Fear and Loathing.

Anti-Semitism in the Polish cultural code and the discussion on the shape of Polish nation.

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I would like to dedicate this work to my Dad, who has been a help for me throughout the year, and who is happy for what I'm doing.

My special thanks to bubliki for their close friendship, and to Juli, who is always wonderful.

Introduction.

> Sleep therapy [concerning historical revisionism] is ineffective. The virus of anti-Semitism has crept in to infect the young generation who have no knowledge or experience of the topic but whose members respond to the appropriate signals and slogans. Let them at least know what they are talking about and what they think they believe in.[1]

The 1968 anti-Zionist, Communist regime steered campaign rendered Poland a virtually Jew-free country. The government, originally creating social divisions along class lines, now, led by Władysław Gomułka, used the negative anti-Jewish sentiments to redirect antigovernment tensions towards the remaining group of around 30.000 Polish Jews. Based on an anti-Catholic ideology, in an ironically pro-nationalist move, the Party fulfilled Roman Dmowski's – a virulent Catholic, nationalist and anti-Semite – dream of an ethnic state. The building of a new, legitimate post-1989 Polish state reopened the discussion about the understanding of the "nation." Geneviève Zubrzycki describes a major question of that discussion about Polish future, asking if it should be "defined by Catholicism, as its traditional motto *Polonia semper fidelis* (Poland always faithful) calls for, and therefore should the state be confessional, or should Polishness be understood in secular terms, with a state transcending religious membership through official religious neutrality?"[2] The 1989 transformation then triggered a debate on how the nation in the new state should be defined, whether on civic-national or ethnic-national basis; the struggle which appeared then between liberals, secularists and leftists on one side, and rightists, patriots and devout Catholics on the other, is still ongoing. Since newly created parties appeared in a political void, their representatives needed to delve into history in the quest for legitimization,

[1] Jerzy Jedlicki, "How to Deal with This," *Polityka*, February 10, 2001.
[2] Geneviève Zubrzycki, "*We, the Polish Nation*: Ethnic and Civic Visions of Nationhood in Post-Communist Constitutional Debates," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 5, (Oct., 2001), 632.

and as "Jewish question" was significant in Poland, it reemerged in the political discourse.[3] This struggle was reflected also in an opposition between the so-called cosmopolitism and superior matter of national benefit, perceived by the stringent supporters of the latter as contradictory *per se*. Finally, those seconding an ethnic vision of the state (ethno-nationalists) would find their roots in the interwar Poland and Endecja (National Democracy, ND) with their conservative and patriotic perception of Poland, while the inclusivist civic-nationalists would find their heritage in the Jagiellonian Commonwealth, that of variety of cultures and home of tolerance. Challenging the perception of the past – a subject matter of the paper – began in the early 1990s, when the group of liberals accused the conservative right of holding anti-Semitic views, and the other replied with the accusation of lenience towards post-Communists. In any case, the fight for defining the nation is the fight for the undecided majority, that one that is in the middle, and position of which can go in either of directions. This thesis treats of that struggle.

The identity is intrinsically connected to the history and memory of the nation's past, therefore a certain visions of history shared by society, or large parts thereof, allow for creation and maintenance of those identities. When the history is to be challenged and this new vision clashes with memories of glorious past, strong opposition voices its indignation. Such opposition cannot however prevent the discussion, since the past never fails to fall a prey of a process of revaluation, inevitable in a pluralistic society. In German, the word *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* describes a struggle to come to terms with one's own past. Such an identity debate has been taking place in Poland since 1989, a part of a wider trend in the post-Communist countries, where pluralism of ideology was hitherto non-existent. That debate thus determines the shape of identity of the majority of Polish society, and the lines along which next generations will build

[3] Similarly András Kovács writes in his book *A kéznél lévõ Idegen. Antiszemita elõítéletek a mai Magyarországon.* (PolgArt, Budapest: 2005).

their character. The majority of society, that, which in democracy has its decisive voice, will have to accept certain stances vis-à-vis the identity creating historical memory; either it will accept the truth and move forward, or it will reject it and dwell in a traditional preconception-tainted denial, where history is perceived through various stereotypes.

The 21st century discussion, concerning the dark past of Polish-Jewish relations, was commenced with the publication of Jan T. Gross's, a Polish-Jewish sociologist and historian, book "Neighbors," which triggered a discussion on the behavior of ethnic Poles during WW II. A debate that was very emotional, since, as will be presented, Jewish question is important in Polish historical memory. The book suggested that Poles were active perpetrators of several crimes directed against Jews. This debate lasted several months and ended with apologies for the crimes by the president of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Has this discussion and its outcome changed the Polish memory of that period? Has this debate eradicated the heroic notions about Polish past generations? According to the 2002, that is published immediately after the Jedwabne discussion, Ireneusz Krzemiński's report on Polish anti-Semitism, 65% of Poles claimed that Poles have acted more nobly than other nations. Compared to 1992 this number grew by almost twenty percent. In Poland, as it will be later presented, patriotic and purist vision of the nation is closely connected to the level of religiosity, naturally of the Catholic persuasion. The more religious the person is, the higher the mentioned patriotic notion, therefore the more secular the person the more he or she is likely to critically reconsider the history. [4] All in all, the more religious the views, the more idealized the perception of history and a more prevalent notion of the war Polish sufferings. Those, who attempt to analyze, digest and learn to live with the past less critical view on Polish history would much less frequently (50%) admit greater Jewish

[4] Ireneusz Krzemiński, *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z Badań.* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2004), 135-136.

sufferings compared to the remainder of society. (70%).[5] This data shows that the eagerness to incorporate those new historical propositions has been overcome by a defensive rejection. The history lost with memory.

A subsequent, after "Neighbors," challenge to history Gross expressed in *Fear*,[6] which was recently (January 2008) published in Poland. In short, the author argues that, in Poland, anti-Semitism existed not only before World War II and during the war, but remained at least as salient thereafter, and there exist a clear continuity of those attitudes. He analyses the postwar events in Poland, with the main focus on the *Kielce* pogrom, and the myth of 'Żydokomuna', which he meticulously dismantles, as an anti-Semitic stereotype. Not to stall over the details here, it should be stated that Gross's main goal seems to be to challenge the prevailing understanding of the Polish contemporary, i.e. post-1945, history. The fervent and ongoing debate in Polish media questions the author's lack of a general historical background, use of sources and, most importantly, his generalizations of anti-Semitism on the Polish society at large.

In this paper, all those arguments will be presented as reflected in the discussion on the book, which inevitably fits in a broader discussion of competition of historical narratives in creation of identity. The aim then is to look into the debate and see what responses it triggers. The underlying premise is that anti-Semitic notions are present in Polish cultural code presenting the Jew as a (threatening) other. The synergy of various conceptions embedded in that code, such as 'Żydokomuna', and their accessibility in the Polish collective memory, provides for a palette of defense tools against Gross's accusations. They are employed by common people, intellectuals, politicians and, finally, by professional historians. Long-lasting notions, although

[5] Krzemiński, 145.
[6] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: an Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York : Random House, 2006). Polish edition: Jan T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści* (Kraków: Znak, 2008).

continuously rebutted, are still considered as historical facts, e.g. the numbers of Jewish prosecutors and judges, who served the Communist regime.

The goal is to understand why are the long dismantled and invalidated arguments and myths still existent in the present-day discourse. Why are the anti-Semitic tropes still present in Polish debate? Why is history and memory of Jews, despite their negligible position in Polish society today, a bone of contention in public discussions? Why are people, neither connected to, nor particularly interested in Jewish matters, and not anti-Semites, so preoccupied with the history of Jews in Poland? This paper argues, that for Poles a favorable memory of the historical events is very important for identity formation, and because they were present during the defining periods of Polish identity creation, that is in the interwar period and during the war. That period is thus crucial in determining the shape of the nation. That is why historical attempts, which challenge that memory cause such strong debates as the one around "Fear," and earlier about "Neighbors." It is, further, reinforced by memories and narratives transmitted by those, who still remember those events. Those debates, focused around the identity wake hidden anti-Semitic prejudices, latent in Polish consciousness, because anti-Semitism is a more or less acknowledged part of a Polish cultural code, expressed in political and identity discourses. In order to investigate this Polish debate, I will turn to an analysis of Polish newspaper and magazine articles from the immediate period after the publication of "Fear", interviews and public debates, and Internet fora (Mancewicz calls the Internet users' reaction a *virtual pogrom*[7]), which to an extent, represent the majority of the opinions among the society, and show which notions are accepted into the cultural code by the society. I expect to find anti-Semitic

[7] Stanisław Mancewicz, "Od apelu do apelu," *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków, January 25, 2008.*

utterances in all those media.[8] This paper recognizes three groups of Poles, according to how they position themselves towards the book; those rejecting the book's premises, those who support Gross's utterances, and those in the center, who constitute the majority, and who can be convinced to second one of the stances.

The present paper suggests that the discussion surrounding the book is not about Jews and Poles or Jewish and Polish relations – it is in fact about Poles. Similarly, Adam Michnik states that "this book is an element of a Polish-Polish dialogue," and effect of which should be a look "deep into our own history, deep in our conscience."[9] Therefore such perceptions of history as characterized by Polish benevolence towards minorities, or the popular mobilization of Catholic Poles in helping the Jews escape Holocaust, become revaluated. The identity, founded on that memory is challenged, and thus the shape of the nation.

It is important to observe if Poles are eager to accept the proposed facts and humbly carry the inherited responsibility, or if they want to altogether dismiss historical criticism as an unnecessary threat to already established vision of a nation. If they, however, are mature enough to incorporate those notions, another question should be posed – is the discussion reaching the majority of society and is it really influencing the identities of the members of society at large? The author assumes a skeptical stance in that respect. The paper finally argues that understanding the presence of today's anti-Semitism in the historical memory is a touchstone of the development of Poland as a democratic, open, and tolerant society. Because only in such a society can, critical view on the history, the disclosure of the grievances kept in secret and full repentance be really performed.

[8] Two main daily newspapers will be analyzed: right-wing conservative *Rzeczpospolita* and liberal left-oriented *Gazeta Wyborcza.* Other dailies and weelkied will be also consulted.
[9] Adam Michnik, "Z antysemityzmu trzeba się spowiadać," debate in Kraków, January 24, 2008.

1. History and memory.

> If we want to grasp the power and understand the shape of modern nations and nationalisms, we must trace the origins and formation of nations, as well as their possible future course, over long period of time (la longue duree), and not tie their existence and formation to a particular period of history or to the processes of modernization.[10]

1.1 History as a problem.

This paper understands history in context of long-term historical structures (la longue duree) which require total analyses. The reason for the acceptance of that concept is the style of writing of the author of "Fear," Jan T. Gross, who – along with some other contemporary scholars – recognizes the complexity of the Jewish problem in Poland and anti-Semitism, expressed both in its persistence over a long period of time and its sociological dimension. The longue duree concept was developed in the beginnings of the 20th century by the Annales school, according to which history proceeds at different rates of speed, and historian's task is to "examine and determine the rhythm of historical processes."[11] The Annales School's, or as Peter Burke suggests movement, approach is characterized by: substitution of the traditional narrative of events by problem-oriented analysis, concern with a whole range of human activities instead of just political history and an interdisciplinary approach, required to fulfill the two first. And so, according to that concept, historian should not only stop avoiding any extra-discipline aid, but search for additional tools provided by history, economics, anthropology or sociology.[12] Jan T. Gross declared in an interview concerning his book, that he wrote a historical work in a Western manner, where "a historical book is the one that problemizes the question, not simply describes

[10] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and memories of the nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.
[11] Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xxi.
[12] Peter Burke, *The French historical revolution: the Annales School, 1929-89* (Oxford : Polity Press, 1990).

it."[13] With those words he joins the longue duree school of historiography. And, accordingly Pierre Nora suggests "return to event,"[14] history-as-testimony which places history close to the journalistic type of history writing. The style in which Jan T. Gross's books are written serves as an example of such type of writing. His books are full of first-person testimonies, both gathered through personal interviews or collected in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute based in Warsaw. Gross then follows the tradition of the la longue duree perception of history, which also reflects in his striving to find connections between periods of time, such as prewar and postwar anti-Semitism and look for complex explanation of the analyzed problems.

Finally, every history should be a social history, able to separate but also to compare the practice, ideology and political views, in order to draw a panoramic view of the events.[15] According to Jacques Le Goff, another representative of the school the conflation of history and memory is an often mistake – memory is a raw material for history and cannot be mixed. And the latter – along with historiography – has to "seek objectivity and remain based on the belief in historical *truth*." Importantly, it is the memory that is more likely to be distorted than history. The dialectical process that characterizes the relationship between memory and history amounts to a reversible influence of history on the memory.[16]

1.2 History and collective memory.

In order to capture the dynamics of history and memory conceptual tools will be presented pertaining to the relationship between both. Relationship between memory and history has been so captured by Le Goff: "[Collective memory] appears as essentially mythic, deformed,

[13] Jan T. Gross, "Strach polski, Strach żydowski," interview for *Polityka* no.28, 2006.
[14] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* v.1 **(**New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998).
[15] Stuart Clark, *The Annales School: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 1999).
[16] Le Goff.

and anachronistic. But it constitutes the lived reality of the never-completed relation between present and past. It is desirable that historical information (lavished on us by professional historians, popularized at schools, and – one could hope – by the mass media) correct this false traditional history. History must illuminate memory and help it rectify its errors."[17] The history is more nuanced and complex. In his book on the ethno-symbolic approach to nationalism, Anthony D. Smith, introduces the historical ethno-symbolism theory reconciling the approaches to nationalism of modernists and substantialists and says: "what gives the nationalists its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern national intelligentsias."[18] The collective memory is thus selective per se, depending which group one belongs to, and that membership suggests different modes of conduct and perception of the past that continues within one group.[19] And so, if in a group of Polish combatants of WW II or descendants of the anti-Communist underground certain notions pertaining to the past are preserved, they start living their own lives.

Maurice Halbwachs speaks of collective frameworks, the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord with the predominant thoughts of the society, of a particular epoch.[20] The most elementary and the most stable among the frameworks of collective memory are the verbal conversations. They fail, however, to encompass all memories and retain only isolated details and discontinuous elements of our representation, making the past frequently distorted in the act of deconstruction.[21] Halbwachs

[17] Le Goff, 111.
[18] Smith, *Myths*, 9.
[19] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* **(**Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[20] Halbwachs, 40.
[21] Ibid., 182.

argues that human memory can function only in a collective context, through institutionalized state events or recollections and accounts of certain groups of people.

As Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka suggest, the most important delimitation to be established, is the one separating the *communicative* or *everyday* memory from the cultural memory. The cultural memory is "characterized by a high degree of nonspecialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization,"[22] that memory is confined to a group and is socially mediated. So created social memory, as Pierre Nora defines it, includes historical narratives.[23] Paul Connerton asserts that "it is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory,"[24] and Iwona Irwin-Zarecka argues that collective memory is not a *natural* result of historical experience, but a product of a great deal of work of large numbers of people, who are all trying to secure the "public articulation for the past."[25] And this is the reason why there are differences in perspectives and opinions as well as frequent disagreements as to the principles. The author claims that collective memory is both a selective and mediated version of the past – even contrasted with historical findings – but that does "not absolve it from judgments of accuracy."[26] Therefore, the findings of history should influence and reshape the memory, so that the latter represents an "accurate" description of the past. Finally, cultural memory works though a process of reconstruction, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.

