evidence of his misrepresentations while the shells overwhelmingly proved German complicity in the murder as only they could carry firearms. An example of such conclusions can be found in the words of Jan Engelgard, the chief editor of "Myśl Polska": "All the myths and lies promoted stubbornly by Jan Tomasz Gross dispelled. The myth of 1,600 dispelled, the myth of the unassisted Polish perpetration without German compliance – dispelled."[637]

Behind the utterances of some journalists there was an implicit suggestion that the reduction of the number of victims not only undermined Gross's findings but also belittled the significance of the Jedwabne massacre: changed its overtone, made it less exceptional. How else to interpret such statements as: "the conducted exhumation lets us speak of only about 250 victims of the murder"[638]; or "the number of murdered Jews was supposed to prove the bestiality of this deed (...), the investigation revealed that only about 200 Jews were killed"[639]? It is also hard to determine the source of the information published by "Nasza Polska" that "among the victims there were also bodies of Catholics which prove that Poles were forced to participate".[640] The aim of this publication, however, is very clear: "Catholic corpses" were supposed to prove that Poles had been forced to help the Germans and the Jedwabne barn became a Polish-Jewish grave, which was obviously very significant from the perspective of the perpetual Polish-Jewish rivalry over the amount of experienced suffering. Also, the members of the Polish American Public Relations Committee and the Committee to Defend the Good Name of Jedwabne stated in their declaration that Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne had been murdered for their refusal to participate in the massacre.

The whole self-defence camp were united in pointing at the motives of the Jedwabne massacre: in fact, at one prime motive, the supposed cooperation of Jews with the communists between 1939 and 1941 (the "ignored collaboration"), was disregarded by Gross but recognised by Tomasz Strzembosz. This issue was analysed by both moderate and radical defenders of Polish innocence. Some depicted the sheer pandemonium experienced by Poles between 1939 and

637 J. Engelgard, *Granice podłości*, "Myśl Polska" 17-24 VI 2001, p. 1.
638 D. Kołakowska, *Zdradza ich płaszcz pocisku?*, "Życie" 6 VI 2001, p. 3.
639 P. Krukowski, *Jest kij na Polaka*, "Nasz Dziennik" 8 VI 2001, p. 16.
640 A. Kolatorski, *Siewcy kłamstwa*, "Nasza Polska" 7 XI 2001, p. 10-11.

1941 from Jewish and Soviet communists acting arm-in-arm. Jews were portrayed as traitors who had denounced Poles and made lists of their Polish neighbours assigned to be deported to the USSR and as ruthless tormentors of the Polish nation characterised by particular cruelty. In other words, the pens of numerous journalists painted a picture of murders and harm suffered by Poles from their Jewish neighbours as if they were settling accounts by counter-accusation.

Although the majority of debaters who touched upon the subject of Jewish attitudes under Soviet occupation emphasised that their purpose was only to show the motive of the murder and consider its wider context – not to justify its perpetrators – in many cases it was hard to trust the honesty of those declared intentions. There were also some debaters, however, who never even tried to hide behind such a rhetorical facade: according to them, the revenge motive was an extenuating circumstance for the murder and somehow justified its perpetrators. Maciej Giertych was representative of such an attitude: he claimed that "[Jewish – author's note] collaboration with the occupier was not an isolated phenomenon and must have caused aversion among the 'neighbours'. It could have been a reason for lynchings, if there were any, and every normal court would acknowledge it as an extenuating circumstance. But Gross obviously does not care."[641]

It is somehow comprehensible that those defenders of Polish innocence, who agreed that some Poles had taken part in the pogrom, interpreted their motives as a revenge for the Jewish attitudes under the Soviet occupation. It is paradoxical, however, that the same argument was used by the group of defenders who denied Polish compliance. If, as they claim, Poles had been forced to help the Germans and were only background actors in the massacre, they would not have had any motives. Therefore, the whole context of Jewish attitudes under Soviet occupation should lose its validity as a mitigating factor.

However, all descriptions of the disgraceful attitude of Jewish communists towards Poles between 1939 and 1941 were only part of a more developed indictment against Jews for their numerous crimes against the Polish nation, brought by some of the defenders of Polish innocence. This "confession of someone else's crimes" was certainly characteristic of this wing of the defence. It was an attempt to depict Jews as perpetrators, not victims, and often consisted of categorical calls for Jews to account for their own past and to confess their sins against Poles. So what should Jews apologise to Poles for in that case?

The argument most often used, already stated above, concerned Jewish behaviour under the Soviet occupation 1939-1941: not only how they "whole-

641 M. Giertych, *Jedwabne prostuje kręgosłupy*, "Myśl Polska" 19 VIII 2001, p. 16.

heartedly" welcomed the Soviet army, but also committed all other sins against Poles from this period – which the journalist Helena Pasierbska in "Nasz Dziennik" explained by referring to the "everlasting anti-Polonism" deeply grounded in Jewish mentality.[642] The whole defensive camp seemed to use, in one way or another, the argument of Jewish attitudes under the occupation which served a function of an overarching topos.

The list of all charges against Jews was much longer, however, and difficult to reconstruct in detail. Accusations of disgraceful attitude included almost all periods of the twentieth-century history of Poland, starting from the interwar period and ending at the alleged support given by the Jews to the Round Table arrangements. Jews were reproached for their pre-war participation in the Communist Party of Poland and held responsible for installing the communist system in postwar Poland. In "Nasz Dziennik", Jerzy Pawlas reminded the readers how Jews in 1939 had "celebrated the fall of the Polish state and joined the NKVD (...) betrayed their country and their neighbours".[643] Antoni Macierewicz noted that Poland regained its independence in 1989 "after a 50 year occupation led by communists of Jewish origin who supported Russian bolshevism".[644] There were even attempts to prove that communism was a Jewish idea and creation, which was supposed to be verified by Karl Marx's origin and an exceptional susceptibility of Jews to the "Hegelian bite".[645] There were texts about nameless Jews from NKVD and Cheka, Jews in UB and SB [secret police] and the crimes they were supposed to commit. Concrete examples were also used, with the names and surnames of the Jewish communists responsible for suffering and death of many Poles: Salomon Morel, Anatol Fejgin, Helena Wolińska, Jakub Berman, Stefan Michnik and many other Jewish murderers, given a symbolic status in the national-Catholic discourse.

Much attention was devoted to the postwar period of violence: the Stalinist era in Poland. Violence was attributed to Jewish communists, who were members of the justice administration and state security service. Piotr Semka even suggested that their inclination to violence could have been the result of some post-Holocaust trauma. "How many of the UB officers of Jewish origin" – Semka asked – "tried to get over the war oppression, fighting with 'fascists' from AK [Armia Krajowa – underground forces loyal to the Polish government in exile]? (...) Wasn't it true that people shocked by the enormity of murder they

642 H. Pasierbska, *Antysemityzm czy antypolonizm?*, "Nasz Dziennik" 22 VI 2001, p. 10.

643 J. Pawlas, *Dialog*, "Nasz Dziennik" 19 IV 2001, p. 11.

644 A. Macierewicz, *Rewolucja nihilizmu*, "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy" 3 II 2001, p. 10-11.

645 A. Kolatorski, *Siewcy kłamstwa*, "Nasza Polska" 7 XI 2001, p. 10-11.

saw during the Holocaust found some sort of relief in their postwar cruelties?"[646] Other debaters did not always analyse the causes of these cruelties, focusing instead on exemplifying them or only reminding readers about them.

This particular category, "confession of someone else's crimes", also included Jewish sins committed against Poles during World War II. For example, the journalist Krystian Brodacki wrote in his extensive article published in "Tygodnik Solidarność" that Jewish police, ordered by the Gestapo, carried out two public executions of Poles in Cracow.[647] Numerous and cruel murders of the Polish civilian population, allegedly committed by Jewish partisans together with Ukrainians, Belarusians or Soviets, were also recalled. In addition, the decision to murder Polish officers in Katyń was attributed to Jews. One of the journalists announced that in Western Europe "they evilly do not want to acknowledge that the Holocaust was meant for Poles and for Poland. And that it was committed with the hands of Germans, Russians and, in the end, Jews from UB."[648] There were even some voices that "Jewish Gestapo'' denounced Poles who hid Jews during the German occupation.

Let us finish here, however, this laconic and incomplete deliberation about harm supposedly done to Poles by Jews and extensively described by the radical defenders of Polish innocence. They used the Jedwabne pogrom and the public debate around it as an excellent opportunity to recall the amount of Polish suffering for which Jews were supposed to be responsible. One "Głos" journalist wrote about it openly: summarising the public dispute over the Jedwabne massacre he noticed only one advantage of the debate: "The Jedwabne case" – he pointed out – "allowed us to remember the enormity of Jewish murders (...). It reminded us about Jewish participation in the physical extermination of the best sons of the Polish Nation, as well as in the destruction of Polish culture and science, the falsification of history, the persecution of the Church and the twisting of the minds of a few generations of Poles."[649]

In the radical defence camp, "Confessing someone else's sins" was not limited to listing Jewish sins against Poles: Jews were also accused of supporting Germans in the Holocaust and advised to come to terms with this part of their inheritance instead of accusing Poles of their complicity. The evidence that Jews had contributed to the Holocaust and supported Germans in its every stage was offered by referring to the Jewish police in ghettos, the Jewish Gestapo,

646 P. Semka, *Bez tematów tabu*, "Życie" 18 V 2001, p. 15.

647 See K. Brodacki, *Co z tymi napisami?*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 25, p. 6-7.

648 M. Prałat, *Czy pieniądze zamkną Wam usta?*, "Nasz Dziennik" 3 IV 2001, p. 16.

649 R. Dybczyński, *Pokłosie sprawy Jedwabnego (3)*, "Głos. Tygodnik Katolicko-Narodowy" 22 IX 2001, p. 14.

Judenräte, members of Sonderkommando and many other manifestations of alleged Jewish collaboration with Nazis. Referring to "Eichmann in Jerusalem" by Hannah Arendt, famous for her controversial views on the Jewish role in the Holocaust, Teresa Kuczyńska, quite freely interpreting Arrendt's book, claimed that Germans would not have been able to murder so many Jews without Jewish assistance as "there would not have been enough people to murder". It was not only Kuczyńska who quoted Arendt as a "great Jewish philosopher" who, thanks to her origin and academic authority, was supposed to give credibility to the author's own judgements.[650] One of the journalists of "Najwyższy Czas!" also extensively quoted Arendt to finally conclude that "it would be naive to wait for a debate about Jewish collaboration with the Nazis as intensive as the one about Jedwabne."[651] "Nasza Polska" weekly went even further. Not only did it attempt to prove the Jewish collaboration with the Nazis, but also claimed that the Nazis simply had Jewish roots.

If we add to this register of Jewish sins against Poles the problem of Israeli policy towards Palestine within their own nation, often stressed by the defenders of Polish innocence, and if we see modern Jews in the role of armed oppressors, then Jews as the victims of Jedwabne or even the Holocaust will be pushed into the background. In front of our eyes we will see the picture, painted by the multiple voices of the debaters, presenting Jews as oppressors. This was probably one of the aims: to push the debate over Jedwabne into the background; to replace national self-examination with "the confession of someone else's sins"; to hide the Jedwabne massacre behind a smokescreen of Jewish crimes against Poles by applying the "you did it to us, we did it to you" logic; to let the Jedwabne crime dissolve/cross-fade in a sea of mutual harm and to replace the necessity of accounting for and revaluing the difficult past of the Polish nation with a call for Jews to confess their crimes first.

There is yet another important question to solve. If "Neighbors", in the opinion of radical defenders of Polish innocence, offered no academic value and its author committed a number of lies and manipulations, what was his real aim? In other words, how were Gross's intentions and his book interpreted? The answer was partly signalled in the analysis of the ways "Neighbors" and its author were referred to. In both cases, the "anti-Polish" character of "Neighbors" and Gross's attitude were stressed. Generally, "anti-Polish" was a key word in the rhetoric of the representatives of the radical defence camp.

In most general terms, one could say that "Neighbors" was interpreted as an attack on the good name of Poland and the Polish nation by accusing Poles of

650 T. Kuczyńska, *Nauka o holokauście*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 18, p. 16.

651 T. Kornaś, *I tak winni są Polacy...*, "Najwyższy Czas!" 17 II 2001, p. XXXI-XXXII.

participating in the Holocaust. The book was seen as another piece of faked evidence of the supposed Polish atavistic and "drunk with mother's milk" anti-Semitism, and as yet another anti-Polish campaign led by Jews after the dispute about the Carmelite Sisters' convent and the religious symbols in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Gross's book was also perceived as evidence of Jewish hatred and prejudice against Poles and another manifestation of the slandering and humiliating of the Polish nation. What is more, in the debate over Jedwabne, a conspiracy theory was gradually emerging. "Neighbors" was supposedly the integral element of the conspiracy against Poles and Gross the co-conspirator.

The existence of such a secret plan or plot was suggested for example by the Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Józef Glemp, who said in the "Józef" Radio that a year before he had been informed by a "solemn Jew that the Jedwabne case would be publicised soon".[652] Two months later in an interview for the Catholic News Agency he stated that "Neighbors" had clearly been written "on order".[653] He did not specify, however, on whose order. Similarly, Bishop Ordinarius of Łomża Stanisław Stefanek confessed in his sermon that he had already found out about the approaching "great attack on Jedwabne" from his Warsaw friends, "in a discreet conversation, with lowered voices". But that was not all that Bishop Stefanek had to say in his Jedwabne sermon: he also argued that the assault on Jedwabne was actually "an attack on our understanding of World War II" and that we all were "in the middle of an enormous storm whose initiators mean to inflame our minds with a spiral of suspicions and hatred".[654] Unfortunately, neither the Bishop nor the Cardinal specified who these initiators were. Mystery and ambiguity are fundamental principles on which conspiracy theories are based. Conspiracy theorists trust their recipients' intuition and leave them a margin of freedom in interpreting their words. Therefore, both Glemp's and Stefanek's words were quoted in press as evidence that "the attack on Jedwabne" had been prepared much earlier.

There were also some journalists, however, who openly and directly wrote about "Operation 'Jedwabne'", as "Myśl Polska" called it[655] and who represented a strong, defensive attitude. Occasionally, they used different rhetoric, but were virtually unanimous in analysing the reasons behind Gross's decision to

652 (KAI), *Wina uznana sprawiedliwie. Wystąpienie prymasa Polski kardynała Józefa Glempa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 5 III 2001, p. 6.

653 *Żydzi powinni uznać, że są winni wobec Polaków. Wywiad Prymasa Polski ks. kardynała Józefa Glempa dla KAI*, "Nasz Dziennik" 15 V 2001, p. 10.

654 See *Moralny obowiązek dochodzenia do prawdy. Homilia JE ks. biskupa Stanisława Stefanka, ordynariusza łomżyńskiego, wygłoszona 11 marca 2001 r. podczas mszy św. w kościele parafialnym w Jedwabnem*. As cited in "Nasz Dziennik" 13 III 2001, p. 4.

655 J. Engelgard, *Operacja "Jedwabne"*, "Myśl Polska" 18 III 2001, p. 1.

write "Neighbors". The analysis of press articles and other public utterances shows two main motivations attributed to Gross's decision. First of all, revealing the Jedwabne pogrom was intended to: hold Poles responsible for the Holocaust; deprive them of pride in their heroic actions during World War II; destroy the national axiom that Poles had never fallen into the disgrace of collaboration with the Nazis; and question the status of Poles as solely victims of Hitler rather than perpetrators. A lot was written on this subject in the national-Catholic press, but not only there: Jarosław Kaczyński at the Law and Justice political campaign inauguration also stated that in Poland there were powers "trying to defame us, make us Hitler's accomplices" and received a loud ovation for these words.[656] Although his statement referred to some local "powers", it fitted the wider context created by other debaters in other countries who went much further, crossing Polish borders with their conspiracy theories.

Some of them made an effort to keep alive the narrative typical of the March 1968 propaganda. Following the example of March orators, they suggested that the purpose of accusing Poles of the Jedwabne massacre and, ipso facto, participation in the Holocaust, was to relieve the Germans of the burden of their responsibility for murdering Jewish people by making Poles co-perpetrators.

Therefore, there were attempts to prove some sort of Jewish-German pact, which Jews entered into in exchange for substantial war reparations. In their open letter to "Brother Jews", the members of the Journalist Circle of the Polish People's Party wrote about the sole responsibility of the "forces influenced by the Germans" for the "propaganda war" unleashed against "the good name of our Nation". They clearly stated that "one of the reasons for this war was German determination to conceal the unique character of the German state's anti-Semitism and its murders from the period 1939-1945, in which the entire, culpable German nation participated". In the opinion of the Circle members, it was "the German intriguers and Polish political ignoramuses who supported them" who decided to put Jedwabne on the "list containing symbols of the alleged genocide committed by Poles under the German occupation."[657]

Much more often, however, it was suggested that accusing Poles of the Jedwabne crime and complicity in the Holocaust was intended to facilitate the process of paying financial claims made by Jews against the Polish state. Here we can see the other motive attributed to Gross's decision to write his book and, at the same time, an attempt to confirm the conspiracy theory about greedy Jews:

656 As cited in P. Wroński, *Marsz Kaczyńskich*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 VI 2001, p. 6.

657 Do Braci Żydów, *List otwarty Koła Publicystów PSL we Wrocławiu*, "Nasz Dziennik" 19 III 2001, p. 11.

Jedwabne was called "a good speculation",[658] a "Holocaust-speculation",[659] "Jewish cheek", or even a "financial assassination of Poland".[660] Moreover, in the opinion of some debaters, the fact that the Jedwabne case saw the light of day at the very moment of the debate about the re-privatisation bill could not have been accidental. In one way or another, many defenders of Polish innocence tried to prove that there was in fact "a Holocaust Industry" behind Gross's accusation of the Jedwabne massacre against Poles; that the book was a product of "Shoah business"; and that Gross himself played a menial role in the Jewish financial claims on the Polish state. The phrases quoted were invented neither by Polish journalists nor during the Jedwabne debate – but gained immense popularity at the time. The author of the phrase "Holocaust industry" is the American political scientist of Jewish origin, Norman Finkelstein, who has been claiming for years that "Holocaust memory is an ideological construct of vested interests" of Israel and American Jews. His main thesis is that "the Holocaust industry" ruthlessly exploits the memory and tragedy of the Holocaust victims, attempting to "extort money from Europe in the name of 'needy Holocaust victims'".[661]

Interspersed with numerous footnotes, Norman Finkelstein's book titled "The Holocaust Industry" was released in Poland in 2001, and the author of the useful theory became an unquestioned authority for many Jedwabne debaters. He played the role of a "good Jew" who unmasks his brothers and their real intentions with the use of scientific methods. Therefore, Finkelstein was referred to, quoted and treated as if he had been a real expert on "The Holocaust Industry". "Rzeczpospolita" daily even published an interview with Norman Finkelstein in which he explained what the industry had been like, how it had functioned, and referred to the Polish context saying: "'Neighbors' has the easily recognisable trade mark of the Holocaust Industry".[662]

Some debaters admittedly never used Norman Finkelstein's terminology or tried to validate their words by his findings, but were clearly inclined to acknowledge that accusing Poles of participation in the Holocaust and of anti-Semitism were closely related to the debate about the re-privatisation bill and Jewish financial claims on Poland. For example, Ryszard Bugaj believed that the stereotype of anti-Semitic Poland, strengthened by emotions and supported by "powerful interests", served some countries to hide "the dark pages of their

658 W. Wybranowski, *Jedwabne – dobry geszeft*, "Nasz Dziennik" 7 XI 2001, p. 16.

659 J. M. Jaskólska, *Sąsiedzi sąsiadów*, "Nasz Dziennik" 9-10 VI 2001, p. 28.

660 M. Twaróg, *W Będzinie tak jak w Jedwabnem*, "Myśl Polska" 5 VIII 2001, p. 16.

661 N. Finkelstein, *Przedsiębiorstwo holokaust*, Warszawa 2001, p. 15, 20.

662 N. Finkelstein, *Goldhagen dla początkujących*, "Rzeczpospolita" 20 VI 2001, p. 7; K. Darewicz, *Kto czerpie korzyści z holokaustu?*, an interview with N. Finkelstein, "Rzeczpospolita" 26 IV 2000, p. 7.

histories" out of sight and to "justify their financial claims on Poland".[663] What Ryszard Bugaj wrote in "Gazeta Wyborcza", was commented upon by the chief editor of "Myśl Polska", Jan Engelgard, who used a truly Marxist phrase in noting that the Jedwabne case served to create "an ideological superstructure aimed at facilitating the process of laying financial claims on Poland."[664]

Probably quite involuntarily, Ryszard Bugaj pointed at yet another function of the Holocaust Industry, attributed to it by other debaters. The real purpose of the accusations against Poles of their anti-Semitism, participation in the Holocaust and the Jedwabne pogrom was supposedly to divert attention from the Israeli policy towards Palestinians and the problem of Jewish participation in the Holocaust.

This is what the narratives woven by many participants of the debate and conventionally called "a conspiracy theory" looked like. Its purpose was to explain the origin of "Neighbors" and the intentions of its author, Jan Tomasz Gross, accusing him and his book of a wide range of anti-Polish actions. Obviously, even the most radical defenders hardly ever used the "conspiracy" word. Much more often they wrote about a "crusade", "an attack", "a campaign" or speculated about some mysterious "defaming plan" of which Poles were the victims.[665] Some even argued that Jedwabne was only a prelude to far-flung actions against Poland.

Debaters presenting opposing arguments were constantly criticised by the defenders of Polish innocence. To quote Maciej Łętowski, they were defined either as "national flagellants"[666] or just co-founders and co-participants of the anti-Polish campaign. Needless to say, most objections were raised towards "Gazeta Wyborcza", but also "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Wprost" weekly, "Znak" and "Więź" magazines; the "Freedom Union" party, the left wing in general; Leon Kieres, Maria Janion, Reverend Stanisław Musiał and all the others who never sprang to defend the Polish innocence paradigm but who took part in the debate and were visible; those who beat their own breast instead of the breasts of others, or who deliberated not on the Holocaust industry but on the moral responsibility of the Jedwabne citizens for the murder of Jews. The debaters who denied Polish voluntary participation in the massacre or claimed that Poles had never taken any part in the pogrom even under compulsion, felt they were relieved of responsibility. The rest of the defenders, who were inclined to

663 R. Bugaj, *Prawda historyczna i interes materialny*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6-7 I 2001, p. 20.

664 J. Engelgard, *Operacja "Jedwabne"*, "Myśl Polska" 18 III 2001, p. 1.

665 A. Zambrowski, *Plan zniesławiania*, "Najwyższy Czas!" 9-16 VI 2001, p. L-LI.

666 M. Łętowski, *Przedsiębiorstwo "Pokuta"*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 2001, No. 6, p. 5.

acknowledge the participation of a small social margin, questioned the national responsibility of the local scum and the very idea of collective responsibility. Both, however, almost at every step, reminded readers about the Polish Righteous Among the Nations and Polish trees in Yad Vashem: the proofs of Polish sacrifice and heroism and Jewish ingratitude.

5. Disputes over reconciliation rituals

Although the debate over the Jedwabne massacre had already been active for a few months, it was only in March 2001 that the Polish president and the Primate of Poland took the floor. In an interview for the Israeli daily "Jedijot Achronot", the President Aleksander Kwaśniewski stated that "regardless of the inspirations, sources and historical background" that led to the murder and that were being dealt with by the Institute of National Remembrance, the Jewish citizens of Jedwabne "deserve to be paid the greatest homage" and announced that "the commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the murder will be an opportunity to make such an apology."[667]

The President confirmed the position he adopted on the case, and developed it in a few statements given to Polish television, radio and press. He stressed that his intention was neither to "extend the collective responsibility" for the Jedwabne massacre to all Poles nor to admit the full responsibility for it, nor to "alter historical evaluations" by claiming co-responsibility for the Holocaust. He argued, however, that regardless of all the circumstances, the Jedwabne massacre had been committed by Poles and for this reason "it is necessary to do what one should do in situations like this: apologise and ask for forgiveness". The President did not forejudge the form of such an apology or express any expectations about the number of guests at the commemorations planned for the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne pogrom. He also left the decision for the Church's potential participation solely in the hands of the Church's own hierarchy.

President Kwaśniewski's standpoint was supported by the management of Democratic Left Alliance: the Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek spoke about "the duty to appropriately honour the memory of the victims" and "for the nation to acknowledge the guilt of those who murdered Jews"[668] while Bronisław Geremek, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, issued a letter to the president in which he asked him to initiate a meeting of the leaders of all political parties in

667 As cited in *Zbrodnia pozostaje zbrodnią*. An interview with president A. Kwaśniewski, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 5 III 2001, p. 6.