In his essay on the Polish collective memory of Jews, Zvi Gitelman writes: "[it] is not an inherent thing to be passed on but a resource to be mobilized…. Jews might be remembered in

[22] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, (Spring - Summer, 1995), 126.
[23] Nora.
[24] Paul Connerton, *How societies remember* **(**Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[25] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: the Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick [N.J.] : Transaction Publishers, 1994), 144.
[26] Ibid., 145.

order to explain the failures of the prewar republic and the advent of Communism."[27] The relationship between memory and history was reflected on by Andrzej Paczkowski, Gross's critic, who defined memory as a black and white and fragment-focused while history as providing an outlook characterized by all shades of grayness,[28] and criticized Gross for letting emotions coming from his memory influence his work. In any case, the difference between history and memory amounts to a discernment: the former is expressed in writing while the latter in media and public debates. They also both play different roles in creating identity; memory has much stronger influence and challenging it by history causes denial of the "book history."

1.3 Memory, history and creation of identity.

John R. Gillis so defines identity and the way it is preserved: "The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, the sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity."[29] In his introduction to a compilation of essays concerning the commemorative activity as a depiction of the memory-identity relationship, the same author asserts that the "notion of identity depends on the idea of memory, and vice versa. "Identities and memories are highly selective, inscriptive rather than descriptive, serving particular interests and ideological positions."[30] Its purpose is then to create a sense of community fulfilling a psychological need of identification with a group. Social identity theory claims that individuals, besides their personal, also possess a social identity in

[27] Zvi Gitelman, "Collective Memory and Contemporary Polish-Jewish Relations," in Joshua Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 278.
[28] Andrzej Paczkowski, "Gross, historyk z misją," Television debate, *TVN* January 19, 2008.
[29] John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: the History of a Relationship," introduction to John R.Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.
[30] Gillis, 4.

various groups to which they belong,[31] with a nation as an especially salient one. National identity, this thesis deals with, is a product of both *natural* continuity and conscious manipulation, a stance somewhere between social constructionism and essentialism.[32] Such manipulation is achievable through commemorations of past events, particular ideology or preserving symbolic sites of memory. Smith argues for the ethno-symbolic approach to nationalism, suggesting that historians play a crucial role in understanding, reinforcing or dismantling the memories, thus strengthening the particular understanding of the national identity.[33]

The role of religion is often neglected when it comes to the problem of nationalism and the creation of a national identity. This approach should be refuted, as often they pair up or even conflate with each other to create a powerful mixture. Therefore the religious identity in such cases as Poland, cannot be construed as irrelevant. "Religious identities," Smith suggests, "derive from the spheres of communication and socialization, and they're based on alignments of culture and its elements – values, symbols, myths and traditions, often codified in customs and rituals."[34] Poles are among those ethnic communities, singled out by Smith, whose identities are based on religious criteria of differentiation. The process of conflating those two crucial elements of Polish identity harkens back to the Partition period, especially in the later, post-1880 phase, which will be discussed later. The culture becomes perceived in a nationalist way, where Jan Matejko's monumental historical painting of great Polish battles, Sienkiewcz's patriotic epics and poems from Stanisław Staszic are praised for the expression of the essence of Polish nation.

[31] Henri Tajfel and Colin Fraser (ed.), *Introducing social psychology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).
[32] For the review of the literature on identity see: Karen A. Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 23, (1997), pp. 385-409.
[33] Anthony D. Smith, *National identity* (Published London : Penguin Books, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).
[34] Smith, *National,* 6.

On the other hand, writers of Jewish origin, who would not follow the classical way of writing and whose main weapon was irony, satire and mockery, such as Julian Tuwim or Antoni Słonimski are disowned by the supporters of the ethno-nationalist vision of the nation. They are considered anti-nationalist, which in the interwar period, would only amount to strengthen the "otherness" of Jewish culture. In the ethnic model the actions can be justified by an appeal to the "will of the people" (and people in a sense of the Polak-katolik, i.e. Pole-Catholic) something that has been recently done in Poland, when Prime Minister Kaczyński criticized a ruling of the Supreme Court on the basis of being incoherent with the expectations of the Polish society.

National identities are then historically constructed and reconstructed, thus when the bases of the identity are undermined, the identity is too. Gillis then suggests that the national memory is shared by people who have never met or heard of one another, but who however regard themselves as having a common history. They are "bound together as much by forgetting as by remembering."[35] And as Allan Megill suggests, the relationship between identity and memory is such, that if the former is problemized, the latter becomes valorized.[36] Thus the threatening external forces may direct focus at collective memory at its shape, making a challenge of memory also a challenge to identity. Thence, preoccupation with memory rises when there is insecurity about the identity, a phenomenon observable in today's Poland.

On the role of a historical narrative as recorded in memory, Steinlauf notes that in Poland, the role of personal narrative, next to the one of media, is playing a crucial role in the perception of 20th century events. He emphasizes the role of Polish private narrative "a cornerstone of popular resistance to Communism," however "Polish private narratives of the war punctuated by rumors, resentments, and silences inherited from the war years and the years

[35] Gillis, 7.
[36] Allan Megill, "History, Memory, Identity," *History of the Human Sciences*, vol.11 no.3, 1998.

immediately following, were a legacy primarily subject to distortion."[37] He suggests that the knowledge about Polish history was preserved through the period of Communism in personal accounts of family and friends, and was transmitted behind closed doors. History can be a burden, an obstacle to the sense of common identity and positive perception of one's own group. As Zvi Gitelman rightly points out, "in postwar Poland, increasingly, the memory of Jews is a transmitted image, not a personal memory,"[38] embedded in the cultural code of the society.

[37] Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the dead : Poland and the memory of the Holocaust* **(**Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 74.
[38] Gitelman, 276.

2. Polish identity.

> [N]ation without a past is a contradiction in terms, as what makes the nation is the past.[39]

2.1 The shaping of the identity.

Religion plays a great role in Polish identity formation and its maintenance. Peculiar ethnic composition makes Poland one of the most homogenous societies in the world, in which all minorities – be they national, religious or ethnic – amount to merely 4 per cent of the society. This chapter shows how the identity was formed, or else, how the Polish memory interprets certain events and which of them are especially salient.

In the Polish identity creation process certain events are emphasized as having the strongest influence on the shaping of Polish identity. Particularly the period from 14th to mid-18th centuries is remembered as a climax of Polish statehood and power. The use of that so-called "Golden Age" of the Polish nation – a coherent group of Polish-speakers, Catholics and patriots – glorifies the nation as a stronghold of Christianity and its sacrifice for higher cause. In the popular narrative shared by ethno-nationalists, Polish was always the prevalent language, spoken among all layers of society. This is the time period which is interestingly also used by the opponents of the heroic vision of Polish past, those which support the multiethnic and multicultural state, "Jagiellonian Poland." Here, different filters are employed to fish for different aspects of history, which define the identity of the recipient. In reality, however, only in the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, language, along with the Catholic denomination, became the markers of Polishness. The one, who was to be accepted among the Poles was to speak Polish at

[39] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today" In: Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the nation* **(**London: Verso, 1996), 255.

home and profess Catholicism. And analogically, the exclusion was based on those criteria, making minorities perceived as foreign. Especially Jews, who were not – unlike most of the other in the turn of the centuries – limited to the eastern borders of former Commonwealth, but lived among Poles in large cities, were by their conspicuousness more likely to be exposed to hostility.

The origins of the shift in understanding Polishness can be traces back to the dismemberment of the 18th century Poland by three neighboring states; Prussia, Tsarist Russia and the Austrian Empire. Steinlauf rightly points out that "during Partitions, Polish national consciousness was cultivated above all in the Church."[40] And that is when a peculiar coincidence of rise of the significance of Catholicism for Polish identity and Polish nation building, which makes the Polish conflation of religion and nationalism so unique. A consequence of that was, that Catholicism, a universal religion, in Poland became appropriated by Polish nationalists, and that created a 20th century perception that borders of the religion overlap with the borders of nation. Today, John Radzilowski also suggests that Catholicism has always been the most important factor influencing Polish society and culture, and that is exactly why Gross's attack on the Church constitutes an attack at the very deepest layers of Polishness.[41]

This is also the time when the Polish romantic messianism was born, in which the Polish nation was to be called– after Adam Mickiewicz – as a *Christ of Nations*. In that context Irwin-Zarecka argues that the narrative of shared suffering reinforces the sense of moral obligation to the communal past and the sense of solidarity among those who share these *memories*.[42] And accordingly, the twentieth century Poland witnessed a trend to highlight the martyrological elements of history, with its dramatic battles fought to repel the enemy, usually of a different

[40] Steinlauf, 7.
[41] John Radzilowski, "*Strach* i rewizja polskiej historii," *Rzeczpospolita*, March 01-02, 2008.
[42] Irwin-Zarecka.

persuasion; Protestant Swedes or Orthodox Russians. The main writer supplying literature of that sort was Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916), the author of the extremely popular trilogy describing the turbulent 17th century, and fights with Swedes, Turks and Ukrainians. The popularity of those novels, which continues to this day, reflects the demand on the nationalist market. Today Marek J. Chodakiewicz writes that because of the Partitions, Poland's history should be understood from a perspective of colonialism. In this interpretation, Poland is a victim and thence should be listened to before a judgment is cast. "This is the only honest stance,"[43] understood as Poles – as victims – should have the exclusive right to write their own history.

Brian Porter notes that the fundamental shift in the definition of Polish identity took place when Poland entered the modern world and when a new form of nationalism emerged. That is when the "old forms of elite political culture became irrelevant as various mass movements burst onto the public stage and the vectors of power shifted toward *the people*."[44] Therefore, not only the *szlachta* (nobility) and intelligentsia that had hitherto defined the nation, but everyone who shared the same cultural values and spoke Polish was now a member. The adjective *modern* suggests that the nation became a means of establishing collective identity, and this according to Mendelsohn was in the Polish case "accompanied by anti-Semitism,"[45] entwining the Polish-Jewish relations with identity formation. It was "the intelligentsia's search for coherence and singularity, set against a world of irreducible multiplicity,"[46] that heavily contributed to building the nation around those characteristics. According to Porter, the fight for the nation in the mid-19th century and the one in the beginnings of the 20th was a fundamental change in its nature,

[43] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka," *Rzeczpospolita* November 18, 2006.
[44] Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
[45] Ezra Mendelssohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Word Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 41.
[46] Porter, 6.

while the former was characterized by a struggle *for* ideals of freedom and justice, the latter was a fight *against* external and internal enemies in an attempt to create a unified nation. It was then characterized by a rhetoric of exclusion, that eventually evolved into hatred; it was then not only the modernity that came to define the nation, but the way Polish intelligentsia imagined this modernity in the Polish context. Therefore, through certain interpretations of the representations of *us* and *them*, "nationalism and historiosophy of the nation were contested and variable, and the latter conditioned the former."[47]

2.2 Anti-Semitism and Polish identity.

The formation of the identity and the type of nationalism is strongly stigmatized by the presence of the "other" - which is a popular assumption among the scholars of nationalism – an alien tissue inimical to the majority of the society. In her study on the image of the Jew in the post-1880 until today, Joanna Michlic argues that for the identity formation the Jew represented and, to a lesser extent, still represents the defining *threatening other*.[48] The significance of the Jew as a *determinant of Polish national consciousness* in the second part of the 19th Century was also pinned down by a Polish scholar Alina Cała.[49] Zvi Gitleman accordingly suggests that when feelings of injustice are involved, such as the perceived Polish victimhood, even distant conflicts remain alive in the collective memory.[50] In that collective memory Jews occupy a particular place, they are outsiders, who have never acculturated and assimilated in the Polish society. Their presence throughout the ages should be seen through the ongoing dynamic process of

[47] Ibid., 8.
[48] Joanna Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: the image of the Jew from 1880 to the present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).
[10] Alina Cała, "The Question of the Assimilation of Jews in the Polish Kingdom (1864-1897): An Interpretive Essay," *Polin I* (1986): 130-150.
[50] Gitleman, 277.

creating the nation. Therefore history should be taken into consideration not as a set of events, but as a continuum of attitudes of generations, that influence each other. In accordance with the longue duree concept, Gross, Steinlauf and Michlic, all suggest that unfavorable attitudes toward Jews during and after World War II not only in the fear of Germans but also as an effect of the prewar legacy, which determined a prevalent model of the postwar Polish identity. When the postwar geographical and political changes occurred, Poland became an almost homogenous country, culturally, ethnically and religiously, the recipe for Polish understanding of a nation created in the eve of 20th century was already waiting to be applied. In this case, the perception preceded reality.

It is valid then to consider anti-Semitism as an ideology inherent to the Polish tradition and culture, something that allows for it to survive in the admittedly Jew-free society.[51] The concept of *cultural code* serves as an explanation for the accessibility of stereotypes, which dwell latent in Polish ideological repository. In this manner, Yehuda Bauer explains the way the centuries-old Christian hatred towards Judaism was easily transmitted to a modern culture. This transmission was possible thanks to the *tradition* of perceiving the Jew as an Other, which could be interpreted both in religious and secular terms.[52] Shulamit Volkov, in her famous article "Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code," suggests that Jews represent modernity in something she calls a "nationalist anti-modern Weltanschauung…. [which it] made possible the transfer of anti-Semitism into a short-hand substitute of an entire culture."[53] Those two elements fit ideally in the Polish version of anti-Semitism as embedded in culture. Especially a peculiar combination of the rising importance of Catholicism as a center of Polishness understood in linguistic and religious

[51] Sergio Della Pergola assesses the number at 3,500 Jews in Poland in 1992 In: Sergio DellaPergola, *"World Jewish Population 2002," American Jewish Year Book, 102*, (New York, 2002).
[52] Yehuda Bauer, "In Search of the Definition of Antisemitism" In: Michael Brown (ed.): *Approaches to Antisemitism* (New York, Jerusalem: American Jewish Committee, 1994).
[53] Shulamit Volkov "Antisemitism as s Cultural Code," In: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXIII, 1978, 38.

sense, with the wave of nationalisms that swept through the late 19th century Europe, created a special Polish dynamics of nationalism, in which Catholicism plays an extraordinary role in defining the nation. This centrality of Catholicism led to strengthening the anti-Semitic attitudes in a twofold way: firstly, the exclusiveness of nationalism stigmatized Jews as others, and secondly the Catholic tradition of anti-Judaism reinforced that stance. In this particular setting, anti-Semitic ideology grew rapidly.