668 See *Oświadczenie premiera*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 7 III 2001, p. 1.

order to adopt a common standpoint regarding the Jedwabne massacre.[669] In the end, no such meeting ever took place and no common stance of Polish political elites was agreed upon. Some politicians, e.g. Stefan Niesiołowski, Michał Kamiński or Zbigniew Romaszewski openly, but for different reasons, criticised the President's announcement about the apology. Generally, however, Polish politicians were not particularly visible in the Jedwabne debate and apparently avoided expressing their opinion in public. It is not unlikely that the politicians were silent for pragmatic reasons, since they were aware of the emotions arisen by the revelation of the crime and stimulated by the temperature of the dispute, and conscious of the social divisions caused by it. They were afraid to take a position in such a difficult case. Reportedly, Leszek Miller said that every use of the "Jedwabne" word cost him 2 percent decline in his support level. The sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis noticed that the members of Civic Platform did not use this word whatsoever.

Almost at the same time as President Kwaśniewski's speech, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp took the podium. In his speech to the Warsaw station "Józef Radio", he clearly stated that "the murder committed by burning alive the Jewish population, driven to the barn by Poles, is undeniable" and that "the collective murderer is known". This way, he confirmed Polish participation and perpetration, which should be considered significant, taking into account the authority of the speaker and numerous attempts of the debaters to question Polish compliance. In his speech, he also pointed to the need to claim generational responsibility, that is, "the apology to God for the sins of our ancestors and to apologise to the victims' descendants". The Cardinal also enthusiastically referred to the letter of Michael Schudrich, a Warsaw rabbi, who suggested joining together in common mourning for the unnecessary loss of many human beings[670] on the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre in one of the Warsaw churches, the synagogue, or at the Warsaw Ghetto Monument. At the same time, the Cardinal disapproved of politicians' attempts to impose on the Church the manner of "performing/accomplishing the act of repentance" and the ideology "in which the prayer of atonement should be wrapped". He claimed that such pressure was exerted by "a few important politicians" and that the Jedwabne case is to some extent political. Moreover, in his speech given to "Józef Radio", the Cardinal mentioned that, a year before, a "serious Jew" had informed him that the problem of Jedwabne would be publicised soon, suggesting there was

669 See B. Geremek, *Dajmy znak*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16 III 2001, p. 4.

670 See *Rabin pisze do prymasa*, "Życie" 6 III 2001, p. 6.

some sort of secret plan.[671] Nonetheless, a senior Church official stated that neither the Jedwabne massacre nor Polish participation in it could be questioned, which was often referred to and appreciated. Some debaters noted, however, that when the Primate had mentioned the "prayer of atonement" he also warned against getting involved in the projects of some politicians, which was a clear reference to Aleksander Kwaśniewski's initiative. Indeed, the Primate spoke about "the prayer of atonement" in Warsaw and not in Jedwabne. The twisted casuistry and rhetoric of the Cardinal's speech was criticised as well.

As opposed to Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who only strengthened and explained his original words in the course of the debate, the Primate of Poland personally belittled the meaning of his own words and, above all, gave reasons to doubt the honesty of his intentions. He also altered the meaning of the decision made by the Episcopal Conference about a penitential service to be held on 27 May 2001 in the Warsaw All Saints' Church, to which rabbi Michael Schudrich would be invited and during which the bishops would "apologise to God for the murders of Jews committed in Jedwabne and other towns".[672] Announcing this decision, Primate Glemp stated that the prayer would not be only for Jedwabne victims but also for "other sins, against Polish Catholics, committed partly by Polish Jews". According to Glemp's explanations, he only wanted to extend "the formula of the meeting" and that the bishops would also apologise to God for "all manifestations of hatred which resulted in human suffering", including Poles who "were for example murdered by the Nazis for saving Jews or suffered because of wrong done by Jews, e.g. during the establishment of communism". "I expect", Glemp continued, "that the Jewish side will carry out a self-evaluation and apologise to Poles for these crimes".[673]

In other words, the memorable phrase from the historical letter from Polish bishops to German bishops: "we forgive and ask for forgiveness" underwent a peculiar transformation and took a conditional shape: "we apologise and expect an apology". In Jasna Góra, on 3 May 2001, a day after expressing his expecta-

671 As cited in: (KAI) (Catholic Information Agency), *Wina uznana sprawiedliwie. Wystąpienie prymasa Polski kardynała Józefa Glempa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 5 III 2001, p. 6; (KAI), *Prymas Polski kard. Józef Glemp w radiu "Józef"*(4. 03. 2001): *Nie chodzi o krzykliwą pokutę*, "Gazeta Polska" 7 III 2001, p. 19.

672 The decision about this penitential service was made on 2 May during the 311th plenary session of the Polish Episcopate Conference. On the next day Primate Glemp announced it in his sermon held at Jasna Góra.

673 All said on 2 May 2001 during a press conference held directly after the closing of the plenary session of the Polish Episcopate Conference. As cited in (WK, PAP, KAI), *Przeprosić Boga*, "Życie" 4 V 2001, p. 1; (JAK, PAP), *Za winy nasze i winy wasze*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 4 V 2001, p. 1.

tion of a Jewish apology to Poles, Cardinal Glemp said in his sermon that "history and memories also record Jews destroying their own compatriots". Therefore, he argued that this was something they should apologise for. He also suggested that the Jedwabne affair was part of a particular campaign. Referring to the dispute about the location of the Carmelite Sisters' convent in Oświęcim [Auschwitz], Glemp stated that "now that the Weiss [a controversial rabbi who actively protested against the location of the convent – author's note] vs. Carmelites bonanza is over; the time has come for Gross and Jedwabne"[674].

Numerous controversial statements and anti-Semitic clichés could also be found at the same time in the interview given by the Primate of Poland to the Catholic News Agency in the middle of May. He spoke for example about a continuous "crusade" against the Church, aimed at forcing an apology for Jedwabne; about "Neighbors" which was written "on order"; about Jews who were not liked before the war for their "odd folklore" and Bolshevik sympathies; about the economic background of the pre-war Polish-Jewish relations – because Jews were "more cunning" than Poles and were able to take advantage of them; about the anti-Judaism that he could not see, although he could see the problem of anti-Polonism. Moreover, Primate Józef Glemp once more raised for consideration the proposal that Jews should acknowledge and confess their sins against Poles and stated that President Aleksander Kwaśniewski did not have "a formal title to speak in the name of the nation".[675] By the way, he had already announced in one of the television interviews that he would not go to Jedwabne on the 60th anniversary of the massacre because he did not want to participate in a "spectacle".[676]

All of the Primate's statements were intensively commented upon and variously evaluated. While for some, the Primate's proposal that Jews should confess their sins against Poles was fully justified and understandable, others pointed out that disinterest was a condition of honest apology and that it could not be a tie-in agreement. "Trading in moral acts" – Reverend Stanisław Musiał wrote – "should not be known to Christianity, which is based on gratuitousness of God's redemption."[677] Glemp's announcement of his absence in Jedwabne on the 60th anniversary of the massacre was also widely discussed. As one of the

674 See *Wychodzić spod władzy ciemności. Homilia Prymasa Polski ks. kardynała Józefa Glempa, wygłoszona na Jasnej Górze 3 maja 2001r.*, "Nasz Dziennik" 5-6 V 2001, p. 17.

675 As cited in *Żydzi powinni uznać, że są winni wobec Polaków*, *Wywiad Prymasa Polski ks. kardynała Józefa Glempa dla KAI*, "Nasz Dziennik" 15 V 2001, p. 10.

676 See (PAP), *Nie robić widowisk*, "Rzeczpospolita" 14 IV 2001, p. 2.

677 (ks.) S. Musiał, *Prosimy, pomóżcie nam być lepszymi*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 21V 2001, p. 24.

"Wprost" journalists aptly predicted, this forewarned absence of the head of the Catholic Church was interpreted by part of public opinion as a heroic resistance to the Jewish pressure and the ongoing crusade."[678] Following such logic, "Myśl Polska" weekly found Cardinal Glemp's refusal to be a very important declaration and a "signal that the actions of some circles that planned the 'Jedwabne" operation and wanted to involve the President, Prime Minister, Parliament Speakers and the Primate of Poland into the 'act of penance' are slowly collapsing."[679]

Let us, however, skip detailed reconstructions of the panoply of opinions towards the Primate's standpoint and the Episcopal decision. Various utterances of senior Church officials clearly demonstrate that, since the beginning of the Jedwabne debate, there had been no unanimous voice of the Church; consequently, the hierarchs' opinions about the validity and formula of the symbolic expiation were varied. Without doubt, Archbishops Józef Życiński, Henryk Muszyński, and Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek[680] consistently supported the idea of unconditional apology, 'act of penance', 'asking for forgiveness' and 'clearing the conscience', that is, acknowledging Polish guilt and moral responsibility for the sins of past generations. Contrary to them, but similarly to Primate Glemp, Bishop Bronisław Dembowski demanded an apology "from representatives of the Jewish nation for their membership in the NKVD and UB".[681] Also, Bishop Stanisław Stefanek in his sermon in Jedwabne mentioned that the "best profit is now to be made on the innocent blood of murdered Jews" (he called it "Shoah business") and "the attack on Jedwabne" was all about money. The bishop did not say anything about Polish guilt but suggested that someone "unwound a spiral of hatred – hatred that made Nero burn Rome and slander Christians."[682]

The narratives of individual priests were also diverse. Suffice to say that the rector of Jedwabne parish, Edward Orłowski, and Reverend Waldemar Chrostowski found the idea of saying "we apologise and ask for forgiveness" to

678 See W. Amiel, *Narodowa terapia*, "Wprost" 20 V 2001, p. 28.

679 J. Engelgard, *Stop dla prowokatorów*, "Myśl Polska" 29 IV- 6 V 2001, p. 1.

680 See (abp) J. Życiński, *Banalizacja barbarzyństwa*, "Więź" 2001, No. 3, p. 27-32; (ks.) A. Boniecki, M. Okoński, *Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto*, an interview with abp. H. Muszyński, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 25 III 2001, p. 12; M. Olejnik, *Za zbrodnie trzeba przepraszać*, an interview with bp. T. Pieronek, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 8 III 2001, p. 6.

681 These words were said by Bronisław Dembowski on 3 May during the service held by him in Włocławek. As cited in *Biskupi o sprawie Jedwabnego*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 4 V 2001, p. 4.

682 See *Biskup przestrzega przed próbą nowego wypaczenia historii, Homilia biskupa Stanisława Stefanka wygłoszona w Jedwabnem 11 marca 2001 r*., "Niedziela" 25 III 2001, p. 6, 8.

Jews "pathological", one-sided and humiliating for Poles. Like the Primate of Poland, Reverend Chrostowski demanded reciprocity for a list of Jewish sins against Poles.[683] Prelate Henryk Jankowski from the Saint Bridget's Church in Gdańsk did not disappoint his supporters and joined the debate using his characteristic methods: he manifested his credo through the Easter decoration of the miniature Holy Sepulchre. There was a miniature, charred barn placed on one side of the altar, surrounded by candles, with a skeleton protruding from it, and a figure of Jesus Christ surrounded by numerous skulls on the other. Under the peculiar installation the inscription read: "Jews killed Jesus Lord and the prophets; they also prosecuted us" and "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Providing the interpretation is right, this was the way in which Prelate Henryk Jankowski demanded an apology from Jews for their sins dating back to the distant past but also for more contemporary wrongs listed minutely by many of the debaters. There were also other priests, however, such as Reverend Stanisław Musiał and Reverend Michał Czajkowski, who did not take any evasive actions, did not try to relativise Jedwabne and had no doubts about which standpoint to adopt towards it.

To put aside the opinions expressed by senior Church officials and by individual priests, the fact remains that by Episcopal decision, an expiatory service was planned to be held on 27 May 2001 in the All Saint's Church, Warsaw, and the bishops declared they would apologise to God for the Jedwabne massacre. Another apology, but at a different time and in a different place, was announced by the Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Secular and religious powers differed in styles of speech, arguments and the choice of time and place for performing their act of repentance but both declared the same aim and the belief that the murder had been committed by Poles.

The two proclaimed acts of symbolic apology received mixed reception; however, they soon became key elements of the debate – particularly the President's apology, which became a dividing line. Needless to say, the clearest division was between the defenders of Polish innocence and the moralists, called "national flagellants" by the former group. A positive attitude towards the President's idea came from those acknowledging Polish participation in the Jedwabne massacre and the fact that our national legacy consisted not only of pride in our great compatriots but also of disgrace for the crimes of ordinary citizens. A critical attitude was simply a consequent continuation of taking the defensive stand: that is, minimising or questioning Polish participation in the Jedwabne massacre. Nonetheless, there were also debaters who had no doubts about the

683 P. Paliwoda, *Kto utrudnia dialog?*, an interview with ks. W. Chrostowski, "Życie" 10 IV 2001, p. 15.

perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre and never defended against taking the responsibility for the sins committed by past generations, but expressed certain fears concerning the apology announced by the President. It would be impossible, however, even to compare these doubts with the rhetoric used by declared opponents of the President's initiative, whose standpoint is worth considering. Those who questioned any Polish participation in the Jedwabne massacre considered the President's apology in the name of the nation to be an "absolutely unjustified"[684] act, to quote Andrzej Chrzanowski, a Member of Parliament from the Christian National Union party, who wrote these words in his letter to the President. Much more often, however, the debaters believed that the massacre had been committed by only a margin of Polish society and stressed that the President had no right to apologise in the name of Poles and that the blame should not be put on the whole nation. The announcement of the President's apology was interpreted as acknowledging and extending the blame for Jedwabne to all Poles, including those who had saved Jews during the war or were born after the war. Some even maliciously asked whether apologising in the name of all Poles included the name of Emmanuel Olisadebe, a popular Nigerian-born Polish footballer.[685]

Many of the debaters, including those who had no doubts about Polish perpetrators and did not call them a "social margin", referred to the argument that blame and responsibility can only be individual and therefore rebuffed the assumption that the President's initiative accepted the collective responsibility. Additionally, some of them stressed that using the term "national guilt" was nationalistic: they found it an á rebours manifestation of ethnocentrism; an absolutisation of the idea of nation and an example of "pars pro toto". "Najwyższy Czas!" even published an example letter to the President declaring denial of the rule of collective responsibility and asking him to emphasise that his apology for the Jedwabne crime in the name of the Polish nation did not include the name of the sender. [686]

Apparently, under certain conditions, some were inclined to acknowledge some sort of national responsibility but the fact that the murder was committed by a "social margin" – a small, pathological group of social scum – was the reason not to apologise. "I can apologise for what is typical of my nation" – a "Życie" journalist wrote – "but not for the attitudes of social margins".[687]

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684 As cited in (PAP), *Protest posła*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 10 VII 2001, p. 2.

685 S. Karczewski, *Olisadebe w Jedwabnem?*, "Nasz Dziennik" 5 VI 2001, p. 16.

686 See *(wzór listu do prezydenta Aleksandra Kwaśniewskiego)*, "Najwyższy Czas!" 24 III 2001, p. XXXII.

687 R. Krasowski, *Jedwabny supeł*, "Życie" 9 III 2001, p. 14.

Another argument used by the critics of the President's planned apology concerned the moment of its announcement, which was prior to the completion of the Jedwabne investigation by the Institute of National Remembrance. In other words, the President rushed too much, did not wait for the investigation findings, decided about Polish guilt and determined the time of the act of penance on his own.

Not only was the apology considered untimely, but also not yet grounded in facts, as Jarosław Kaczyński prompted.[688] It is doubtful, however, whether the critics who used this argument would have been inclined to support the apology initiative even if the results of the investigation had confirmed the words of Jan Tomasz Gross. It was one of numerous arguments intended to prove that Poles should not apologise to Jews rather than applying the 'evidence first, penance later' rule. Considering the numerous accusations against the IPN president, Leon Kieres, it would be difficult to expect common willingness to acknowledge the findings of the IPN conclusive and ultimate.

The announcement of the President's apology was also questioned by claiming that Aleksander Kwaśniewski was not entitled to give it – either as an official or as a person. As for the former, it was stressed that the Jedwabne massacres had not been committed in the name of the Polish state or on the state order; no public institutions had been involved. Thus neither the President, as the head of state and its highest official, should apologise for this murder nor should anyone demand such an apology. Besides, it was noted, the position of President did not authorise Kwaśniewski to exercise moral authority. Ewa Czaczkowska, for example, stated that the whole debate was "all about the wrong attribution of moral authority to the state which has no competence in the fields of morals."[689]

Much more often, however, the problem of Aleksander Kwaśniewski's legitimacy to apologise for Jedwabne in the name of the Polish nation was linked to the President's political biography. It was suggested to Kwaśniewski, as a former member of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and a post-communist, that he, together with other members of his political formation ("the heirs of communist murders"), should first of all "apologise for the atrocities of their ideological ancestors."[690]

Ryszard Bugaj, referring to the President's apology, which, *nota bene*, he considered a manifestation of "political calculation", subtly and aptly noted that

688 See D. Wielowieyska, W.Załuska, *Rzeczpospolitej trzeba się bać*, an interview with J. Kaczyński, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16-17 VI 2001, p. 15.

689 E. Czaczkowska, *Morderca wyrzeka się człowieczeństwa*, "Rzeczpospolita" 21 IV 2001, p. 9.

690 P. Jakucki, *Wyrok na Polskę*, "Nasza Polska" 27 III 2001, p. 1.

it was the party in which Aleksander Kwaśniewski "later made such a brilliant career" that launched an anti-Semitic campaign in 1968.[691] Considering that, at more or less the same time, the "Gazeta Polska" daily revealed that the head of the Foreign Office of the Chancellery of the President was Andrzej Majkowski, who actively participated in this campaign, Bugaj's remark was hardly incidental or neutral. Majkowski's case and particularly Kwaśniewski's decision not to remove him from office inspired some journalists to accuse the President of an asymmetric attitude: on one hand, he announced the apology for Jedwabne, on the other, he turned out to have understanding for the anti-Semitic past of a state official. The accusation of inconsistency was clearly meant to undermine the honesty of the President's intentions and to question his legitimacy to apologise to the Jews.

The apology announced by Aleksander Kwaśniewski was also criticised using openly anti-Semitic rhetoric. It was insinuated that the President took the Jewish side instead of defending Polish honour; that he represented Jewish interests in Poland; worked for the "Holocaust industry" and that the purpose of his apology was only to help Jewish financial claims — the apology was a prelude to their reparation demands. In "Nasza Polska" daily it was suggested several times that Aleksander Kwaśniewski was simply a Jew, which was naturally supposed to explain his attitude. He was called to respond to the charges brought against his father, whose "real" name was Stolzman, who "was an NKVD officer and betrayed Polish patriots to the Soviets."[692] The journalist Leszek Czajkowski offered his readers a riddle: "If President Kwaśniewski expresses the need to apologise in the name of his nation... who is actually going to apologise to whom?"[693]

Opponents of the apology also stated that such an act could doubtlessly be interpreted as the confirmation of Polish compliance in the Holocaust, which should never be allowed to happen. In consequence, various petitions, open letters and declarations that aimed to dissuade the President from his plans appeared. Some debaters, objecting to the announced acts of expiation (both Presidential and Episcopal), emphasised that Poles had already apologised enough on numerous occasions and it was time for Jews to apologise to them. Even Lech Wałęsa said this.[694]

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691 R. Bugaj, *Zbyt wiele emocji*, "Życie" 16 III 2001, p. 15.

692 (zespół redakcyjny), *Scenariusz znany od lat*, "Nasza Polska" 13 III 2001, p. 1.

693 L. Czajkowski, *Zagadka*, "Nasza Polska" 17 IV 2001, p. 5.

694 "I apologised as President. I apologised many times" – Lech Wałęsa said when asked about Aleksander Kwaśniewski's initiative – "and not a single Jew has apologised to Poles (...). There are Jewish losers who only reopen old sores and earn from it by writing books (...). This is repulsive and we should have gotten it over with a long time ago. Na-

Some opinions focused on the reciprocity rule that many demanded be applied to the potential apology. Such an attitude was represented, for example, by a member of Parliament from the Christian National Union party, who made the following declaration for "Nasza Polska" magazine: "I am ready to say the words 'I apologise' – but on two conditions. First, I need to know what I am apologising for. I am apologising for a handful of outcasts. Second, I may do that if someone from the Jewish side apologises for what the Jews did under the Soviet occupation between 1939 and 1941: for the massive collaboration of the Jewish population with the Soviet occupier; for fighting against Polish underground forces in the area; and finally – for murdering Poles."[695]

Thus, Michał Kamiński went one step further than the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, who, admittedly, demanded reciprocity and acknowledgment by Jews of their sins against Poles and an apology for them, but did not make this a condition of the expiation act of Polish bishops. Besides, he never spoke of "a handful of outcasts". Nonetheless, the Primate's idea also gained its admirers among the debaters for whom only a reciprocal apology made good sense.

Obviously, the above-mentioned arguments, undermining the point of the apology in the name of the whole nation, did not necessarily mean that their users represented the defensive stand. This reservation particularly refers to those debaters who questioned the President's initiative only because of their disagreement with the rule of collective responsibility, which, according to them, the act of apology represented. Often, however, the "individual responsibility" banner was only a useful liberal facade behind which there were attempts to defend Polish innocence.

The symbolic acts of expiation announced by secular and religious powers also met with the approval of some debaters, however, who were not uncritical or free from important doubts and fears. Their approval originated from acknowledging that what a community, such as a nation, inherits from previous generations, is not only glory but also disgrace: according to this rule, the apology was considered obligatory. Besides, as Wojciech Sadurski wrote, for example, an act of apology did not necessarily mean claiming collective responsibility – because an apology could also be "a manifestation of shame, not necessarily guilt".[696]

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tions who paid such a price should have understanding for each other and should understand that there were scoundrels on both sides". As cited in: (PAP), *Kiedy przeprosiny drugiej strony?*, "Nasz Dziennik" 10-11 III 2001, p. 3.

695 K. Bogomilska, *Polacy stawiani pod ścianą*, an interview with M. Kamiński, "Nasza Polska" 13 III 2001, p. 10.

696 W. Sadurski, *Przeprosiny są potrzebne nam samym*, "Rzeczpospolita" 24 III 2001, p. 6.

Long before the President's, Primate's and Bishops' declarations, some of the debaters addressed representatives of local authorities and Church officials asking them not to procrastinate but to take some action as soon as possible. For example, one of them was Jan Nowak-Jeziorański who, in a few different declarations published at the same time, proved with determination the necessity of pleading guilty. He pointed out that the existing situation created "a burning need for some symbolic act that would become a manifestation of sorrow and compensation for the massacre and cruelty inflicted by our compatriots."[697] Suffice to say, due to his consistent stand he was cursed by the national-Catholic press, which called him nothing but a traitor, while the then president of the Polish American Congress, Edward Moskal, accused him of working for the Germans during the war, as "their trusted and loyal administrator of confiscated Jewish properties."[698]

Considering all the appeals and the fact that for a long time the President, the Primate and the Episcopate were silent and only in March 2001 did they decide to speak in public and announce their apology initiative, it is understandable that some debaters accused the secular and religious powers of indolence. They also lamented the Primate's decision not to attend the ceremony in Jedwabne on 10 July, which suggested that he had questioned the significance of the event, refused to give Church support to the President and also left a space for speculation.

One way or another, both announced acts of symbolic expiation also met with approval, although their supporters expressed certain doubts. President Kwaśniewski's competence to apologise in the name of the nation was not questioned; however, some debaters were afraid that although he was going to do a lot of good, his voice would not be widely accepted because of his limited moral legitimacy in the eyes of many people. In this context, one observed a lack of Polish authorities whose standpoints could receive the support of the majority of society and whose voice would unite beyond any division. The debaters were mostly concerned, however, whether the President's apology would become only "a tool of social engineering, a PR event" with regard to Poland's image in the world.[699] Even this function of the ceremony was appreciated; however, there were warnings not to reduce it to a political profit and loss account. It was noted that a critical assessment of the national past, its re-evaluation, the confes-

697 As cited in: (PAP), *Oświadczenie Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 12 III 2001, p. 2.

698 E. Moskal, *Faryzejskie wzywanie innych do przeprosin*, "Nasz Dziennik" 25 IV 2001, p. 10.

699 See Z. Nosowski, *W perspektywie sumienia*, "Więź" 2001, No. 6, p. 69.

sion of sins and asking for forgiveness had to be honest, as they were needed by us and not by international public opinion. In concern for the collective, national identity, honest self-examination and purification were advised, which could not be replaced with any symbolic gestures or rituals. "Official speeches, apologetic gestures is one thing", Adam Krzemiński wrote, "democratic psychotherapy – another."[700]

Therefore, some debaters were afraid that these announced acts of apology would precede "democratic psychotherapy", which should come first. Had the Jedwabne massacre ever been regarded as a Polish disgrace, they wondered? Had it been a subject of individual reflection, sorrow, repentance, some sort of atonement? Had the ritual and symbolic act of apology replaced true, national self-examination? Would it become a comfortable alibi? What is more, wouldn't this symbolic gestureclose the debate and squander the chance for national catharsis given by the debate belated by almost half a century? In other words, the apology to be proclaimed for the Jedwabne massacre was feared to be premature – not because the Institute of National Remembrance had not yet finished its investigation but simply because one needs to be mature to apologise.