The history of the Poles' attitudes towards minorities, and Jews in particular, was rather favorable during the Partition period, when e.g. Jews fought in both major uprisings (1830-31 and 1863-64). The situation changed around year 1881, when the Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in Petersburg, one of the organizers of the crime was a Jewish woman, a fact which spurred a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms all around the Pale of Settlement (covering roughly the former Polish territory incorporated to Tsarist Russia, and to which Jews were limited to live) which continued until 1884 and caused a complete redefinition of the position of Jews in the region. The rise of Russian anti-Jewish sentiments was accompanied by an increased hostility towards Jews from the ethnic Poles, who in light of solidifying nationalism and discontent with yet another failed uprising, moved to the inclusive positions, with Jews increasingly considered as outsiders. Influence on that rise in anti-Semitic sentiments was the abovementioned consolidation of the society leaning towards the conservative, traditionalist and Roman Catholic circles. In 1880s, as Michlic points out, the anti-Jewish tropes were introduced into the discourse of national politics by the core ethno-nationalist National Democracy (ND). Their ethno-nationalist approach to history and presence is the perception of an impermeable division between ethnically understood "us" and the rest – "them." The later significance of the ND in the interwar period signalized the expectations of society regarding the political means and goals

furthered by ethno-nationalists. The peculiarity of the meaning of Polishness is easily visible in the position of converts is in Poland. While conversion would have had in previous centuries allowed for integration into the Polish nation, now the process of assimilation, demanding conversion, was not easily attainable. A Jew, who wished to leave his faith, who already spoke fluent Polish, was still not to be considered truly Polish, invoking the memory of the infamous term *marrano*. Zvi Gitleman writes: "Even when more and more Jews began to lose their external markers and dress, speak, and eat like Poles, they were often resented for trying to *pass* and insinuate themselves into Polish society."[54] The language of exclusion, a part of the 20th century politics, allowed for the transformation of the independence-driven patriotism into a strongly anti-Semitic ideology.

Keely Stauter-Halsted suggests that the process of modernization implemented in the hitherto prevalent economic structure of the late 19th century Galicia, placed Jews and Catholics on a *sociological collision course*. Naturally, those processes fit in a broader trend in rise of the race-based anti-Jewish views in Eastern Europe, referred to as a *Jewish question*, concerning solving the problem of the presence of Jews as distinctively Jews, through emancipation and often assimilation. The city-bound movement of Jews caused "economic and political frustration of the Polish intelligentsia" and it was those from "that modern forms of anti-Semitism were first given voice in the public arena."[55]

2.3 Competing visions of nation and identity.

The discursive shaping of the identity between the intellectual elites and society is a two-way process, therefore the myths and perceptions of the Polish nations are reinforced and

[54] Gitelman.
[55] Robert Blodaum's introduction to Robert Blobaum (ed.), *Anti-Semitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* **(**Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

equipped with a legitimacy. The 1989 transformation brought changes in all spheres of Polish everyday life. Along with the economic and political changes, also the hitherto suppressed identity pluralism could be now fully expressed. In other words, the nation, that was to inhabit this state needed to be defined. The shape of a nation would be based on either the multicultural, secular, inclusive civic version (civic national) or rather the exclusive, religious and mono-cultural option (ethno-national) would be implemented. Naturally, those are ideal models, but they render the nature of that opposition.[56] This model – its shortcomings notwithstanding – serves best to describe the character of the division that exists within the Polish society and the polarization of stances along those two ideal models. In contemporary Poland "[t]he conflict between anti-Semitism and its opponents has long been part of a wider dispute between two visions of Poland, one nativist and xenophobic, the other outward-looking and European.… and its outcome will determine the place of Poland in the twenty-first century."[57]

According to Gross, the clash between two camps representing two opposing stances in the discussion is concentrated around the memory, not the history, the latter construed as an objective representation of the facts, with all shades of gray.[58] The black and white character of memory provides for an easy radicalization of one's own stance when confronted with a competing vision. The ethnic perception of a nation is a relatively new concept, with its origins preceding WW I, and dates back to the major reshaping of the European map. In Poland, which regained its independence in 1918, the ethnic perception of the nation became accordingly very salient. Eric Hobsbawm's radical modernist approach, has been criticized for not paying credit to

[56] George Schöpflin criticizes this simple divide civic against ethnic as going along the east-west lines, seeing eastern nationalism as *tribal* and *brutish*, and he says that "if there is an *Eastern* nationalism, there are perfectly good reasons for this evolution, not merely the cussedness of people who speak – insist on speaking – obscure and unpronounceable languages." George Schöpflin, *Nations, identity, power* (New York : New York University Press, 2000), 5.
[57] Introduction to Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism*, 18.
[58] Jan T. Gross, "Gross, historyk z misją," Television debate, *TVN* January 19, 2008.

the ethnic origins and myths, beliefs in choseness etc. This mixed approach, the European perception of the states as ethnic should be contributed to the outcome of the World War I and the Wilsonian plan of dividing Europe into ethnic-linguistic territorial states,[59] acknowledging the historical modernity of the concept of the nation, finds early pre-modern sources thereof.[60] Smith's concept seems best to describe the origins and content of nationalism, in any case, it appears very accurate for understanding Polish nationalism. Kenneth Thompson, who writes about the process of secularization in modernity, argues that although European Churches, unlike American, were less successful in meeting the needs of the wider society, the prominence of religion in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s suggests that "religion can still be a powerful source when combined with other discourses, such as nationalism."[61] So is the case of Poland.

An interesting analysis of two trends in historiography reflecting two opposing visions of the Polish nation, was presented in Joanna Michlic's article "The Soviet Occupation of Poland, 1939-41, and the Stereotype of the Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet Jew."[62] By using the image of the Jew as a supporter of Communism, or else, a popular notion of Judeo-Communism, she presents how (ethno)nationalist historians use the stereotype in writing history today. She names a handful of prominent historians, who see Polish nation in a uniquely favorable light; a group victimized throughout ages, fighting a zero-sum game with all enemies, Jews included. On the other end of the spectrum in Michlic's picture of the Polish historians' scene, there is a place for those who do not shy away from "critical social history."[63] Their greatest contribution is the will to integrate the national minorities into Polish history, a new trend that has been introduced to

[59] Hobsbawm.
[60] Smith, *Myths.*
[61] Kenneth Thompson, "Religion, Values, and Ideology." In: Stuart Hall, *Modernity: an Introduction to Modern Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 404.
[62] Joanna Michlic, "The Soviet Occupation of Poland, 1939-41, and the Stereotype of the Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet Jew," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 13, no.3 (Spring/Summer 2007).
[63] Ibid., 136.

hitherto very (ethnic)nation-centered style. This process is a part of a larger-scale phenomenon of transforming Poland into an inclusive, open and tolerant civil society, which – as I argue – proceeds at a varied pace. The ethno-nationalist historians advocate a heroic vision of history, accepting only Polish sufferings and the benevolence of the Polish state. Here Michlic fails to see a broader spectrum of kinds of history writing – those which reject certain notions because they do not fit their memory and which cannot be qualified as ethno-nationalist – as this Manichean approach shows only the radical stances. Therefore, omitted are equally interesting cases. In any case, it is not only ethno-nationalists that reject or accept certain history-revising propositions.

Different styles of writing history reflect on the eagerness and readiness to challenge history and memory, thus identity, not only among historians, but also among a bulk of the society which they represent. The obsession about the distorted views and wrong methods of Western school of "postmodern history" is clearly visible in writings of the champions of the traditional, 'good old' school of history writing.[64] This dismissal of postmodernism indicates a resistance to any new method of perceiving historiography, where a different approach, yielding unfavorable outcome, is rejected at the level of methodology. Those competing historiographies argue whether to include Jews in history and thus memory, so that Poles remember that current ethnic and religious composition is relatively new. And that is why historical revisionism, that is changing the way of writing about certain historical issues, has such an important place in identity debate.

[64] For example: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz: "Historia jako wycinanka," and the same historian "Ludzi należy rozliczać indywidualnie," an interview for *Rzeczpospolita* November 18, 2006, also John Radzilowski, "*Strach* i rewizja polskiej historii."

3. Historical revisionism.

> "It is legitimate to observe that the interpretation of the history hinges on a will to transform it."[65]

3.1 Polish-Jewish relations in the 20th Century.

After the 1905 Russian revolution, Endecja's exclusivist anti-Jewish ideals came to be shared by *liberals* and progressives and by the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church as well, either for the reason of lost faith in *assimilation* or by the threats posed by modernity,[66] all of which Brian Porter associates with the beginning of the Pontificate of Leo XIII. Therefore, anti-Semitic tropes entered the tissue of the society at large. The outbreak of the First World War came as a breaking moment, uniting nationalists, *progressives*, and Catholic clergy in their efforts to, by employing the language of hatred, dislodge Jews from their positions in the urban economy.[67] Between the wars, the Jewish question reached the supreme place on the Endecja's list of problems to be solved, evoking many brutal attacks toward Jews and attempts to eradicate Jews from the intelligentsia circles and replace them with ethnic Poles. Roman Dmowski *secularized* the religious anti-Judaism and turned it into a political anti-Semitism, a platform of his nationalist party.

The post-1935 period came to be known as a "ghastly decade"[68] for Jews in Poland. It is then, when anti-Jewish events turned out to be particularly virulent, with several pogroms, sanctioning of *numerus clausus* (which, at a point, transformed to *numerus nullus*[69]) in universities and the 1938 attempt to ban *kashrut*. A constellation of three major factors

[65] Le Goff, xviii.
[66] Introduction to Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*
[67] Robert Blobaum, "The Politics of Anti-Semitism in Fin-de-Siecle Warsaw," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no.2 (2001), pp. 291-305.
[68] Jan T. Gross, *Upiorna Dekada* (Kraków: Austeria, 2007).
[69] See also: Monika Natkowska "Numerus clausus, numerus nullus i getto ławkowe,"

contributed to this extraordinary penetration of anti-Semitism in Polish setting. The first is a constant fear of losing the just-regained independence. Jews were popularly indicted with collaboration with the Soviet Union during the war waged by the latter after the end of WW I, which lay foundations for the 'Żydokomuna' concept. The second factor was the anti-Jewish tradition deriving from both religious and secular mythologization of Jews as Christ-killers, hostile to any other religion but Judaism, or tavern-owners, attempting to poison the Polish nation. The final factor is purely economical; since Jews were overrepresented in freelance professions, as lawyers or doctors, as well as factory owners their image was the one of a wealthy and influential group. Those elements created a special dynamics, which allowed for the rise of anti-Semitism and popularity of Endecja, which furthered that concept. At that particular moment, even those who did not share ethno-nationalist views were eager to support Endecja's anti-Jewish actions. Those reasons, taken together with an everyday personal experience, the notion of Jews as disseminators of prostitution etc., all combined for a synergic perception of a enemy within, as – using the anti-Zionist phrase from-1968 – a *fifth column*. The program of Endecja constitutes the embodiment of Polish specificity, and because interwar period is so important for Polish memory, that time so relevant from the standpoint of Polish identity. As well as a bone of contention for the competing visions of nation today.

Alongside the political anti-Semitism of Endecja, Catholic Church's influence on society and its hostile attitude toward Judaism, and later Jews as a group, heavily contributed to the 20th century Polish anti-Semitism. Konrad Sadkowski suggests that the Catholic Church's shift from the support for conversion to the policy of *struggle* derived from the perception of a civic state, that Jews embodied, as particularly threatening to the Church's own power and authority in

society.[70] This attitude continued to the post-1939 period. Emanuel Ringelblum, the author of the book on Polish-Jewish relations during World War II, and written during the war, commented on the Catholic priests' attitude towards Jews and Holocaust the following: "It would have been difficult to expect more effective aid to Jews from such a clergy during the present war, since the Polish clergy did not provide assistance even when they were in a position to do so."[71] In an interview conducted after the publication of "Fear" Dariusz Libionka suggested that the myth of a great help brought Jews by the Church during the war, comes from a publication ordered by the Communists in 1968, and by being referred to in a number of Catholic publications, it became sanctioned and survived to this day.[72] As Libionka suggests that there are two Polish historical conceptions about the relationship between Jews and the Church, one of it being a notion of a serious involvement of clergy in saving Jews and the other, of the high religiosity of the Polish society as correlated with the scale of an effective help to Jews. The author claims that those conceptions, born in the 60s were challenged only after 1989, however they succeeded in influencing even the post-transformation historians and still play an important role in political struggle.[73] All in all, the Church's attitude towards Jews during the wartime was nowhere near being that of compassion and *doing everything that could have been done*, and these attitudes continued over to the postwar period. The scope of anti-Semitism was very wide and infiltrated all strata of society. For example, in their book on the situation of Poles and Jews during World War II under a significant title "Unequal Victims," Krakowski and Gutman suggest that anti-

[70] Konrad Sadkowski, "Clerical Nationalism and Antisemitism: Catholic Priests, Jews, and Orthodox Christians in the Lublin Region, 1918-1939," in: Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*
[71] Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations During World War II* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974).
[72] Dariusz Libionka, "Oni nie są z ojczyzny mojej," interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 2-3, 2008.
[73] Dariusz Libionka, "Anti-Semitism, Anti-Judaism, and the Polish Catholic Clergy during the Second World War, 1939-1945," in Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*

Semitism was openly practiced in the Armed Forces of General Anders, so-called Anders Army,[74] which is almost unanimously praised in today's historiography.

While Gross writes of a "ghastly decade" and almost universal anti-Semitism, there were admittedly many courageous Poles, who helped saving Jewish lives. In Lucjan Dobroszycki's collection of accounts of Jewish life under the Nazi occupation of Łódź, positive references to Poles living on the "Aryan side" far exceed the negative ones. One of the records reads: "The civilian population [..] particularly the Poles, were very favorably inclined toward the Jews and, in large measure, the Jews from Brzeziny owe them their lives. They tell of one baker who baked a special quota of bread for the Jews, which he would have little children bring into the ghetto…. anti-Semitism seemed to have vanished completely there." (May 20, 1942).[75]

Seeking reasons for the still high anti-Semitism after 1945, Joanna Michlic suggests the strength of ethno-nationalist views among the society that allowed for the war and postwar anti-Jewish actions, in conditions where only an admittedly small percent of the society was under the influence of Nazism.[76] Even during the war, she argues, the ethno-nationalist project of the purification of Polish culture had not lost any of its urgency for some of its advocates. All in all, the underground state was ethnically homogenous, which made it easy for the politics of exclusion to emerge. The 22-month long occupation of Poland by Soviets between 1939 and 1941 had disastrous consequences for Polish-Jewish relations, because it reinforced the prewar stereotypes about the "Communist Jew."[77] Bożena Szaynok argues that the postwar Polish-Jewish relations cannot be described solely by anti-Semitism, but also by a trauma caused by

[74] Yisrael Gutman and Shmuel Krakówski, *Unequal victims : Poles and Jews during World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986).
[75] Lucjan Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941-1944* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1984), 183.
[76] Joanna Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: the Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* **(**Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2006).
[77] Ibid., 174.

Holocaust, however she admits, anti-Semitism cannot be altogether underestimated, especially when confronted with the strength of the 'Żydokomuna' myth.[78] According to the estimates he presents, around 275,000 Jews lived in Poland between the summer of 1944 and the spring of 1947.

Supporters of the 'Żydokomuna' myth, the very basis of today's anti-Semitism in Poland, suggesting that Jews were supporting Soviets before and during the war and afterwards were excessively overrepresented in Communist regime, propose that the number of Jews in KPP (Communist Party of Poland) – according to various estimates – could be as high as 25% of all members. And accordingly, the return of over 200.000 Jews from USSR (up to 1959) was perceived by many as a "re-inundation of Poland by Jews."[79] Their conspicuousness was especially high since they tended to cling together and settle in large cities, predominantly for safety reasons. It made an impression that there were many more survivors, than there really were. Dobroszycki suggests that the initial invitation of Jews, such as Sommerstein, into the Polish postwar government was an attempt to obtain legitimacy from all members of the Polish nations, Jews included.[80] The main argument is that there were highly-ranked Jews in the Communist authorities, but the truth is that they were either old Communists or committed leftists,[81] nowhere near similar the typical Polish *shtetl* Jews. This situation lasted only until 1949, when both the international and internal situations changed significantly. And indeed, Communists were in need of obtaining legitimation from society, and anti-Semitism was an easily accessible tool. The factor contributing to the persistence of anti-Semitism was the

[78] Bożena Szaynok, "The Role of Anti-Semitism Postwar Polish-Jewish Relations," in Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*
[79] Gutman and Krakówski, 364.
[80] Dobroszycki, 15-16.
[81] Gutman and Krakówski.

question of the restoration of the property,[82] that had been occupied by Poles after Jews were forcibly removed from their hometowns. Its rise in the discourse of the government then, something completely contradictory to the 'Żydokomuna' proposition, should be attributed to its *realpolitik* – siding with Jews would simply deprive Communists of, in any case scarce, popularity.

Anti-Semitism, contrary to what many people in Poland believe, i.e. the close connection between Jews and regime, anti-Semitism survived the war not only in the society at large, but also within the government. Joanna Michlic suggests that 1954-1956 *political thaw* allowed for the outbursts of anti-Semitic attitudes.[83] In his essay on the 1968 anti-Zionist campaign, Dariusz Stola argues that although the use of anti-Semitic slogans was caused by many political factors, the documents and paranoia, as well as entailed irrational impulses were too sincere to be cynical.[84] Anti-Jewish rhetoric was too used by the Communist regime against the KOR movement (Committee for the Defense of the Workers, 1976) and against Solidarity. Around 1980-1981 "Polish-Jewish relations began to move into the new and contested terrain of memory,"[85] when the tone of the discussion about Jews left the realm of convenient political insult and entered an intellectual discussion on the Polish-Jewish relations and the shape of the nation vis-à-vis those. That situation continued to the post-transformation period with their peak in 1998 during the *War of the Crosses*, to borrow Geneviève Zubrzycki's term.[86] Janine P. Holc denotes that another controversy, which erupted soon after, namely the publication of

[82] Ibid., 369-370.
[83] Michlic, *Poland's*.
[84] Dariusz Stola, "Fighting against the Shadows: The *Anti-Zionist* Campaign of 1968," in Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*
[85] Introduction to Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism*, 15.
[86] Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

"Neighbors," was an event marked by an *obsession with innocence*,[87] an expression that can – after seven years – be again used to reflect the "Fear" debate.

The memory of the interwar period and war were very strong in the early 1990s, when a continuity of political ideology and tradition as well as legitimation were sought. The presence of Jews in history was considered as peaceful coexistence and the problem of anti-Semitism, except for those who saw it now in the right wing parties programs, was left aside. In any case, Irwin-Zarecka rightly points out that only after 1990 did the fate of Polish Jewry started to be considered as a *loss*.[88]

3.2 European trend of challenging past.

Challenge of history is a wide-spread phenomenon, focusing on revisiting certain places of memory tainted by popular preconceptions, which strongly influence historical perception of a nation. Some of the issues that were challenged in Europe after 1989 concerned such issues as evaluation of the Soviet and Nazi regimes; ideologies that not only dominated the politics of the 20th century Europe, but also caused the highest death toll in the World's history. The Nazi regime is still the one evoking a magnitude of controversies, and – since it is also crucial for the Polish memory of the 20th century – few examples of discussion will be presented, in which champions of different views on the modern history voiced their – ever so often – controversial opinions.

The difference in the war experience between Poland and countries collaborating with Hitler, where discussions erupted, is that in Poland there was virtually no with Nazis, thus one could be an anti-Semite and also a patriot. Popular notion, amounting to a statement that in

[87] Janine P. Holc, "Memory Contested: Jewish and Catholic Views of Auschwitz in Present-Day Poland," in Blobaum, *Anti-Semitism.*
[88] Zarecka.

Poland there could have been no collaboration with Hitler, because of the resistance of a patriotic Polish nation is also a myth. Konstanty Gebert, a popular journalist of Jewish origin, openly claims that there was no collaboration because Hitler did not want Poles cooperating, that he scorned their offer.[89] Ironically enough, in those countries where a political collaboration of anti-Semites with the Nazis took place, the wartime anti-Semitism was later much easier rejected as it amounted to treason (France, Hungary). The exculpation was thus very difficult in the Polish case, where "being a *good Pole* and detesting Jews easily coexisted."[90] Steinlauf analyzes the subjective nature of witnessing, as contributing to the good self-image of Poles, because as witnesses Poles had committed no crime thus there was nothing to expiate.[91] In any case, unlike in Poland where the trend is opposite, in those collaborating countries the revisionism is not directed at blaming the titular nation, but rather at its whitewashing. Polish historical revisionism is then not unique as a fact, yet it is specific in character.

In Hungary a discussion of early 1990s was characterized by blaming cooperation with Nazis on the set of external circumstances, in which siding with Hitler was forced on the Horthy regime. Disseminators of such views came from a conservative mainstream, and while openly condemned the war anti-Semitism, they however did not see the *enforced* interwar anti-Jewish laws of the Hungarian state in any case similar to the anti-Semitism of Nazis, and thus distance themselves from it. In this way they justified the cooperation with Hitler, as being virtually imposed by foreign agents.[92] Another example is the *Historikerstreit*, or else the "historians' quarrel," a debate about the interpretation of Holocaust in German history, that erupted in West Germany between left-wing and right-wing intellectuals. The late 80s witnessed an important

[89] Konstanty Gebert, "Kto się boi Strachu." interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 18, 2008.
[90] Steinlauf, 32-33.
[91] Gross challenges that approach, proposing to treat all indifference towards Nazi atrocities against Jews, as a "collaboration by omission." In: Gross, *Upiorna*.
[92] As András Kovács argues in: András Kovács, *A kéznél*.

debate on the contemporary German history, where two opposing visions clashed. One side disseminated a conception that Nazism was the inevitable result of the way German society had developed. Others saw Nazism was a totalitarian movement which a small criminal clique, thus Germans were victims of Nazism and it had no connection to the strong interwar German conservatism. Also here, as in Hungary, external factors – here the Bolshevik challenge, in the Hungarian case it was the German dominance – not the inevitability of Nazism in German conditions, were underlined by supporters of the perception of Nazism as a response to the crisis of classical liberalism. Such reinterpreting trend is thus characteristic for the *guilty* countries, citizens of which try to find some positive anchorage in their past.

3.3 Challenging historical memory and identity.

Ernest Renan stated in his lecture delivered at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882, entitled "What is a Nation?" a following thing: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality."[93] Accordingly, Smith emphasizes the central role that historians play in the delineation of the nation and in the rediscovery, transmission, and analysis of its ethnic heritage.[94] And thus, the dispute about the nation reaches back to the history, or rather historical memory, transmitted between generations. The process of challenging and facing the past in Poland, has been going through a varied stages and proceeded at a various pace. While the murder of Polish citizens in Katyń and lustration (process of verification of public figures concerning cooperation with secret services of the Communist regime) of the former Communists and members of secret service was a priority for all non-left

[93] Ernest Renan "What is a Nation?" in: Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.) *Becoming National: A Reader*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 41-55.
[94] Smith, *Myths*.

governments after 1989 (left in Poland consists of so-called post-Communists, obviously opposing lustration), other issues dwelled somewhere on the fringe of a public mainstream debate.

The Polish memory, although generally molded by an anti-Communist narrative, was strongly influenced by the pro-national propositions of Communist historiography. The memory of Holocaust entered public discussion only on rare occasions. According to Steinlauf, this memory was shaped by the non-elites and accepted by the Communist regime in exchange for the popular support, a thesis that was also voiced in Gross's "Fear". The historical narrative that developed throughout the Communist period was ideologically influenced, in other words, the interpretation of the war years was so presented to satisfy ethno-nationalist views of the majority of society. And indeed, "the many-sided development, in a host of contexts and mediums, of an acceptable narrative of the war years, was a process crucial to the efforts of postwar Polish governments to legitimate themselves to their subjects."[95]

In 2003, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz – who represents the very conservative school of Polish history writing – suggested that Poland needs its *Fragebogen*, a questionnaire concerning Polish past. "Historians must devise a methodology," he argues "that would ruthlessly and brutally pry into the nation's history without avoiding any controversial topics."[96] In this, admittedly, positive proposition the crucial role is played by the tradition of writing that is employed in these attempts. The most important issues he suggests need dealing with are the ones that he would challenge in Gross's writing; collaboration with Nazis and Communists, anti-Semitism and post-war banditry. It is then valid to state that there was a consensus as to the need of dismantling conceptions and narratives that were influenced by Communist propaganda. And

[95] Steinlauf, 68.
[96] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Poland's Fragebogen," In: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, John Radziłowski, Dariusz Tołczyk (ed.), *Poland's Transformation. A Work in Progress* (Charlottesville: Leopolis Press, 2003), 254.

so, Jerzy Jedlicki, who has been a prolific writer on the Polish-Jewish relations, suggested that the real hindrance to a proper inquiry into the mater, the limited scholarship notwithstanding, is erected between a well-researched historical knowledge and "popular beliefs formed by the passing of available information through a thick filter of preconceived notions, prejudices and personal recollections."[97] Not surprisingly then, some pieces of information never make it through the filter, whereas a number of those that should be rejected as contradicting generally accepted opinions, do. John Radzilowski, supporter of the established idealistic vision of Polish past argues otherwise, and suggests, "although in light of new evidence, certain elements of common past can be reinterpreted and amended, the essence of the traditional history must stay untouched if the culture and society are to survive," and, as the author further argues, none of the groups can build a common future on such a perception of past, in which members of that group are "sinister scoundrels."[98] The conclusion coming from that type of thinking amounts to refraining from any critical evaluation of the past, which so conflicts with the memory to destroy identity, upon which the future should be built. That thread of argumentation is not insignificant in the "Fear" discussion.

Undoubtedly, the real battle between backward-looking ethno-nationalism, exclusive toward Jews and intolerant of cultural diversity and civic and pluralistic nationalism, inclusive of Jews and other minorities, began in the post-Communist period.[99] The battlefield was the historical memory, on which the legitimacy was to be built upon, and in this struggle Joanna Michlic sees the Poles' attitudes towards Jews are a litmus test of "Polish democracy." The early 1990s, the background for that discussion, began with general anti-minority sentiments, characteristic also for the post-1918 period, when were perceived a threat to a newly regained

[97] Jedlicki, "How to Deal with This," 234.
[98] Radzilowski, *Strach.*
[99] Michlic, *Poland's*, 261.

independence. The battle was also visible within the Church; Closed Church – Open Church distinction was a reflection as well as a reason for the division in the society at large. The two big debates, concerning the challenge of a certain conception pertaining to the Polish-Jewish relations, which – although reluctantly, were introduced into public discourse (preceding Gross's "Neighbors"), were those of Błoński's article in 1988 and Cichy's op-ed, first pointing out the indifference of the inhabitants of Warsaw toward the victims of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and the second suggesting that the soldiers of Home Army would commit crimes against Jews on their own.[100] They both were marked with a strong opposition. The strongest came from the supporters of the ethno-nationalist view of history, but also from those who did not want to accept any responsibility, and who saw the creation of a new national (not necessarily ethno-national) identity endangered by this approach. They would like to make a "clean break" with the past in order to create room for new identities, and be proud of their nation. This search for historical continuity, rejecting the Communist period as and cleansing memory of the influence of the Communist historiography, was challenged here, and that was perceived to rebirthing identity.

Revision of history touched also the notorious Nazi camp in Oświęcim. Zubrzycki describes the way the numbers of the Auschwitz victims were manipulated during Communism to both *boost* the number of Polish victims and lower the Jewish losses. The post-1989 process of "de-Polonizing" the camp, was aimed at correcting the numbers of victims, and changing the way the words of commemoration site were formulated on the plaques located at the camp site. There were many *complaints* about the adjusted numbers, coming from people who had visited

[100] Jan Błoński, "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, January 11, 1987, and Michał Cichy, "Polacy-Żydzi. Czarne karty powstania," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 29, 1994.

the site before the fall of Communism when they were confronted with corrected figures. It was not so much about the people, as it was about the competition with the numbers.[101]

3.4 Anti-Semitism and a challenge of Polish narrative.

Ireneusz Krzemiński and his team conducted two extensive series of surveys, one in 1992, that is right after the transition, and the second one in 2002, that is one year after the Jedwabne debate. In both of his studies on the anti-Semitic attitudes in Poland, Krzemiński tested the perception of the bilateral relations between Poles and Jews in history, something he called a *collective reflected-self*. In other words, he shows how the memory of Polish-Jewish relations influenced Polish identity. From those he learned that in 1992 and 2002 respectively 9,0 and 8,5 percent of the respondents saw Polish people as benefiting from encounters with Jews more then Jews profited from cooperation with Poles. A balanced give-and-take was voiced by, respectively, 45 and grew to 51 percent, while the more benevolent attitude of Poles than vice-versa was significantly higher, respectively 18 and 27 percent. The number of undecided decreased more than twice (28 and 13,5).[102] This shows that the Jedwabne debate rendered fewer undecided people, who now moved to the position of defending Polish nation and identity, probably by accepting the "ethno-nationalist" propositions. Moreover, Krzemiński's study shows that over the ten year period, the picture comparing Polish and Jewish suffering during World War II changed significantly. While in 1992 Jewish sufferings were perceived as greater by 46,1%, in 2002 they dropped to 38,3%, concurrently with a significant rise in the answers recognizing equal victimhood by almost fifteen percent (32,3 and 46,9).[103] Much fewer people were undecided, which should also be contributed to the debates of the early 21st century.

[101] Zubrzycki, *The Crosses*, 112-118
[102] Krzemiński, 113.
[103] Ibid., 120.