These fears were in fact more than empty moralising. In April 2001, almost half the Polish population (48%) surveyed by the Centre for Public Opinion Research believed that Poles should not apologise to Jews for the Jedwabne massacre; over one-third (34%) claimed it had been committed only by the Germans. Polish and German complicity was presumed by 14% and only 7% believed that only Poles had committed this crime.[701] In other words, according to the survey, every third Pole claimed that only Germans should be charged with the massacre. In this context, Mark Edelman's words, "no one should apologise because an apology does not help in anything", gains deeper meaning although the commemorations planned for 10 July in Jedwabne received his recognition.[702]

Despite the controversies appearing over the course of the debate about the two apologies for Jedwabne, particularly over the President's apology, both came into effect and both on schedule. Chronologically, the penitential service organised on 27 May 2001 under the auspices of the Polish Episcopate in the All Saints' Church in Warsaw was first. Neither the choice of date nor of place was accidental. While the choice of place was somehow symbolic, as the Church used to border the ghetto wall during the war, the choice of time was purely practical, indeed scheduled because of another event. The day after, in Warsaw,

700 A. Krzemiński, *Okaleczeni milczeniem*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 28 VII 2001, p. 18.

701 CBOS: *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem*, kwiecień 2001, Warszawa.

702 S. Rejak, *Z fanatykami nie ma o czym mówić*, an interview with M. Edelman, "Rzeczpospolita" 12 V 2001, p. 5.

a meeting of the Polish Episcopate on the occasion of the anniversary of Stefan Wyszyński's death was scheduled: in other words, bishops were intending to go to Warsaw anyway.

The Primate's decision about the time and place of the service, however, turned out to be very controversial, since the Jewish holiday, Shavuot, fell exactly on 27 May. Jews celebrate this day by praying in Synagogue, which excluded the possibility that the invited rabbi, Michał Schudrich, or any other Jews would attend it.[703] Another blunder resulted from the choice of place for the service. In the basement of the Church in which the bishops decided to apologise to God for Jedwabne, there was an impressively huge and patriotic bookshop called "Antyk" ("Antique"), stocked with anti-Semitic literature. The Church officials did not react, however, although they had been informed about it before the planned celebration.[704]

Regardless of all the controversies and negligence, on 27 May in All Saints' Church, a few dozen bishops in black cassocks apologised to God for the murdered Jews in Jedwabne and elsewhere. In the introduction to the inaugurating prayer, Bishop Stanisław Gądecki talked about the necessity to "purify the memory" and the difficult tasks of "purifying the conscience". Moreover, he declared in the name of the Episcopate: "As the Shepherds of the Polish Church, we want to stand in truth, in front of God and the people, above all, our Jewish brother and sisters, to express our sorrow and repentance for the massacre that happened in July 1941 in Jedwabne and elsewhere. Its victims were Jews and among the perpetrators there were also Poles and Catholics – people who were baptised."[705] Not only were these words heard by the bishops – whose numbers were not at full strength that day – but also by Leon Kieres, Władysław Bartoszewski, Maciej Płażyński and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who all attended the service. In front of the church, on the other hand, the defenders of Poland's good name protested and objected to "apologising to Jews for deeds not done." [706]

Over the next few days, the Warsaw service was a subject of numerous comments and although highly positive reviews predominated, critical ones appeared as well. While in the opinion of Jan Turnau from "Gazeta Wyborcza", in All Saints' Church a "prophet's voice" could be heard, comparable even to the

703 See K. Gebert, *Zmarnowana okazja*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 24 V 2001, p. 15.

704 The open letter in this issue was written e.g. by Sergiusz Kowalski form "Otwarta Rzeczpospolita – Stowarzyszenie przeciwko Antysemityzmowi i Ksenofobii" (Open [Polish] Republic: Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia". See S. Kowalski, *Fasada i zaplecze*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 V 2001, p. 2.

705 *Wprowadzenie do modlitwy bp. Stanisława Gądeckiego*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 28 V 2001, p. 6.

706 As cited in A. Szostkiewicz, *Na kolanach*, "Polityka" 2 VI 2001, p. 17.

reconciliation letter of 1965 from the Polish bishops to German bishops, in the opinion of his colleague, Roman Graczyk, this prophecy was missing. And while the Episcopate's letter from 1965 demonstrated that the "moral consciousness" of bishops had emerged earlier than "the moral consciousness of Poles", the Jedwabne case proved that anti-Semitism brought the Episcopate closer to "common knowledge: facing the truth with reluctance and reservations."[707] These two very different opinions, which referred to the same event and the Episcopate's attitude, say a lot about the atmosphere after the Warsaw service and comments formulated at the time.

Between the penitential service celebrated by bishops in Warsaw's All Saints' Church and the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre commemorated by the President, another disagreement that divided observers arose. This concerned the content of the inscription on a new monument set up to commemorate the Jedwabne Jews. It was intended to replace the old monument, pulled down in March 2001, which had stood at the crime scene since 1962. The old inscription read: "Site of the Suffering of the Jewish Population. The Gestapo and the Nazi Gendarmerie Burned 1,600 People Alive on 10 July 1941."

The publication of "Neighbors" invalidated these words, although no one had doubted them for years. Unfortunately, years later, The Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites attempted to replace the lie inscribed in stone using a dodge which was called a "compromise". The new inscription was suggested to be: "In memory of Jews from Jedwabne and environs, men, women and children, co-masters of this land, murdered and burned alive at this spot on 10 July 1941. As a warning to posterity so that the sin of hatred enflamed by German Nazism might never set the inhabitants of this land against each other. Jedwabne, 10 July 2001. "

The above-mentioned evasion, comfortable for the Jedwabne citizens, for the local rector and generally for numerous people critically oriented towards Gross's book, was the latter part of the proposed inscription that said nothing about the direct perpetrators of the massacre but pointed only at Nazism, enflaming "the sin of hatred" as the cause of the crime. One could get the impression that it was the Nazis who murdered local Jews; thus, the new inscription was in fact hardly different from the old one. Let us skip, however, detailed descriptions of the debate over this problem, in which one side demanded an inscription closer to the truth, and the other, that is, the defendants of Polish innocence, were afraid that Poles would be mentioned as perpetrators. Suffice to say that finally the epitaph was changed – only the first and uncontroversial part was

707 J. Turnau, *Głos biskupów jasny i mocny*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 9-10 VI 2001, p. 25; R. Graczyk, *Zabrakło proroctwa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 9-10 VI 2001, p. 24.

saved – and the decision was made a few days before the planned commemorations.[708]

Before the celebrations were held, however, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, in an article published in "Polityka" daily, explained why he had decided to apologise, in whose name he was going to apologise and what the word "apology" meant in the context of the Jedwabne massacre. He also wrote that Jedwabne turned out to be the greatest challenge of his presidency, as Poles for the first time had been so severely confronted with "another face of our actions."[709] On 10 July 2001, the planned ceremonies took place in Jedwabne. Among the participants, in addition to the President, there were politicians from the Democratic Left Alliance and the Freedom Union, Władysław Bartoszewski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Marek Safjan, Leon Kieres, Jan Tomasz Gross, the Israeli ambassador Szewach Weiss, leaders of the World Jewish Congress and the European Jewish Congress, representatives of the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum, of the Lutheran Church, the Protestant Reformed Church and the Evangelical Methodist Church, Rabbi Jacob Baker, other rabbis, families of the victims, Poles and Jews.

True to his word, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, did not appear in Jedwabne. Other bishops followed his decision. Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, parliamentary speakers and right-wing politicians were absent, too, as was the Jedwabne rector; the local citizens' attendance also left a lot to be desired. Instead, in some home and shop windows, posters appeared which read: "We do not apologise. It was Germans who murdered Jews in Jedwabne. Let the slanderers apologise to the Polish nation."

In the Jedwabne square where the local Jews had been gathered on 10 July 1941 and where 60 years later the commemoration began, Aleksander Kwaśniewski took the floor.

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708 Finally, the inscription on the monument at the site of the burnt barn reads as follows: "In memory of Jews from Jedwabne and environs, men, women and children, co-masters of this land, murdered and burned alive at this spot on 10 July 1941."

709 This is how the president Aleksander Kwaśniewski explained the meaning and legitimacy of his apologies: "I can hear questions or even accusations about whether the president should apologise in the name of the nation. Here is my answer: The president apologises as a person shocked by what happened in Jedwabne and other towns. The president apologises in the name of those who have a sense of guilt for the crime committed by a handful of our countrymen. The president has an obligation to apologise as the head of the Polish state. (…) What other word, if not an apology, would be proper in this situation? An apology is not an accusation – it is supposed to be a bridge to reconciliation." A. Kwaśniewski, *Co to znaczy przepraszam*, "Polityka" 14 VII 2001, p. 13.

In his speech, there were words of apology for the Jedwabne massacre: "(...) as a citizen and as the President of the Republic of Poland, I apologise. I apologise in my own name and in the name of the Poles whose conscience has been touched by that crime, in the name of those who believe that we cannot be proud of the grandeur of the Polish history without experiencing the pain and shame because of the evil committed by Poles against others."[710] Aleksander Kwaśniewski's speech, although doubtlessly the most anticipated, was not the only moving statement heard that day in Jedwabne. The ambassador Szewach Wesiss and Rabbi Jacob Baker (born in Jedwabne) also addressed the crowd.

It is impossible to summarise each of the commentaries that appeared in press after the event, and there were many. Their reading, however, allows one to draw a general conclusion. These commentaries clearly reflected the spectrum of attitudes revealed during the debate and originated from them. In other words, the attitudes towards the ceremony in Jedwabne, and particularly to President Kwaśniewski's speech, were analogical to the attitudes towards Gross's "Neighbors" and the revelation of the massacre. Thus, it is no surprise that while Andrzej Friszke wrote "we can be proud that the Polish state, represented by its highest officials, did not attempt to belittle Polish guilt but decided to face the painful truth",[711] Antoni Macierewicz accused the President of treason and stated that "whatever there is to say about traitors in Polish history, such an atrocity had never happened before".[712] "Nasz Dziennik" daily added that it was "cheek to disgracefully apologise for the crimes the Polish Nation is not guilty of."[713]

Needless to say, the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre met with radically different responses. Admittedly, sometimes even declared opponents of the President's apology openly admitted their recognition of the Kwaśniewski speech. Regardless of all the commentaries, 10 July 2001 was without doubt a day that proved the courage of the President, who managed

710 In his speech Aleksander Kwaśniewski also raised the issue of Polish responsibility for the Jedwabne massacre. He said: "(...) One is not allowed to talk about a collective responsibility that would burden the citizens of a town or the whole nation. Every human being is responsible only for his/her own deeds. The sons do not inherit the guilt of their fathers. But are we allowed to say: 'it was a long time ago' or 'it was them'? The nation is a community. It is a community of individuals, a community of generations. That is why we have to face the truth. Every truth. We have to say: that's what happened. Our consciences will be clean if looking back to these days we shall always feel horror and moral indignation in our hearts." See *Sąsiedzi sąsiadom zgotowali ten los, Przemówienie Prezydenta RP Aleksandra Kwaśniewskiego*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 VII 2001, p. 4.

711 A. Friszke, *10 lipca w Jedwabnem...*, "Więź" 2001, No. 8, p. 3.

712 A. Macierewicz, *Zdrada, państwo i niepodległość*, "Głos" 21 VII 2001, p. 2.

713 W. Wybranowski, *Jedwabna demokracja*, "Nasz Dziennik" 11 VII 2001, p. 16

to go against the stream of prevailing opinions. He steadfastly fulfilled his declaration of intent to apologise and did not give in to the pressure from all those people who had, one way or another, tried to dissuade him from doing so. His speech was a symptomatic example of the "language of morality" in contrast to the "yes, but" narrative. The message was clear and gave no illusions about the author's intention.

Some participants in public life, however, believed that 10 July 2001 had brought dishonour on the highest officials of the Catholic Church, as the absence of the Primate of Poland and Polish bishops could not be justified by the penitential service organised in Warsaw sometime beforehand. While both expiation ceremonies could have been complementary, the impression was they were mutually exclusive. Moreover, the absence of Church officials at the site marked with death, at the collective tomb of the murdered, on the anniversary of their death, in the company of their families, by the side of rabbis and Jews, disturbed the message of the Episcopal prayer in May in Warsaw's All Saints' Church. It gave reasons to doubt the honesty of the bishops' intentions. Besides, considering the spiritual rule that the Catholic Church imposes upon Poland, it is a pity that none of its officials stood by the President in Jedwabne. It would have been a signal for all the people who did not trust "Neighbors" but trusted the Church. Unquestionably, Maciej Giertych could not then have commented that their absence "was the most meaningful commentary."[714]

Having said all this, it would be hard to disagree with Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, who commented on the absence of the leading Church shepherds: "If it is true that there was not one representative of the Polish Episcopate at the funeral in Jedwabne, the May service in All Saints' Church can be interpreted as a classic example of a premature apology, which brings relief at first but delays real reconciliation in the long term."[715]

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After a wave of comments about the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne murder, the debate over "Neighbors" began to fade away. Admittedly, there was a discussion about anti-Semitism in Poland in "Gazeta Wyborcza", and "Rzeczpospolita" published several articles about the character of Polish historiography and the view of Polish history; however, the very problem of the Jedwabne massacre disappeared from the first pages of newspapers. Extensive articles and polemic essays on the Jedwabne pogrom were replaced by shorter pieces of infor-

714 M. Giertych, *Jedwabne prostuje kręgosłupy*, "Myśl Polska" 19 VIII 2001, p. 16.

715 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Pułapki wczesnego przebaczenia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11-12 VIII 2001, p. 20.

mation and commentaries on the findings of the IPN investigation, carried out since August 2000. Their temperature increased when Radosław Ignatiew, the prosecutor running the investigation, informed the public in December 2001 that, according to the results of criminological research, the shells found near the barn had not come from 1941 and had not been shot by the Germans."[716] Thus, vain were the hopes of those who believed these shells to be the key evidence of German perpetration and Polish innocence.

The heightened emotions aroused by the IPN investigation also accompanied its annual report, presented by its president, Leon Kieres, on 27 February 2002 in the Polish parliament. Although his report related to the entirety of the IPN activities, it was the Jedwabne investigation that sparked off a heated discussion. In fact, it instead became a trial of Leon Kieres. The prosecutor's role was played by the deputies from the League of Polish Families who, for example, asked the IPN president about the origins of his submission to Jews and the lack of interest in the crimes committed by Jewish communists on Poles. Antoni Macierewicz accused Leon Kieres of the "unfounded and unlawful" burdening of Poles with the murder committed by Germans and of falsifying history. According to Macierewicz, Kieres had also begun "stoning the Polish Nation", the culmination of which was President Kwaśniewski's speech. Moreover, the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre was described by the MP Antoni Strykowski as "Jewish cheek."[717]

After 9 July 2002, a moment came when the subject of the Jedwabne massacre again appeared in the first pages of newspapers. It was the day when the prosecutor Radosław Ignatiew informed the public about the final findings of the investigation into the Jedwabne massacre, during which dozens of witnesses had been interrogated, Polish and German archives probed and an exhumation had been conducted. Summarising the findings, prosecutor Ignatiew emphasised that the massacre had been planned and organised. He confirmed the decisive role of the Polish population in "conducting the criminal act", whose direct perpetrators were "Polish citizens of Jedwabne and its environs: at least forty men." Prosecutor Ignatiew broadly attributed to the Germans the responsibility for the crime , that is, their consent to and inspiration for the massacre. He also stated that "Germans, who were probably in a small group, assisted in driving the people who were being persecuted to the market place and their active role was limited to that. It is unclear, in the light of the evidence collected, whether the Germans took part in escorting the victims to the place of mass murder, and whether

716 (IPN o Jedwabnem), *Nie te łuski*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 20 XII 2001, p. 1.

717 See szerzej, *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 15. posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniach 27, 28 lutego i 1 marca 2002 r.*, Warszawa 2002..

they were present at the barn. Witness testimonies vary considerably on this question".[718]

In other words, the IPN investigation confirmed Jan Tomasz Gross's main thesis: Jedwabne Jews had been murdered by their Polish neighbours. It could not be proved that Germans had committed the crime or that Polish perpetrators only obeyed the orders under the guns of German soldiers. The number of murdered Jews given by Gross, however, was verified. Prosecutor Ignatiew, on the basis of the exhumation findings, estimated that the number of victims was around 350 although he did not rule out that it could have been larger. He also noted that "before the people were taken away from the market, individual murders had been committed."[719]

Considering the already mentioned attitudes of the participants in the debate about the Jedwabne massacre, it is easy to guess the responses to the final findings of the IPN investigation. While for some they were only a confirmation of the sad truth they had already acknowledged, others only interpreted them as fabricated evidence to support some arbitrary thesis with an anti-Polish undertone. Newspaper headlines published immediately after the press release on the final findings of the investigation were very meaningful by themselves: "Neighbours Murdered",[720] "Neighbours After All",[721] "Jedwabne – Let us Accept it with Humility",[722] "Jedwabne massacre, Slippery Investigation",[723] "Humorous Investigation",[724] "IPN Findings a Bungle",[725] "The Crime of the Jedwabne Investigation",[726] "Crusade Against Poles",[727] "How IPN Absolved the SS".[728] While the debaters representing "critical patriotism" realised that the content of "Neighbors" was confirmed, they drew a conclusion from that knowledge and, like the chief editor of "Znak", Stefan Wilkowicz, asked: "what next?",[729] the defenders of the Polish innocence paradigm wrote serial open letters to the Insti-

718 As cited in P. Machcewicz, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, [in:] *Wokół Jedwabnego. Studia*., P. Machcewicz, K. Persak (red.), Warszawa 2002, t. 1, p. 17.

719 As cited in P. Machcewicz, *Wokół...*, p. 17.

720 U, Arter, *Mordowali sąsiedzi*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 10 VII 2002, p. 1.

721 E. Południk, A. Kaczyński, *Jednak sąsiedzi*, "Rzeczpospolita" 10 VII 2002, p. 1.

722 J. Paradowska, *Jedwabne – przyjąć z pokorą*, "Polityka" 20 VII 2002, p. 13.

723 In Polish, the word "jedwabne" means "silky" – a slippery material; Polish title is "Jedwabny mord, jedwabne śledztwo".

724 M. Walaszczyk, *Niepoważne śledztwo*, "Nasz Dziennik" 10 VII 2002, p. 1, 2.

725 R. Popielewicz, *Ustalenia IPN to fuszerka*, an interview with J. R. Nowak, "Nasz Dziennik" 12 VII 2002, p. 1, 3.

726 Z. S. Zdrojewski, *Zbrodnia śledztwa w Jedwabnem*, "Nasza Polska" 31 VII 2002, p. 1, 4.

727 S. Zawadzki, *Nagonka na Polaków*, "Nasz Dziennik" 11 VII 2002, p. 1, 3.

728 W. Lehr-Spławiński, *Jak IPN rozgrzeszył SS*, "Nowa Myśl Polska" 18-25 VII 2002, p. 7.

729 See S. Wilkanowicz, *Jedwabne – co dalej?*, "Znak" 2002, nr 9, p. 5-7.

tute of National Remembrance, accusing it of mistakes in the investigation and lies in their final findings. They demanded a re-examination and completion of the exhumation process. They stubbornly defended "Poland's good name" and, obviously, would never agree with Aleksander Kwaśniewski's opinion: "the investigation showed Polish credibility".[730]

In December 2002, the Institute of National Remembrance released a two-volume collection of studies and documents titled "Wokół Jedwabnego" ["Around Jedwabne"] – the fruits of the almost two-year investigation into the Jedwabne massacre. Not only did these documents and analyses confirm the key thesis of Jan Tomasz Gross, but also significantly completed and enriched the contents of "Neighbors". Historians and prosecutors extended their area of interest to other towns in the Łomżyńskie and Białostockie regions, where the locals participated in pogroms of their Jewish neighbours and where the scenarios of all murders were amazingly alike. The Jedwabne massacre, although unquestionably the most tragic and best documented, was not an isolated episode. Thus, reading the two volumes of "Around Jedwabne" is even sadder and more paralysing than Gross's book, as it shows that Jedwabne was only the tip of the iceberg.

The debate over the Jedwabne massacre has been by far the longest, deepest and intensive debate about the Polish-Jewish past. Among the participants were journalists, journalists, priests, the highest Church and state officials, symbolic elites and ordinary citizens, sending letters to numerous newspapers and magazines. Undoubtedly, the debate was also held in many Polish homes, as it had been the first time when Poles were confronted on such a scale with a picture of war completely inconsistent with the cultivated narrative about national valour and suffering. Polish perpetrators of someone else's suffering, so far removed from sight, replaced Polish heroes and victims – or, in fact, appeared alongside them. Therefore, those debaters who considered the debate a challenge to face the unwanted and denied past were correct. Jedwabne finally closed the door on nearly half a century of shameful repression, occasionally interrupted with the voices of Polish intellectuals who were appreciated only in narrow circles. At last, not only the readers of "Tygodnik Powszechny" had a chance to hear about Jedwabne, which was confirmed by a CBOS survey conducted in 2001: 80% of Poles declared they had heard about the Jedwabne massacre.[731] It could not be otherwise: the Jedwabne issue was subjected to comment on television and ra-

730 (PAP), "Gazeta Wyborcza" 10 VII 2002, p. 2.

731 When asked "Have you heard of Jedwabne?" 83% of the respondents answered in the positive. CBOS: *Polacy wobec zbrodni w Jedwabnem*, kwiecień 2001, Warszawa.

dio, and hundreds of Polish press articles formed, as Dariusz Stola brilliantly noted, "a monument made of words, a tumulus made of newsprint".[732]

On the other hand, an image of a deeply divided nation emerged from the cacophony of different voices. At least "two Polands" could be seen. One was the Poland ready to face the challenges posed by Jan Tomasz Gross, acknowledge the painful truth of the national past, retell history and include Jedwabne in collective memory, together with the Polish Righteous Among the Nations, the heroes of the Warsaw Uprising and Maria Skłodowska-Curie. Another Poland remained stuck in the victim and hero syndrome: it attempted, with determination and in the name of self-defence, to belittle and minimise the Jedwabne massacre and to prove Polish innocence. This Poland was represented by Tomasz Strzembosz, Jerzy Robert Nowak and many other historians, journalists and priests, for example the rector of Jedwabne, reverend Edward Orłowski and the Bishop of Łomża Stanisław Stefanek. Although the defensive camp had different faces, what united them was the building of fortifications to entrench themselves in the position of an innocent victim. Inability to overcome this syndrome became, in my opinion, the main obstacle to viewing Poles as the perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre.

The debate over "Neighbors" revealed, however, not only the divisions related to the attitudes to the national past but also the vitality of a particular mentality, dating back to the 1930s or even to the end of the 19th century. A litmus test of this mentality was the language used during the debate by some of its participants. It was this language that loudly echoed the legacy of National Democracy with all its reservoir of anti-Semitic clichés and stereotypes. Unfortunately, it was not restricted only to the journalists of "Nasza Polska", "Nasz Dziennik" or other press considered marginal despite their large circulation and common availability. The Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, also used this language – not for the first time, by the way – and he was one of those who legitimised the process of incorporating this language into the national-Catholic press. Glemp and numerous other Church and state officials supported the attack by the Polish innocence defenders camp, to which they often belonged.

Regarding Polish elites, yet another disturbing phenomenon, by no means new, could be observed in the debate. The problem of the attitude of elites towards the people or, in other words, the division between "lords" and "boors" was revealed with a vengeance. How else could one explain that the perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre were believed to be a social margin, mob, scum and generally, people of second category? Needless to say, the purpose of such endeavours was to remove the burden of the Jedwabne murder, to wash ones hands

732 D. Stola, *Pomnik ze słów (cz. 1)*, "Rzeczpospolita" 1 VI 2001, p. 14.

of it. At the same time, however, by introducing this dichotomy, the Polish elites exposed their perception of society and the nation.

A few years have passed since the national debate over the Jedwabne massacre ended. The disclosure of the crime has resulted in several significant publications, whose authors carefully examined the subject raised by Jan Tomasz Gross.[733] Nonetheless, the most important question is whether the Jedwabne pogrom and the debate over it have in any way contributed to Polish self-knowledge. Has the Jedwabne murder been inscribed in Polish "collective memory"? Answers to these questions are not obvious. The results of the OBOP survey conducted in November 2002, that is, after the IPN press release on the final findings of the investigation and the publication of "Around Jedwabne", do not give reasons for optimism. Half the respondents were unable to answer the question as to who had murdered the Jedwabne Jews: the majority of those who had an opinion on the matter claimed the perpetrators were German rather than Polish.[734] Unfortunately, we do not know what answers would be given by Poles today. We can only hope that the debaters, who prophetically claimed that Jedwabne would be forgotten after some time, were not absolutely right.

733 See e.g. A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego*, Warszawa 2004; A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*, Warszawa 2006.

734 TNS OBOP: *Polacy o zbrodni w Jedwabnem*, grudzień 2002, Warszawa.

Chapter IV
"Fear" after Jedwabne.
The debate that almost didn't happen.

1. "Fear" in Poland and in the eyes of historians.

In January 2008, almost eight years after the release of "Neighbors", Jan T. Gross's new book, "Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści" [English: "Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland just After the War. The History of Moral Collapse"] appeared on the Polish book market.[735] Unlike "Neighbors", which was first released to Polish readers, "Fear" was originally published in the USA and with a slightly different title: "Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation".[736] Thus, due to the author's decision, his critics were prevented from formulating concerns of what could happen to the good name of Poland and Poles after foreigners read the book – concerns which had already been manifested in the debate over the massacre in Jedwabne.

Jan Tomasz Gross's new book started a debate in the Polish media at the time of its publication in the USA. As a result, before it was released in Poland, "Fear" had already been "promoted", particularly by the national-Catholic press, reporting the 'deceitful' and 'anti-Polish' contents of the book. However, other comments and reviews also appeared, including academic texts. Therefore, in the first days of January 2008, when various newspapers announced Jan T. Gross's new book, "Fear", to be published by "Znak", the title was already familiar to many readers and the author's name well known, particularly after the controversy over the Jedwabne pogrom. While for some it symbolised a breakthrough confrontation with the difficult Polish-Jewish past and the final end to the myth of Polish innocence, for others it was just the synonym for "anti-Polonism".

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735 J. T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*, Kraków 2008.

736 J. T. Gross, *Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Random House, New York 2007.

What riveted the attention of the public and critics was that, unlike "Neighbors", Jan T. Gross's new book did not reveal any unknown historical facts. This time, the author described different faces of anti-Semitism in Poland in the first years after World War II, based on well-known sources and available publications. As the book dealt with anti-Semitism against Holocaust survivors, the author focused mainly on the postwar wave of anti-Jewish violence in Polish society, which resulted in the deaths of – according to different estimates – of between 500 and 3,000 people.[737] Depicting a series of acts of anti-Semitism, Gross included in his book the postwar pogroms in Rzeszow, Cracow and Kielce; murders of Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns; murders of Jewish repatriates on trains known as "train operations", conducted mostly by National Armed Forces troops; murder-robberies, political assassinations and other forms of violence. Based on official statements, press articles and private conversations, he also describes the responses to these acts of violence – particularly the Kielce pogrom – by the state, by Catholic Church authorities and by the lay intelligentsia.

However, "Fear" also depicts other manifestations of postwar anti-Semitism, such as the anti-Jewish attitude of local administrations, employment discrimination, anti-Semitism among children, and the antipathy towards Holocaust survivors displayed through words, gazes and gestures within local communities. A separate chapter was devoted to the anti-Semitism nourished by the myth of "Żydokomuna" (Jewish Bolshevism) – and to the deconstruction of this anti-Semitic stereotype, which had long been used as a simple matrix to explain complex reality. Jan T. Gross did not, however, limit his work to a simple reconstruction of facts about different manifestations of postwar anti-Semitism. On the contrary, in accordance with the English subtitle of his book – "An Essay In Historical Interpretation" – the author attempted to diagnose the causes of this phenomenon and to interpret the constellation of events documented in his book. It was mostly these that caused the greatest controversies among his adversaries.

In Gross's opinion – and not only his – the causes of anti-Semitism and violence against Jews in Poland between 1944 and 1949 can be traced to a few different sources. First of all, as a result of the Holocaust, Poles came into possession of various Jewish properties – from small objects of everyday use to properties: flats, shops, workshops, etc. Therefore, quoting Elżbieta Janicka who aptly summarised Gross's thoughts: "postwar anti-Semitism (as a legitimising mechanism) was an effect of the nationwide process of growing rich 'on

737 See. D. Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946*, Yad Vashem Studies" 1998, no. 26, p. 43-47; J. Michlic, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1918-1938 and 1945-1947*, "Polin" 2000, v. 13, p. 34-61.

Jews'"[738] and the violence against them became a specific tool to defend newly acquired assets. Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns were treated with distrust and hostility by non-Jewish Poles, including those who formed the "Polish Third Estate", "which did not exist before". They "completely took over trade, supplies, mediation and local crafts in the provinces".[739] The homecoming of Holocaust survivors also frightened those who needed to return Jewish assets that had once been deposited with them, either because they no longer had them or simply did not want to give them back.

Another underlying cause of postwar anti-Semitism and violence against Jews suggested by Gross has its source in the hatred towards a hurt victim. The author, referring to Tacitus, noted that "it is, indeed, human nature to hate the man whom you have injured"[740]. Such hatred afflicted Jews as the targeted victims of Nazism. Their very existence reminded of the inglorious attitudes of non-Jewish Poles towards Holocaust: complicity, indifference, and passiveness. As Gross noted: The Jews who survived the war were not threatening just because they reminded those who had availed themselves of Jewish property that its rightful owners might come back to reclaim it. They also induced fear in people by reminding them of the fragility of their own existence, of the propensity for violence residing in their own communities (...) [and] because it called forth their own feeling of shame and of contempt in which they were held by their victims".

Finally, the last cause of postwar anti-Semitism highlighted by Gross was getting "infected with anti-Semitism"[741] during the war. Not only did the Nazis infect Poles with anti-Semitic propaganda, but they also showed to Polish witnesses of the Holocaust that Jews could be humiliated, mistreated and killed with impunity and that their lives were 'completely worthless'. According to Gross, "mass killings of Polish Jews, as well as of those Jews who resided east of Poland, took place in situ (...) in countless small towns where a few hundred or a few thousand Jews were confined to their neighbourhoods". Polish society, the author notes, "proved vulnerable to totalitarian temptation"[742].

"Fear" included a few more of the author's thoughts that brought controversy and were the focus of the attention of his critics, such as his reflections on the indifference of the majority of Poles towards the Holocaust happening in front

738 E. Janicka, *Mord rytualny z aryjskiego paragrafu. O książce Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2008, issue 2, p. 231.

739 See J. T. Gross, *Fear…,* p. 47.

740 Ibidem, p. 256.

741 Ibidem, p. 130.

742 Ibidem,…, p. 260.

of their eyes. In his book, Gross ascertains that "Killings of Jews, (...) were not a secret cloak-and-dagger operation. They were, by all appearances, a form of social control"[743]. What generated strong emotions was also the term "Catholic National Democrats" used by the author in the Polish version of the book to present a certain "cognitive orientation, according to which the Roman Catholic Church sided strongly with the National Democrats' worldview. Gross's criticism of the highest order of the clergy – including Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek and the cardinals Adam Sapieha, August Hlond and Stefan Wyszyński for their silence and ambiguous attitude towards anti-Semitic acts of violence and particularly for their lack of a strong response to the Kielce pogrom – also heated the discussion of "Fear". More importantly, it is the words written by Gross and the response to them that deserve attention and at least a fragmentary reconstruction and interpretation of the formulated opinions.

The setting of the debate over "Fear" was almost analogous to previous discussions referring to the difficult Polish-Jewish past. The Polish release of "Fear", like the release of Claude Lanzmann's films, Jan Błoński's articles or Gross's "Neighbors", was an event that sparked off a public discussion. Therefore, determining its start is not particularly problematic. Nor is demonstrating its clear ending – or, shall we say, its hasty and artificial ending, which was the publication of the materials forming part of the debate such as articles, columns, interviews, and the records of meetings etc. by "Znak publishers".[744] In other words, "Znak publishers" somehow attempted to control the beginning and the end of the debate over "Fear".

Znak had, however, no real influence over elements such as the dynamics, trajectory and contents of the debate over Gross's new book. Thus, it is important to ask whether debate is even a good word in this context, since it lacked internal dynamics from the very beginning. The participants did not really refer to each other's texts; dialogism and referentiality were replaced with isolated and unrelated statements. Even though some of the debaters even confessed to not having read Gross's book, this did not in the least deter them from formulating categorical assertions based on press commentaries and intuition. In response, most contributors legitimised their statements by declaring their knowledge of "Fear". What is more, the debate over the book definitely lacked texts or statements that could be regarded as key for its trajectory and that would set a reference point for other debaters. What is significant and fascinating at the same time, however, are different attempts to block the debate by the use of various strategies of invalidating the contents of the book, its cognitive value and

743 Ibidem, p. 38.

744 M. Gądek (ed.), *Wokół "Strachu". Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, Kraków 2008.

its author's competence, etc. Considering the debate's progress, timing and outcome, these efforts were somehow successful. Before these strategies are discussed in detail, let us listen to Polish historians and to what they said in interviews, reviews and debates.

Naturally, there is no single, unanimous, collective entity such as "Polish historians"; nor is there any agreed standpoint of a professional association, but rather some dispersed voices of different representatives of this academic discipline. Analysing their opinions, we can see that certain critical comments and objections to Jan Tomasz Gross and his book are similar and repeated by many. Generally they fall into two categories: "It is hard to engage in a rational polemic with such far-fetched statements, expressed in such pungent and categorical words. They may be accepted or dismissed because the dispute is not about facts, which are known and usually unquestionable, but their interpretation and the right to formulate strong accusations based thereon".[745] The other is more metaphorical: "The problem is that The Last Judgement [a triptych by Hieronymus Bosch – author's note.] consists of three panels with a few hundred figures and numerous episodes. A glance at just one of these elements not only fails to provide an overall image, but even makes it difficult to understand the element itself".[746]

A great number of historians emphasised that Jan Tomasz Gross had not introduced any new facts in "Fear" but had only used sources already known to scholars – mostly publications and the latest results of the study conducted by scholars from The Polish Centre for Holocaust Research. The only aspects considered novel by a few historians were the results of Gross's own desk research concerning the Rzeszow pogrom, which – unlike the Cracow and Kielce pogroms – has not yet been analysed in detail.[747] However, the lack of independent research and the use of only well-known sources were not always considered to be factors undermining the value of Gross's book. According to Feliks Tych, a long-term Director of the Jewish Historical Institute, "Fear" introduced its numerous readers to sources which otherwise would have been difficult for them to access.[748]

Since Jan Tomasz Gross had based his analysis on well-known sources, publications and undeniable facts, almost none of the historians taking part in the debate questioned them. This does not mean that no factual mistakes, faults

745 P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, "Więź" 2008, issue 2-3, p. 75.

746 M. Zaremba, *Sąd nieostateczny*, "Polityka" 2008, issue 3, p. 17.

747 See eg. A. Grabski, *Krew brata twego głośno woła ku mnie z ziemi!*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2006, issue 3, p. 410.

748 F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach"*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2008, issue 1, p. 90.

or inaccuracies were found in his work.[749] While pointing them out was supposed to help preserve "scientific accuracy", it also served another purpose. Jerzy Jedlicki, Marcin Kula and Andrzej Friszke were certainly right when they observed that all too often the search for mistakes and inaccuracies in "Fear" by pedantic historians was aimed at invalidating the contents and the undertone of the book and averting its moral call – all in the name of self-defence[750]. Similarly, eight years beforehand, there were attempts to devalue "Neighbors" with the use of the same techniques in public discourse.

While the facts presented in "Fear" were not questioned, what was criticised were the author's interpretations and language. A number of historians pointed out Gross's tendency to generalise and jump to conclusions, and his predilections for making arbitrary judgements. The language and the tone of the book were often criticised for their accusatory and moralistic character. Gross himself was compared to a prosecutor, judge, moralist or missionary[751] – also by those historians who refused to recognise the academic value of "Fear" for these very reasons. A few, however, considered this language and these strong statements to be a virtue and not a disadvantage of Gross's work. Naming important, reliable, balanced and unemotional works concerning similar issues, they argued that no one would take any interest in them except a narrow circle of experts. They had not ever been a subject of public debate (even though they deserved to be) and thus never got a chance to gain such a significant number of readers as

749 For example, Bożena Szaynok, a historian and a scientific consultant of the Polish edition of "Fear", pointed out the author's mistakes and incorrect interpretations. However, she and Paweł Machniewicz found only one substantial mistake. The diary of Józef Kuraś, a guerrilla leader from Podhale, was forged and Gross should have known that. See A. Klich, *Gross – moralista, a nie historyk*, an interview with B. Szaynok, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 25 I 2008, p. 25; P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, "Więź" 2008, issue 2-3, p. 77.

750 See J. Jedlicki, *Tylko tyle i aż tyle*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2008, issue 4; A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 23-24 II 2008, p. 28; M. Kula, *Obrońcy swoich*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16 II 2008, p. 21.

751 See F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach"*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2008, 1, p. 90; A. Stempin, *Czy należy bać się "Strachu"?,* "Znak" 2008, 6, p. 126, 128; A. Klich, *Gross – moralista, a nie historyk*, an interview with B. Szaynok, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 25 I 2008, s. 25; *Gross – historyk z misją. Debata "Tygodnika Powszechnego" i TVN 24 o książce Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach",* [w:] *Wokół "Strachu". Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 303; A. Bikont, *Ci nie są z ojczyzny mojej*, an interview with D. Libionka, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2-3 II 2008, p. 21.

Gross's books did, in spite of media interest in the subject.[752] Moreover, the author of "Fear" stated in a television debate that he'd used such rhetoric perfectly consciously for he was convinced that the description of dramatic events requires "equally dramatic presentation".[753]

However, the objections formulated by historians towards Gross's book referred not only to what the book contained but also to what it lacked. In other words, using the above-quoted metaphor of Marcin Zaremba, the objections resembled listing unmentioned "episodes" of "The Last Judgement" by Hieronymus Bosch. According to the majority of historians who participated in the debate, a wider social and political context should be taken into consideration in order to explain the causes of postwar violence against Jews. That is why they regarded the reasons Gross presented as neither exclusive nor satisfactory. Among the causes of the postwar violence that had been belittled or ignored, Paweł Machcewicz, Dariusz Stola, Bożena Szaynok and Marcin Zaremba mentioned war trauma, which could influence postwar behaviour. Other causes listed were the disintegration and atomisation of society; the lack of authorities who could help prevent the violence against Jews; common postwar banditry; an increase in violence and the devaluation of human life; common poverty and hunger; the Polish civil war between supporters and opponents of the new government, during which Jews were killed not as Jews but as representatives of the repressive state apparatus; the general destabilisation caused by the postwar moral condition of Polish society and the unexpected change of the political system.

What is more, and something only a few historians taking part in the debate noticed, Jan Tomasz Gross avoided discussing the political anti-Semitism of the National Radical Camp, which increased its power in the 1930s.[754] The pre-war national and Catholic press overflowed with political anti-Semitism. It was not compromised during the war and therefore survived it, and must have influenced Polish attitudes toward Jews in the period discussed by Gross. If this context had been considered and honestly presented by the author, maybe the IPN historian Wojciech Muszyński would not have claimed in an interview for "Rzeczpo-

752 See A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 23-24 II 2008, p. 29; J. Jedlicki, *Tylko tyle i aż tyle*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2008, 4.

753 *Gross – historyk z misją. Debata "Tygodnika Powszechnego" i TVN 24 o książce Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach",* [in:] *Wokół "Strachu". Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 302.

754 See A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 23-24 II 2008, p. 28; P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, "Więź" 2008, 2-3, p. 82-83.

spolita" that the national camp in interwar Poland "wasn't anti-Semitic because it wasn't racist".[755]

What is more, many historians criticised "Fear" for not including the chapter on the time of the Nazi occupation of Poland and the period afterwards, when the country lay within the Soviet orbit: the chapter opened the American version of "Fear" but was omitted in the Polish edition. Gross rationalised this decision by suggesting that this historical period is well known in Poland while it needed to be properly expounded to the Western reader. The lack of this chapter was deprecated by some historians who claimed that it would have been necessary, if only because of the issue of the complex attitude of Poles towards Jews and the Holocaust and Gross's accusation of their indifference.

Regardless of the criticism, the historians cited above never doubted the gravity or significance of the subject raised by Jan Tomasz Gross in his latest book. Moreover, referring to this criticism, Marcin Kula asked rhetorically whether "the image depicted by the author would be different if the mistakes disappeared".[756] Besides, Feliks Tych posed the question whether, considering the analysis presented in the book, Gross was actually supposed to include all the factors that could influence the postwar murders of Jews. Tych answered this question himself saying: "Let us imagine a detective or a journalist who picked up the trail of a terrible crime committed by a group of people. Must the description take into account the fact that the murderers were poor, politically and morally confused and lacked the feeling of stability? This is an important fact but not a necessary condition to write about the very act of murder and its direct motif. And the motif is one that Gross clearly named".[757]

Some of the historians who considered generalisation, failed interpretations and language that is too emotional or strong to be the main drawbacks of "Fear" expressed concern that these weak points would give Gross's critics an opportunity to easily reject and invalidate the contents of the book. They were afraid (sincerely or not) that the subject raised by Gross would be belittled by his own faults. The value of the book was highlighted by Barbara Engelking-Boni, director of the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, who said it concerned "the feeling of harm and how the feeling of harm inflicted does not match the feeling of

755 E. Czaczkowska, *Prymas bał się manipulacji*, an interview with W. Muszyńskim, "Rzeczpospolita" 18 I 2008, p. 16.

756 M. Kula, *Obrońcy swoich*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16 II 2008, p. 21.

757 F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach",* "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2008, 1, p. 93.

harm suffered. Jews have a strong feeling of harm suffered and Poles do not have any feeling of harm inflicted".[758]

What may confirm this are statements by some historians who attempted to disparage the value of "Fear" in different ways and thus avoid confrontation with the past described by Gross. What is more, their statements confirm the concerns expressed by those historians who claimed that Gross's critics would use the weak points of "Fear" to invalidate its key focus and the pedantic search for mistakes would be used to avoid its moral challenge. The scenario once rehearsed during the debate over "Neighbors" was thus reconstructed and the arguments once used by Gross's declared critics were repeated. As a matter of fact, they were repeated by the same historians who, eight years earlier, had played the roles of the defenders of Polish innocence, primarily Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk, Bogdan Musiał and Jerzy Robert Nowak, supported faithfully by the director of Public Education Office of The Institute of National Remembrance, Jan Żaryn and the president of the institute at the time, Janusz Kurtyka. Jan Żaryn claimed in public that "'Fear' should soon be thrown out with the rubbish";[759] Janusz Kurtyka called Jan Tomas Gross "a vampire of historiography" and his book "a libel on Poles".[760]

As the accusations made by the historians against Jan Tomasz Gross and his book weren't new, there is no need to reconstruct them. Let us mention the most important ones: Jan Tomasz Gross is not a historian, but a journalist; his research techniques are pitiful and "for years the most characteristic technique used by Gross has been manipulation";[761] the author uses questionable facts and has not conducted reliable research; "Gross's book does not leave space for sources that do not support his thesis or for a multipage description of concrete events and their historical context".[762] Moreover, "Fear" is regarded as an anti-Polish and anti-Catholic book, which, in Jan Żaryn's opinion, illlustrates a "deep phobia" of the author".[763] The author was even called a "Pole-eater" and a "Catholic-eater" by Jerzy Robert Nowak".[764]

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758 A. Bikont, *Dolary skupuję, koty przechowuję*, an interview with B. Engelking-Boni, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16 II 2008, p. 22.

759 After: K. Wiśniewska, *Między ziemią a niebem*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 21 I 2008, p. 19.

760 After "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19-20 I 2008, s. 17.

761 P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek*, "Rzeczpospolita" 25 I 2008, p. 16.

762 J. Żaryn, *Pogarda dla kontekstu*, "Rzeczpospolita" 19-20 I 2008, p. 28.

763 Ibidem, p. 29.

764 J. R. Nowak, *Strach pana Pospieszalskiego*, "Nasz Dziennik" 17 I 2008, p. 8; See also J. R. Nowak, *Jak Gross szkaluje Polaków*, "Niedziela" 3 II 2008, p. 32-33; J. R. Nowak, *Jak Gross szkaluje Kościół*, "Niedziela" 27 I 2008, p. 14-15.

However, at least two of the arguments aimed at undermining and refuting the contents of "Fear" were something of a novelty in the discourse involving this group of historians. First of all, some of them considered Gross's book to be a product of mass culture dealing with the Holocaust, such as Daniel Goldhagen's book "Hitler's Willing Executioners" or Hollywood movies such as "Schindler's List" – a trivialised, pop culture version of the Holocaust which is unreliably documented and offends scientific methods.[765] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz used thus argument, saying that "Gross stopped being an academic and started to be a representative of popular culture, someone like Doda-Elektroda (a popular and controversial Polish singer and celebrity – author's note)"[766]. According to Chodakiewicz, Gross's desire to be "on top" can be proven by the fact that he employs "a discourse that worships national minorities" in compliance with the newest global trends; and more precisely, a popular Philo-Semitic discourse used in the struggle for power and influence.[767]

Secondly, Gross's methodology was somewhat curiously interpreted as applying a postmodern approach, primarily the deconstruction method. Gross was accused of ignoring the truth, facts and sources and focusing only on his theses that determine the whole narration. Such a research perspective was also considered typical of the left-wing American academic milieux.[768] Its presumed danger was recognised by the historian John Radzilowski, who warned against its application in "Rzeczpospolita", considering it particularly threatening from the perspective of the history of Poland.[769]

The quoted statements of historians may be interpreted as attempts to reject the contents of the newest Jan T. Gross book and to discredit its author. However, the strategies of invalidation, which consisted of depriving the book of its significance or gravity and belittling its contents in order to reject it in public discourse (as a form of self-defence) are more complex and require special at-

765 See P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek*, "Rzeczpospolita" 25 I 2008, p. 16; M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

766 T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, "Czas!" 19 I 2008, p. VII.

767 See T. Sakiewicz, *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz "Gazeta Polska" 16 I 2008, p. 17.

768 See T. Sakiewicz, *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, "Gazeta Polska" 16 I 2008, p. 17; M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Skąd się wziął Strach*, "Niezależna Gazeta Polska" 6 VIII 2006, p. 34-35; T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, "Czas!" 19 I 2008, p. VII; J. Radzilowski, *"Strach" i rewizja polskiej historii*, "Rzeczpospolita" 1 III 2008, p. 28.

769 J. Radzilowski, "*Strach" i rewizja polskiej historii*, "Rzeczpospolita" 1 III 2008, p. 28.

tention. They will be discussed in two contexts: invalidation of "Fear" by lay and church authorities and invalidation on the grounds of narrative, clichés and rhetorical figures present in public discourse.

2. Invalidating strategies

The best example case of the attempt to invalidate and disparage "Fear" by a public institution was the publication of the so-called "anti-Gross Wunderwaffe" by The Institute of National Remembrance: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's book entitled "After Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Relations 1944-1947".[770] This publication, provided with a public office's seal, was released together with Gross's book, which cannot have been accidental. It was recommended as a reliable alternative and counterweight to the unreliable "Fear", and a well documented and nuanced study. The foreword, written by the Polish historian Wojciech Roszkowski, as well as the cover note, praised the merits of the book.[771] Yet, the most apologetic advertisement of Chodakiewicz's book and a defence against its critics was conducted by the historians from The Institute of National Remembrance. The president Janusz Kurtyka praised it in an interview for "Super Expres", saying that "the substance of the book is very good", that it was written by a "competent historian" in compliance with "the proper methodology for this field".[772] Piotr Gontarczyk described "After Holocaust" as a "pioneer work", an "academic study conveying great factual knowledge" and a complete contrast to Jan Tomasz Gross's "Fear", which consisted "mostly of a lack of knowledge and obvious manipulation".[773] The merits of Chodkiewicz's book were also noted by Jan Żaryn, who constructed his opinion during the opposition to "Fear" and the criticism of its author.[774] It is worth mentioning that "After Holocaust"

770 See M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008.

771 Praising his own book and listing the names of those who also praised it, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz confirmed its value with the authority of the author of the preface: "and the preface has been written by professor Wojciech Roszkowski, one of the best historians studying contemporary Poland and one of the few not prostituted during communist times. Would such a recognised scholar advertise my book if it was rubbish, as 'Tygodnik Powszechny' has called it? M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

772 After B. Szaynok, D. Libionka, *Głupia sprawa*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 3 II 2008, issue 5, p. 23.

773 See P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek*, "Rzeczpospolita" 25 I 2008, p. 16.

774 See J. Żaryn, *Pogarda dla kontekstu*, "Rzeczpospolita" 19-20 I 2008, p. 28.

was officially promoted in the centres of The Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Cracow, Kielce, Gdansk and Wroclaw. Moreover, the author himself became popular as Gross's adversary much earlier, when he disparaged the value of "Neighbors". As a matter of fact, between the publications of "Neighbors" and "Fear", Marek Chodkiewicz was silent.