However, given the character of the debates, natural would be rise in compassion toward Jewish victims, which obviously did not happen. Maybe the debate awoke certain memories, and since majority of families in Poland has someone in their family who fell victim of war, the accessibility of those recollections strengthen their stances. Or maybe defense mechanism enabled resistance tools to oppose Gross. Crucial in light of the present paper is the perception of the help given to Jews during the war. Throughout the ten year span the notion of Poles having had done all they could have was shared by 86% of the society, with only around ten percent claiming that more could have been done.[104] The number of respondents who thought that more could have been done to save Jews grew by 5% in 2002, but the number of those who claimed that there had been not more that could have been done grew by 10%, meaning that the debates reduced the number of undecided and hesitating by half.[105] Similar polarization appeared with the answers concerning remorse about the behavior of Poles toward Jews during the war – both indicators grew by 3 percent, and the number of rejecting any notion of Polish guilt reached almost three fourth of answers.[106] Although those findings allow for a skeptical prognosis for a possibility of reshaping memory by historical discussions, such attempts should be taken. The most recent one is that surrounding Jan T. Gross's "Fear."

[104] Ibid., 122.
[105] Ibid., 123.
[106] Krzemiński, 124.

4. The discussion.

> The public disputes, more often than not, challenge the established wisdom, by critically exposing it as well as crystallizing the alternatives. As such, they have the potential to *change* the existing ways of remembrance; indeed, changing people's views is often an explicit goal of the participants themselves.[107]

4.1 "Fear" and its propositions.

The propositions of "Fear" have to be taken in the context of the author's first book, "Neighbors." There are two main differences between the books, which in many instances, allow for the supporters of the first one to reject the second. The first of these differences is the time period. Although the time of the War is widely reflected on in "Fear", its main focus is the postwar period, whereas in "Neighbors" only wartime events were discussed. Therefore, the war conditions do not apply (although, admittedly, the vicissitude of the post1945 period is emphasized by his critics) and the responsibility is harder to refute. The second difference pertains to the scale of the phenomenon; while in "Neighbors" a single event was discussed, not necessarily a representation of the behavior of the society at large, in "Fear" the main underlying statement is that anti-Semitic attitudes of the whole society yielded a high number of Jewish victims on the whole Polish territory. Those events, despite the scale of witnessed Holocaust, were possible because of the virulent anti-Semitism that was present in the society of the time.

What are the arguments, propositions and interpretations offered by Gross? There is a wide range of statements proposed by Gross, but the main one is that – in accordance with the book's subtitle – anti-Semitism after the war was strong, and Jews feared hostility of their own neighbors. Jerzy Jedlicki suggests that Gross is the only writer, who was "not afraid to state that

[107] Zarecka, 70.

Jews in the first place were scared of their neighbors, and only after that Germans."[108] During a debate organized in Kielce, Gross claimed that the book is about people who helped Jews.[109]

Young historian Marcin Zaremba, who was acclaimed by Gross himself for a balanced review of his book,[110] discovers six theses of therein.[111] The first suggests that Jedwabne was not an exception, that Poles killed Jews side by side with Germans or even on their own. The second proposes that the indifference of Poles allowed for the postwar anti-Jewish events. The third thesis, the one that is also seconded in the present paper as valid even today, says that anti-Semitism is part of the Polish cultural code, and an explanation for the popular dislike of Jews, even after the Holocaust. The fourth proposes that since anti-Semitic thinking was widespread in the society, it was even more salient within the Church, thus its indifference was caused by that prejudice. Along with fear, the fifth thesis proposes, murders were caused by a sense of guilt that as their neighbors they would not help Jews during the war and that their possessions were taken by them over night after Jews had left the town. Finally, the myth of Judeo-Communism is dismantled, the conception which serves as the most important explanatory tool for anti-Jewish events. The book is moreover about the fact that those who had helped Jews during the war were too afraid, and often still are, to admit that they helped. Gross accordingly asserts "I am myself a fruit of such help," in reply to accusations of lack of discussion about the help brought by Poles to Jews.[112] In short, Gross rejects the popular notions of the purity of the underground state's postwar actions and challenges contemporary Polish historiography, distorted by a patriotic vision of the 20th century, and opens the discussion for the redefinition of memory.

[108] Jerzy Jedlicki, "Tylko tyle i aż tyle," *Tygodnik Powszechny* no. 4, 2008.
[109] Jan T. Gross, "Strach w Kielcach," debate in Kielce, January 21, 2008.
[110] Jan T. Gross, "Gross, historyk z misją," Television debate, *TVN* January 19, 2008.
[111] Marcin Zaremba, "Sąd Nieostateczny," *Polityka* no. 3, 2008.
[112] Quoted by Anna Bikont, "Moi chłopi wymordowali moich Żydów. Portret Jana Tomasza Grossa," *Duży Format* no. 5, supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 4, 2008.

4.2 What is the discussion really about?

In 1997 Steinlauf predicted that the historical discussion about Polish-Jewish relations during the War can go either toward renewal or repression, with the influence on the shape of Polish identity. "Neighbors" had a high resonance and, to an extent, influenced people's historical memory. What does "Fear" bring? A well known sociologist and politician, Paweł Śpiewak, points out that the current discussion isnot about the facts, but about the interpretation.[113] Several threads appear in the course of discussion. The facts are known and both sides admit that that Gross cites nothing new. The new element is the interpretation of those facts.

From this paper's standpoint, the most significant is the issue of the nature of the discussion and character of "Fear" itself. Is it a discussion between Poles or rather an external intervention in Polish historical memory? Piotr Semka accuses Gross of lack of knowledge about the geographical realities of Central Eastern Europe;[114] it seems that he considers Gross as an American, outsider writer, who just happens to write about Poland. In a daily newspaper, *Rzeczpospolita,* the book is plainly described as anti-Polish.[115] This rhetoric, presented in a nationwide newspaper, is strongly criticized by Marek Beylin, who admits that he never encountered such radical and marginal language in a respected newspaper.[116] There is clear evidence that Gross should, more than anything else, be considered as a romantic and patriotic Pole, who demands a lot from their fellow Poles,[117] therefore it is a Polish debate. Seweryn Blumsztajn states that, although Gross speaks in the name of Jews, he has a sufficient Polish

[113] Paweł Śpiewak, "Lekcja Strachu, " interview for *Newsweek* no. 4, 2008.
[114] Piotr Semka, "*Strach* cofnął dialog o całą epokę," *Rzeczpospolita* January 16, 2008.
[115] Paweł Lisicki, "Żydzi, Polacy i przeszłość," *Rzeczpospolita* January 11, 2008.
[116] Marek Beylin, "Żydzi, Polacy, Strach," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 12-13, 2008.
[117] Henryk Woźniakowski's introduction to Mariusz Gądek (ed.), *Wokół Strachu* (Kraków, Znak: 2008), 12.

legitimacy, making "Fear" a "Polish conversation."[118] Adam Michnik agrees with the statement, and adds: "it is a book from a Polish historian, Polish patriot, who wants a better Poland, a country without hatred."[119] Accordingly, Adam Szostkiewicz writes that Gross "writes from a Polish standpoint for Poles."[120] Gross says himself "I write this book as a Pole. And I see the described events as a stain on my own identity."[121]

Another salient thread in the discussion, present in all media from the moment the book appeared in bookstores, is the differentiation between passion or mission, as incentives that made Gross write the book. So claimed Andrzej Paczkowski during a television debate,[122] and accordingly Piotr Gontarczyk,[123] both rejecting Gross's theses. A supporter of the book, Zbigniew Nosowski claims that the fact that Gross writes with mission only hinders the possibility of convincing those, who he really wants to reach: the "silent majority."[124] Tomasz Wiśnicki finally calls it a national psychoanalysis.[125] It is often argued that the book tries to fulfill a therapeutic role on Polish society, move its conscience. Zygmunt Bauman states that the more we try to fight the pangs of conscience, the stronger we offend the memory of victims and the lower chance for the necessary recovery.[126] Paczkowski suggest that he, as a historian wishes to describe the world, whereas Gross wishes to change it.[127] That argument captures the goals of Gross's writing, that is a change in Polish historiography, that would modify the way history is being written, by incorporating the memory of Jews in the Polish narrative.

[118] Seweryn Blumsztajn, "Polski głos Grossa," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 19-20, 2008.
[119] Adam Michnik, debate in Kraków.
[120] Adam Szostkiewicz, "Egzorcysta Gross," *Polityka*, no. 5, 2008.
[121] Jan T. Gross, "Gross: pisałem *Strach* jako Polak," interview for Polish Press Agency (PAP), January 16, 2008.
[122] Paczkowski, debate "Gross, historyk z misją."
[123] Piotr Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 12, 2008.
[124] Zbigniew Nosowski, "Bez okoliczności łagodzących," debate in Warsaw, January 22, 2008.
[125] Tomasz Wiśnicki, "Katolickim wydawnictwom nie może być wszystko jedno," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 23, 2008.
[126] Zygmunt Bauman, "Wytłumaczyć niewytłumaczalne," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Polish edition), no. 7, September, 2006.
[127] "Gross, historyk z misją," Television debate, *TVN* January 19, 2008.

What connects to that thread is the accusation of the postmodernism and deconstructionism of the writing style.[128] The President of the State supported Institute of Polish Remembrance (IPN), called Gross "a vampire of historiography,"[129] while John Radzilowski claims that this approach to history writing is "falsely called a *critical thinking*, but in fact it deprives students of the capability to understand their own history and culture."[130] Gross – answering to a question whether his book is historical – answers that it most certainly is, it was just written in a different tradition of history writing; this Western style is characterized by a lively language and target audience of a wide range.[131] The very same argument is used by Chodakiewicz to reject his writing, when he says that it is a cultural phenomenon, not science,[132] and suggests that the school to be followed is that of Raul Hilberg, where every document is closely examined and thoroughly described.[133] Gontarczyk delves deep into the mass culture paradigm of history writing, and says that the one practiced by Gross is a "typical trademark of pathological phenomena long known in the US."[134] In any case, Gross's postmodernism looks critically on patriotism, the traditional model of society and is hostile to religion. According to Radzilowski, it aims at "radical destruction of values and the meaning of facts, in order to transform society…. This approach is *ex definitio* nihilistic and closely resembles methods used in totalitarian countries."[135] Therefore, Gross is alleged to condemn everything which is not secular, leftist or liberal. Thus the author, by positioning himself as anti-religious, makes "*Fear* not only an attack on Poland itself, [but] an attack on its traditional values: religion and

[128] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Ludzi należy rozliczać indywidualnie," Interview for *Rzeczpospolita*, January 18, 2008.
[129] Janusz Kurtyka, Interview for Radio RMF, January 10, 2008.
[130] Radzilowski, "*Strach* i rewizja polskiej historii."
[131] Gross, "Strach polski, Strach żydowski."
[132] Chodakiewicz, "Ludzi należy rozliczać indywidualnie."
[133] Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka."
[134] Piotr Gontarczyk, "Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 25, 2008.
[135] Radzilowski, "*Strach* i rewizja polskiej historii."

patriotism."[136] The discussion is then about the shape of Polish historiography. The criticism of the so-called historical politics,[137] voiced by the supporters of Gross's style, connects with an argument that – although the censorship was lifted – still certain subjects are avoided.[138] This situation has not changed in the postwar period, because of the "Communist enslavement," therefore the Polish version of history could not be defended.[139] The tone of the book, that of accusation becomes rejected, and it is suggested that he should explain instead of indicting.[140]

The next assertion that is being challenged amounts to a question: Was anti-Semitism really that popular before, during and after the War? Jastrun ridicules the conviction that there was no anti-Semitism in Poland, when he quotes the oft-repeated phrase, such as "A good person, though a Jew,"[141] which with "I am not an anti-Semite, but…," (*crystal of anti-Semitism,* according to Mancewicz)[142] both show that the lack of anti-Semitism is not only a myth, but a deeply rooted conviction that Poles are not anti-Semites. It also renders the paramount Polish self image. Polish self-perception has a strong component of the perceived goodness of the Polish nation, which – if has to partake in war – is always on the side of the victims. Being an anti-Semite is bad, and since Poles are not bad, they are not anti-Semites, seems to go the logic. Finally, an accusation concerning his one-dimensional explanation of the facts through anti-Semitism is frequently voiced.[143] Zaremba, who does not entirely agree with the book's premise, suggests that this is only one of the keys to understanding the postwar events, and rejects the

[136] Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka."
[137] Marek Beylin, "Żydzi, Polacy, strach," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 12-13, 2008.
[138] Henryk Woźniakowski, "Odpowiedź Henryka Woźniakowskiego na list otwarty Kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza," open letter, January 15, 2008.
[139] Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka."
[140] Paweł Machcewicz, "Odcienie czerni," *Tygodnik Powszechny* no. 2, 2008.
[141] Tomasz Jastrun, "Znowu Strach," *Newsweek*, no. 4, 2008.
[142] Mancewicz, "Od apelu do apelu."
[143] Machcewicz, "Od apelu do apelu."

trend in diminishing of the scale of anti-Semitism.[144] Gontarczyk suggests that only a margin killed Jews, and this margin was composed of criminals, not anti-Semites[145] who, as Chodakiewicz suggests, should be held accountable individually since people are equipped with free will.[146] Generalization of the invoked instances of crimes on the whole population, which allows Gross to argue for the existence of anti-Semitism in the society at large, undergoes then a close and ruthless scrutiny. According to *Rzeczpospolita* publicist, "in *Fear* there is no Polish-Jewish matter, nor there is anything about the history of Jews in the Communist Poland. There is only a distorted history of Polish crimes."[147] Chodakiewicz finally states that Gross's proposition that "Poles are pathological anti-Semites…. is strongly imbued in the Western conscience,"[148] thus has nothing to do with the reality.

Another theme is the issue connected to the perceived victimization of Poles and Jews. Gross's opponents would reiterate often used argument, in which the war tragedy is reduced to Holocaust alone.[149] Centrality of Holocaust for the historiography of the war is attacked as diminishing Polish sufferings and overemphasizing the significance of the *Shoah*. Gross, on the other hand, suggests that after there were only few Jews left in Poland, anti-Semitism remained all intact in the public sphere, while Polish historiography neglected the problem, making any attempts to change in this trend in Poland, being perceived as rewriting history in an anti-Polish manner.

The main difference in the texts of the different language versions of the book, is the removal of the first chapter of the English edition from the Polish one. That chapter, "Poland

[144] Zaremba, "Sąd nieostateczny."
[145] Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy."
[146] Chodakiewicz, "Ludzi należy rozliczać indywidualnie."
[147] Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy."
[148] Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka."
[149] Lisicki, "Żydzi, Polacy i przeszłość" and Tomasz P. Terlikowski, "*Strach*, czyli propagandowy akt oskarżenia zamiast historii," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 11,2008.