All this "promotion" proved to be outstandingly successful. In bookstore windows, "After Holocaust" and "Fear" were located next to each other as though they were two volumes of the same book. The Internet auction service "Allegro" even offered them as one package. Nevertheless, they had functioned from the very beginning not as two complementary historical works but as specific versions of the truth/false game with the Institute of National Remembrance as an arbiter, symbolic elites as players and remembrance of the past as a stake. Understanding of the rules could be seen in the titles of the articles that encouraged the public to read "After Holocaust": "Hard Facts vs. Conjuration of Reality",[775] "Truth Like a Bitter Medicine",[776] "Read Chodakiewicz!".[777]

The book by Marek J. Chodakiewicz had first been released in the USA in 2003, entitled: "After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II".[778] Its Polish edition was not updated in any way and the only modification was the title, with "Polish-Jewish conflict" replaced by "Polish-Jewish relations". "After Holocaust", described in the "Foreword" by Wojciech Roszkowski as based on "a dissertation recently defended at Columbia University in New York",[779] obviously intended to raise its academic status, had not been based on any doctoral thesis. The author's PhD thesis concerned the history of Janów Lubelski district, which can be easily checked in the list of dissertations available at the Columbia website.

While "After Holocaust" was often presented as an answer to Gross's "Fear", Chodakiewicz frequently highlighted that it was the other way round: Gross's book was the answer to his book and his thesis. What was interesting, he stressed in public statements, was that Jan Tomasz Gross and himself had long been involved in a "book fight" and that a few years earlier, his answer to "Neighbors" had been released. This book, by the way, was reviewed by the journal "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały" ["The Holocaust. Studies and Ma-

775 G. Eberhardt, *Konkret kontra zaklinanie*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 25 I 2008, p. 30.

776 B. Urbanowski, *Prawda jak gorzkie lekarstwo*, "Gazeta Polska" 23 I 2008, p. 20-21.

777 K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewicza!"*, "Niedziela" 17 II 2008, p. 29.

778 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, Boulder, Columbia 2003.

779 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 7.

terials"] in the "Curiosa" section.[780] Although Gross announced he had never read Chodakiewicz's book, he stubbornly claimed that "Fear" was an answer to "After Holocaust". What is more, he also claimed that his book should be recognised as the "first monograph on the subject" and that before it "only one pioneer paper by David Engel had come out" and "presented similar conclusions".[781]

What are those conclusions then? I do not intend to provide a detailed review of the book, particularly since many competent and comprehensive ones have already been written.[782] However, this simple question helps answer another, more important one: why did a public institution such as The Institute of National Remembrance decide to provide "After Holocaust" with its official stamp? Chodakiewicz, in the very first words of introduction to his book, included its key conclusions. Explaining the roots of postwar violence against Jews, the author concluded that it was a response to, first of all, "Jewish communists who fought to establish a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist regime"; secondly, "Jewish avengers who endeavoured to extract justice from Poles who allegedly harmed Jews during the War"; and thirdly, "Jews who attempted to reclaim property confiscated by the Nazis".[783] The whole subsequent narration of the book is subservient to the attempt to prove these assumptions. In other words: what happened to Jews in Poland after the war was what they deserved. As David Engel rightly noted in his review, "One can hear the chorus of Cell Block Tango from the musical 'Chicago' – They had it coming! – re-echoing while reading this book".[784]

What is more, on the basis of his controversial calculations, Chodakiewicz concluded that between 1944-1947 "(…) for self-defence or revenge, persons of

780 This book was published in the USA in 2005. See M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Massacre in Jedwabne*, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After, East European Monographs, Boulder, CO, 2005; its insightful review was written by Joanna B. Michlic. See J. B. Michlic, *Odwrócenie historycznej prawdy o Jedwabnem*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały" 2007, issue 3, p. 493-505.

781 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

782 See B. Szaynok, D. Libionka, *Głupia sprawa*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 3 II 2008, issue 5, p. 22-23; P. Machcewicz, *Gabinet historycznych osobliwości*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 18 I 2008, p. 24; A. Żbikowski, *Anty-Gross*, "Polityka" 26 IV 2008, p. 76; D. Engel (ed.), Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2005, issue 1, p. 328.

783 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 11.

784 D. Engel (rec.), Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2005, nr 1, p. 326.

Jewish origin acting on their own or in collaboration with Stalinists, snitched on, assaulted and robbed at least 7,000 Poles, killing some of them".[785] This announcement was preceded in bold type with a reference to results coming from another study: "In sum, probably a minimum of 400 and a maximum of 700 Jews and persons of Jewish origin were killed in Poland between July 1944 and January 1947".[786] Considering that a number of them were killed because of their communist affiliation and some in robberies (although anti-Semitic motivations are also taken into account), the ratio of Poles killed by Jews to Jews killed by Poles seems self-explanatory. The argument has been well summarised in the title from the first page of "Rzeczpospolita": "The Dispute over Gross's Book. Poles-Jews: Who Was Afraid of Whom".[787]

"After Holocaust" is no real alternative to Gross's findings, but plays an important role: bringing the status of a victim back to Poles. It erases questions raised by "Fear" and removes the difficult truth about Poland's guilty past from sight. The ready answers to the roots of postwar violence against Jews given by Chodakiewicz do not aggravate in the least, and instead put the reader at ease. Hence the publication of "After Holocaust" may be interpreted as an attempt by the Institute of National Remembrance to hide "Fear" and undermine or devaluate the findings of its author. In any case, the publication should be seen as a counter-offensive, prepared beforehand: a validation of a safe and comfortable version of the past and not as a manifestation of concern for "the society" which "should be given an opportunity to confront Gross's findings with an alternative lecture on the same subject".[788] Such a concern should be manifested in a direct dialogue with Gross and not in a book that leaves a lot to be desired, one that completely ignores the postwar pogroms and whose author uncritically quotes such "exotic" researchers as Henryk Pająk, Jerzy Robert Nowak, Czesław Bartnik or Tadeusz Bednarczyk. Thus, not only has the Institute of National Remembrance legitimised the authority of Marek Chodakiewicz but indirectly also these authors, whose writings are often openly anti-Semitic.

What is more, the invalidation of "Fear" by secular authority was implemented literally and legally in spring 2007 in the form of a penalty law paragraph (132a) introduced on the initiative of the League of Polish Family party (supported in the parliament by the Self Defence and Law and Justice parties):

785 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 206.

786 Ibidem, p. 205.

787 See "Rzeczpospolita" 11 I 2008, p. 1.

788 That is how Jan Żaryn explained the decision of the Institute of National Remembrance in answering the bruising critique by Bożena Szayok and Dariusz Libionka. See J. Żaryn, *W sprawie głupiej sprawy*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 10 II 2008, p. 27.

"Anyone who publicly defames the Polish nation for having participated in organising or being responsible for communist or Nazi crimes shall be punished with imprisonment for up to three years". The initiators of this proposal emphasised that its purpose was to protect the good name of Poland and Poles from unfair wording appearing in the foreign media such as: "Polish concentration camps".

However, it should be noted that while the necessity of the proposal was being discussed and the legal works were in progress, the American version of "Fear" had already premiered and first voices against it could be heard in Poland. It was this book that some initiators of this proposal openly referred to when suggesting Gross could be put into prison after the introduction of the new law. Also, Gross as a "revisionist" featured in the parliamentary speech of Mateusz Piskorski, representing the Self Defence Party.[789] In this way, interestingly, Jan Tomasz Gross has been 'honoured' with a law paragraph created especially for him. However, before the new rule could be used against him, it had been reported to the Constitutional Court for Judicial Review by the Civic Ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski for the abuse of the freedom of speech and scientific research. It had not been reviewed by the court before the Polish release of "Fear".

It had been known since 2006 that the prosecution would be interested in Gross's "Fear". At this point, the Public Prosecutor General Deputy, Jerzy Engelking, promised a group of right-wing senators demanding he prosecute Gross for insulting Polish nation that he would "study the case" and "contingent indictment".[790] In January 2008, a few days before the release of "Fear" in Poland, the secretary of the Public Prosecutor General, Ewa Piotrowska, said that "beyond doubt, the Prosecutor will read the new Gross's book". And he did.[791] The moment "Fear" came to Polish bookstores, the Cracow District Public Prosecutor Office commenced actions to investigate whether the author had imputed

789 Here is the part of the parliamentary speech by Mateusz Piskorski, in which he justifies the necessity of introducing a new article to the penalty code: "Why is it so important? It is important, for example, in respect of the words of some history revisionists, such as Jan Tomasz Gross, who is just now publishing another book that vilifies the Polish nation. This book, according to the editor, is going to be published in Poland next year and maybe the editor should think twice before the release, considering our new regulations (applause)" Polish parliamentary report from 20 July 2006, 22nd parliamentary session, Warsaw 2006, p. 300.

790 Cyt. za (PAP), *Prokurator przeczyta książkę "Strach"*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 8 I 2008, p. 3.

791 Cyt. za J. Stróżyk, *Prokurator przeczyta nową książkę Grossa*, "Rzeczpospolita" 8 I 2008, p. 6.

any participation in Nazi crimes to the Polish nation. These public proceedings were based on the press articles about Gross's book and notifications made by private persons, e.g. the populist politician Andrzej Lepper and the editor Leszek Bubel, known for his anti-Semitic publications. In this way, the reading of "Fear" was handled by prosecutors.

The decision by the Cracow District Public Prosecutor's Office to commence preparatory proceedings concerning the contents of "Fear" provoked another dispute over the unwise law – which not only restricted freedom of speech but also significantly limited and penalised academic research, for example on *szmalcownictwo* [the blackmailing of Jews who were hiding during the war], the Blue Police [collaborationist police in the German occupied area], etc. Most of the debaters criticised the regulation, stressed its nonsensical character and disapproved of the fact that Gross's book was handled by the prosecution. A few open letters in defence of Gross were published in the Polish press. Their signatories were Polish and foreign intellectuals, researchers, etc. who demanded the removal of the regrettable legal article from the penal code. Even Gross's adversaries, including Marek Chodakiewicz, protested against the legal paragraph, thus supporting Gross (however, Chodakiewicz could not resist belittling his book by calling it "journalism"[792]).

Finally, having read "Fear", Cracow investigators discontinued the proceedings against Gross, finding no grounds to charge him with libel against the Polish nation on the basis of Article 132a of the penal code. They also concluded that the contents of "Fear" allowed them neither to charge Gross with libel against the Polish nation (Article 133) nor with inciting hatred based on national, ethnic, racial, or religious differences (Article 256) which, it turned out, had also been analysed by the prosecution. What's most important here, however, is that for almost a month there was a real possibility that Gross would become the defendant and Poland would be ridiculed worldwide. Indeed, Jan Tomasz Gross was close to becoming a Polish Orhan Pamuk.[793]

In a country where anti-Semitic and hate-speech magazines, periodicals and books are widely available and the Prosecutor's Office often refuses to open an investigation against their editors or authors, the investigation was launched into

792 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Nie cenzurować!*, "Rzeczpospolita" 21 I 2008, p. 14; see also T. P. Terlikowski, *Prokuratura nie powinna zajmować się "Strachem"*, "Rzeczpospolita" 12 I 2008, p. 2.

793 The recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature was charged with insulting Turkey's national character as he dared to honestly write about the Armenian genocide, identifying those who were responsible for it.

the case of a historical essay written by a respectable author.[794] In addition, the accusations cast a shadow over Jan Tomasz Gross and cast doubt upon the credibility of his book.

In a sense, the decision of the Prosecutor's Office interrupted the discussion by radically redirecting it. Additionally, in common knowledge, the difference between commencing preparatory proceedings and a decision to launch an investigation may have been unclear. What was important for the public was the fact that "Fear" was dealt with by the Public Prosecutor's Office. Fortunately, however, the debate over Gross's historical interpretations did not reach the courtroom and the penalty law paragraph reported to the Constitutional Court by Civic Ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski was declared unconstitutional in 2009.

The invalidation of "Fear" was practised not only by lay institutions such as the Institute of National Remembrance and the Public Prosecutor's Office. Some statements made by Catholic Church officials are symptomatic of such practice; for example statements by Archbishop Kazimierz Nycz, Józef Życiński, Józef Michalik, and particularly the open letter by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, Stanisław Dziwisz, to Henryk Woźniakowski, the president of Znak Publishers, which published "Fear". Cardinal Dziwisz who, due to his close and long-term friendship with Pope John Paul II ("The Polish Pope"), has a special position in Poland (being even sort of a cult figure) wrote in this letter that the reading of "Fear" filled his heart with "great pain" but also that "the press warnings against the claims of this book proved to be right". When explaining the reasons why he'd written the letter, the Cardinal stated he "could not remain indifferent about the creation of an atmosphere of national tensions in our homeland based on some biased historical data". He quoted the comments of "the famous analyst and historian" from the Institute of National Remembrance, Jan Żaryn, about Gross not having included the context of the postwar political reality in Poland. However, his key message and reflections are enclosed in the last paragraph of the letter: "The intentions of the book's author should be more carefully looked at and the decision to publish or not should also be made with extra care in the interest of greater responsibility of our common good, namely Poland. Your task is to spread the truth about history and not to awaken the demons of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism. Your publishing company could pay more attention to the selection of books presented to the Polish reader, especial-

794 The cases when the prosecution discontinued proceedings against the authors of anti-Semitic publications as well as comprehensive explanations of these decisions have been diligently documented by "Open Republic: The Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia"; See: *Przestępstwa nie stwierdzono. Prokuratorzy wobec doniesień o publikacjach antysemickich*, Stowarzyszenie "Otwarta Rzeczpospolita" i Wydawnictwo Nisza, Warszawa 2006.

ly considering the ethical heritage left by the founders. The Christian roots, in which your editorial past was established, oblige you to do so."[795]

These quotations from Cardinal Dziwisz's letter give us a glimpse into some of his opinions and assumptions. The Cardinal's words clearly indicate that Gross's book does not tell the truth about history, reports historical facts in a selective way and should not be published by a Catholic publisher in the interest of Poland's good. Most importantly, however, its contents carry threats: it brings national tensions and awakens the demons "of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism". No wonder Cardinal Dziwisz's doubts were raised by Jan Tomasz Gross's intentions.

The letter addressed to Henryk Woźniakowski is thus both an admonition, addressed to a Catholic publisher, on its duties, roots and mission and also a review of "Fear" written by the Cracow Metropolitan Archbishop. In this review, Cardinal Dziwisz strongly opted for Jan Żaryn's version of the memory of the past and expressed support for "the press warnings against the claims of this book".

The letter may be also interpreted as an attempt to shut down the public debate over "Fear", or prevent it from happening. Admittedly, the Polish journalist Tomasz Terlikowski, who identified with the Cardinal's voice, announced in "Rzeczpospolita" that the letter "was not aimed at closing the debate but reminding us what a real dialogue should consist of",[796] but such a diagnosis seems to be erroneous and untimely. One possible meaning and aim of the letter (to some extent also a result) was uncovered a month after its publication by another Polish journalist, Rafał Ziemkiewicz. Referring to the earlier book by Gross, he stated: "This time the pamphlet was received calmly, knowing its real value – most Poles shared the view of Cardinal Dziwisz rather than the one held by 'Gazeta Wyborcza'" journalists, and they forgot about the whole case. For a long time, it's been only the latter who has regularly devoted a few columns to the 'debate' over the book".[797] Therefore, even if cutting off the debate over "Fear" was not the principal aim of the Cracow Metropolitan Archbishop, the contents of his letter fully led one to conclude that there was nothing to discuss, or even that such a discussion was inadvisable as it could wake up demons. Through his letter, Cardinal Dziwisz joined the group of those undermining Gross's book and he rejected the challenge it had posed. Most importantly, he gave this group significant support with the power of his authority. However,

795 *List Otwarty kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza*, [in:] *Wokół Strachu*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 74-75.

796 T. P. Terlikowski, *Odwaga kardynała Dziwisza*, "Rzeczpospolita" 18 I 2008, p. 2.

797 R. A. Ziemkiewicz, *Jesteśmy skazani na bezsilność*, "Rzeczpospolita" 20 II 2008, p. 15.

not everyone enthusiastically welcomed Cardinal Dziwisz's letter, or quoted it to confirm and mostly strengthen their own views.[798] A low-key, humble answer, dismissing the accusations against "Znak" Publishers, was submitted as an open letter by Henryk Woźniakowski.[799]

Other disputers also expressed remarks critical of the Metropolitan Archbishop's letter. One of those surprised by Dziwisz's letter was Jan Tomasz Gross, who expressed his desire to meet the cardinal and discuss all the controversies around his book in person. Such a meeting never came to pass, however.

As for the Archbishop's letter, it had another aspect worth mentioning. In writing about awakening the "demons of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism", not only did he equate two irrelevant and disproportionate phenomena, but apparently also suggested that the problem of anti-Semitism would not even exist if it were not evoked. Or perhaps the other way round: the problem may exist but should not be not raised but cured with silence.[800] Anyway, the Metropolitan Archbishop could have personally realised how serious the problem of anti-Semitism was by listening to Jerzy Robert Nowak, the ideologue of "Radio Maryja" [a Catholic Polish radio station] and "the tribune of anti-Semitic Poland".[801] It was on 9 February 2008 that his peculiar tour around Poland, containing hateful, anti-Semitic lectures against "Gross's new lies", started in Cracow.[802] Thousands of listeners attended his lectures, which often took place in churches, parish centres or divinity schools. The inaugural meeting in Cracow was held in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where the participants could hear from Prof. Bogusław Wolniewicz that "Jews are attacking us" and

798 Naturally, some commentators criticism the publisher of "Strach" went much further than Cardinal Dziwisz, whom they fully supported.

799 See *Odpowiedź Henryka Woźniakowskiego na List Otwarty kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza*, [w:] *Wokół Strachu*, M. Gądek (red.), Kraków 2008, s. 76-78.

800 Another member of the Polish episcopate, Archbishop Józef Michalik, wrote in his letter for Lent about "Fear" as including unfair accusations against Poland and Poles of "their alleged anti-Semitism" and about his suspicions that Gross meant to "intentionally awake anti-Semitism, against which we should defend ourselves". The letter was read out on the first Sunday of Lent in the parishes of Przemyśl Archidiocese. Citation after E. Czaczkowska, *Abp Michalik o szatanie i in vitro*, "Rzeczpospolita" 3 III 2008, p. 6.

801 It was Marta Cobel-Tokarska who called Jerzy Robert Nowak "the tribune of anti-Semitic Poland". This term was used in her article devoted to Nowak's lecture tour of Poland – a crusade against Gross's books. See M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bo "Żydzi nas atakują"... Tournee Jerzego Roberta Nowaka z wykładami potępiającymi "antykatolicką i antypolską książkę" Grossa*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2008, issue 4, p. 631-635.

802 See J. R. Nowak, *Nowe kłamstwa Grossa*, Warszawa 2006.

"we must defend ourselves".[803] What they heard from Jerzy Robert Nowak is easy to guess – his articles in "Nasz Dziennik" and "Niedziela" newspapers are clear enough, as are newspaper reports of meetings with him.[804] For instance, in an interview for "Nasz Dziennik" (17/18 May 2008), he boasted of his speeches given in 37 towns and cities; each meeting gathered between 100 and 2,000 people, who gave him a standing ovation that was reported even by "Gazeta Wyborcza".[805]

The Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, Stanisław Dziwisz, however, never decided to refer to what Jerzy Robert Nowak was propagating in such a formal and loud way as he did in his open letter to Henryk Woźniakowski. Nor did he ever answer the letter addressed to him by Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), who was concerned by the anti-Semitic character of Nowak's appearance in Cracow. Considering Dziwisz's concern over "waking the demons of anti-Semitism" and the fact that the "tour" started in the capital of Dziwisz's Metropolis, his silence remains intriguing. In any case, it casts doubt on the honesty of the Archbishop's intentions and confirms that there were other motivations behind his reproachful letter.

Silence as an answer to Nowak's lectures throughout Poland was also chosen by the Senate of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, which had earlier expressed indignation over Gross's statement about the anti-Semitism of the cardinals Adam Sapieha and Stefan Wyszyński. Besides, only a few priests and Church officials strongly and publicly criticised Nowak's speeches, their content, location and the applauding audiences.[806] That criticism came from the Warsaw management of Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej (KIK; Polish: Club of Catholic Intellectuals),[807] the Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia "Open Republic:", Zbigniew Nosowski in the name of the

803 Cit. after P. Piotrowski, M. Niemczyńska, *Żydzi nas atakują! Trzeba się bronić*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11 II 2008, p. 1, 5.

804 During his lectures, Jerzy Robert Nowak attacked not only Jan Tomasz Gross, but also other "enemies of Poland and what is Polish", by which he meant some members of Polish elites and whom he listed.

805 P. Tunia, *Dokonuje się przełom świadomości*, an interview with J. R. Nowak, "Nasz Dziennik" 17-18 V 2008.

806 See M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bo "Żydzi nas atakują"... Tournee Jerzego Roberta Nowaka z wykładami potępiającymi "antykatolicką i antypolską książkę" Grossa*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2008, issue 4, p. 634 635.

807 It is worth noticing that the appeal of the KIK management sparked an internal conflict, which resulted in a letter from members criticising the management for speaking in the name of the whole association. See C. Gmyz, *List w obronie pluralizmu w KIK*, "Rzeczpospolita" 19 IV 2008, p. 5.

Polish Council of Christians and Jews, and numerous journalists. However, even their polyphonic voice was not as audible as that one letter by Cardinal Dziwisz.

Although Jerzy Robert Nowak's lectures unequivocally contributed to the process of devaluing "Fear", it is worth analysing different strategies used by many journalists with the same purpose. Therefore, let us have a closer look at the character of the plots and of the rhetoric of the figures trying to disparage "Fear".

As with the case of "Neighbors", critics attempted to have the book dismissed as invalid by belittling its author. However, analysis of press content indicates that the repertoire did not change and practically nothing new was said. It was repeated that Gross is not a historian and has not acquired history methodology, which naturally discredits both him as a scholar and his book. Some journalists, like certain historians, stressed that Gross was not motivated by a desire to research, understand and describe the past, but by a mission. Thus, he was called a moralist, a prophet, a missionary, but also a prosecutor and a judge. Some questioned Gross's honesty and frankness, claiming that his main motivation was a desire to earn money with "Fear". Similarly, Gross was identified as a "tool of Holocaust Enterprise" attempting to finagle Poland out of former Jewish properties and compensations. Attempts to discredit Gross were again made by Antoni Zambrowski who wrote: "Janek Gross – ranked among the leaders of the Polish March 1968 protests – was one of the very few who were broken during interrogation and who "gave away his colleagues" while most "refused to testify".[808] It's worth mentioning that Zambrowski wrote these words a month before the fortieth anniversary of March 1968.

In their attempts to undermine Gross's position as a scholar, some (such as the journalist Marek Chodakiewicz) even compared him to the pop star Doda or called him the "Britney Spears of historiography".[809] Such comparisons were rather incidental, however. Much more often, radical views were ascribed to Gross and he was compared to the Holocaust denier David Irving or Leszek Bubel, a Polish politician and journalist seething with anti-Semitism. This was clearly an attempt to give Gross the status of a fanatic and radical who did not deserve to be treated seriously. The author was also depicted as a stranger who, by definition, is suspicious and hostile. Moreover, the image of a stranger was strengthened by stressing the Jewish roots of the author and the fact that since 1968, when he left Poland, he has been living in the USA. What seems interesting here is that Marek Chodakiewicz, also living permanently in the USA, has

808 A. Zambrowski, *Wojna niechwalebna*, "Gazeta Polska" 6 II 2008, p. 19.

809 See T. Sommer, *Gross i idioci*, "Czas!" 9 II 2008, p. III; T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, "Czas!" 19 I 2008, p. VII.

never been considered a stranger.[810] Gross, however, is easily thought of as an American Jew to whom anti-Polish intentions can be attributed on the basis of common knowledge and stereotypes. One such attempt to strengthen the image of Gross as a Jewish stranger was, for instance, publishing the picture of the author wearing a Jewish Kippah the first page of "Super Express" newspaper, or numerous caricatures showing a striking aesthetic resemblance to those in the anti-Semitic magazine "Der Sturmer" that were published in "Super Express" and "Nasz Dziennik". Jewish Gross lost his credibility as an author since he must be biased, speaking in the name of his nation and taking on the victims' perspective.

All these strategies and procedures had already been worked out 8 years earlier, in the debate over the Jedwabne Pogrom. What was new about the "Fear" debate, however, were quasi-psychoanalytical interpretations of the language and contents of the book (and other books by Gross about Polish-Jewish relations) based on the author's personal experience and biography. The best illustration of this is the article by Piotr Zychowicz, published by "Rzeczpospolita" and entitled "Face to Face with the Mob", consisting mostly of ostensibly nuanced statements by people declaring their acquaintance with Jan Tomasz Gross.[811] What can we learn from it? A few interconnected answers to the question as to why Jan Tomasz Gross had decided to discuss Polish-Jewish relations and how he had approached the subject. According to the first version, during his stay in the USA Gross's painful experience was that his earlier books devoted to Soviet atrocities against Poles had not been appreciated, which made him realise that "nothing profits as much as writing anti-Polish books from a Jewish perspective". Thus, he changed the field of his research interest, which helped him earn money and resulted in a professorship in Princeton. The idea of Gross writing books for profit was quite often discussed by others. Therefore, it would be more interesting to have a look at other motivations attributed to Gross by Zychowicz's article.