Abandoned," draws a brief historical background of the war and the postwar introduction of Soviet rule. This chapter discusses Polish heroism and lack of any possibility to oppose the Soviet regime, which in some people's perspective serves as an explanation of the crimes described. Therefore, the lack of that context is most probably the most frequently invoked argument. Connected to that context-related argument, and the main bone of contention in the discussion, is the so-called 'Żydokomuna', and its presence in Polish historiography. Those who tend to oppose Gross and perceive Communism as enslavement, often understand this term as describing the postwar reality. And so, Piotr Gontarczyk accuses Gross of not mentioning the highly positioned Jews in the Communist party – Hilary Minc and Jakub Berman.[150] This is a common argument for 'Żydokomuna' supporters, who consider ethnic Jews, who have nothing to do with Jewish culture or religion, as Jews *sensu stricto*. They were born Jews, they stay Jews. Moreover, goes the reasoning, Jews were Communists – because they were against nationalism. Tropes that the myth carries, are especially visible in the historical writings concerning the time of Soviet occupation (1939-1941) and are expressed in interpreting 'Judeo-Communism' as a historical fact. Michlic analyzes works on the subject published in post-1989 Poland and discovers the introduction of 'Judeo-Communism' as a reality, and an instrument for interpreting the interwar Communism in Poland.[151] The bone of contention is the origins of the stereotype of 'Żydokomuna'. While ethno-nationalists claim that Jews were keen supporters of the Soviet state, before, during and after the War, and this despite the favorable treatment of Jews by Poles, the opposing faction sees greater support of Jews for the Communist regime in exactly a divergent perception, that of prevailing Polish anti-Semitism which forced Jews to look for safety in the Communist regime. A good example of the resentment to challenge Polish history

[150] Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy."
[151] Michlic, *The Soviet.*

lays in the fact that the seminal book on the Polish-Jewish Communists, which meticulously describes the whole generation of the "Communist Jews," has not yet been, since 1991, translated into Polish.[152]

The interpretation of the role of the Church in the anti-Jewish actions, both during the war, when their lack of protest is considered by Gross as a tacit collaboration, is naturally strongly rejected, even by some who otherwise accept "Fear". One group claims that the reaction of the Church to the Kielce pogrom was appropriate, because any reaction would just be manipulated by Communists.[153] To that, Gebert answers that it is deeply frightening that for theChurch it was more important not be manipulated by the Communist than to prevent anti-Jewish violence.[154] And as for the current approach of the Church towards the book, that is its harsh rejection by cardinal Dziwisz and bishop Pieronek – Marek Edelman, the last leader of the Warsaw Uprising, inquires about the reason for their negative attitude towards the process of informing Poles about their own past. "Maybe," he asks, "it is so, because Church's conscience is not clear in that matter and wants to sweep something under the carpet?"[155]

Does the book, finally, jeopardize the Polish-Jewish dialogue? According to the right-wing audience, it is very advanced at the moment as Poland represents one of the closest the Israel's allies.[156] Semka, in one of his articles opening the discussion, stated that the book set the dialogue back by an epoch,[157] which means that he *a contrario* suggests that the lack of discussion would allow for a smooth continuation of great, well established relations. This shows

[152] Jaff Schatz, *The Generation: the Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
[153] Wróbel, "Mord i starch," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 29-30, 2006.
[154] Paweł Machcewicz in "Kto się boi Strachu."
[155] Marek Edelman, "Powszechna rzecz zabijanie," interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 19-20, 2008.
[156] Robert Nęcek, "*Strach* jest jak fałszywa moneta," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 21, 2008.
[157] Piotr Semka, "*Strach* cofnął dialog o całą epokę," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 16, 2008.

that Krzemiński's survey results, showing anti-Semitic attitudes in one third of the society, are either unknown or considered false.

4.3 Why is discussion so heated?

Why is the book causing so much controversy? There have been several books written on the subject (for instance "Bondage to the Dead" by Michael Steinlauf), which, equally controversial, went without echo, or caused debates in small circles of professional historians. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir asserts that the book is not important, the reaction is important.[158] And although Gross admitted that he did not expect such a wide reaction,[159] Kozłowski, after the publication of the English version, rightly guessed that the book would become popular.[160] Irwin-Zarecka writes: "The authority of the historians' claims to truth is very much dependent on the proximity of the collective experience itself. Recent history, after all, is not just a subject of study; it is a part of individual biographies as well."[161] Mythology is a national sanctity and whoever violates it, even if it is flawed, places themselves outside the nation, therefore the rejection is understandable.[162] The book challenges several notions strongly embedded in Polish memory, some of which are almost sacrosanct. The role of the Church in helping Jews during the war, the 'Żydokomuna' myth or Poland as only a victim of the war, not a perpetrator of crimes are imbued in Polish memory. And so is a certain interpretation of the interwar period as a time of independence and landmark of national pride. When those conceptions are challenged, the defense mechanism of those, whose memories are undermined by them, use arguments which are

[158] Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "*Strach* w Polsce," in Gądek, *Wokół Strachu*.
[159] Jan T. Gross, "Żałoba ze Strachu," *Przekrój*, February 7, 2008.
[160] Maciej Kozłowski, "Fakty i uprzedzenia, czyli stracona szansa na dialog," *Plus Minus*, supplement to *Rzeczpospolita*, July 15-16, 2006.
[161] Zarecka, 149.
[162] Jerzy Pałosz, "Różne oblicza strachu," *Przegląd*, 24.02.2008.

contradict book's main premises, such as that of 'Żydokomuna'. Teresa Boguska suggests that it is because of the author, who once shook Polish consciences and now the tabloid press dealt with book as a new sensation.[163] In reference to the Polish self-perception, she uses a term "dwarfed grandchildren of fallen heroes," which refers to the tendency to think of one another in a bad way inside the country, but on the outside be perceived as noble victims. And that is why when a professor from an American university wrote an easily accessible book in English, he insulted Poland in the world. Norbert Maliszewski suggests that because Gross uses a big quantifier "Poles," those to whom Polish identity is important, "read the book from an in-group perspective, with white-and-red glasses on;"[164] as a result assuming defensive positions. Gross challenges the myths in an ultimate manner, leaving no space for even the slightest compromise.

Taking all those elements together, we can find an answer to the question "Why were people upset about the clash between their memory and history presented in Gross's books, in other words, why were people provoked by it?" by saying that it is because it challenges the consensus of paramount memory as to certain interpretations of past events. The heroic and pro-Church paradigms concerning Polish modern history, are trampled to deprive the audience of the roots for their current identities, so deeply entwined with historical memory.

4.4 The State responds.

Concurrently to Gross's book, IPN prepared another publication on the same topic, that is Marek Jan Chodakiewocz's book "Po zagładzie," ("After the Holocaust")[165] which had also been originally published in the US. Chodakiewicz represents a specific, very one-sided version of

[163] Teresa Boguska, "Strach, gniew, debata," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 23-24, 2008.
[164] Norbert Maliszewski, "Uprzedzenia: wolni od jawnych, spętani ukrytymi," *Niezbędnik Inteligenta*, supplement to *Polityka*, March 8, 2008.
[165] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Po zagładzie* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008).

Polish history writing, which Michlic describes as "the most extreme spectrum of the contemporary mainstream ethno-nationalist school of history writing."[166] The author, widely praised by the contesters of Gross, wrote his book "Po Zagładzie" from the standpoint of an apologist of the National Armed Forces (NSZ), a military formation that after the war organized partisan actions against the pro-Soviet government. They mainly attacked members of the NKVD or new Polish secret police, and ended with killing many Jewish survivors in the process. Evaluation of Chodakiewicz's book should be unequivocally negative, or at least bring about an analogical debate concerning historical methods. The author claims that his book presents a nuanced and balanced picture of the Polish-Jewish relations, based on a magnitude of sources. They show that Jews really were overrepresented in Communist government, and even if only to an extent, in the eyes of the underground state, they created a justified perception: public persecutors of fighters for independence were primarily Jewish and this is an understandable explanation for the murders. In any case, the picture of the postwar relations becomes blurred, and when one reads the titles of one of the chapters, "Self-Defense of the Underground or Polish Anti-Semitism," there should be no doubt what kind of literature it is, and how the author answers his own question. All in all, Chodakiewicz rejects anti-Semitism as a source of anti-Jewish actions, and for that he is highly acclaimed by many of Gross's opponents. This 'nuanced' approach distorts the picture, and allows for people to say: "It happened in one way and sometimes another – so, there is nothing to talk about,"[167] and in this manner any need for self-reflection is washed away.

A bulk of the discussion, on both sides, focuses on juxtaposing those two works, in favor of one or another, representing a battle between historiography schools. And so, comparing

[166] Michlic, *The Soviet*, 152.
[167] Śpiewak, "Lekcja Strachu."

Gross's and Chodakiewicz's books, Żaryn rejects the former in favor of the latter, praising the author of "Po Zagładzie" for his good, old empirical school of history writing. Gontarczyk plainly states that "the book *Po Zagładzie* is a scientific work transmitting a great knowledge, [while] *Fear* is built mainly on ignorance and manipulation."[168] The attributes of truth and "that is how it really happened," of Chodakiewicz's book became a sort of obsession of the ethno-nationalists. In this context one should consider the assertion voiced by Gontarczyk, that "the truth of history will defend itself from the attacks of witch-doctors and scientific charlatans."[169] Chodakiewicz argues that more Poles died from the hands of Jews in the after-war period than Jews were killed by Poles.[170] Libionka claims that it is worth entering a polemic, but not in a manner of a *pathetic work* "Po Zagładzie."[171] He suggests that every page seems to be screaming – "They deserve it." Finally, along with Gross,[172] he presents that Chodakiewicz does not mean much in the American science, and he was only acclaimed by a Polish audience.

The fact that the book is sponsored by a state institution, seems to prove that this state tries to enter a very dangerous path of a "historical politics." This politics has been, in a popular belief, introduced by a post-Solidarity government of Law and Justice (PiS), that was in power from 2005 until 2007 (*polityka historyczna PiS*) party. Śpiewak calls the group that led the country at that time a *political counter-elite*, which was characterized by opposing the intelligentsia and the strive for creating a new model of society.[173] Finally, at the end of their rule, PiS claimed that it has to create their own universities to build their own intellectual base.

[168] Gontarczyk, "Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek."
[169] Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy."
[170] Chodakiewicz, "Po zagładzie."
[171] Libionka, "Oni nie są z ojczyzny mojej."
[172] Gross's afterward in Gądek, *Wokół.*
[173] Śpiewak, "Lekcja Strachu."

Such was a representation of the society, which aimed at dislodging intellectuals as alien to the society at large.

4.4 Stands in the discussion.

The majority of responses to the book is that of rejection, whether completely or partly, because of the language of because of Gross's arguments, because of the use of sources or because of his sociological interpretations. In any case it is valid to state that this book, by injuring the spine of historical memory of society, resulted in rejection. This rejection is then fight for the established identity. What are the responses of those who dismiss Gross's and what of those more eager to challenge that identity?

4.4.1. Rejection.

Those, who reject Gross's writing in its entirety, are those who support a vision of ethnically or culturally homogenous nation, are generally strongly connected to religion and the Church, they cherish the memory of the interwar period and tend to blame Communism for enslavement. Their narrative further regards leftist and secularist tendencies not only negatively influencing everyday Polish life, but also undermining the very core of their perception of Polish identity.

What is really dangerous for the ethno-nationalist historians is the "leftist elites trends towards secularization" in Gross's writing.[174] Bogdan Musiał suggests that Gross's theses make an impression as if Poles were *en masse* beneficiaries of crimes on Jews.[175] Those propositions are, in his view, not only shocking but also very false. The thread of Germans plundering the

[174] Radzilowski, "*Strach* i rewizja polskiej historii."
[175] Bogdan Musiał, "Kto się wzbogacił na majątku Żydów," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 19, 2008.

occupied territories is present, making Poles, even if they had wanted to, unable to steal anything from Jews. Germans moreover plundered not only from Jews, but also from Poles, a typical trope of victimization. Stanisław Meducki, a participant of the Kielce debate and strong opponent of Gross, suggests that the "book gives an impression that the murder of Jews is more of a Polish than German deed."[176] Gross sees reality as a "universal Polish conspiracy," claims Gontarczyk, "organized to murder all Jews and deprive them of their property."[177]

Chodakiewicz seems to reject the notion of a popular, wide-spread anti-Semitism before and after the war, and gives numerous exceptions, showing that some alleged victims of anti-Semitism were in fact victims of robbery or "fell from a truck driven by a drunk guy."[178] He then says that Gross's style of writing is close to Stalinist propaganda, proposing that all Poles are ignominious fascists and anti-Semites. Paweł Machcewicz tries to separate the anti-Semitism of the Polish underground and that of German Nazis, to state that the former was directed not against Jews, but against Communism.[179] This is a recurring theme, which tries to lift a weight of anti-Semitism off Poles and conflate it with anti-Communism. Rejection comes, along with the book content, incited by the language of the book – Michnik suggests that it is so because those in opposition "do not agree that one can so entirely break a certain type of patriotic-national-Catholic political correctness and speak a language so brutal and radical."[180]

In March, that is two months after "Fear" appeared in Polish, a book consisting of a selection of articles from Polish newspapers concerning the "Neighbors" and "Fear" debates was published by a radical nationalist publishing house *Fronda*.[181] All of those articles reject Gross's

[176] Stanisław Meducki, debate in Kielce.
[177] Gontarczyk, "Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie łatek."
[178] Chodakiewicz, "Ludzi należy rozliczać indywidualnie."
[179] Machcewicz, "Kto się boi Strachu."
[180] Michnik, debate in Kraków.
[181] Robert Jankowski (ed.), *Cena Strachu* (Warszawa: Fronda, 2008).

proposed theses; with a foreword advertising their own publication as a compilation of the articles showing the truth about the sources used by Gross.[182] All the authors cited therein, and others, including foreign historians, whose names are also evoked, seem to be seconding the established perception of history. None of Gross's theses are accepted, while the majority of the accusations are based on factographic details, falsely interpreted, and a proper interpretation of which would allegedly change the whole perception of events. In those narratives, the Jedwabne massacre was meticulously and precisely planned and conducted by Germans, and the Kielce pogrom was a Communist, anti-Polish provocation. Those historians are referred to as "majority of historians."[183]

Unlike Gross himself, who claims that the language of Polish version is much stronger and theses more shocking, Robert Jankowski writes that "many drastic statements were erased from the Polish edition, because…. in Poland, where the memory of those events is still alive, [Gross's] theses would be instantly rejected as unbelievable."[184] The disagreement thus reaches even the sharpness of the language.

4.4.2 Acceptance.

The need for exculpation and inevitability of dealing with Poland's own history are some of the arguments behind the acceptance stances. They finally altogether reject the 'Żydokomuna' myth, more and more often 'Żydokomuna' written without the quotation marks.[185] Joanna Tokarska Bakir suggest that pro-Endecja writers diminish anti-Semitism, arguing that anti-Jewish actions were nothing else but anti-Communists. "What about Jewish children," she asks,

[182] Jankowski's foreword to *Cena Strachu*.
[183] Ibid., 12-13.
[184] Ibid., 14.
[185] Tokarska-Bakir, "*Strach* w Polsce."

”victims of anti-Jewish actions, were they also considered Communist?” She admits that the only “fault” of Gross is boycotting the standards of sincerity, hitherto accepted by Polish scholars.[186] Similarly, Jedlicki suggests that the only reason the book made it through – unlike many others treating of the same subject – is because it employs a pungent language, and because Gross is not dependant on Polish public opinion.[187] And if it had not been for that emotional language, nobody would have ever read the book.

In a very straightforward manner Tokarska-Bakir suggests that the rejection of the book is easier because of the already-hated author. She admits that it could have not been possibly accepted by those who reject a critical view of Poland’s history. She, then, writes: “Gross would be screwed from day one, because he is Gross.”[188] As Konstanty Gebert rightly points out, Polish national myth remembers the cooperation with the occupiers completely differently than Gross writes. And it is very good that Gross challenges that myth of “us we’re innocent.”[189] Adam Aptowicz, who as a boy was saved from Holocaust by a collective effort of several Polish women, claims that “in the first years after the occupation anti-Semitism raged.” And although, he does not entirely agree with the generalizations, he otherwise states that “what Gross wrote is true.”[190]

Adam Szostkiewicz suggests that the minority patriotism of Gross might be a majority in the future, and such discussions – which in Western societies are a norm – will build a modern and open national identity, similarly to other patriotisms, those building museums of wars and national uprisings.[191]

[186] Ibid.
[187] Jedlicki, “Tylko tyle i aż tyle.”
[188] Tokarska-Bakir, “*Strach* w Polsce.”
[189] Gebert, “Kto się boi Strachu.”
[190] Adam Aptowicz, “Skoro Niemcy unicestwili społeczność żydowską, niech zapłacą koszty jej upamiętnienia,” interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 3, 2008.
[191] Szostkiewicz, “Egzorcysta Gross.”

4.4.3 Questioning.

The majority of the reactions, as was presented above, is that of rejection. But this rejection is not necessarily total, nor is the acceptance unequivocal. Many comments acclaim Gross's courage to deal with the topic of anti-Semitism, although do not agree with the generalizations. On the other hand those, who refute the accusations against the Catholic Church, acknowledge the existence of anti-Semitism in Poland, and they praise the book for being a counterpart to the nationalist historiography promoted by the Institute of Polish Remembrance.

Bożena Szaynok writes that although the value of the book as a historical piece is doubtful, the importance of the publication rests on the fact that it is presenting the Jewish experience, which is absolutely foreign to Poles.[192] She also suggests that Gross makes a mistake of mixing history with morality, which does not allow for a proper understanding of Polish-Jewish history. Halina Bortnowska suggests that had there been more work done to use precise language, it would have helped the reception of the book, and some who now reject it, would otherwise have reacted differently.[193] Dariusz Stola, rejects the notion that the anti-Jewish violence was an outcome of what Poles had done during the occupation, Gross's main suggestion. He supports himself with Steinlauf's book "Bondage to the Dead," to say that stupor and distance, results of witnessing deaths of masses of people, allowed for anti-Jewish behavior. In short, it was not what Poles had done, but what they had witnessed.[194] He therefore, although trying not to diminish the Polish guilt, in a way finds justification of those crimes.

[192] Bożena Szaynok, "Gross – moralista, nie historyk," interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 15, 2008.
[193] Halina Bortnowska, "Gross, historyk z misją."
[194] Dariusz Stola, "Nieudana próba Grossa," interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 19-20, 2008.

What does that middle position show? It suggests people who are not yet ready for that type of writing and debate about their own nation's past. In other words, "those unconvinced," as Zbigniew Nosowki asserts, "will not be convinced by this book."[195]

[195] Nosowski, "Bez okoliczności łagodzących."

5. The significance of the discussion.

> The vision of Poland as a country of heroes and victims is edifying, but how one can fit Jedwabne, Kielecki pogrom and anti-Jewish "railroad actions" in it?[196]

5.1 Was it necessary?

The discussion around the book reflects what was written by historians like Michlic or Gross about the condition of Polish historiography, which does not shy away from using the 'Żydokomuna' myth. In fact authors, among them Krystyna Kersten and Joanna Michlic, point out the inconvenient and rarely mentioned counter-'Żydokomuna' fact of ethno-nationalization of Communist ideology in Poland.[197] Postwar Polish historiography which influenced the way memory is shaped today, saw anti-Semitism as a marginal "exaggerated and biased problem" created by the enemies of the Polish case.[198] Therefore Polish historiography, which challenges memory is stigmatized with mixture of nationalism and Communist propaganda. Why was the book written, and why is the discussion important for the reshaping of Polish historical memory?

Jan T. Gross, asked why he had written the book, says that *Neighbors* showed that there is a social demand for such books, but that one did not exhaust the matter.[199] In the same interview, Gross claims that the ignorance of society about Polish-Jewish relations during the war is overwhelming, whereas it should be perceived as an integral part of the Polish experience. Finally, asked if he writes about anti-Semitism and fear, in order to protect freedom, he quickly answers "Of course." The author then shows that he is led by a mission. Is that mission,

[196] Szostkiewicz, "Egzorcysta Gross."
[197] Michlic, *Poland's* and Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-1968* (Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza: Warszawa, 1992.)
[198] Michlic, *Poland's*, 135.
[199] Gross, "Strach polski, Strach żydowski."

however, making the difference? Marek Edelman argues that the discussion around the book will die in three months, because it requires years to change things, and the generation that witnessed the Holocaust has to pass away.[200] Therefore, in the perception of the historian from the critical school, the book is important in conveying a certain message.

5.2 What is the message?

The message from the author has a lot to do with the romantic tradition, that he claims he is faithful to, and his will to have the Polish society to be sharing it as well. It is a tradition of resisting evil, fighting for a common freedom and helping victims, a tradition opposite to the one of anti-Semitism and Endecja, which is absolutely destructive to the state and the "Polish romantic, freedom-oriented collective soul."[201] Gross overtly states that he does not expect his book to be a basis for any type of pecuniary compensation, nor a reason for apology, but an attempt to "call things by their name."[202] In an interview for the weekly *Przekrój*, Gross states that he hopes the book would invoke such a discussion that would make people better, because the things hitherto unspoken now are widely discussed.[203] He wants "Fear" to become a "Gulag Archipelago" of Polish anti-Semitism, because the latter is "a strong toxic substance, a poison, still present in a social and psychological circulation."[204]

Konstanty Gebert suggests that "Fear" will move the Polish-Jewish debate forward but will not be the final voice in it,[205] while according to Zbigniew Nosowski, this book "does not

[200] Edelman, debate in Kraków.
[201] Jan T. Gross, "Strach polski, Strach żydowski,"
[202] Ibid.
[203] Gross, "Żałoba ze Strachu."
[204] Gross, debate in Kielce.
[205] Gebert, "Kto się boi Strachu."

move forward Polish-Jewish relations."[206] In any case, as Jedlicki states, internalization of Jews into Polish historiography has to be performed, so that the Jewish existence will appear in the Polish memory, and Poles will finally be able to deal with it.[207] What does remain after the publication and the debate in the popular perceptions; in other words how is the narrative modified?

5.2 Why is the discussion significant now?

The discussion is then important today because it reflects two opposing forces in Polish identity creation and the openness of the society, measured by the eagerness to internalize negative images of the past. Therefore debate centers around the definition what it means to be a Pole today. There are thence two opposing historical memories, which are influencing, but also are influenced by the trends in historiography. And the latter is understood in this paper as bearing strong ethno- and cultural-nationalist tendencies, which distort the reasonable interpretations of the past. And for example, according to Joanna Michlic, the primary obstacle in the eradication of the "patriotic" historiography is the exclusivist ethno-nationalist legacy of the twentieth century. [208]

Given that the discussion is aimed at shaping society's identity, it is important to see what resonance in the society it evokes. Admittedly, because of the recentness of the discussion it is hard to easily assess that. The position that the author of this paper assumes is skeptical for several reasons. Polish society's knowledge on the subject is based on a number of preconceptions, that have been taught in schools and repeatedly told by parents, which yielded a strange mixture of Communist propaganda and distorted family history. Moreover, unlike

[206] Nosowski, "Bez okoliczności łagodzących,"
[207] Jedlicki, "Tylko tyle i aż tyle."
[208] Michlic, *The Soviet.*

"Neighbors," the new book is much more complicated, and the discussion accordingly focuses on details that can be understood, once the audience accept a different interpretation of that period. Another discouraging signal came from the audience itself. During the debate in Kielce, people would ask participants, Gross included, the same questions as had been presented and discussed before. Frequently exactly those stereotypes that were dismantled by Gross would be voiced, which altogether gives a rather grim perspective on the influence of the debate on society at large. Therefore the historians' and intellectuals' discussions cannot be considered as very influential on the Polish population at large; simply its specificity and sophistication supersede knowledge of a common citizen, let alone his interest in delving into complicated issues. A psychologist Michał Bilewicz, suggests that young, well educated Poles, coming from large cities ascribe Poles a lot of negative traits – a phenomenon on an European scale.[209]

If the mentioned audience is more than any other, to understand and potentially internalize the inconvenient part of history into their memory, it is interesting to try measuring that resonance. Since memory is selective, only certain notions form the debate stay in the popular perception. Which elements are internalized by public is well illustrated by Internet user utterances on fora, where discussions show different level of memory, that is the popular one. [210] There it is visible what of kind of arguments people select to allow to enter their memory. On several fora consulted, a visible tendency of rejection is prevalent. The arguments used by users are mostly focusing around the 'Żydokomuna' notion, which is presented as a fact and backed with high percentages numbers. And so, 80% of secret service was Jewish, and Gross himself

[209] Michał Bilewicz, debate in Kielce.
[210] According to a research conducted by OBOP in February 2007, 64.3% of Internet users were between the age 15 and 39, while 66% of them had secondary or higher education. My personal thanks to Łukasz Kąkolecki for providing access to those findings.

was their informer until 1968,[211] a 'fact' confirmed by other users.[212] 'Żydokomuna', which still exists is considered to be profiting from the book publication.[213] Many suggestions appear as to what the real issue should be touched upon; Gross should write about Jewish gendarmes and informers, who helped the Germans to kill their own nation,[214] or the Allied forces should be held responsible for killing Jews, not Poles, who had no army during the war.[215] Some are also extreme in the other direction saying Endecja prepared ground for Hitler's final solution.[216] Finally, the trope suggesting that there are many reliable, unlike the Gross's, books that were printed about e.g. Kielecki pogrom, and those should be discussed.[217] In any case, those opinions are much more radical than in the open public debate, which is understandable given their complete anonymity. The influence of the debate is visible, since there are threads visible in the public discussion that are reflected here too. The significance of the personal transmission of the memory of the War is reflected in frequent utterances bearing a clear reference to the experiences of one's own family, most likely grandfather who fought against Nazis and at the same time would help Jews. Therefore, often the views expressed are those inherited through memory and stories reiterated in one's family and the emotional affinity with a particular outlook.

5.4 Deconstructing narratives.

There is a paramount memory of wartime history that constitutes a common narrative for the Polish society. That narrative consists of a set of undisputed events, such as that of Poland

[211] http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=410&w=74025226&a=74097529
[212] http://www.gry-online.pl/s043.asp?ID=7268383&N=1
[213] http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=410&w=74025226&a=74493876
[214] http://forum.o2.pl/temat.php?id_p=5387635
[215] http://forum.gazeta.pl/forum/72,2.html?f=902&w=74288360&a=74288678
[216] http://www.tvn24.pl/1,251,8,40087424,108975861,4438597,0,forum.html
[217] http://www.prawica.net/node/9877

being a victim of the Nazi *Drang nach Osten* plan, that Poles fought against their enemy and never seriously collaborated with Hitler, and the one about lack of Polish fault as to the fact that Holocaust was performed mostly there. Those tropes are, however, only the basic notions, which are either ideologically internalized and projected on Poland in the context of a heroic vision of history, hostile to any attempts of changing it, or they are just a background, basic knowledge about the period of time, that witnessed many cruel deeds, and those were not only the ones inflicted upon Poles. Those two opposite stances are also reflected in historiography, which deals with modern history and either inquires about the installation of Communism with the help of Jewish hands in Poland or challenges the myth of innocence, in accordance with the principles of historical justice. With this, there the central distinction about the relationship with past appears and the question of whether there should be a moral responsibility for the past separates the two camps. As in previous hereto presented distinctions, that division is neither clear nor it is dichotomic, therefore more than two narratives exist. They show, however, the nature of the division and the fight for the undecided center, the fight that decides upon the shape of the identity of the nation.

In the right wing discourse the conviction about the magnitude of Polish 20th century (but not only) sufferings always plays the main role; thus Poles are victims. First those were the Germans, who killed Poles and Jews and plundered their property. Then Communists, who not only enslaved Poland, but also had Jews to help them. Jan Żaryn, who assumes the role of the defender of Polish national identity, writes: “The measurable consequence of the installation [of Communism in Poland] was on one side a mass support of Poles for the nation’s right to sovereignty, on the other support from a body of Jews for the occupier, slandering Polishness

also in the propaganda of the day."[218] Such views, presented in a bulletin of the Catholic Information Agency, prove that the language of Gross's opposition is in fact anti-Semitic.

Only the interwar period did not have its occupier; however anti-Semitism of the time is either denied or treated as a natural means for defense against excessive Jewish influence. This narrative does not acknowledge that Poles could have collaborated with Germans, that they were the ones who constituted the overwhelming majority of Communists in post-1944 Poland. Poles were, to continue that thread, opposing oppression and fighting for the freedom, forcibly taken away from them. In any case, had there been any dark characters in Polish history, they constituted a negligible margin. In that uncritical approach to history, there is no place for Polish crimes or cooperation with the enemy, because so is the Polish nation remembered – the essence of their identity dwells in the pride in nation. In the historical narrative promoted by e.g. Chodakiewicz, religion is the most salient foundation of the identity. Therefore Gross's attacks on the Catholic Church are refuted by Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, who supports his arguments with the findings of an ethno-nationalist historian, Jan Żaryn.[219] After the war, he argues, an atheistic, anti-Polish and anti-independence system was imposed on Poland, so Poles were victimized by a foreign power. Moreover, the Cardinal assures that there is and has never been a mass support for anti-Semitism, especially in the Church, allowing him to argue that it is this type of history writing that evokes the demons of anti-Semitism and anti-Polonism, and jeopardizes the common good, Poland.