A more complicated one, headlined in the article, digs deeper into the meanders of Gross's biography and announces him as a journalist, who "pays a debt incurred 40 years ago from Adam Michnik" with his books on Polish-Jewish relations. What type of debt? Zychowicz begins his article with a de-

810 Krystian Brodacki wrote in "Niedziela" magazine: "In 2005, Prof. Chodakiewicz was appointed to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President George W. Bush (…). This seems to be sufficient recognition of the knowledge and honesty of our compatriot from Washington". K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewcza!*, "Niedziela" 17 II 2008, p. 29.

811 All the above quotations come from this article. See P. Zychowicz, *Oko w oko z tłuszczą*, "Rzeczpospolita" 26 I 2008, p. 18.

scription of a clash between Gross and Michnik at a birthday party of the latter (chief editor of "Gazeta Wyborcza") in 1967. Zychowicz suggests that the argument cast a shadow on their acquaintance and was not resolved before Gross's migration to the USA after March 1968. According to an anonymous "former oppositionist" quoted by Zychowicz, the two finally agreed "when Gross began to write about Polish-Jewish relations". Jadwiga Staniszkis (a sociology professor and a famous political commentator) notices that his books on this subject, "result largely from a guilty conscience about Michnik", whom Gross left behind, together with others "in the horrifying, grey, communist Poland" while he himself could get an education and develop in the USA. Staniszkis also explains how this debt was paid by the books on Polish-Jewish relations. She claims that Gross, informed of what was happening in Poland after 1989 by "Gazeta Wyborcza", "received a deformed, exaggerated image of Polish reality", where "the powers of progress, represented by his friends, struggled with the traditional Polish demons of anti-Semitism and nationalism. He believed that any criticism towards Michnik in Poland was caused by his Jewish origin. And since Gross felt guilty about leaving Michnik in 1968, he decided to join the war against 'dark instincts sleeping in the Polish nation', writing 'Neighbors' and 'Fear'".[812]

In other words, the guilty conscience and remorse Gross felt for Adam Michnik as well as his incorrect perception of Polish reality inspired his work on "Neighbors". Thus, a book written in the name of atonement led to one of the most important and certainly the one of the longest public debates in Poland after 1989. However, there is one more part of Gross's biography, without which the author's interest in Polish-Jewish relations and the reason for the emotional nature of his narration would be unclear: it is his personal experience of anti-Semitism in March 1968. According to Piotr Zychowicz, the anti-Semitic campaign launched by the communists, and particularly the confrontation between Gross, who was under arrest, and Security Service officers who liked using anti-Semitic rhetoric, "must have been a great shock for a 21 year-old student from a good family". Therefore, he openly asks whether this experience "happens to echo in his books" – a suspicion which Józef Dajczgewand confirms.[813]

812 According to Jadwiga Staniszkis, Gross's biographical experiences or precisely his family experiences could explain some contents of his books: "Janek's mom saved his dad's life [Gross's father was of Jewish origin –A/N]. That is why he has built up such high expectations for Poles. "If it was possible in my family, it means it could have been possible in millions of others. For some reason it did not happen". Ibidem.

813 Józef Dajczgewand: "Those people [Security Service officers – A/N] were skilled professionals. They broke this young boy in a brutal way. The whole prison experience must have been a great trauma for him. And his books must be an answer to what hap-

There were also others who believed that March 1968 determined the contents of "Fear" – for example, Ryszard Bugaj and Reverend Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, who interpreted Gross's book as an "author's individual revenge for having been expelled from Poland in 1968".[814] It is not hard to guess that what inspired such an interpretation was the forthcoming 40th anniversary of the events of March 1968, in which Gross had been an active participant and a victim. However, what is much more important is that accepting such an interpretation is a classic example of SEP [Someone Else's Problem phenomenon, i.e. a practice of ignoring an issue that we regard as another person's problem and not ours]. In this case, the problem was Jan Tomasz Gross, his post-March trauma and his feelings of guilt about Adam Michnik, which he tried to overcome by writing his books, vibrating with emotions, about the difficult Polish-Jewish past.

Moreover, the fact that in these books Gross censures Poles in harsh and bitter words for their attitude towards Jews during and after the Holocaust is a understandable result of the identification with Jewish victims that Gross developed after his trauma in March. Indeed, one could not imagine a better (and a more patronising) way to undermine "Fear" than to acknowledge that it is the author and not us who has a personal problem, although we understand his experience and the resulting pain.

The devaluation of "Fear" also included the suggestion that its contents resulted from hatred or other negative feelings of the author towards Poles and Poland.[815] However, it focussed mostly on depreciating and criticising the very text and pointing at what was missing but should have definitely been included. Moreover, the most persistent critics of the book repeated almost all the accusations and invectives that had been once said about "Neighbors" – though not with the same intensity.

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pened then in the jail building. It can be noticed in his writing style. His language is the language of emotions. Gross is a party of the argument, somehow a participant of the events he describes. March 1968 was like a continuation of the War for him, in a way. In such a situation there's no room for neutrality". Ibidem.

814 T. Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Fałszerze historii*, "Gazeta Polska" 16 I 2008, p. 32; See also R. Bugaj, *Gross sadza Polskę na ławce hańby*, "Rzeczpospolita" 22 I 2008, p.16; A. Stempin, *Czy należy bać się "Strachu"?*, "Znak" 2008, issue 6, p. 128-129.

815 "Fear" as proving "far-reaching disdain and hatred" of the author was described by Paweł Lisiecki, the chief editor of "Rzeczpospolita". He suggested that the way of depicting Poles in "Fear" was similar to the Nazi propaganda that had classified them as "Untermensch". P. Lisicki, *Żydzi, Polacy i przeszłość*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 I 2008, p. 2; Gross's hatred towards Poland and the Poles as a motivation to write "Fear" was also a theory promoted by "Nasz Dziennik" and "Myśl Polska" newspapers.

Thus, the new book by Gross was refused the status of an academic publication; it was demonstrated to include methodological and factual mistakes and selective and incomplete source texts. The academic value of the book was thought to be weakened by generalisations and a language that was too emotional and uncovered the non-academic commitment of the author. Another depreciating factor was the fact that Gross had not written anything new or unknown. He created a book which, to quote Piotr Siemko, was an emanation of America's obligatory way of writing about the Holocaust, which meant making it the central event of the Second World War and changing "formerly obvious proportions of guilt"[816].

Similar to certain historians, other disputers also listed contexts ignored by Gross but which supposedly refuted his arguments. The "silenced circumstances", believed to be the most important context, was not acknowledging the risk related to helping Jews during the war and the immensity of suffering experienced by Poles and caused by the occupiers. Another popular critique directed at Gross concerned his focus on the suffering of Jews while ignoring Polish martyrdom – which was thought to prove his partiality. Also, by ignoring Polish citizens recognised as Righteous among the Nations, "Fear" was considered as unjust and erroneous. Although Gross tried to explain that it had been the drama of the Righteous who were forced to remain anonymous after the war that inspired him to write "Fear", his arguments were for nothing. Besides, as Gross noticed, referring to the book of Władysław Bartoszewski or Zofia Lewinówna[817], that no one accused the authors of ignoring the case of *szmlacowniks* or blackmailers in their book about Jews rescued by Poles.[818]

Gross was also criticised for not including in the Polish edition of the book the first chapter of the American edition, "Poland abandoned", depicting the situation in Poland during and after the war. Some claimed that the Polish edition of "Fear" was a censored version of the American, which was overflowing with much more radical statements, judgements and conclusions, thus being even more anti-Polish than the already anti-Polish, domestic, "light" version. "Anti-Polish" and "anti-Catholic" were terms used not only by the far-right and conservative "Nasz Dziennik", "Gazeta Polskiej" or "Myśl Polska", but also by moderately conservative "Tygodnik Solidarność" and "Rzeczpospolita". It was anti-Polish because it did not speak of Polish victims, but of perpetrators and an

816 P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, "Rzeczpospolita" 16 I 2008, p. 14.

817 Bartoszewski and Lewinówna were editors of a study, first published in 1966, devoted to the help given to Jews by Poles during the Second World War. See W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*, Warszawa 2007.

818 See J. T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie,* Kraków 2008, p. 11.

indifferent majority; anti-Catholic because it formulated serious accusations against Polish Church officials including its icons: cardinals Adam Sapieha and Stefan Wyszyński. "An anti-Polish lampoon" was a term used by the leader of the "Law and Justice" party, Jarosław Kaczyński.[819] Expressions such as "pasquil" or "lampoon" helped many other disputers to label and characterise the book. These deprecating terms alone did not allow a serious debate over what they referred to. Similarly, it would be difficult to have such a discussion on a "propaganda indictment instead of history"[820] or a "weak, little ideological composition" similar to "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"[821] – because "Fear" was defined this way as well.

Therefore, in the name of a serious conversation about the issues raised by Gross in "Fear", the right-wing "Niedziela", "Nasz Dziennik", "Rzeczpospolita", "Czas!", "Gazeta Polska", "Tygodnik Solidarność", "Myśl Polska" and other magazines recommended Marek Chodkiewicz's book "After Holocaust". It was presented as an honestly documented, balanced and objective scientific work by a recognised historian – "an antidote to Gross's 'work'".[822] Parts of the book and, most importantly, interviews with its author were published. Everything was done in order to devalue the contents of "Fear" and cover it with a book stamped by the Institute of National Remembrance. For the same purpose, some newspapers published texts that could be roughly described as "histories from the other side" or "contra-histories". While on one page there was a text referring to "Fear" and strongly critical of it, on the next one there was an article or a testimony aimed at undermining Gross's arguments. "Histories from the other side" described Poles who paid the highest price for saving Jews.[823] There have been many such publications: about an exhibition in Cracow documenting Polish help for Jews in Little Poland between 1939 and 1945;[824] about Jews

819 *Quote after Napisali o "Strachu"*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 9-10 II 2008, p. 27.

820 T. P. Terlikowski, *"Strach", czyli propagandowy akt oskarżenia zamiast historii*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 I 2008, p. 12.

821 T. Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Fałszerze historii*, "Gazeta Polska" 16 I 2008, p. 32.

822 K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewcza!*, "Niedziela" 17 II 2008, p. 29.

823 See A. M. Sekretarska, *Życie za życie*, "Gazeta Polska" 16 I 2008, p. 19; J. Żaryn (introduction), *Schronienie na plebanii* , "Rzeczpospolita" 19-20 I 2008, p. 29.

824 Janusz Kurtyka, the president of the Institute of National Remembrance, who was present at the opening of the exhibition, said: "(…) The problem of *szmalcownictwo* is always mentioned when there is a discussion about the attitudes of Poles during the war. But in fact the main attitude of a Pole is being helpful". See A. Wojnar, *Pamięć nie tylko na zdjęciach*, "Niedziela" 10 II 2008, p. 9.

murdering Poles, Jews informing on their Polish rescuers,[825] or Jews responsible for the death of their kinsmen.[826]

Publishing these stories side by side cannot have been coincidental. Analogous strategies were already employed in 1968, on the wave of the anti-Semitic campaign, when the press published articles about foreign media accusing Poles of complicity in the Holocaust and of anti-Semitism together with contra-histories of similar content and function.

However, taking into consideration the pogroms discussed in "Fear" and caused by the rumours of ritual murders committed by Jews, it is worth noticing curious aspects of the "contra-histories" used in the polemics with Gross. Three different newspapers simultaneously mentioned the story of the killing of Bogdan Piasecki, son of the president of PAX (a secular Catholic organisation created in 1947 by the pre-war, extreme-right Polish activists; author); the killing was supposed to have features of Jewish ritual murder.[827] The authors of these publications did not claim it with full conviction but allowed such an interpretation and introduced certain presumptions into the public discourse. Thus, they could insinuate that perhaps in Kielce, Cracow or Rzeszow...? Certainly, they revived the myth whose destructive results Gross had discussed in "Fear". Apparently, for some people in Poland, Jewish ritual murders are not only a myth, as shown by research conducted by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir and others[828] near Sandomierz. However mind-boggling these results are, they become more and more understandable considering the effects of the three publications mentioned.

Quite a peculiar method of devaluing "Fear" was to classify Gross's book as that of a Jewish voice, that is, speaking of it as a Polish-Jewish and not a Polish-Polish dispute, which, in fact, it was. The essence of this reasoning can be seen in Piotr Semko's text, in which he writes: "Gross wanted to scream the truth about the tragedy of his nation", and adds, referring to the very discussion about "Fear", that the Jewish side "has a right" to observe the intentions of its critics.[829] The presumption that Gross speaks in the name of Jews and is a party in the Polish-Jewish dispute understates the contents of his book, making it seem biased. However, it is suggested that a Jewish book has every right to be biased

825 See I. Lisiak, *Roman Blum oddał życie*, "Myśl Polska" 13 IV 2008, p. 18.

826 See A. Solak, *Zagłada "Patrii"*, "Myśl Polska" 9 III 2008, p. 16-17.

827 See M. Motas, *Winni księża i katoendecy*, "Myśl Polska" 10 II 2008, p. 5; K. M. Mazur, *Filozofia bungee*, "Czas!" 2 II 2008, p. XII; J. R. Nowak, *Przegląd prasy*, "Niedziela" 13 I 2008, p. 30.

828 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przesądu*, Warszawa 2008; See also J. Żyndul, *Kłamstwo krwi. Legenda mordu rytualnego na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2012.

829 P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, "Rzeczpospolita" 16 I 2008, p. 14.

– after all, it represents a foreign, antagonistic perspective and is a voice in the permanent dispute. Accepting such an interpretation, the accusations can be dismissed together with the challenges that "Fear" poses to Poles. Only, Semko's theory of the Polish-Jewish dispute and its influence on "Fear" is not grounded in any evidence. As Seweryn Blumsztajn rightly noted, "Jan Gross does not ask: 'Why did you do it to us?', he asks: 'Why could we do such a thing?'. Clearly, it does not mean he is right. But 'Fear' is a Polish book and the dispute over it is our, Polish, conversation".[830] Similarly, anti-Semitism was another Polish problem Cardinal Dziwisz and others attempted invalidate during the "Fear" debate. Many journalists suggested that it was artificially created and kept alive by the "Gazeta Wyborcza" clique who often used it instrumentally. Rafał Ziemkiewicz noted that in fact the debate over "Fear" interested only "Gazeta Wyborcza", for everyone else evaluated the book in the same way as Cardinal Dziwisz and found the discussion finished.[831] Ziemkiewicz was accompanied by Robert Krasowski from "Dziennik", who claimed in his broad article that anti-Semitism in Poland is neither social, nor real, but an instrumentalised, political problem; besides, "Gross's book is not worth organising a debate over" as it "does not bring any new arguments".[832] Some of the arguers who depreciated "Fear" expressed with Pharisaic care their concern that the book might not only evoke antipathy towards Jews but also contribute to a regress in Polish-Jewish dialogue.[833]

Naturally, defining every form of criticism as an attempt to invalidate and depreciate "Fear" would be an abuse and misinterpretation. Moreover, it could be unjust for those debaters who, drawing attention to the weak points of "Fear", such as language, generalisations and exaggerations, did not use these arguments to cover the key contents nor follow it up with questions and messages. On the contrary, they did not cast doubt on the documented events but stressed the importance of confronting this chapter of Polish history. Above all, what they were saying had nothing to do with cutting off the debate over Gross's book or dismissing the accusations formulated by the author.

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830 S. Blumsztajn, *Polski głos Grossa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19-20 I 2008, p. 16.

831 R. A. Ziemkiewicz, *Jesteśmy skazani na bezsilność*, "Rzeczpospolita" 20 II 2008, p. 15.

832 R. Krasowski, *Antysemityzm Polaków jako problem polityczny*, "Dziennik Polska" 18 I 2008, p. 6.

833 See eg. P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, "Rzeczpospolita" 16 I 2008, p. 14; G. Pustkowiak, *Antysemityzm Jana T. Grossa*, "Myśl Polska' 3 II 2008, p. 19; M. Łętowski, *Gross igra z ogniem*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 25 I 2008, p. 33; P. Zychowicz, *Czy "Strach" zaszkodzi dialogowi?*, "Rzeczpospolita" 5 I 2008, p. 7; P. Lisicki, Żydzi, *Polacy i przeszłość*, "Rzeczpospolita" 11 I 2008, p. 2.

3. "Fear" without fear

Weak points of Gross's book were mentioned also by those disputers whose voices were relatively inaudible and who may be defined as followers of the Jan Błoński[834] tradition of speaking about the difficult Polish-Jewish past. This "moral discourse", so clearly outlined and loudly spoken in the discussion over Jedwabne was, in the case of "Fear", was drowned out by those who, for different reasons, found the book bad and not worth talking about. Also, the debate over "Fear" lacked articles of the scale of those from the times of the "Jedwabne" dispute: "Obsesja niewinności" [The Innocence Obsession] by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "My z Jedwabnego" [We From Jedwabne] by Anna Bikont, "Jedwabne to nowe imię Holokaustu" [Jedwabne Is a New Name for Holocaust] by Reverend Stanisław Musiał, or "Krótkowzroczność kulturalnych" [Short-Sightedness of the Cultured] by Hanna Świda-Ziemba, to mention just a few important and courageous voices. This does not mean that Gross's book was noticed only by its zealous adversaries or that the tradition of having a critical look at the past was not followed. Yet, the representatives of this tradition had a difficult task to carry out. They had to struggle with a multi-voiced, dominant, social representation of "Fear" reconstructed above, that is, finding Gross's book anti-Polish, anti-Catholic, filled with simplifications, missing contexts, far-fetched interpretations, generalisations and exaggerations – thus not worth consideration. That is why a lot of statements took the shape of polemics in response to such representations of the book. They aimed at demonstrating the value of the contents of "Fear" through strategies opposite to those of SEP, namely "legitimising, disclosing, publicising and making important what others found unimportant as a subject of interest"[835]. Therefore, the journalist Marek Beylin stressed that the drawbacks of "Fear", although they exist, are "secondary in comparison to the challenge that Gross mounts to our dealing with the past",[836] and the Polish writer Jerzy Pilch asked outright whether they can invalidate in any way Gross's question of how it was possible that Jews were murdered in Poland after the war.[837]

Other statements had a similar character, while some disputers, for example Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, did not notice these diligently listed errors and weak points of "Fear" at all. The weak points actually listed by Tokarska-Bakir did not overlap with the accusations raised by the journalists from "Rzeczpospolita"

834 Polish historian literary critic, journalist and translator

835 M. Czyżewski, K. Dunin, A. Piotrowski, *Cudze problemy. O ważności tego, co nieważne. Analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce*, Warszawa 1991, p. 7.

836 M. Beylin, *Żydzi, Polacy, Strach*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 12-13 I 2008, p. 2.

837 J. Pilch, *Czarna robota*, "Dziennik Polska" (dodatek Europa) 18 I 2008.

or "Nasz Dziennik",[838] the most popular of which was the missing context of the events described by Gross. This argument was debated by Marek Edelman, who categorically stated: "I can see no context of a murder. A murderer is a scoundrel and that is it. And the one who sees and turns their head away is his or her accessory",[839] Sławomir Buryła, a Holocaust literature researcher, stressed that "Fear" was in fact the first monograph treating of the postwar violence against Jews even though individual symptoms had been already known by Polish historians and described separately.[840] Indeed, no one before Gross had attempted a complete exposition of the subject, which in most part undermines the suggestion that "Fear" is imitative or reproductive.

As with some historians, journalists defended the sharp and provocative language of "Fear", praising it for initiating discussion on an important subject. They mentioned measured works by Polish historians also concerning the difficult Polish-Jewish past, which also spoke about the disgraceful attitudes of Poles towards Jews, and which could have brought completely new knowledge but instead had no repercussions whatsoever. Their list was repeated as a mantra: "Prowincja Noc",[841] "Szanowny Panie Gestapo",[842] "Ja tego Żyda znam"[843] and "U genezy Jedwabnego".[844] Another example was an anniversary article by Adam Michnik published in "Gazeta Wyborcza", in which the author analysed the

838 "I wonder," Tokarska-Bakir writes, "whether I can put forward a factual objection towards his book. And only one comes to my mind. This book, as well as the reality itself, is close to sadism. Some of the evidence just cannot be held. One might want to but something inside refuses to allow it. Some elementary trust to the world is needed to live and the confrontation with concentrated cruelty deprives us from this trust. Amery [Jean Amery, a French essayist writing about moral challenges caused by Holocaust – A.N.] claimed that the pain, once experienced, cannot be communicated in any other way without causing it. This is exactly the danger of the historical literature written by Gross. To express certain things, one has to overcome ones and someone else's pain withdrawal reflex". And another word about Gross's "fault", short and ironic this time: "Gross's fault lies in boycotting standards of honesty accepted in Polish historical literature". J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Strach w Polsce*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 12-13 I 2008, p. 22.

839 J. Szczęsna, *Powszechna rzecz zabijanie*, an interview with M. Edelman, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19-20 I 2008, p. 14.

840 S. Buryła, *Wiedza, która sprawia ból*, Znak" 2008, issue 3, p. 183-184

841 See B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (ed.), *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, Warszawa 2007.

842 See B. Engelking, *"Szanowny panie gestapo". Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach 1940-1941*, Warszawa 2003.

843 See J. Grabowski, *"Ja tego Żyda znam". Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie 1939-1943*, Warszawa 2004.

844 See A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na kresach północno-wschodniej II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939-lipiec 1941*, Warszawa 2006.

responses of the Polish bishops Czesław Kaczmarek and Teodor Kubina to the Kielce pogrom – the same documents that Gross used when writing "Fear". Michnik's article, however, did not start any debate and none of the Catholic Church officials rose to speak about it.[845]

Asking about the silence and the undeserved lack of public debate greeting those publications, one could hear that the articles were too balanced or reserved. A more complex answer was given by Teresa Bogucka, Polish writer and journalist, who noticed that since the Polish debate over Jedwabne, the name of the author of "Fear" had already been labelled controversial, therefore some scandal regarding his upcoming book was expected (and tabloids did their best to provide it). Bogucka also noted that the case of Polish historians writing about the dark side of Polish history is considerably different to that of an American professor writing about the same events and in this way insulting our nation in front of the world.[846] Books by foreign scholars, even if entirely consistent with the findings of Polish researchers, are treated on different terms.

The anti-SEP strategies mainly involved recognising and addressing the problem of the attitudes of Poles toward the Holocaust and the postwar violence against its survivors as well as acknowledging that the anti-Semitism in Poland described by Gross was a real phenomenon, not one artificially evoked. Mirosław Czech in his article started a polemic with Robert Krasowski, suggesting that Krasowski had unintentionally demonstrated that "the problem [Polish anti-Semitism] he describes as non-existent is in fact real."[847] Without doubt, an important voice in the debate was an article by Stanisław Obirek with the meaningful title "The Church needs Gross", in which the author criticised the attitude of Polish Catholic Church officials towards the contents of "Fear". He bravely stated that what the bishops say demonstrates that they don't feel "the need to

845 The above-mentioned article by Adam Michnik about the Polish bishops' response to the Kielce pogrom was published in two parts by Gazeta Wyborcza on the 60th anniversary of the pogrom. See A. Michnik, *Pogrom kielecki: dwa rachunki sumienia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 3 VI 2006, p. 12 and 10 VI 2006, p. 22; The article was mentioned by Michnik himself during a public discussion with Gross in Cracow: "I once wrote an essay about the Kielce pogrom, in which I balanced all the arguments and everything was justly described, but not a living soul noticed it. To be noticed, you have to write like Janek Gross did but this isn't information only about him but also about us – his readers". See D. Wielowieyska, *Lekceważyłam nasz antysemityzm*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 10 IV 2008, p. 20; *Z antysemityzmu trzeba się spowiadać. Zapis fragmentów spotkania z Janem Tomaszem Grossem, które odbyło się w Krakowie 24 stycznia 2008 roku*, [in:] *Wokół "Strachu". Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.) Kraków 2008, p. 345.

846 T. Bogucka, *Strach, gniew, debata*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 23-24 II 2008, s. 26.

847 M. Czech, *Lewica nie wymyśliła antysemityzmu*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 22 I 2008, p. 23.

ask oneself questions about the history of the Holocaust" and that "for them, the lesson from the Holocaust is yet to be learnt."[848]

In addition, some contributions strengthened the claims made in "Fear" by giving examples from history, literature, film or from personal experience. For instance, Halina Bortnowska wrote a very moving article about her own reception of "Fear" and the shock she felt. Her considerations may be interpreted as subtle criticism towards those who belittled the contents of Gross's book; this criticism is very clear when she writes: "'Fear' seems to induce anxiety by imposing a feeling of guilt on its readers. The author is accused of such an intention, I believe unjustly. It is us who, in trying to free ourselves from the trap of co-feeling the harm, try to deny the facts. As a result, we stand on the side of the wrongdoers and their defenders."[849] Others shone light on the motives and intentions behind the attempts to invalidate "Fear", unanimously interpreting them as a desire to hide and deny the uncomfortable truth.[850]

The truth is not new; it had been discussed by scholars and known by "insiders" but it was only Gross's book that started to inscribe this truth in social memory on such a scale. Although some gave Gross all the credit for it, they should give some, paradoxically, to the noisy critics without whom "Fear" would have shared the fate of the many Polish historical works that were ignored. While readers of the Polish press had a chance to learn about the Kielce pogrom on the occasion of some anniversaries, they probably heard of the Cracow pogrom for the first time. After all, not everyone knows the work by Anna Cichopek.[851] Michał Bilewicz was right when he wrote that Gross's book may be used as a "tool to popularise historical knowledge on almost a massive scale."

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It would be difficult to determine its symbolic ending (unless one chose the hasty "Znak" publication consisting of the articles written by debaters). The debate simply waned as a result of a lack of internal dynamics and left the impression that it was being forcibly/artificially kept alive since participants hardly ever referred to each other's arguments. Instead, they tried to determine whether or not "Fear" was worth discussing. Unfortunately, the answer "no" dominated. Those

848 S. Obirek, *Kościół potrzebuje Grossa*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 7 II 2008, p. 24.

849 H. Bortnowska, *Patrzeć na ekshumację*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 6 II 2008, p. 22.

850 See np. A. Szostkiewicz, *Egzorcysta Gross. Rozdrapywaczy ran nie lubi się nie tylko u nas*, "Polityka" 2008, issue 5, p. 30; W. Maziarski, *Lekcja "Strachu"*, an interview with P. Śpiewak, "Newsweek" 2008, issue 4, p. 22; B. Łagowski, *Strach przed prawdą*, "Przegląd" 3 II 2008, p. 13; S. Buryła, *Wiedza, która sprawia ból*, "Znak" 2008, issue 3, p. 178-185.

851 See A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.*, Warszawa 2000.

who gave this answer paid relatively more attention to Jan Tomasz Gross than to the contents of his book and the challenges it posed. However, the debate, together with all its imperfections, uncovered and highlighted certain things.

First of all, it revealed the results of historical politics initiated in Poland under the rule of the Law and Justice Party, who rejected "critical patriotism" and supported a patriotism that affirmed the past of the nation.[852] Without doubt, the debate over "Fear" showed that the efforts of the Law and Justice party to stop the process of revising the myth of a past of heroes and martyrs and to start to look for reasons to be proud of one's homeland were fruitful. One could clearly observe this shift, for example in the words of historians related to the Institute of National Remembrance, and particularly in the publications under the auspices of Marek Chodakiewicz. One may venture to say that it was fortunate that Janusz Kurtyka was not the President when Gross's book "Neighbors" was published in Poland.

Secondly, the debate over "Fear" revealed the shifts or transformations in Polish public discourse, somehow related to the influence of the rules of affirmative patriotism. The best example of these reconfigurations is what appeared in the columns of "Rzeczpospolita". While the newspaper had played an important and praiseworthy role during the debate over the Jedwabne pogrom, they no longer did after the release of "Fear". Besides, it was during the debate about "Fear" when a numerous and audible group of historians sharing the views of "Catholic National Democrats" (the term introduced by Gross and referring to a certain worldview) and the journalists who supported them were revealed. Some of them did not even refrain from a more or less veiled anti-Semitic rhetoric. This problem leads us to the third issue related to the debate over "Fear". Despite the attempts to invalidate the problem of anti-Semitism, it manifested itself over the course of the debate. Most importantly, the debate revealed the consent given to anti-Semitism in the Polish Catholic Church. The key evidence were the lectures given in churches and parish centres by Jerzy Robert Nowak, which (with few exceptions) did not bring a strong response from Church officials but rather some sort of silent acceptance.

The most important conclusion drawn from the analysis of the debate over "Fear", however, is the backlash that could be observed after the Jedwabne controversy. This counterattack led to affirmative patriotism, reflected in the construction of the Warsaw Rising Museum and the exploitation of the topics of the

852 About "critical"and "affirmative" patriotism, See D. Gawin, *O pożytkach i szkodliwości historycznego rewizjonizmu*, [in:] *Pamięć i odpowiedzialność*, R. Kostro, T. Merta (ed.), Kraków 2005.; See also A. Wolff-Powęska, *Polskie spory o historie i pamięć. Polityka historyczna*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2007, issue 1, p. 3-45.

Polish Righteous Among the Nations and Jewish communists. This backlash took the form of a blockade of public accounting for the difficult and incriminating Polish-Jewish past and was expressed with a meaningful silence, which, after "Neighbors", was temporarily broken and interrupted by "Fear". This very context should be taken into account when one interprets the different strategies of invalidating "Fear". The essence of such a strategy and, at the same time, an absolute lack of understanding of the heart of the matter, is expressed in the appeal made by the editor-in-chief of "Czas!": "Let us forget about the Jews and finally focus on Poland".[853] Since the Jedwabne controversy, his statement has been a credo of many Poles whose response to the massacre revealed by Gross in "Neighbors" was not a feeling of guilt, but a long-term objection to self-flagellation.

853 T. Sommer, *Zapomnieć o Żydach*, "Czas!" 19 I 2008, p. III.

Epilogue

The debate sparked off by the publication of "Fear" by Jan Tomasz Gross was not the last episode in the series of public debates over Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust. Another one, although short, arose after the publication of an article entitled: "The Dark Continent: Hitler's European Holocaust Helpers" in "Der Spiegel" in May 2009. The text concerned various forms of the complicity of European citizens in the extermination of Jews.[854] The response it evoked in Poland was disproportionate to its content. It probably surprised not only the authors of the article, but all those who believed that after the Jedwabne debate and other discussions concerning the Polish-Jewish past, Poles had learnt a lesson. The most surprising element, however, was that the article, which provoked such an emotional reaction, did not add anything new to our knowledge about Polish complicity in the Holocaust. Moreover, Polish threads were few and mentioned only briefly; they were reduced to the problem of *szmalcownik*s, pogroms in 1941 ("Pogroms in Poland by local people against Jews in 1941") and postwar murders of Jews, of which, according to "Der Spiegel", there were "at least 600, and possibly even thousands of Holocaust survivors." If the intention of the authors had been some special focus on Poland, they certainly could have written much more – and there would be more things to write about, as Poland had been the main area of the Holocaust. For instance, one could refer to recent publications of the Polish Centre of Holocaust Research, or examine the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute. Yet, the authors used only facts and events that had been already analysed by Polish historians in at least a few important publications.

Moreover, the article in "Der Spiegel" neither questioned nor extended prevailing knowledge of the attitudes of other European citizens who, individually or institutionally, aided the Nazis in their extermination plan. Also, it would be hard to disagree with the thesis of the article: that voluntary or forced collaboration indeed influenced the scale of the Nazi project. This, however, was not new information. As the historian and Holocaust expert Dariusz Liponka stated in his interview for "Gazeta Wyborcza",[855] the article did not provide any surprising or

854 http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-dark-continent-hitler-s-european-holocaust-helpers-a-625824.html ; the article was reprinted by a major Polish daily, see: "Gazeta Wyborcza" 22 V 2009.

855 See: M. Wojciechowski, *Niech IPN zostawi "Spiegla" w spokoju*, an interview with D. Libionka, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 22 V 2009.

controversial facts, with which many politicians and journalists agreed. In such a case, one might wonder what the debate was all about.

The key accusation against the authors was their alleged historical revisionism; in other words, the fact that they wanted to share German responsibility for the Holocaust with other European countries and nations to lighten their own burden. Moreover, the text was interpreted as an example of a certain tendency characteristic to the German way of thinking, speaking and writing about the World War II. This tendency manifested itself, for instance, in attempts to modify the roles they had been assigned and to make the perpetrators victims. Needless to say, Erika Steinbach's activity was first on the list of evidence that such a tendency existed. The list included also German cinematography (*Die Gustlof*, *March of Millions, A Woman in Berlin*), literature (e.g. Günter Grass) and the CDU/CSU resolution in May 2009 (just before the European Parliament elections), appealing for "international condemnation of Germans' post–World War II expulsion".

According to the journalist Piotr Semka, the "Der Spiegel" article confirmed the "deepest Polish fears about changes in German thinking about World War II", suggested that "the Nazis found European nations an equal partner in hatred towards Jews and desire to kill" and equalised "German architects and directors of murder and those who were forced or paid by Germans to murder".[856] Piotr Semka was accompanied by the editor-in-chief of the national daily "Rzeczpospolita", Paweł Lisicki, who wrote in his blog that "Der Spiegel" wanted to rewrite history and the authors of the article did everything they could to ease the German burden.[857]

More journalists expressed their negative opinion about "The Dark Continent"; for example, Andrzej Talaga ("the article smartly effaces German responsibility")[858] and many others – from "Rzeczpospolita", "Dziennik", "Polska", and, obviously, "Nasz Dziennik". Deputies and senators of the Law and Justice Party – Beata Kempa, Jan Ołdakowski and Arkadiusze Mularczyk at the top – shared their views. The chairman of the Law and Justice Party, Jarosław Kaczyński, provocatively said that "we will soon pay compensation to Germans for soldiers who died in the Warsaw Uprising".[859] Władysław Bartoszewski joined the group of the article's critics, saying it was a "blatant lie" and "nonsense not

856 P. Semka, *"Spiegel" pisze historie na nowo*, "Rzeczpospolita" 19 V 2009.

857 http://blog.rp.pl/lisicki/2009/05/22/kto-byl-pomocnikiem-hitlera/ [accessed: 10 IX 2012]

858 A. Talaga, *Niemcy wymigują się z Holokaustu*, "Dziennik" 20 V 2009.

859 http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/160059,prezes-pis-jeszcze-bedziemy-placic-niemcom.html [accessed: 10 IX 2012]

worth commenting on".[860] So did Szewach Weiss, according to whom Germans could not deal with "Cain's stigma" on their foreheads and wanted to share it "with other nations".[861]

Considering the response to the article, one may conclude that its critics created their own reality that had little in common with the factual content of the text. The authors of "The Dark Continent" clearly and repeatedly pointed at the initiators, architects and main coordinators of the Holocaust. They wrote in black and white: "It's completely undisputed that the Holocaust would never have happened without Hitler, SS Chief Heinrich Himmler and the many, many other Germans" and "Of course only Hitler and his entourage or the army could have stopped the Holocaust".[862] There were more similar statements in the article. However, Piotr Semka found them purely "ritual"; similarly, Piotr Skwiecicki called them "a ritual safeguard."[863] What mattered for them were only the negative intentions ascribed to the authors.

The anti-Semitic campaign of March 1968 was the time when the most was said about Germans trying to efface their responsibility for the Holocaust and share it with Poles. Thus, the accusation was not new. Obviously, the content of press articles in 1968 and official statements made by communist dignitaries was very different to the responses to the "Der Spiegiel" article. Nevertheless, it is important to observe that one German press article (in accordance with the facts) was enough to liven up certain narrations and introduce a state of emergency.

Certain responses to the article were linked to the role of "the fifth column". "Gazeta Wyborcza" and the Civic Platform party were both accused by Jarosław Kaczyński of anti-Polish actions, e.g. defining Poles not as victims of Nazism, but the ones who collaborated with Germans.[864] Alina Cała, a researcher connected with the Jewish Historical Institute, was also attached this role and her case is worth attention.

In an interview given by Alina Cała to "Rzeczpospolita" daily, the historian answered the question: "Are Poles co-responsible for the Holocaust" saying: "To some extent, yes. The reason was the pre-war anti-Semitism, which did not prepare them morally for what was going to happen during the Holocaust." In

860 http://www.jewish.org.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2319&Itemid=57 [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

861 http://www.rp.pl/artykul/309080.html [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

862 http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-dark-continent-hitler-s-european-holocaust-helpers-a-625824.html

863 P. Skwieciński, *Wymazywanie niemieckich win*, "Rzeczpospolita" 20 V 2009.

864 http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/89744,kaczynski-wyborcza-popiera-niemcow-i-po.html [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

the later part of the interview, Cała explained in a sober way how the atmosphere created by the Polish national camp, overusing anti-Semitic slogans, the Catholic Church and Catholic magazines contributed to at least passivity and indifference of most Poles towards the Holocaust. Taking this context into account, Cała said that "in a sense" Poles were responsible for "the death of all – 3 million Jews".[865] Without going into details, I will only mention that Cała's words are verified by the rich literature of the subject.

Yet, it is important to pay careful attention to the responses to the interview. Władysław Bartoszewski, in an interview for "Rzeczpospolita", did not hide his indignation with Alina Cała's words,[866] the historian Piotr Gontarczyk, Ph.D, found her views "extremely leftist";[867] and the director of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, Jan Ołdakowski,[868] spoke about his "fury" in reaction to Alina Cała's "complete nonsense". The archbishop Leszek Sławoj Głódź called Cała's words a provocation and decided that the Catholic Church had clear conscience and "no fear of attacks", adding: "if it goes any further, we may expect to hear that it was the Church that provoked the war."[869]

The journalist Piotr Zaremba went even further. In his polemic with Alina Cała in "Dziennik" Zaremba, he agreed with some of Cała's observations but he also completely misinterpreted the meaning of her words about murdering 3 million Jews and understood them literally. Hence, he deprived the historian's words of many meaningful phrases, such as "in a sense" or "to some extent", which would disable such a literal interpretation. What makes Zaremba's article so distinctive, however, are the insinuations he included in it. The journalist stated openly that Alina Cała was a "bitter enemy of the Catholic Church", legitimising his statement by referring to his own experience ("which I had an opportunity to learn personally"). He also wrote that "Mrs Cała, completely involuntarily, not being German, supported German desire to share their responsibility for the biggest tragedy of 20th century" and that she even "went further than German newspaper."[870]

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865 P. Zychowicz, *Polacy jako naród nie zdali egzaminu*, rozmowa z A. Całą, "Rzeczpospolita" 25 V 2009.

866 P. Zychowicz, *Wielu endeków pomagało Żydom*, rozmowa z W. Bartoszewskim, "Rzeczpospolita" 26 V 2009.

867 P. Gontarczyk, *Nonsensy, uproszczenia, konfabulacje*, "Rzeczpospolita" 27 V 2009.

868 http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/150447,polacy-zabijali-zydow-kosmiczne-bzdury.html [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

869 http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/150407,glodz-polacy-katami-zydow-to-prowokacja.html [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

870 http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/150513,to-nie-polacy-wymordowali-zydow.html [accessed: 12 IX 2012]

There was also the implicit message Zaremba provided in his article. He undermined the legitimacy of Alina Cała's words relating to the role of the Catholic Church in infecting the interwar society with anti-Semitism by suggesting that an anti-Catholic fanatic could not be objective in that case. That's not all. Let us imagine that following Piotr Zaremba, who eliminated the phrases "in a sense" and "to some extent" from Alina Cała's statement, one would eliminate the word "involuntarily" from his sentence about "supporting German desire". Considering that Cała works for Jewish Historical Institute, of which Piotr Zaremba informs in the first words of his paper, the accusation may sound familiar to the reader. Bearing in mind how, in March 1968, the authorities promoted the idea of Jewish conspiracy aimed at washing off German guilt and assigning co-responsibility for the Holocaust to Poles, the reader can wonder whether history is repeating itself.

There is yet another issue relating to the Polish debate over the article in "Der Spiegel" that is worth considering. The message of this article was completely ignored both in Poland and in the rest of Europe. Many comments and statements suggested that the Holocaust did not concern anyone else except Germans (the perpetrators) and Jews (the victims).

In other words, nothing has changed since the war when Poles and Jews were dying separately. Sławomir Mrożek wrote about it: "What was happening to Jews during the occupation did not arouse amusement in my surroundings; it aroused horror, but this was the horror that was incorporated into the general horror of the war and occupation. After all, what was happening between Germans and Jews was only an affair between Germans and Jews. Thus it was no business of ours."[871] This opinion illustrates why a shift in the way we think is required. Another reason are the disgraceful attitudes of Poles towards Jews during the war, which cannot be counterbalanced by the Polish Righteous Among the Nations or trees in Yad Vashem. The fear that the "guardian mole" from Czesław Miłosz's poem will count us "among the helpers of death: The uncircumcised" cannot block our speech. The phenomenon of SEP manifests itself today in statements that Germans should not publically speak about any complicity in the Holocaust other than their own because it is their problem. Does "Kain's stigma" really exclude the possibility of talking about the past, especially if those who talk are honest and do not attempt to hide their blame?

The article in "Der Spiegel" has clearly shown that the Holocaust was the experience of Europe in its entirety. Considering the Holocaust as involving only Germans and Jews removes a number of important issues from sight, for example the question as to what extent the pre-war European anti-Semitism made

871 S. Mrożek, *Nos*, "Kultura" 1984.

that Holocaust possible to conceive of and implement. In that civilised and modern Europe all safeguards failed, as did ethics and humanism. As Henryk Grynberg noted, "Europe has more murders on its conscience than the whole rest of the world. And the 20th century broke the records of all times. The European 20th century gave birth to Hitler. Only in Europe, brought up on an anti-Jewish myth, could consciences be so corrupted".[872] Is this statement so different from the question asked by the historian Götz Aly in "Der Spiegel"? Can the Holocaust be explained only by relating it to German history? Europe after the Holocaust, the Europe of perpetrators, witnesses and bystanders, is certainly different. "To Europe – yes, but together with our dead" Maria Janion wrote.[873] Jews are our dead and the dead of Europe. Perhaps this is how the "Der Spiegel" article should be interpreted, rather than striking a nationalistic note, suggesting that German revisionism is still alive and calling for the rejection of this apparent revisionism.

Less than two years had passed since the publication of the article in "Der Spiegel", when in March 2011 a new book by Jan Tomasz Gross and Ireną Grudzińską-Gross was released, entitled: "Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust".[874] Like "Fear", it was published by the prestigious editorial house "Znak" and it also sparked off a debate. It had actually provoked a debate before the official premiere, as the authors decided to share a draft version with acquainted historians, sociologists and journalists; on the grapevine, it reached a number of other readers. Therefore, a public debate over the content of the book began even before the book reached bookstore shelves and everyone had a chance to read it. The discussion was held among the privileged few, or people who formulated their opinions on the basis of other people's reviews: those who had actually read the book. This fact considerably influenced the course and temperature of the debate, which started to fade after the premiere of "Golden Harvest".

It is impossible to make a thorough summary of "Golden Harvest". In the most general terms, the book describes how European society, mainly Poles, financially benefited from the extermination of Jews. The authors focused on diverse methods of taking over Jewish property by ordinary people during the war – on blackmailing, theft, murders and on situations when local people reaped benefits at the expense of their Jewish neighbours who were taken to extermination camps. One part of the book describes the incidents of plundering

872 H. Grynberg, *Winię Europę*, "Res Publika Nowa" 2002, no 8, p. 6.

873 M. Janion, *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi*, Warszawa 2000.

874 J. T. Gross, I. G. Gross, *Złote żniwa. Rzecz o tym, co działo się na obrzeżach zagłady Żydów*, Kraków 2011.

former extermination camps (mostly Treblinka) and digging mass graves in search of valuables among the remains of victims of the Holocaust. A photograph depicting people who had been probably involved in such activity, and caught red-handed, was the direct impulse for the authors to write the book. The photograph was first published by "Gazeta Wyborcza" as an illustration to the article entitled "Gold Rush in Treblinka", which described the above-mentioned activity.[875] However, at the time, the article brought no controversy or doubts. Similarly, an article about the same problem by Martyna Rusiniak provoked no discussion.[876] Digging through mass graves in Treblinka, however, was not the dominating thread of the book but only a particular example of the phenomenon that was the taking over the possessions of the Holocaust victims by Poles. The authors of "Golden Harvest" also brought up the subject of the murders of Jews, committed by people from Polish provinces, "at the peripheries of the Holocaust".

Due to its subject, the book by Jan and Irena Gross had wide repercussions. Perhaps, however, controversies and emotions around the figure of Jan Tomasz Gross contributed even more to this fact. The debate included also two other publications but to a much lesser extent. These were books by Barbara Engelking[877] and Jan Grabowski[878], which concerned the so-called "third phase of the Holocaust", after the liquidations of ghettos and the moving of Jews to extermination camps. This phase included hunting down and identifying Jews to the Nazis, or even murdering them. Both books were written by authors connected with the interdisciplinary Centre for Holocaust Research, which since 2003 has been gathering scholars who are endeavouring to make up for years of negligence and inattention paid to the subject. Results of their research are known to a narrow circle of experts and do not arouse wider interest. So far, none of the books published by the Centre has ever become a subject of public, common reflection, although almost all of them considerably extend our knowledge about the Holocaust, particularly about voluntary complicity of Poles. It is not surprising, since mainstream media neither noticed the books, nor considered them important. A pity, as they could have helped to introduce the thought into the social self-knowledge that blackmailing Jews who were hiding (*szmalcownictwo*) was not as marginal as it was claimed.

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875 See: P. Głuchowski, M. Kowalski, *Gorączka złota w Treblince*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 7 I 2008.

876 M. Rusiniak, *Treblinka-Eldorado Podlasia?*, "Kwartalnik Historii Żydów" 2006, no. 2.

877 B. Engelking, *"Jest taki piękny słoneczny dzień…" Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942-1945*, Warszawa 2011.

878 J. Grabowski, *Judenjagd. Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945. Studium dziejów pewnego powiatu*, Warszawa 2011.

Therefore, it should be firmly stated that in the debate over "Golden Harvest", Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski were the main experts, invited to most TV programmes and interviewed by national press. However, it is very likely that if it had not been for "Golden Harvest", Engelking's and Grabowski's publications would not have been noticed and treated as complimenting the book of the Grosses. The media presented them as even more reliable and better documented than "Golden Harvest". This fact is particularly worthy of attention if we remember how "Fear" was compared to Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's "Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947" [After the Holocaust: Polish-Jewish Relations 1944-1947]. Chodakiewicz's book, marked with the stamp of the Institute of National Remembrance, was then recommended as a reliable alternative to the unreliable "Fear". In bookshop windows, the two books were often put next to each other as if they were a two-volume edition – obverse and reverse; truth and falsity. It is very likely that now "Golden Harvest" is placed on a bookstore shelf next to Engelking's and Grabowski's publications. Perhaps a new book by Marek J. Chodakiewicz about Poles saving Jews, with a meaningful title "Złote serca czy złote żniwa?"[879] ["Golden Hearts or Golden Harvest?"] is also there. Polish Righteous or Polish murderers? Cannot these two histories coexist? Does one really exclude the other? Does the Polish language not include various words such as "szmalcownik", denunciator, murderer, hero, the righteous?

Let us return to the public debate that related mostly to the book by the Grosses. Attitudes revealed during the debate confirm the previously noted observation about repeating patterns of discussion, opinions and stands. Yet another time, many positivist-oriented historians and journalists criticised the methodology of the authors and their selection of sources. This accusation seems ritual and Jan Tomasz Gross can probably be considered the most thoroughly investigated scholar in relation to his research tools. Naturally, not each and every remark about methodology should be interpreted as an attempt to invalidate the author's findings, but it seems that such was the aim of most of the comments.

Another strategy to belittle or disparage the content of the book was providing detailed analyses of the photographs around which the narration of the book was constructed. A few different articles in the national press were published that cast doubt on Gross's interpretation of the photographs. According to Gross, they depicted people digging mass graves in search of gold and other valua-

879 M. J. Chodakiewicz (ed.), *Złote serca, czy złote żniwa? Studia nad wojennymi losami Polaków i Żydów*, Wydawnictwo De Facto 2011.

bles.[880] In the end, no evidence was found that could question this interpretation. No other alternative hypotheses about the time and place where the picture had been taken and the events it had depicted were confirmed. Even if they were, does it mean that the content of the book should be significantly modified? Analogically, did the publically encouraged exhumation in Jedwabne and its results undermine the content and meaning of "Neighbors"?