The arguments about the majority of the Righteous Among the Nations coming from Poland is used in almost all publications and discussions. No one, however, points out that it is in Poland where the Holocaust primarily happened. Poland, goes the reasoning, was the only

[218] Jan Żaryn, "Polacy w *Strachu*," *Biuletyn KAI*, no. 825, January 27, 2008.
[219] Stanisław Dziwisz, "List otwarty Kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza," open letter, January 12, 2008.

occupied country in which helping Jews was punished with death, not only of that person, but the whole family. Jan Żaryn, a virulent opponent of Gross, writes about the help brought by nuns and priests to Jews, which some of them failed to be acknowledged, which after the war manifested in the persecution of clergy. Naturally, this concept suggests that the whole Church helped Jews and thus all Jews should appreciate that help and avoid cooperating with Communists. Jan Żaryn – who is also the director of the Public Education Office of the Institute of National Remembrance – claims that Jews after the war were on the side of the occupier,[220] presenting probably the most radical 'Żydokomuna'-myth tainted statement. In this narrative, Jews seem to have been occupying Poland along with Soviets, and Poles were subjugated to their power. According to Bogdan Musiał, the Communist state protected Jews (after all, ethnic Jews Hilary Minc and Jakub Berman were prominent figures in the government), so that when Jews came to collect their prewar property, they "could have retained their real estate. Most often they would sell them and leave."[221] Moreover, continues Musiał, "not infrequently frauds would take place. Some Holocaust survivors claimed that they are rightful heirs of plots of lands or houses, proprietors of which were murder along with their families, which meant that there were no rightful heirs anymore. They would then obtain them under false pretences and sell at favorable prices and disappear."[222]

Finally, what bothers those historians and their audience is the call for accepting the memory of those events in the above narrative, adjusting the memory to the historical findings and admiting that Polish history is also that of Polish crimes. Finally, they distance themselves from any appeals to bear responsibility for the deeds of their ancestors. In their view such a historiography does not have a place in Poland.

[220] Jan Żaryn, "Pogarda dla kontekstu," *Rzeczpospolita*, January 19-20, 2008.
[221] Musiał, "Kto się wzbogacił na majątku Żydów."
[222] Musiał, "Kto się wzbogacił na majątku Żydów."

The opposing stance is characterized by eagerness to introduce Jewish history and the sufferings they received from the ethnic Poles in the course of the 20th century. Marek Edelman, who remembers those events, repeatedly recalls anti-Semitic events, while the late Czesław Miłosz's famous poem *Campo Fiori* shows how Polish children undisturbed played by the walls of the burning Warsaw Ghetto. In this narrative, Poland was a victim, but Jews suffered the most. For them, technical mistakes that Gross made writing "Fear," various inaccuracies do not matter, because the message is most important. And so, commenting on the accusation of the formal flaws in the book, ever so often voiced in the discussion, popular writer Jerzy Pilch argues that those shortcomings do not make the matter any less valid, [223] and accordingly Bortnowska suggest that the book, regardless of the shortcomings, is a "shock reaching the bases of identity."[224] Jerzy Pilch again asks whether normal people, not historians, have to wait for a specialist scrutiny before they even begin the discussion.[225] Jerzy Jedlicki answers to this that the "conditional reflex at the word Jew is the best reagent of who we are dealing with."[226] He further states that it is enough to look into Krzemiński's survey to stop denying the scale of anti-Semitism. The interwar period, that has been invoked as defining for current identity, is perceived as a time of turbulence, of uncertainty, of strengthening nationalism and xenophobia, the country that had to be saved by Marshall Piłsudski less than a decade after WW I had ended. In that view, there is a parallel between that period and the post-1989 one, where the fear for independence and internal turmoil moved people to radical positions.

Most importantly, this part of the society is able to accept the responsibility and correct their distorted historical memory, in order to create an open and self-conscious society. They

[223] Jerzy Pilch, "Czarna robota," *Dziennik Polska Europa Świat*, January 18, 2008.
[224] Halina Bortnowska, "Patrzeć na ekshumację," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 5, 2008.
[225] Pilch, "Czarna robota."
[226] Jedlicki, "Tylko tyle i aż tyle."

accept Gross's therapy and look forward, unlike the traditionalist, inclusive and, admittedly, larger part of the society, which looks into the past to reinforce their already defined identities.

5.5 Narratives reconsidered?

Polish memory is strongly stigmatized with a sense of victimhood and martyrology. Naturally, Jews have their own martyrology as expressed in their memory of the 20th century, with Holocaust in its very center (especially American Jews). Therefore, while Auschwitz is the ultimate symbol for contemporary Jewish memory of suffering, the ultimate symbol for Polish martyrology is Katyń, a forest not far from Smolensk, where in 1940 about 22,000 Polish citizens, and among them 8,000 officers were executed by Soviet authorities. The symbolism of Katyń is to an extent parallel to the symbolism of Auschwitz for Jews. Two competing martyrologies, both with claims to uniqueness, hinder the dialogue between two groups victimized in the 20th century. The need to incorporate Jewish suffering into the Polish narrative is difficult. The vision of history, which focuses only on Polish sufferings, tends to see everyone who is not ethnically Polish, as an outsider. Such an outsider is a Jew, who although they lived next door for hundreds of years, has no place in Polish mainstream narrative. The topics discussed during the debates and commented by public on Internet fora, show which elements are particularly salient for Polish historical memory of the 20th century. Those unquestionably indicate how important the interwar period is for continuation of the independent statehood after 1989. Therefore, there are attempts made at whitewashing that period of all dark spots, such as instability of government, general mess and, mostly, anti-Semitism. The prevailing concept concerning WW II is that Poles fought against Germans, who also, at the time, persecuted Jews, placing them on the same side. However, anti-Semitism was still present during the war,

especially in the Polish underground and Anders Army, both ethnically very homogenous. In Polish historiography, that of the dominating heroic school, Jews are mentioned in the context of the help delivered to them by ethnic Poles, most preferably by the Catholic clergy. Holocaust, therefore, occupies only a marginal place in that narrative, which places Polish sufferings in the central point. Of course, the actions described by Gross in his two latest works, are never mentioned, because the perceived moral superiority of Poles, allows for the glorification of the nation.

Last years witnessed changes in government, and thus in public institutions. It led to the radicalization of IPN, where a politicized group of historians was employed,[227] which coincided with a similar trend in daily *Rzeczpospolita*, a newspaper which took a very important stand in the Jedwabne discussion, now focuses on fighting Gross. IPN introduced a project "Index," a purpose of which is to record all cases of help brought to Jews during the war. Dariusz Libionka voices his doubts concerning the project, saying that "it is hard to understand how people, who unequivocally identify themselves with national democracy or other national camp formations, can be responsible for dealing with the help brought to Jews."[228] The person responsible for the project is Jan Żaryn, who – along with Chodakiewicz – is an open admirer of Endecja-oriented National Armed Forces. While during the Jedwabne debate, their then president, Leon Kieres, conducted a thorough unbiased research regarding the crime, he was almost lynched in the Parliament, when he presented the Institute's findings. Now, the new president Janusz Kurtyka, who calls Gross a vampire, is praised for publishing the 'unbiased and nuanced' book from Chodakiewicz. Gross, in an afterword to a compilation of articles "Wokół Strachu,"[229] writes that in the IPN's conception of historiography, unlike his, Chodakiewicz's book is "scientific,

[227] Stanisław Obirek, "Kościół potrzebuje Grossa," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 7, 2008.
[228] Libionka, "Oni nie są z ojczyzny mojej."
[229] Gądek, *Wokół*.

historical, pioneer and craft-wise impeccable."[230] The problem in having a serious discussion rests on the fact that an important public institution is now in hands of "clerks, full of ideological stereotypes."

The propositions of the book do not fit the narrative of right wing audience, because they are ideologically foreign to the those, who uses history as a foundation of the culturally, ethnically and religiously unified nation. In their narrative there is no place for Jedwabne, let alone the perception of raging Polish anti-Semitism. The other group of audience, that of liberal, mostly left-oriented, Poles, is ready to accept the propositions presented in "Fear." They either accept the book in its entirety, or conduct a discussion, which aims at establishing a consensus, which would allow for internalizing past wrongs for the sake of the future. Finally, there is the part of the society in the middle, which cherishes the notions stemming from Communist teachings in schools, a group that is religious and strongly connected to the country. That group, although closer to the right than to the left part of the ideological spectrum, is more open to discussion and can be influenced by the critical historical assertions. In order to achieve that goal, a long education is needed, as well as the lapse of time. Books like "Fear" play an important role in redefining past in order to deal with the dark stains on it, and bring that change closer.

[230] Gross's afterword to: Gądek, *Wokół*.

Conclusion.

> Clearly nationalism today is a means to establish and reinforce collective identity, to designate that *we* are like and how we differ from *them* and to specify what political consequences should flow from these distinctions.[231]

Historical memory is an important element for identity formation in Poland. Unlike "Western" countries which tend to look into the future to see how to shape their current identities, Poland always looks back. Polish identity is then strongly historicized, and so influences the character of the nation. The challenging of the historical narrative, then, highly correlates with the challenging of identity. Gross's book, written from the position of a member of Polish society, makes the discussion Polish in character. Since that discussion, opened with the publication of "Fear," concerns Polish matters, it pertains to (re)defining what the adjective "Polish" means. In the discussion there is a lot about the author, much less about the book, and there is much about the reasons for which it should not have been published at all.[232] So argues Piotr Gontarczyk, when he openly states that Gross often and knowingly misses with the truth.[233] It reflects Aleksander Klugman's observation that the participation of Poles in the murders of Jews and the postwar anti-Semitic activities are topics, about which it is very uncomfortably to talk.[234]

Why is the historical memory of Jews, in spite of an almost non-existent group of Jews now living in Poland, a point of discontent in a public discussion? This paper tries to argue that the reason is that they were present during the formative years for Polish nationalism, that is in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jews were also the 'significant other' during the interwar

[231] Porter, 4.
[232] Obirek, "Kościół potrzebuje Grossa."
[233] Gontarczyk, "Daleko od prawdy."
[234] Aleksander Klugman, "Kogo przeraża *Strach*," *Midrasz* nr. 8 February, 2008.

period, fundamental for the formation of Polish identity today. They, finally, compete with Poles for the centrality of their suffering in the war experience. Therefore, although the number of Jews in Poland is negligible, the "Jewish problem" has not disappeared from Polish memory, which too explains why people who are not preoccupied with Jewish history, become interested in historical debates. Similarly Jedlicki writes that "despite the time that has elapsed, there is perhaps no other historical issue in Poland that plays so powerfully on hidden sensitivities and resentments."[235]

The question whether anti-Semitism is a part of the Polish cultural code, is crucial for understanding the character of the arguments used in this discussion. Failing to acknowledge the stereotypical character of 'Żydokomuna', writers such as Marek Wierzbicki, describe Polish anti-Semitism as a cliché.[236] The arguments in the discussion, and myths they are based on, show that anti-Semitic tropes are still present in the Polish cultural code. Personal accounts, usually biased toward Poles, reinforce the convictions about the lack of anti-Semitism. The debate triggers the dormant anti-Semitic prejudices, used in a defensive reaction to the infringed foundation of the identity. The Polish attitude to Jews today is illustrated in two articles from daily Gazeta Wyborcza two articles concerning Jewish affairs which appeared next to each other. One treated about a football player from one of the Łódź teams, which said "Śmierć Żydzewskiej Kurwie" (Death to the Jewish Whore), and the other about opening of a new center for Jewish Affairs in Kraków by Prince Charles.[237] Fortunately, young people are more likely to admit that the perception of Poles as anti-Semites is true, and they also more often concede that anti-Semitism is a problem in contemporary Poland.[238] In a survey presented in Gazeta Wyborcza on

[235] Jedlicki, "How to Deal with This."
[236] Michlic, *The Soviet*, 157.
[237] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 30, 2008.
[237] Krzemiński, 117.

11.02.2008, that is a month after the publication of the book, 31 percent of respondents claimed that Poles are anti-Semites.[239] Some suggest that the issue of anti-Semitism becomes almost *condition sine qua non* of the process of eradicating the ethno-nationalist vision from the major stream of politics and substituting it with the inclusive and tolerant civic model. [240] It seems that this simplifies the reality, where there are many more factors that contribute to the shape of the nation and thus, Polish identity. However, undoubtedly, the nature, continuity and longevity of Polish anti-Jewish representations and their significance have to be taken into consideration when analyzing the process of Polish nation building. Michlic suggests that the failure of the civic nationalist model is a failure to assimilate Jews into the Polish cultural code.[241] Unlike Michlic, who seems to reject the "ethno-nationalist" historiography altogether, Adam Szostkiewicz shows that parallel to two visions of Poland represent are two patriotisms, which should "both have their place, but need to be tolerant of each other and do not harm themselves."[242]

Polish identity is strongly entwined with Catholicism, which even among those, who do not consider themselves believers or simply do not practice, is an element of everyday culture. Chodakiewicz claims that religion, tradition and patriotism are the most important values of Poles, and "those Polish attributes can change the secularized Europe."[243] Therefore, the Church plays a crucial role in creating and transforming Polish identity. Adam Michnik, a Pole of Jewish origin and one of the most prominent members of the Polish intelligentsia, says: "Poland will be, like the Polish Catholic Church will be. If it continues to sweep those things under the carpet and teach us conformism, histrionics, falseness, hypocrisy so we will be…. If the catholic Church

[239] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 11, 2008.
[240] Michlic, *Poland's*.
[241] Ibid., 16.
[242] Szostkiewicz, "Egzorcysta Gross."
[243] Chodakiewicz, "Historia jako wycinanka."

clearly states that one should confess all the guilt connected to anti-Semitism then we will live in a different country."[244]

Polish nationalist historiography seems to be tolerant of its own selectiveness of the topics, but is more restrictive otherwise. Therefore, when there were Poles killing Jews during the war, there were hundreds of those who helped – why such authors fail to mention them? According to Michael Steinlauf, the mid 60s through the 70s were characterized by expelling of memory of Jews in e.g. schoolbooks and the subsequent removal from the mainstream discussion about the war. He suggests that the perception of a national conflict, existing between Jews and Poles gave Polish anti-Semitism a unique logic that made it different other anti-Semitic movements in Europe, and however fails to prove that it is in fact a specific phenomenon, he very well shows *la longue duree* of the Poles-Jews perceived conflict.[245] Poles are building their identity on remembering and reflection on history, therefore – says Gross – this history has to be true, especially when it pertains to such catastrophes as described in "Fear."[246]

All research seems to show that, although we cannot speak of a nationalist Poland, the more the country modernizes and the more social relations are becoming more liberated, a large part of Polish society does not open, but quite otherwise, it closes. Conservative, restrictive and intolerant, authoritarian stances are radicalizing.[247] These attitudes in the society are reflected in the right-wing parties' political programs, which take advantage of such social conditions.

The analysis conducted herein, shows that the willingness to take responsibility for the anti-Jewish actions is low. Moreover, the response of the audience, unable to grasp some of the complicated historical facts, proves that the message does not reach the majority of the society,

[244] Michnik, debate in Kraków.
[245] Steinlauf.
[246] Gross, "Żałoba ze Strachu."
[247] Śpiewak, "Lekcja Strachu."

hindering the possibility of molding people's perception. The fact that anti-Semitism is still present in the Polish cultural code proves that the society is not mature enough to be called fully open and tolerant. The two visions of the nation, that of the Jagiellonian Republic of Both-Nations (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów), serving a as a symbol and model for the tolerant, inclusive and pluralistic Poland, and that of exclusivist, intolerant and religiously zealous, clash today, to create a specific dynamic of Polish identity (re)definition, in which the latter option still prevails. Therefore, although Polish society was prepared for the publication of "Fear," it failed to accept it as a purifying measure. It proves that the society at large does not want to alter the paramount historical memory.

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