The debate over "Golden Harvest" included many more motives well known from previous debates, such as the accusation that the authors had made numerous generalisations or did not take social context into account: war and postwar demoralisation, decline of the prevailing social order, lack of authorities, backwardness, poverty and famine in the Polish countryside. The historians who agreed on it were e.g. Marcin Zaremba,[881] Bożena Szaynok[882] and Paweł Machcewicz,[883] even if their attitudes to the book were different. In her polemics with Paweł Machcewicz, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir noted that "indescribable contempt lies in associating social origin and poverty with demoralisation; in thinking 'he is poor, therefore he steals and kills' (...) Murderers are sometimes born in poverty but not all the poor are murders. We must look for other explanations."[884]

The Grosses were also accused of ignoring the subject of the Polish Righteous. Jan Tomasz Gross answered this accusation in person, explaining he had chosen another topic and arguing that authors writing about help given to Jews, including the aid provided by Żegota, had never been accused of being selective and neglecting the subject of murdering Jews.[885] Another returning accusation was that Gross was a sociologist and not a historian, and that his book was not a reliable monograph but only a poor essay. Moreover, numerous debaters emphasised that Gross's work did not add anything new but only quoted studies of other scholars, as Gross himself had never conducted any. However, there were also debaters who explained the content and meaning of "Golden Harvest" in

880 See: M. Majewski, P. Reszka, *Tajemnice starej fotografii*, "Rzeczpospolita" 22-23 I 2011; P. Głuchowski, M. Kowalski, *O czym mówi to zdjęcie*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26 I 2011; M. Majewski, P. Reszka, *Tajemnica zdjęcia z Treblinki*, "Uważam Rze" 2011, no. 4; M. Kącki, *Powiększenie. Nowe oblicze starego zdjęcia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 12-13 III 2011; J. T. Gross, I. Grudzińska-Gross, *Złote żniwa. Zamieszanie wokół zdjęcia*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26-27 III 2011.

881 See: M. Zaremba, *Biedni Polacy na żniwach*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 16-16 I 2011.

882 See: B. Szaynok, *U nas nie tak się umierało*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2011, no. 14.

883 See: P. Machcewicz, *Historia zaangażowana*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 12-13 II 2011.

884 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Historia jako księgowość kreatywna*, http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/1956-historia-jako-ksiegowosc-kreatywna.html [accessed: 22 VI 2012]

885 J. T. Gross, *Historia to nie księgowość*, "Więź" 2011, no. 8-9.

terms of the origin (Jewish roots) and personal experience of the author, including his emigration to the USA, which was supposed to emphasise his "strangeness". Suffice to say that the historian Jan Żaryn, from the Institute of National Remembrance, argued that Gross's books "fit into a trend in Jewish literature and historiography (mainly biographical, but also research), which is filled with deep hatred for Poles."[886] Władysław Bartoszewski emphasised that Gross was more a sociologist than a historian, that "as a writer he's more American than Polish" and that he grew up in specific environment, learning the history of his mother, whose first husband had been denounced by a Polish neighbour and murdered in consequence. According to Bartoszewski, this fact, as well as the experience of anti-Semitism in 1968, when he was a young student, made him suffer from "great mental strain". Don't these interpretations sound familiar?

Some debaters expressed a rather Pharisaic concern about the possibility that the publication of "Golden Harvest" could cause anti-Semitism. Such fears were expressed e.g. by the aforementioned Władysław Bartoszewski in "Gość Niedzielny" and by Danuta Skóra, the director of "Znak" publishing house, who also, for some reason known only to herself, apologised to readers who felt offended by "Golden Harvest". Why and how the book could cause anti-Semitism was not explained. It is certain that every publication or statement related to the difficult Polish-Jewish past makes us see that anti-Semitism does exist and allows anti-Semites to count their ranks. A repetitive rhetoric figure that appears in debates over Gross's books is the persistent concern about evoking anti-Semitism and that the books are, in fact, the mirror that reflect these sentiments. Even if anti-Semitism exists, once it is asleep and hidden from sight it is not an eyesore.

The debaters once again divided into enlightened citizens, ready to deal with the difficult past, and suffering patriots, considering "Golden Harvest" as anti-Polonism or "intellectual rubbish" that is not worth a debate, as Reverend Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski called it. This polar division was described in "Więź" monthly. Michał Bilewicz wrote about leftist and rightist Poland, entrenched in their positions and no longer interested in arguing their case. In his opinion, until recently Poles had been willing to argue over the Jedwabne and Kielce pogroms, about their motives, and about the scale of Polish collaboration with the Nazis, but in the debate over "Golden Harvest" they only either accepted the brutal truth of their past or denied it. The debate on "Golden Harvest" – or rather lack of debate, indicates, according to Bilewicz, a wider process: decline in public debate in Poland and two differentiating Polish communities of memory: leftist

886 J. Żaryn, *Z daleka od Grossa*, "Więź" 2011, no. 7.

and rightist."[887] Similarly, Barbara Engelking noted that the whole discussion about the attitude to the past was about Poland's way of being in the world – "anachronistic or modern, infantile or mature".[888] It is also difficult to avoid the impression that this short debate without internal momentum was once again imbued with nationalist spirit manifesting itself in its traditional and modernist version. Deputy Zbigniew Girzyński displayed the former, declaring in Tomasz Lis' TV show that "Polish history and Poles can be proud of themselves". The latter manifested itself in the mathematical calculations of victims and perpetrators and attempts to measure good and bad by percents. These discourses permeated, reinforced and complemented each other. Once again, nationalism implied a defensive stand and became a barrier to noticing universal meanings and problems in the content of "Golden Harvest", such as the key question of appropriation and redistribution of the properties of the Holocaust victims. Although the scale, context and methods of this process were different, it occurred in many European countries during and after World War II. What was the Polish version of the process? The Grosses outlined it and pointed at key traits. Similar to Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, the authors paid attention to what was happening "at the peripheries of the Holocaust": in the Polish countryside, hinterland, backwoods, where murders of Jews, differently motivated, were a gloomy commonness, fitted into the landscape. Most importantly, however, the debate sparked off by their book meant that our dictionary gained new terms such as "the peripheries of the Holocaust", "third stage of the Holocaust", "Judenjagd" or "human desert" – an ingenious and painful phrase coined by Charles Baudelaire and used by Barbara Engelking. Without these terms, it would be difficult to think, speak and write about the Holocaust, particularly about its Polish context.

The end of 2012 brought yet another scene of the debate around the difficult Polish-Jewish past, during which the above-mentioned terms were used and the publications of Jan Tomasz Gross and Jan Grabowski were cited again. This time, the catalyst for the discussion was the premiere of a film entitled "Pokłosie" ["Aftermath"] directed by Władysław Pasikowski. This famous Polish director was until then known for gangster or even thriller movies about tough guys. He was also famous for probably the most sexist dialogues in Polish cinematography and vulgar lines that still dwell in pop culture.

In his newest film, however, Pasikowski broached a completely different subject. Following the artistic language he had elaborated – thriller and western aesthetics – the director presented a story that on the one hand was modern, but

887 M. Bilewicz, *Niepokojąco spokojna debata*, "Więź" 2011, no. 7.

888 B. Engelking, *Polacy – gapie Zagłady*, "Więź" 2011, no. 8-9.

on the other, strongly inspired by the Jedwabne events described by Gross in "Neighbors". The name of the town was never used in the film and one could assume it was just a village or little town at the cusp of the 20th and 21st century, where a dark secret is hidden about the murder of Jews committed by Polish neighbours during the occupation. One of the villagers, however, Józef Kalina (played by a popular Polish actor Maciej Stuhr) turns out to be brave and honest, and he decides to bring back the memory of murdered and absent Jews. On his own field, Kalina places Jewish gravestones (*Matzevot*), found in different parts of the village or bought from farmers, which after the war served e.g. as a building resource.[889] Thus, he creates a symbolic Jewish cemetery. Due to his interest and particular "collector's" passion, Kalina exposes himself to danger. The local community ostracises him and shows him hostility and hatred. The atmosphere becomes even tenser when Józef, together with his brother Franciszek, tries to find out what happened to Jewish villagers during the war. In the end, his unusual mission, investigation and revealing of the local "open secret" are severely punished. Kalina is murdered by his neighbours – crucified on a barn door.

This was only a laconic and fragmentary summary of the film, lacking nuances, details and interpretations of symbols the film included. Yet, it is enough to grasp the key content of the film that was not a factual reconstruction of what had happened "at the peripheries of the Holocaust", including Jedwabne, but clear indication of the moral problem of Polish complicity in the Holocaust and its consequences. "Pokłosie" also showed the cost of breaking a local – and not only local – conspiracy of silence. Pasikowski's picture touched a clearly a Polish-Polish problem rather than Polish-Jewish or Polish-German ones. Hence, there are no Germans in the movie and Jews appear only in one scene at the very end.

The film started a heated and fierce discussion that was held in national media for almost two months following the premiere. The film developed a controversial reputation even before its release. Władysław Pasikowski revealed that the idea to make it occurred to him after the debate over Jedwabne but the outline of the film, initially entitled "Kadisz", did not at that point get financial support from the Polish Institute of Film Art. It was considered anti-Polish. Although another attempt by the director proved successful, the accusation of anti-Polonism returned with full force. Predictably, debaters took ritual positions well known from previous, similar debates, particularly the one initiated by the publication of "Neighbors" by Jan Tomasz Gross. Many of them interpreted

889 Łukasz Baksik's exhibition in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw entitled: "Macewy codziennego użytku" ["Matzevot for everyday use"] clearly shows how Jewish gravestones have been used in postwar Poland.

Pasikowski's film as a direct reference to the Jedwabne pogrom. Thus, the same accusations that had been once made against Gross (and which the author encountered after the release of each new book) were raised to Pasikowski. Moreover, a non-documentary film, based on original screenplay and not intended to reconstruct historical events (although consulted with historians), was evaluated with the use of methodological criteria of academic work.

Critics pointed out that Pasikowski presented an image of Polish countryside that was far from reality and highly stereotypical: villagers were depicted as always drunk, violent and anti-Semitic primitives. They also accused him of generalisations, simplifications and ignoring important contexts; of drawing a false and incomplete picture. The director was reproached with disregarding the heroic attitudes of Poles during the war and the key role of Germans in the Jedwabne pogrom. Most importantly, rightist (but not exclusively) journalists and historians pointed out that the film said nothing about the motives for the murder. According to these critics, the pogrom was revenge for the wrong done by the Red Army to Poles when they occupied a part of Polish lands after 17 September 1939. Thus, the topic of collaboration between Jews and communists returned with force, and strengthened mythological images of Jews building triumphant arches for the Red Army and welcoming them with bread and salt; of vindictive Jewish officers in the secret police and almighty Jewish commissioners.[890] In short, one could observe the return of an explanation of the events of July 1941 as an act of vengeance.

Another returning motif was the fear of the opinion of western audiences ("What will they think of us abroad?"). A decade earlier, similar fears concerned "Neighbors". Although the form of transferring the horrible truth changed, oddly interpreted concern about Poland's good name remained the same, as well as the rule not to discuss the skeletons in one's closet with outsiders. Strong critics of the film emphasised that the government, which financially supported production, also funded negative PR for Poland: an anti-Polish movie with taxpayers' money. Those who wrote such words, and there were many of them, apparently disregarded the fact that the debate around the Jedwabne pogrom had met with a very positive reception outside Poland. Honest discussion about Poland's difficult past and a willingness to confess their sins against Jews gained general admiration and respect.

Naturally, there were many more objections to the film, relating to its artistic value, aesthetic convention and stylistic mistakes, which belittled the value and message of the movie. The final scene of the movie, in which the main

890 See: np. P. Zychowicz, *Polacy, Żydzi, kolaboracja, Holokaust*, "Uważam Rze" 19-25 XI 2012; P. Semka, *Kolejna przekroczona granica*, "Uważam Rze" 19-25 XI 2012.

character is crucified on a barn door, was regarded as particularly kitsch and it was analysed and interpreted differently, even by admirers of "Pokłosie".

National Catholic media, particularly internet portals, also lynched the actor who played the leading part, Maciej Stuhr, who had until then been the darling of Polish audiences, known mostly for his comedic roles. The actor firmly defended the content and message of the film in all interviews he gave to press and television. Some critics believed it to be evidence of his anti-Polish attitude and Jewish origin and directed numerous accusations and invectives at him, including anti-Semitic phrases. In different circles, Maciej Stuhr transformed from the audience's favourite to an object of open hatred. More moderate critics believed that he exceeded his professional role as an actor by playing a moralist and an educator and,according to them, it was the director, not Stuhr, who should be the advocate of his own film. Pasikowski, however, did not feel obliged to explain or defend his picture, which, according to him, should defend itself. Believing so and protecting his privacy (which he often emphasised) the director consequently refused to participate in television discussions about "Pokłosie". His letter published by "Gazeta Wyborcza" explains the reasons behind this choice. In the letter, Pasikowski also defended Stuhr and anointed him in the role of the film's advocate. The director suggested that all critical letters, invectives and imprecations should be addressed to him (not Stuhr) because he ignored them anyway.[891]

The debate about "Pokłosie" also included affirmative reviews and statements. Most of them were published in "Gazeta Wyborcza", but also: "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Więź" monthly, the internet portal lewica.pl as well as "Dwutygodnik", "Kultura Liberalna" and "Krytyka Polityczna". An affirmative tone, however, does not exclude critical remarks relating to the content and construction of the film. The authors included criticism but from a completely different perspective. They did not look for historical inaccuracies because they did not interpret the film according to the factual order of events in Jedwabne – they even warned against such an interpretation. Considering the content of the film, they emphasised how deeply true it was and how strongly it was anchored in various examples of social attitudes. Most importantly, they did not share fears about how the film would be received abroad or its supposed anti-Polish tone. It is worth noticing that anti-Polonism was a constantly repeated accusation used also by those who did not see the film and openly declared that they had no intention to. One of them was Jarosław Kaczyński, the president of the Law and Justice party. On the contrary, some defenders of "Pokłosie" stressed that the film was actually pro-Polish as it followed the tradition of necessary, critical

891 W. Pasikowski, *Nie będę przepraszał za "Pokłosie"*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19 XI 2012.

patriotism that is not based on blind apology and affirmation of national past but demands a critical approach.

Therefore, the debate over Pasikowski's film did not transform the repetitive scenario of arguments over Polish complicity in the Holocaust. It did not disturb old mechanisms or roles that were once assigned. It only cemented the division (described e.g. by the social psychologist Michał Bilewicz) between the liberal, leftist Poland, ready to face its difficult past and the rightist Poland – repressing this past in the name of sanctifying the Polish nation. This polarisation, naturally, includes numerous simplifications and generalisations but the core of it is noticeable.

Another observation by Bilewicz, however, does not apply to the debate over Jedwabne. In one of his articles, the psychologist claimed that Polish reactions to Gross's books exemplify the so-called sensitivity effect. It means that the same information that is critical to one's nation hurts much more when it is heard from the mouth of a stranger than from one's fellow citizen.[892] Admittedly, this theory was proved right during the debate over "Neighbors", "Fear" or "Golden Harvest". Many opponents of Gross called him an "American" or "Jewish" sociologist and emphasised his strangeness in various ways. Needless to say, evaluating his work in these categories is not only unproductive but also illustrates a fundamental malevolent intention to discredit the author by emphasising his 'foreignness'.

Władysław Pasikowski, however, is Polish through-and-through, permanently resident in the country by the Vistula and is a director who makes films about tough guys for tough guys. The sensitivity effect explains nothing, even if one linked the film directly to the "foreign" Gross and interpreted it as its screen version. This time, it was a one hundred percent Pole who told the story of a difficult past to his fellow citizens; it was him who brought them the mirror. He used the potential of mass media – a film screened all around Poland, which is soon going to be released on DVD and BLUERAY. He revealed our open secrets about murdering Jews, hiding these crimes and the negative attitude of the majority to those who decide to break the silence by representing them in a thriller-style film, addressed to a wider audience. Until then, knowledge had been accessible only to insiders and readers interested in professional literature published by the Centre for the Holocaust Research or the Jewish Historical Institute, everything was all right and the defenders of the nation could sleep peacefully – the influence of these publications is microscopic and does not reach social consciousness.

892 M. Bilewicz, *Efekt wrażliwości. Rabunek i ludobójstwo*, "Znak" 2011, no. 3.

Pasikowski disturbed their peace. He made the first decent film about the attitudes of Poles towards the Holocaust in the history of Polish cinema, without the figures of the Polish Righteous – crucial in Polish discourse, including cinematography, without balancing good and bad and, most importantly, without a preferential attitude. "Gross's literature became widely available" – many participants in the debate on "Pokłosie" repeated, including Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski and other authors of important publications about Polish self-appointed participation in the Holocaust. Most importantly, the truth became widely available – the truth that lies in unmarked, shallow graves scattered around the country that hide the remains of Jews murdered by their Polish neighbours.[893] This fact was the one that most scared declared critics of Pasikowski's film and made them unleash an arsenal of charges against him. Paradoxically, however, their responses actually strengthened the credibility of the film and made them into involuntary protagonists who complemented the screenplay. The sensitivity effect worked but in a different way. Defenders of Poland's good name, sensitive to everything that is said about Poles, stepped out against him because they were scared that a popular director, using mass media tools, expressed his opinion and said something people did not want hear.

Considering what has been already stated, it may be concluded that after years of silence and forgetting about the Holocaust, about the attitude of Polish bystanders and the Polish-Jewish past, the topic returned and became the subject of public reflection. As has been already noted, all the prevailing debates were held according to the same pattern and divided participants in a similar way. This regularity suggests that the patterns will repeat during future debates on the subject.

Why do Poles find it hard to agree on the Polish-Jewish past and refuse to let the subject be thoroughly examined? Prevailing debates or even mentions of these questions have demonstrated that the subject touches a sensitive sphere, starts defensive mechanisms and mobilises defenders of the national innocence paradigm. One of the most important reasons behind these reactions is certainly resistance to the adoption of previously repressed information. All the previous debates have revealed serious gaps and deformations in Polish national memory, which results from the processes of collective forgetting.

Nevertheless, these processes are not the only explanation of the fact that each and every attempt to examine the Polish-Jewish past initiates various defensive mechanisms. An additional barrier is certainly the Polish "innocence ob-

893 See: J. Grabowski, *Prawda leży w mogiłach*, "Więź" 2011, no. 8-9.

session"[894] that manifests itself whenever facts colliding with the heroic and martyr vision of national history are revealed. The impossibility of overcoming this "obsession" significantly undermines all debates relating to Polish sins and omissions towards Jews.

This problem is even more complex and concerns important components of national identity. As one can easily notice, defenders of the national innocence paradigm, who immediately line up whenever the subject of the Polish-Jewish past appears in the centre of public debate, do it in the name of the offended and slandered nation. In the national-Catholic press, the word "nation" is written in capitals and "Polishness", "fatherland" or "patriotism" are used as punctuation marks. Idealisation of the national community and belief in its innocence and uniqueness are constitutive elements of the mentality of parts of Polish society, and romantic, messianic myths organise their thoughts. These processes significantly limit the ability to notice and acknowledge Poland's complex past, overshadow whatever demands condemnation, limit insight and make the past seem one-dimensional. Thus, the debates and conflicts over the Polish-Jewish past and memory have in fact concerned Polish identity. Those who argued were only Poles (not Poles and Jews) and the stake in this game of memory was mostly Polish identity, not some Polish-Jewish consensus.

There are also additional factors influencing the fact that examination and honest evaluation of the Polish-Jewish past faces serious resistance in Poland and evokes emotional responses. One of them is modern anti-Semitism, which is not only a margin of public life and does not result – as some people claim – from lack of education or rural/small town origin. Every discussion about the Polish-Jewish past wakes up anti-Semitic phobias. Anti-Semitic rhetoric, clichés and stories were in the very centre of the debates analysed in this book and they were used not only by journalists of marginal Catholic and nationalist magazines but also by the Polish elites. Although they differed in the level of literality and euphemism, the origin of the anti-Semitic matrix was the same. The heritage of the interwar nationalist camp, reanimated in the People's Republic of Poland, has been constantly reproduced. Nationalist traditions are cultivated, and leading Polish politicians refer to them as their legacy. Thus, one can say that the Polish mentality has not been modernised and until it has, debates about the Polish-Jewish past will follow their prevailing course.

Another factor that hinders Poles in confessing their sins against Jews and acknowledging exceptionality of the Holocaust is "victimisation competition" between Poles and Jews. This competition determined the course of the debates,

894 The term was borrowed from an essay by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir. See: J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Rzeczy mgliste*, Sejny 2004, s. 13-23.

particularly the conflicts over Auschwitz-Birkenau. Poles do not accept the image of World War II outside Poland, i.e. that it is perceived through the prism of the Holocaust. They believe that such an image obscures the uniqueness of their own suffering, which they cherish and hope the world will recognise. Thus, they refuse to acknowledge the distinctiveness of Jewish martyrdom, in fear that if they do, the memory of their own suffering will become secondary.[895] Victimisation competition may explain why most Poles do not acknowledge Jews as main victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau and do not consider this place to be the symbol of the Holocaust. To some extent, this also explains why, during so many debates, particularly the one after publication of "Neighbors", many participants decided to remind everyone about Polish martyrdom during the occupation, particularly about the suffering supposedly caused by Jews.

There are still two important questions to be asked at the end. Can the prevailing debates be regarded as an element of the process of the reconstruction of Polish memory of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations during the World War II? Have they provided a reason for moral cleansing? Undoubtedly, the debate over the Jedwabne pogrom was a chance to re-evaluate the past and for moral purification. It was the longest, deepest and most multi-threaded debate on the Polish-Jewish past of all. At the same time, it was the most difficult as it forced Poles to find themselves in the roles of perpetrators of one's own misery. Brave voices of critical self-reflection were, for the first time, not drowned out by defenders of the Polish reputation. This debate undoubtedly helped Poles to speak about their difficult past. Unfortunately, one cannot say the same about the debates over "Fear", "Golden Harvest", or the film "Pokłosie". Aggressive responses were also present in the debate over the article in "Der Spiegel" about the various forms of complicity of European citizens in the extermination of Jews. Perhaps we need more time to frame certain events into national memory. Michał Bilewicz is right in saying that thanks to debates over Gross's books and without the awareness of agitated critics, the "sleepyhead effect" will start to work. This means that the key content of "Fear", "Neighbors" and "Golden Harvest" will live their own lives, independently from their source, fading from our memory. Thus, if we are asked whether Poles murdered Jews in Jedwabne and other towns, whether they murdered them also after the war, we will give a positive answer that will not be anchored in Gross's books – maybe we will recall them after a moment of reflection. Poles, as Bilewicz shrewdly observed, "will need some more time to forget about the 'vampire of historiography'; however, we can be almost certain that they will not forget the facts publicised by Gross as they expanded the Polish horizon of imagination about what was

895 Ireneusz Krzemiński's observation

possible during the Nazi occupation and during the postwar years". In this context, Gross's books should be appreciated as "a tool for mass dissemination of knowledge about history."[896] "Pokłosie" by Pasikowski also became such a tool.

The process of the reconstruction of Polish memory of the Holocaust has been developing for a relatively short time and it is impossible to catch up with this backlog quickly. Therefore, there are yet many issues that need national self-examination and drawing out of silence and oblivion. The Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust were usually analysed by referring to a very comfortable category of a bystander – one of the three attitudes distinguished by the historian Raul Hilberg.[897] However, as Elżbieta Janicka notes, in the light of the knowledge that we have, the concept loses its relevance. Instead, she proposes to call this attitude an "insider participant observation". Referring to Hilberg, Janicka writes:

> The perspective offered by the scholar is inadequate. Bystander? Neither "stander" nor "by". But we still lack the language to call this position – the position of Poles that certainly is not a position of a bystander. [...] Because we must ask: is an involved – literally and metaphorically – bystander still a bystander? The Polish position was not in the middle and it was not outside. Neither was it formalised in any way. Categories of participation or aid in a crime may seem – and I believe they do – too simple and too narrow at the same time. In other words: so simplistic that they "catch" only the most obvious and undisputed manifestations of the phenomenon. How should we classify the so-called indifference? I claim that due to previous "preparation", "introduction to the subject", "acquaintance", there was nothing of this sort. I would suggest the term "insider participant observation" for solely "participant observation" is too little. It would be conducted in thought, word, deed and omission. In this category – I believe – there is space for a multitude and nuance of manifestations.[898]

Increasingly often, constantly developed knowledge makes us sit on the side of those who have their complicity in the Holocaust. This way or another, the process of the reconstruction of the Polish memory of the Holocaust started. In 2003, the first Polish school textbook about the Holocaust was released and, in the same year in Warsaw, the Centre for the Holocaust was created in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. At the end of June 2007, in Muranów – a former Jewish district – the foundation act for the

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896 See: M. Bilewicz, *Nie tylko o "Strachu". Psychologia potocznego rozumienia historii*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały" 2008, no. 4, s. 524-526.

897 See: R. Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish catastrophe, 1933-1945*, Aaron Asher Books, NY, 1992

898 E. Janicka, *Mord rytualny z aryjskiego paragrafu. O książce Jana Tomasza Grossa "Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści"*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 2008, no. 2.

Museum of the History of Polish Jews was laid. In spring 2013 there was an official opening. Certainly, these are symptoms of restoring the memory of former Polish citizens and the tragic reason for their absence. Let us hope that the memory of Polish Jews will not be limited only to the Holocaust. We still, however, have a lot of painful things to say about our attitudes to the Holocaust and Jews.

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